

August 2016

## INPUD Response



### Response to the UNODC Statement on the killings in the Philippines

Prior to and since his election this year, Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte has repeatedly and vehemently called for police and the general public to kill people suspected of using or dealing drugs. He has called for and endorsed extrajudicial killings. **Hundreds of people have been extrajudicially murdered since Duterte took office as president.** President Duterte has suspended the civil, human, and political rights of people who use drugs, who are being killed in the streets. Simply put, **people who use drugs no longer have the right to life in the Philippines.**

### Responses to the Killings

In July, **over 300 international NGOs**, including the International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD), [called on the United Nations to take immediate action on the hundreds of extrajudicial killings of suspected drug offenders in the Philippines](#). We emphasised that “the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)... have failed to condemn the Philippines for these gross human rights violations committed in the name of drug control”. Now, the Executive Director of the [UNODC has released a statement](#) condemning the killings in the Philippines. This is, in part, good news, and the statement emphasises that the killings will undermine efforts to ensure that “all people can live in health, dignity and peace, with security and prosperity”; today, people who use drugs are still being targeted by these extrajudicial executions and acts of appalling violence. It is people who use drugs and their communities whose human rights are being violated.

### Ongoing Endorsement of the War on Drugs

While INPUD welcomes the UNODC making a statement condemning the extrajudicial killings, we are additionally disappointed by the UNODC noting that it “*stands ready to further engage with the Philippines and all countries to bring drug traffickers to justice*”. Those who are convicted of trafficking drugs are most often marginalised, and are subject to exploitation, manipulation, and coercion. In short, **drug criminalisation and prohibition, as well as the incarceration and killing of people who use drugs, disproportionately impact and harm the most vulnerable in society, and are incompatible with a prioritisation of human rights and health.** It is both irrelevant and inopportune to remind us of the UNODC’s ongoing support of the fundamentally flawed global architecture of drug control that underwrites the catastrophic ‘war on drugs’; this is a war whose ideas and philosophies have directly contributed to and endorsed violence and mass killings such as that those which are ongoing in the Philippines.

**The UNODC continues to stand at odds with the rest of the UN system**, notably the WHO, UN Women, and UNAIDS. The appalling consequences of the current prohibitionist drug control regime on health, human rights, and development have not gone unnoticed: indeed, the former UN Special Rapporteur on the right to the highest attainable standard of health has described the simultaneous co-existence of human rights law and drug control law as being one that is situated in [‘parallel universes’](#).

**Global drug control laws are in direct conflict with human rights law**; it is **this conflict that allows for state-sponsored stigma, discrimination, violence, and in the case of the Philippines, state-endorsed murder.** The UNODC has previously urged countries to abolish the death penalty for drug offences and some UNODC guidance documents recommend countries to [decriminalise drug use](#). How, then, is an affirming remark about meting out justice to traffickers and continuing support and endorsement of prohibitionist drug conventions intended to address or ameliorate a crisis where people are being summarily executed in the streets, a crisis in which many lives are still at stake?

**We urgently call on the UNODC to use all energies and influence to effectively leverage the Filipino government to halt the killing and to unequivocally address the principal doctrines that result in this violence. We demand that the UNODC make active efforts towards harmonising with the rest of the UN system, where human rights must supersede misguided and calamitously detrimental drug control infrastructure.**

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