



Forum: Human Rights Council

Issue: Critically evaluating the anti-drug policies in the Republic of the Philippines

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I. Introduction:

Having to deal with serious drug-related problems the Philippines is a country in crisis which did not seem to find an end for many years. Despite several previous attempts to solve the issue not only being led by the Philippine government but also foreign actors such as the United States of America, still the nation struggles with millions of drug addicts as well as thousands of drug dealers.

Therefore, the on June 30th 2016 elected, current President Rodrigo Duterte imposed a new drug policy which has however, since been heavily criticized by various observers. This is due to the reason that since the new law was implemented thousands of deaths were reported which however did not get pursued.

With his election campaign Duterte promised to combat the drug problem of the nation without any tolerance on a basis of violence. This approach was highly appreciated in the Philippine society and an important aspect of his success in the presidential elections 2016. Since then, members of the public as well as police officers are being urged to “neutralize” drug addicts as well as anyone involved in drug trade. The government justifies such methods with the “war on drugs” being of utmost importance to be handled effectively.

Still, various other parties are complaining about severe human right violations within the nation of the Philippines which is due to various killings in which the policy resulted. Apart from capital punishment being a heavily discussed topic anyways the situation in the Philippines already earned much attention internationally. On June 4 2020 the United Nation’s High Commissioner on Human Rights published a report heavily criticizing the Philippine approach on tackling its drug problem. In it, the most stressed issue is that the killings of drug suspects are simply being tolerated and not pursued properly.

Despite the international criticism, Dutertes strict policy still earns much encouragement inside the country and the government is still supported by many Philippine citizens.



II. Definition of Key Terms:

Drug war:

As a drug war the conflict between the government and drug dealers is understood.

The probably best known example for such is the ongoing “War on Drugs” initiative implemented by the United States of America in order to combat the drug trade within the country which however resulted in a global network on fighting drugs.

Neutralization of drug addicts and anyone involved in drug trade:

In this context the term “neutralization” is being used as a Euphemism with the meaning of killing people involved in the drug problem.

Euphemisms were a very common measure e.g. in the Nazi-Regime in order to obfuscate their ominous measures and they still mostly serve the purpose of making certain actions not seem as brutal as they are.

III. Background Information:

Of course the Philippine drug problem did not just start in 2016 with the election of the current president. Actually, its history goes quite back to the 20th century, with the first governmental initiatives on drug prevention being taken in 1972 which included for example the declaration of the second week of November as Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Week which was since used on a yearly basis to spread awareness on the abuse of drugs.

Since then, the work on the drug policy constantly evolved. Although in this time the problem was not nearly as urgent as it developed in the following time a problem was already seen especially in the abuse of Marijuana which is why further regulations were made as time passed by.

From 1980 on the problem exacerbated with a rising number of addictions to drugs such as methamphetamine hydrochloride which lead to further concern of government officials. Further campaigns were brought to the citizens; the main approach was still reconnaissance.

In 1998 the Philippines launched the “five pillar global drug control approach” which consists of the aspects Drug Supply Reduction, Drug Demand Reduction, Alternative Development, Civic Awareness and Response, and Regional and International Cooperation. It was adopted by the ASEAN and China Cooperative Operations in Response to Dangerous Drugs (ACCORD) and consists of a list of law enforcement actions aiming for the drug problem.

Throughout this millennium the Philippine Government enforced several other laws aiming to tackle the drug problem which have however not shown the hoped effectiveness yet. All of the given aspects led the nation to the ongoing approach of drug policy which is as already stated very controversial.

IV. Major Countries and Organizations Involved:

The Philippines:

With the Philippines being the targeted country it is self-explanatory why they show up on this list.

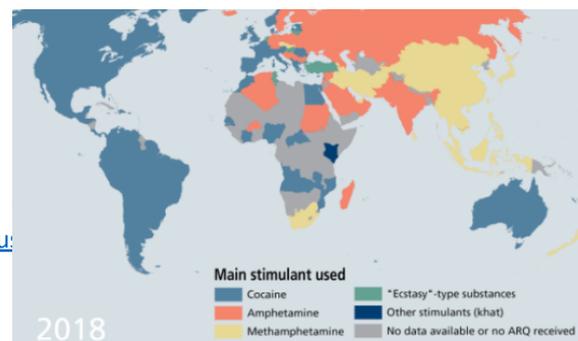
On the one hand there is the government enforcing the controversial drug policy and on the other hand there is the wide part of the citizens supporting it. Still, there are also split views inside the nation as there is also a part of the population that is protesting against the government and especially its drug policy.

The People’s Republic of China:

The People’s Republic of China expressed its support for the Philippine drug policy in form of the spokesman of the Chinese embassy in Manila on July 16th 2016. He declared illegal drugs as the enemy of mankind and thus, justifies the support of the Philippine government.

However, despite the support of Chinese officials residents of the People’s Republic of China actually make a significant contribution to the drug problem of the Philippines. There have been several instances of Chinese people being arrested in the Philippines for drug-related. Often these cases are related to big methamphetamine productions and therefore constitute a significant problem in the crisis as methamphetamine is also the most used drug in the Philippines as to be seen in the graphic¹ below:

¹ <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/drug-u>



International Criminal Court:

Since 2016 the Philippines have repeatedly earned the attention of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Still, as to 2018 no verdict against Philippine officials stood activists and families of victims filed a petition with the ICC concerning the Philippine drug policy on which Duterte reacted by threatening to arrest chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda.

In 2021 the ICC approved a probe investigating the Philippines on any human rights violations as Philippine officials claim for the killings to be legally compliant.

Amnesty International:

As a Non-Governmental Organization which is invested in the observance of Human Rights all over the globe the Philippine drug crisis obviously drew their attention. They regularly publish reports containing statements of victims or their families in order to stress the urgency of the topic. They are invested in informing the public about the problem and furthermore, they criticize the United Nations for not having taken the needed measures to tackle the controversial drug policy of the Philippines.

V. Previous attempts to solve the issue:

On October 7th 2020 the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution presented by the Philippines as well as Iceland that insured ‘technical assistance’ for the Philippines. This technical assistance is provided in means of data gathering of violations by the police; civic space; counter-terrorism legislation and a rights-based approach to drug control. So the approach taken by the UN is further investigation of the region in order to gain evidence of illegal killings which however, did not lead to any further measures yet except the probe of the ICC being approved in 2021.

Still, to this point Duterte can successfully continue his drug policy and apart from international backlash the Philippines did not receive significant consequences.

VI. Questions Delegates should consider During Research:

1. Which opinion does your nation/organization have on the Philippine drug policy?
2. In how far is your nation/organization invested in changing the situation?
3. Does your nation/organization maintain diplomatic relations with the Philippines?
4. How high is your nation's/organization's drug-related crime rate?
5. Is capital punishment a legal verdict in your country?

VII. Useful Links and Sources:

<https://www.hrw.org/tag/philippines-war-drugs> (29.11.2021)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippine_drug_war#International (29.11.2021)

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-review-thousands-drugs-war-killings-if-time-justice-minister-2021-10-20/> (30.11.2021)

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/11/we-have-to-show-courage-the-philippines-mothers-taking-duterte-and-his-war-on-drugs-to-court> (30.11.2021)

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<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2020/10/philippines-un-resolution-a-missed-chance-for-justice-but-scrutiny-continues/> (02.12.2021)

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