

## Philippines: New report reveals deliberate killings of children during "war on drugs"

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*Geneva (OMCT)* - A new report, published today, documents 122 killings of children, from 1 to 17 years old, throughout the Philippines, between July 2016 and December 2019. The report, titled *"How could they do this to my child?"*, jointly published by the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the Children's Legal Rights and Development Center (CLRDC, Philippines), shows that the majority of the killings were carried out by police forces or affiliates.

The report is based on information directly collected from the locations where the children were killed, including interviews with local authorities, families and witnesses, and the examination of official documents related to each case. It identifies clear patterns for the killings, including the direct targeting of victims; killings of children as proxies when the real targets could not be found; as a result of mistaken identities; and as so-called "collateral damage". The report details six cases, with the youngest victim a 20-month old girl.

In one particularly horrific case, a 7-year old boy was killed in cold blood because he had witnessed the murder of an adult by a member of the local authorities. The killings continue, with at least seven children killed from January to March 2020.

"These revelations must be a wake-up call for the international community, who has been largely absent as the Philippine government has kept trampling human rights", said Gerald Staberock, OMCT Secretary General. "Over the past four years, we have hardly seen any meaningful reaction to the wanton killing of thousands of people under the pretext of the "war on drugs", the targeting of the poorest and most marginalized citizens of the Philippines, and the persecution of human rights defenders, many of whom are in prison for their legitimate work. It is the total lack of accountability that feeds the cycle of violence, including the war on children we are witnessing."

It is estimated that the total number of extrajudicial killings in the framework of the Philippine government's anti-drug campaign may run as high as 27,000. Only in one case did the policemen involved get convicted.

This impunity, and the fact that most victims are poor and vulnerable, further increase a climate of terror created by the "war on drugs". Practically all the families and witnesses interviewed for this report have asked to remain anonymous. Many of them did not file a case for the murder of their child, fearing retaliation. With parents often too afraid to testify, even anonymously, it is likely that the actual numbers of children killed are higher than the 122 documented in the report.

As the United Nations Human Rights Council is about to examine the record of the Philippines, the report sets out detailed recommendations, including for the creation of an independent commission of inquiry into human rights violations in the Philippines, with a special focus on children.

*The World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) is the main global coalition of NGOs fighting torture and ill-treatment, with 200 members in more than 90 countries. Its international secretariat is based in Geneva, Switzerland.*

*The Children's Legal Rights and Development Center (CLRDC) is the leading child rights organisation in the Philippines.*

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## **Attachments**

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