



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

“THEY CANNOT KILL OUR FAITH”

Murders of Church Workers and Members in the Philippines



Justice and International
Mission Cluster, Synod
of Victoria and Tasmania,
Uniting Church in Australia

October 2020



Author: Dr Mark Zirnsak, Senior Social Justice Advocate
Elizabeth Minter, volunteer

© Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

Acknowledgement: The Justice and International Mission Cluster would like to thank the National Council of Churches in the Philippines for providing photographs used in this report.

“ As Christians, we are committed to Jesus’ call to stand in solidarity with each other as we work together for peace and justice for the poor and the persecuted. For church people in the Philippines working to defend human rights, the risks are high: death threats, harassment and extrajudicial murder. This report calls us to stand in solidarity with our partner Church, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, to join our voices in working to bring these abuses to an end. ”

Rev Denise Liersch, Moderator

Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

“ We believe that human beings are created in the image of God, therefore, human rights is a divine gift. UCCP is committed to uphold and protect the inviolability of the rights of person/s reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international humanitarian law. We will continue to serve no one but God and persevere to protect our people’s rights for the glory of God. ”

Bishop Joel Tendero

United Church of Christ in the Philippines, South Luzon Jurisdictional Area



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following report documents murders, attempted murders, death threats and harassment of church people in the Philippines under the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte. The report finds that no one in the churches is safe if they are engaged in social justice advocacy in the Philippines. Those targeted have included senior bishops, priests, ministers, pastors and lay members of the churches. The victims have come from the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), the Roman Catholic Church, the Iglesia Filipino Independiente (IFI) church and ecumenical bodies including the National Council of Churches in the Philippines.

The Uniting Church in Australia has a formal partnership with the UCCP.

The murders have occurred in the context of the Duterte Administration's 'drug war', which has seen thousands of extrajudicial executions. President Duterte promised during his election campaign to orchestrate the mass extrajudicial killing of people involved in the drug trade. Extrajudicial killings are where police, soldiers or hired death squads murder people without the need for any evidence of having done anything wrong or judicial oversight. The victims of the 'drug war' have often been people from impoverished backgrounds who used drugs, but also people with no connection at all to illicit drugs.

President Duterte has made many public comments that have encouraged members of the police and the military to engage in egregious human rights abuses.

Those responsible for the murders of human rights defenders, environmentalists, and social justice advocates are very rarely held to account.





The report presents the cases of 16 church members, ministers and priests murdered between 2017 and 2020. Three were Catholic priests, one was a pastor in the UCCP, and one was a pastor in the Kings Glory Ministry. Of the 11 murdered lay members of churches whose situations this report discusses, five were associated with the IFI and one with the UCCP. The majority of the victims were involved with the social justice mission of the Christian faith.

All the victims were murdered by people using firearms. In one case, the victim was stabbed as well as shot. In three cases the assailants were riding motorcycles when they carried out the murders.

The report documents death threats and harassment of 29 church people. These included two bishops in the UCCP, six UCCP ministers, one UCCP pastor, four UCCP lay members, a Catholic Archbishop, a Catholic bishop, four Catholic priests, an IFI bishop, an IFI church worker, two ministers in the United Methodist Church and a lay member of the United Methodist Church. Two of the UCCP lay people who were targeted were the spouses of UCCP ministers. One was the daughter of a UCCP minister. Typical forms of harassment involve the filing of baseless, serious criminal charges against the targeted person.

The charges usually accuse the target of being a member of the New People's Army and involved in the murder or attempted murder of members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Another common form of harassment is to label or 'tag' the person as a member of the New People's Army (NPA) or a supporter of the NPA. The tagging places the target at further risk of harassment or extrajudicial execution because President Duterte has declared that the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NPA to be "terrorist entities".¹ The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights also reported in June 2020 that being tagged a member or supporter of the NPA can lead to a person being murdered.²

In terms of the authorities responding to the human rights violations against church people, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines stated in June 2020:³

“ Despite the many violations that church people have been subjected to, there has been little or no accountability. Those who have committed rights violations face no repercussions. The Philippines judicial system remains open to manipulation and has been exceedingly slow in delivering justice. ”

1 UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Philippines', A/HRC/44/22, 4 June 2020, 3.

2 Ibid., 10.

3 Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches to the UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/44/NGO/116, 26 June 2020, 4.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Philippines Administration:

- ▶ Send a clear signal that the murders, intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders are unacceptable and those responsible will be held to account.
- ▶ Thoroughly investigate all cases of murder of human rights defenders, social justice advocates and environmentalists. Make every effort to bring to justice those responsible for carrying out the murders, and their architects.
- ▶ Promptly and fairly compensate the families of victims of extrajudicial killings carried out by police or the military or those associated with the security forces.
- ▶ Repeal the new *Anti-Terrorism Act*, because it has insufficient safeguards against misuse to target human rights defenders.
- ▶ Maintain adequate funding to the Commission on Human Rights in the Philippines. Strengthen its investigative and forensic capacity.

- ▶ Invite relevant UN Special Rapporteurs to monitor and report on specific human rights concerns in the Philippines.

For the Australian Government:

- ▶ It should pursue every opportunity to put pressure on the Philippines Administration to end extrajudicial killings and murders of human rights defenders and social justice advocates. These efforts should include encouraging other donor countries to do the same.
- ▶ Direct at least \$1 million of the \$79.7 million⁴ in overseas development assistance provided to the Philippines to organisations working to end extrajudicial killings in the Philippines.

International recommendations

- ▶ The International Criminal Court should continue its investigation into the large-scale extrajudicial killings under the President Duterte Administration. The court should proceed with taking action if the investigation finds enough evidence to do so.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	4
Recommendations	6
Introduction.....	9
Human Rights Abuses Under the Duterte Administration	10
President Duterte sets the tone for human rights violations.....	10
Pattern of Extrajudicial Killings and Impunity	12
International Criminal Court opens an investigation into Philippines	14
Labelling human rights defenders as supporters of terrorism.....	15
Murder of Church Ministers and Members under the Duterte Administration.....	18
Wilmer Agorde – Murdered February 2017	19
Melinton Catampongan – Murdered 10 July 2017.....	19
Erning Arkid – Murdered 15 September 2017	19
Segundo Malig-on Jr. – Murdered 20 September 20 2017.....	19
Perfecto Hoyle – Murdered 16 November 2017	20
Pastor Lovelito Quiñones – Murdered 3 December 2017	20
Father Marcelito Paez – Murdered 4 December 2017	20
Fr Mark Ventura, Murdered 29 April 2018	21
Father Rey Urmeneta – shot 6 June 2018.....	21
Father Nilo Richmond – Murdered 10 June 2018.....	21
Valentin Acabal, brothers Edgardo and Ismael Avelino, and 11 other men – murdered 30 March 2019	22
Neptali Morada – Murdered 17 June 2019	22
Salvador Romano – Murdered 7 July 2019.....	24
Pastor Ernesto Javier Estrella – Murdered 2 August 2019.....	24
Zara Alvarez – Murdered 17 August 2020	25
Death threats and harassment against Church Ministers and Members under the Duterte Administration.....	27
Father Amado Picardal.....	27
Jesuit Father Albert Alejo, Divine Word Father Flavie Villanueva, Father Robert Reyes and Archbishop Socrates Villegas	28





Bishop Pablo Virgilio David	28
Bishop Hamuel Tequis	29
Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza and Rev Irma Balaba.....	29
Rev Edwin Egar and Rev Luisito Saliendra	29
Rev Dan San Andres.....	30
Rev Ian Loid Delos Santos	30
Rev Marcelino Mariano, Daisy Mariano, Jennybeth Mariano	31
Karlo Manano.....	31
Rachel Mariano.....	31
Jeoff Larua.....	32
Pastor Jimmy Teves, Jodito Montecino, Eliseo Andres, JP Romana, Rodrigo Medes, and Roger Sabanal.....	32
Bishop Carlo Morales	32
Aldeem Yanez.....	33
Rev Joel Bengbeng.....	33
Rev Brian Asuit.....	33

Bibliography 34



INTRODUCTION

In July 2006, the then Justice and International Mission Unit of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania and the Southern Luzon Jurisdictional Area, United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) produced a report, *Getting Away With Murder*, which documented the murders of 14 UCCP ministers and members between 2004 and 2006 under the administration of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. There were two additional cases of attempted murder. Those murdered had been involved in the struggle for social justice and human rights in the Philippines. Some of the murders involved the Philippines military or police carrying out the murder. In other cases, the person was murdered, after being harassed by the army, by unknown assailants.

Following the release of that report, and other similar reports by the UN and human rights organisations, the Australian Government and other governments put pressure on the Arroyo Administration to end the extrajudicial murders. Subsequently, the number of murders of human rights defenders did significantly decline.

The Philippines has since continued to be plagued by extrajudicial murders and the targeting of human rights defenders.

However, the pace has accelerated to extreme levels under the Duterte Administration.

This report is an act of solidarity with the people of the Philippines in their struggle for social justice. The Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Uniting Church in Australia has a partnership with the Southern Luzon Jurisdictional Area, United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP SLJA).

As partners, the UCCP SLJA and the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania have committed to working faithfully together in the areas of justice, human rights, peace and sustainable development for those in poverty, the deprived and oppressed.

The report documents some of the recent murders of church ministers and members in the Philippines. It highlights the lack of progress in bringing those responsible for the murders to justice.

It also documents cases of death threats and harassment against bishops, ministers and church members.

It also makes recommendations of what can be done to address this situation of injustice.



HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES UNDER THE DUTERTE ADMINISTRATION

On 30 June 2016, Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte took office and launched his “war on drugs”.⁵ During his election campaign, he had promised that if elected, he would deploy the police and the military in an all-out assault on criminal gangs⁶ in an attempt to end crime within six months of coming to power. President Duterte has a history of making outrageous public statements and yet has remained highly popular in the Philippines. As at the end of 2019, an astronomical 82% of Filipinos were satisfied with President Duterte, 10% were dissatisfied, and 8% were undecided.⁷

President Duterte sets the tone for human rights violations

President Duterte has long used his campaign against illicit drugs to boost his political success. Before becoming president, Rodrigo Duterte served as mayor of Davao for more than 22 years, winning seven terms.⁸ In 2009 he was reported to have said: *“If you are doing an illegal activity in my city if you are a criminal or part of a syndicate that preys on the innocent people of the city, for as long as I am the mayor, you are a legitimate target of assassination.”*⁹

While President Duterte has denied responsibility for the extrajudicial killings, he has also frequently announced his support for them. He has set the tone from the top about the behaviour that is acceptable for the police and military. His reported public statements in support of extrajudicial executions date back to his time as mayor of Davao City.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that during President Duterte’s mayoral term in Davao City, hundreds of extrajudicial killings were documented.

The UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions concluded the killings *“bore officially-sanctioned character”*.¹⁰

Four years before he was elected president, Duterte, as Davao City Vice Mayor, said he would give two million Philippines pesos (\$48,400) if an alleged leader of a gang of car thieves was arrested.

He would give four million pesos (\$96,800) if he was killed. He said he would add another one million pesos (\$24,200) if the suspect’s decapitated head was delivered to him *“on ice”*.¹¹

5 hrw.org/tag/philippines-war-drugs

6 Floyd Whaley, ‘Rodrigo Duterte’s Talk of Killing Criminals Raises Fears in Philippines’, *The New York Times*, 17 May 2016, [nytimes.com/2016/05/18/world/asia/rodrigo-duterte-philippines.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/18/world/asia/rodrigo-duterte-philippines.html)

7 ABS-CBN News, ‘Duterte reaches record-high ‘excellent’ satisfaction rating: SWS’, 21 January 2020, news.abs-cbn.com/news/01/21/20/duterte-reaches-record-high-excellent-satisfaction-rating-sws

8 philembassy.org.au/the-philippines/president

9 Andrew Marshall and Manuel Mogato, ‘Philippines death squads very much in business as Duterte set for presidency’, Reuters, 25 May 2016, [reuters.com/article/us-philippines-duterte-killings-insight/philippine-death-squads-very-much-in-business-as-duterte-set-for-presidency-idUSKCN0YG0EB](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-duterte-killings-insight/philippine-death-squads-very-much-in-business-as-duterte-set-for-presidency-idUSKCN0YG0EB)

10 UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Philippines’, A/HRC/44/22, 4 June 2020, 4.

11 Associated Press, ‘\$121K Decapitation Bounty Offered For Gang Leader’, *CBS News*, 26 October 2012, [cbsnews.com/news/121k-decapitation-bounty-offered-for-gang-leader/](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/121k-decapitation-bounty-offered-for-gang-leader/)



In May 2015, Mayor Duterte told the first national convention of the Workplace Advocates on Safety in the Philippines:¹²

“ You rape a child in my city? I will kill you. I have no problem with that.

You commit robbery and rape your victim? I will kill you.

We’re the ninth safest city. How do you think I did it?... Kill them all. ”

A couple of days later, Mayor Duterte warned that, if elected president, he would have 100,000 criminals slaughtered in his first six months in office. He would dump so many bodies in Manila Bay that the “*fish will grow fat*”.¹³

In December 2015, he was reported to have boasted about how many people he had killed. In an interview with Rappler, Duterte reportedly said he had killed three people. Responding to reports that “he killed 700 people”, he said: “*They underestimate the figures ... [I killed] around 1,700.*”¹⁴

In June 2016, in a nationally televised speech,

President-elect Duterte encouraged ordinary citizens to gun down drug dealers who resisted arrest. “*You can kill him ... Shoot him, and I’ll give you a medal.*”¹⁵ “*Please feel free to call us, the police, or do it yourself if you have the gun - you have my support.*”¹⁶

President Duterte visited a Manila slum the evening after his inauguration. He was reported to have said, “*If you know of any addicts, go ahead and kill them yourself as getting their parents to do it would be too painful.*”¹⁷

He also suggested investing in funeral parlours made good business sense. “*I assure you, you won’t go bankrupt. If your business slows, I will tell the police, ‘Do it faster to help the people earn money.’*”¹⁸ The Guardian also reported Duterte said he would issue shoot-to-kill orders to the security forces and offer them bounties for the bodies of drug dealers.¹⁹

In December 2016, he claimed to have personally extrajudicially executed three men suspected of kidnapping and rape in 2015 while mayor of Davao.²⁰ In live television footage, President Duterte stated: “*I killed about three of them... I don’t know how many bullets from my gun went inside their bodies. It happened, and I cannot lie about it.*”²¹

Later the same month, President Duterte

12 Germelina Lacorte, ‘Duterte On Criminals: ‘Kill All Of Them’’, Inquirer Mindanao, 15 May 2015, www.news-info.inquirer.net/691527/dutertes-secret-in-keeping-davao-city-phs-safest-kill-criminals.

13 Floyd Whaley, ‘Rodrigo Duterte’s Talk of Killing Criminals Raises Fears in Philippines’, The New York Times, 17 May 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/05/18/world/asia/rodrigo-duterte-philippines.html

14 Paterno Esmaguél II, ‘Duterte: I Killed 700? No, Make That 1,700’, Rappler, 8 December 2015, www.rappler.com/nation/elections/duterte-killings-amnesty-international

15 Melissa Chan, ‘Philippine President-Elect Urges Citizens To Shoot And Kill Drug Dealers’, Time, 5 June 2016, www.time.com/4357763/rodrigo-duterte-reward-kill-drug-dealers/?iid=sr-link7.

16 CBS News, ‘Filipino President-Elect Tells Citizens To Go Kill Bad Guys In The Streets’, 5 June 2016, www.cbsnews.com/news/rodrigo-duterte-president-elect-philippines-citizens-shoot-bad-guys/.

17 The Guardian and Agence France- Presse, ‘Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte Urges People To Kill Drug Addicts’, 1 July 2016, www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/01/philippines-president-rodri-go-duterte-urges-people-to-kill-drug-addicts.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 BBC News, ‘Duterte Confirms He Killed Three Men’, 16 December 2016, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-38337746.com

21 Ibid.



threatened corrupt government officials by saying he would have thrown them off a flying helicopter. He warned he had personally carried out such action before and had no qualms about doing it again. He said he once hurled a Chinese man suspected of rape and murder out of a helicopter. *“If you are corrupt, I will fetch you using a helicopter to Manila, and I will throw you out. I have done this before. Why would I not do it again?”*²² After he took his oath as President, he was reported to have said: *“I don’t care about human rights, believe me.”*²³ President Duterte also promised to protect officers who killed drug suspects in raids.²⁴

The President was reported to have promised to protect police and soldiers involved in extrajudicial executions. Human Rights Watch stated that President Duterte warned human rights organisations not to file cases against police and army officers for extrajudicial killings saying, *“I would like to say now — they will never go to prison — not under my watch.”*²⁵

In February 2018, President Duterte encouraged soldiers to shoot female rebels in their genitals. He told a group of former communist rebels to *“tell the soldiers ... there’s a new order from the mayor. We won’t kill you. We will just shoot your vagina.”*²⁶

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stated in June 2020 of President Duterte’s statements that encouraged human rights violations.²⁷

“ While the numerous statements by President Duterte are subsequently clarified by his spokesperson and other officials as not to be taken literally, the widespread killings, detentions, red-tagging and score-settling by State actors, including in the campaign against illegal drugs, suggest that his public comments may have incited violence and may have had the effect of encouraging, backing or even ordering human rights violations with impunity. ”

Pattern of Extrajudicial Killings and Impunity

Human Rights Watch and other human rights groups have found evidence of police officers routinely murdering people and then planting evidence such as drugs and weapons to justify the murders.²⁸ Most of the murders have happened in impoverished areas. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human

22 Nick Macfie and Richard Chang, ‘Philippine Leader Says Once Threw Man From Helicopter, Would Do It Again’, Reuters, 29 December 2016, www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-duterte-helicopter-idUSKBN14IODH.

23 Al Jazeera, ‘Rodrigo Duterte: ‘I don’t care about human rights’, 8 August 2016, www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/rodrigo-duterte-human-rights-160806211448623.html

24 www.hrw.org/news/2020/01/14/philippines-no-letup-drug-war-killings

25 Human Rights Watch, ‘Licence to Kill’. Philippine Police Killings in Duterte’s “War on Drugs”, 2 March 2017, www.hrw.org/report/2017/03/02/license-kill/philippine-police-killings-dutertes-war-drugs

26 Lindsay Murdoch, ‘Duterte Tells Soldiers To Shoot Female Rebels In Their Genitals’, The Age, 13 February 2018, www.theage.com.au/world/asia/duterte-tells-soldiers-to-shoot-female-rebels-in-their-genitals-20180213-p4z03t.html

27 UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Philippines’, A/HRC/44/22, 4 June 2020, 15.

28 Associated Press, ‘Philippines police plant evidence to justify killings in drug war says report’, The Guardian, 2 March 2017, theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/02/philippines-police-plant-evidence-to-justify-killings-in-drug-war-says-report



Rights examined 25 police operations that resulted in the deaths of 45 people in Metro Manila between August 2016 and June 2017. In all the crime scenes, police reported recovering satchels of methamphetamine and guns. The guns were allegedly used by the victim to resist police. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights found that police recovered guns with the same serial numbers from different victims in different locations. Seven handguns appeared in at least two places. Two handguns re-appeared in five other sites where police fatally shot alleged suspects. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights concluded the pattern suggested the planting of evidence by police officers and cast doubt on the claims of self-defence made by police. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights also concluded the evidence pointed to victims of police killings being unarmed at the time they were shot.²⁹

Official figures from the Philippine National Police and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency put the number of “drug war” deaths at 5,601 as of 31 January 2020.³⁰ However, the Commission on Human Rights in the Philippines and domestic human rights groups believe an estimated 27,000-plus people have been killed by the police, their agents, or unidentified assailants.³¹ Drug operations by police and murders committed by unknown persons

resulted in 20,322 deaths from 1 July 2016 to 27 November 2017.³² In March 2019, police stated that although there were 29,000 deaths labelled as “deaths under inquiry” that happened between 1 July 2016 and 4 February 2019, only 3,062 were drug-related.³³

Human Rights Watch reported that the number of official deaths at the hands of police increased by 50% between April 2020 and July 2020, compared to the previous four months. They reported that police killed 155 people between April 2020 and July 2020, compared to 103 people between December 2019 and March 2020.³⁴

According to the Philippine Department of Justice, as of January 2019, just 76 deaths had been investigated. Some 33 resulted in court actions, five were still pending, and the prosecutor dismissed 38 cases.³⁵ However, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that the Police Internal Affairs Service reportedly launched 4,583 investigations into killings during police operations between July 2016 and May 2019.³⁶ There was only one case where three police officers were convicted of an unlawful drug campaign-related killing. That was in the case of the killing of 17-year-old Kian delos Santos.³⁷

Between 1 June 2016 and 21 April 2020, the Commission on Human Rights documented

29 UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Philippines’, A/HRC/44/22, 4 June 2020, 6.

30 Ibid., 5.

31 Human Rights Watch, ‘Our Happy Family Is Gone’. Impact of the “War on Drugs” on children in the Philippines’, 2020, [hrw.org/report/2020/05/28/our-happy-family-gone/impact-war-drugs-children-philippines](https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/05/28/our-happy-family-gone/impact-war-drugs-children-philippines)

32 UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Philippines’, A/HRC/44/22, 4 June 2020, 5.

33 Ibid., 5.

34 Charles H. Conde, ‘Killings in Philippines Up 50 Percent During Pandemic’, Human Rights Watch, 8 September 2020.

35 Human Rights Watch, “Our Happy Family Is Gone”. Impact of the “War on Drugs” on children in the Philippines’, 2020, [hrw.org/report/2020/05/28/our-happy-family-gone/impact-war-drugs-children-philippines](https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/05/28/our-happy-family-gone/impact-war-drugs-children-philippines)

36 UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Philippines’, A/HRC/44/22, 4 June 2020, 6.

37 Ibid., 6.



the killing of 73 children in the context of the campaign against illegal drugs. Of the victims, 62 were boys and 11 were girls. The youngest was five months old.³⁸

In a report published in January 2017, Amnesty International quoted a police officer in Manila who alleged police were paid between 8,000 and 15,000 Philippines pesos (\$230 to \$430) per person they murdered during anti-drug operations. The money was paid in cash by police headquarters.³⁹ They were not paid if they arrested the suspect. The officer also alleged that local governments in Metro Manila also provided “*additional benefits*” for murders carried out by police.⁴⁰

The Amnesty International report also alleged that police officers were hiring death squads to carry out murders related to the ‘*war on drugs*’. Police would also dress in plain clothes and commit the murders themselves outside of official police operations.⁴¹

The Amnesty International researchers spoke to two people who stated they were hired by police to carry out drug-related murders three or four times a week. They would be paid 5,000 Philippines pesos for murdering a drug user and between 10,000 and 15,000 Philippines pesos for the murder of a drug dealer.⁴² One of the paid killers told the researchers: “*For me, it’s just work. I’m helping the government take out the trash of society.*”⁴³

As this report shows, human rights defenders, including church ministers and members, are

also murder targets in the time of the Duterte Administration.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights verified there had been 208 murders of human rights defenders, journalists, environmentalists and trade unionists between January 2015 and December 2019.⁴⁴

In a scarce example of accountability, on 2 April 2019, Philippine National Police Chief General Oscar Albayalde fired the police chiefs of Negros Oriental and the towns of Santa Catalina, Manjuyod, and Canlaon City. The sackings followed a co-ordinated military and police operation that fatally targeted more than a dozen church workers and social justice campaigners at the end of March 2019. The case in question is included in this report.

General Albayalde ordered the National Police’s Directorate for Investigation and Detective Management and the Internal Affairs Service to look into the murders carried out by police in Negros Oriental. The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) in the Philippines has started an investigation of its own.⁴⁵

International Criminal Court opens an investigation into Philippines

In April 2017, Filipino lawyer Jude Josue Sabio accused President Duterte and 11 other officials of mass murder and crimes against humanity. He alleged President Duterte was the “*mastermind*” of a campaign of extrajudicial killings that dated back to the late 1980s,

38 Ibid., 5.

39 Amnesty International, “If you are poor, you are killed”. Extrajudicial executions in the Philippines “War on Drugs”, ASA 35/5517/2017, January 2017, 29.

40 Ibid., 29.

41 Ibid., 33.

42 Ibid., 37.

43 Ibid., 38.

44 UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Philippines’, A/HRC/44/22, 4 June 2020, 10-11, 14.

45 Commission on Human Rights, ‘Statement of CHR spokesperson, Atty Jacqueline Annde Guila, on the death of 14 farmers in Negros Oriental’, 31 March 2019, <https://chr.gov.ph/statement-of-chr-spokes-person-atty-jacqueline-ann-de-guila-on-the-death-of-14-farmers-in-negros-oriental/>



when he became mayor of Davao.⁴⁶ The lawyer represented two men who said they had been assassins for President Duterte in Davao.⁴⁷ Mr Sabio filed a 77-page complaint with the International Criminal Court.⁴⁸ Several other complaints were then filed with the court, including from families of victims of the extrajudicial killings and several unidentified parties.

In early February 2018, the International Criminal Court announced it was opening a preliminary investigation into the accusations.⁴⁹ Fatou Bensouda, a prosecutor for the court, said she would be looking at events in the Philippines since 1 July 2016. President Duterte announced the country was cancelling its membership of the court, a move that did not have legislative approval.⁵⁰ President Duterte also threatened to arrest prosecutor Bensouda if she set foot in the Philippines.⁵¹ The cancellation came into effect on 17 March 2019.⁵²

— Labelling human rights defenders as supporters of terrorism

The lives of church staff, ministers, lay preachers and church members in the Philippines have been put in even more danger after the Philippines Army listed, in late 2019, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) as a front organisation for “local communist terrorist” organisations.⁵³

The accusation was allegedly made by Major General Reuben Basiao, deputy chief of staff for Intelligence of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, at a hearing of a committee of the Philippines Congress on 5 November 2019.⁵⁴

The NCCP said that Major general Basiao said the “front organisations” were allegedly providing funds to the “communist terrorist group” through “international solidarity work”.⁵⁵ The listing could make employees and associates of the NCCP and its member

- 46 Richard C. Paddock, ‘Charge Rodrigo Duterte With Mass Murder, Lawyer Tells the Hague’, The New York Times, 24 April 2017, [nytimes.com/2017/04/24/world/asia/rodrigo-duterte-philippines-icc-complaint.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/24/world/asia/rodrigo-duterte-philippines-icc-complaint.html)
- 47 Felipe Villamor, ‘Ex-Officer in Philippines Says He Led Death Squad at Duterte’s Behest’, The New York Times, 20 February 2020, [nytimes.com/2017/02/20/world/asia/rodrigo-duterte-philippines-death-squad.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/20/world/asia/rodrigo-duterte-philippines-death-squad.html)
- 48 Oliver Holmes, ‘“Mass murder” complaint filed against Philippines’ President Duterte at ICC’, The Guardian, 25 April 2017, [theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/25/mass-complaint-launched-against-philippines-president-duterte-at-icc](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/25/mass-complaint-launched-against-philippines-president-duterte-at-icc)
- 49 International Criminal Court, ‘Statement of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda, on opening Preliminary Examinations into the Situations in the Philippines and Venezuela, 8 February 2018’, [icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=180208-otp-stat](https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=180208-otp-stat)
- 50 International Criminal Court, ‘Preliminary Examination. Republic of Philippines’, www.icc-cpi.int/philippines; and Martin Petty and Neil Jerome Morales, ‘Jail me, hang me: Philippines’ Duterte says won’t answer to ICC’, Reuters, 20 December 2019, [reuters.com/article/us-philippines-drugs/jail-me-hang-me-philippines-duterte-says-wont-answer-to-icc-idUSKBN1YO184](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-drugs/jail-me-hang-me-philippines-duterte-says-wont-answer-to-icc-idUSKBN1YO184)
- 51 Reuters, ‘Philippines: Duterte threatens to arrest International Criminal Court Prosecutor’, The Guardian, 13 April 2018, [theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/13/philippines-duterte-threatens-to-arrest-international-criminal-court-prosecutor](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/13/philippines-duterte-threatens-to-arrest-international-criminal-court-prosecutor)
- 52 International Criminal Court, ‘Preliminary Examination. Republic of Philippines’, www.icc-cpi.int/philippines
- 53 Rachel Farmer, ‘Alarm after Philippine government links churches with communist terror groups’, Anglican Communion News Service, 13 November 2019, [anglicannews.org/news/2019/11/13/alarm-after-philippine-government-links-churches-with-communist-terror-groups.aspx](https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2019/11/13/alarm-after-philippine-government-links-churches-with-communist-terror-groups.aspx)
- 54 SCMP, ‘Philippines names Oxfam a front for communist terror’, Deutsches Asienforschungszentrum, 11 November 2019, [dafz.org/regional-affairs/asean/philippines/philippines-names-oxfam-a-front-for-communist-terror/](https://www.dafz.org/regional-affairs/asean/philippines/philippines-names-oxfam-a-front-for-communist-terror/); and Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches to the UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/44/NGO/116, 26 June 2020, 2.
- 55 Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches to the UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/44/NGO/116, 26 June 2020, 2.



churches targets for further murders and death threats.⁵⁶ At the same committee hearing, aid and development group Oxfam was also labelled as a front group for local communist terrorist groups.⁵⁷

The NCCP has consistently spoken out against President Duterte's 'war on drugs'. The NCCP says that being labelled a communist terrorist organisation was an "attack on our Christian faith and tradition".⁵⁸ Further, they said, "We will remain resolute in our prophetic witness and service to the people even in the midst of shrinking democratic space and rising impunity."⁵⁹

On 29 May 2020, a Facebook post by the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict labelled the NCCP, the IFI, the UCCP and the Student Christian Movement of the Philippines as open sectorial organisations of the communist rebel group. In response to the labelling, the NCCP stated on 6 August 2020:

“ This is a clear and present danger to the other staff of NCCP, and to the members of the Council as campaigns like these seek to delegitimise and malign the ministry and work of the Council that has always been serving the Filipino people for decades. ”

We remain steadfast of the vision and mission of Jesus Christ of loving and serving the least of our sisters and brothers. As people of faith, we believe that there must be a greater unity towards healing and even greater cooperation towards providing for the needs of the last, the least and the lost. Reckless and malicious labelling should not be part of a truly democratic society and most certainly not in a time like this. ”

A Human Rights Watch report found that families have been wary about approaching the government for help.⁶⁰ As a result children and their families turn to the only safe avenue left, programs supported by non-governmental groups, particularly those from the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant and ecumenical groups. In some communities where violence is frequent, parish priests and lay workers have been leading the effort to help by providing psycho-social (mental health) support, economic assistance, support for children to attend school, and help in finding and supporting livelihoods for affected families.⁶¹

Such support may also leave groups open to being targeted further.

56 Adam Becket, 'World Council of Churches denounces 'smear' on NCCP', Church Times, 15 November 2019, [churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2019/15-november/news/world/world-council-of-churches-denounces-smear-on-nccp](https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2019/15-november/news/world/world-council-of-churches-denounces-smear-on-nccp)

57 SCMP, 'Philippines names Oxfam a front for communist terror', Deutsches Asienforschungszentrum, 11 November 2019, [dafz.org/regional-affairs/asean/philippines/philippines-names-oxfam-a-front-for-communist-terror/](https://www.dafz.org/regional-affairs/asean/philippines/philippines-names-oxfam-a-front-for-communist-terror/)

58 Mara Capeda, 'Red-tagged Oxfam, NCCP slam military for malicious careless attack', Rappler, 6 November 2019, [rappler.com/nation/244252-red-tagged-oxfam-nccp-slam-military](https://www.rappler.com/nation/244252-red-tagged-oxfam-nccp-slam-military)

59 Vince Ferreras, 'Gabriela, NGOs slam red-tagging by AFP, Defence Dept', CNN Philippines, 6 November 2019, www.cnn.ph/news/2019/11/6/Gabriela-NGO-slam-red-tagging-by-AFP-DND-.html

60 Human Rights Watch, "'Our Happy Family Is Gone'. Impact of the "War on Drugs" on children in the Philippines', 2020, [hrw.org/report/2020/05/28/our-happy-family-gone/impact-war-drugs-children-philippines](https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/05/28/our-happy-family-gone/impact-war-drugs-children-philippines)

61 Ibid.



The Duterte Administration has also labelled human rights defenders and people campaigning for environmental concerns as enemies of the state, communist rebels, or terrorists.⁶²

The Duterte Administration has publicly labelled the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, an inter-congregational organisation of church people working with impoverished rural communities, as a front of the NPA.⁶³

In late November 2017, President Duterte was reported as saying he would investigate legal human rights groups and if they obstruct justice he would have them shot.⁶⁴

The recent passage of the *Anti-Terrorism Act* has been of concern to many human rights organisations and churches in the Philippines, who fear it will be misused to target their activities. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said of the law that it:⁶⁵

“ ... dilutes human rights safeguards, broadens the definition of terrorism and expands the period of detention without a warrant from three to 14 days, extendable by another ten days. The vague definitions in the Anti-Terrorism Act may violate the principles of legality. ”

In a joint statement by:

- ▶ National Council of Churches in the Philippines
- ▶ Ecumenical Voice for Human Rights and Peace in the Philippines (EcuVoice)
- ▶ ACT Alliance
- ▶ Christian Conference of Asia
- ▶ International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines
- ▶ National Council of Churches in Korea
- ▶ United Evangelical Mission
- ▶ World Communion of Reformed Churches, World Council of Churches
- ▶ World Student Christian Federation

issued in September 2020, the church bodies said of the *Anti-Terrorism Act*:

“ This new law legitimizes unlawful arrests and detention, undermines the due process of law, and runs contrary to Philippine Constitution. The legislation in effect, cancels all basic rights stipulated in the Philippine Constitution’s bill of rights guaranteeing to every Filipino basic and fundamental rights and liberties. ”

62 Carmela Fonbuena, ‘Philippines: US rights volunteer branded ‘enemy of the state’ shot outside home’, The Guardian, 8 August 2019, [theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/08/philippines-us-rights-volunteer-branded-enemy-of-state-shot-outside-home](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/08/philippines-us-rights-volunteer-branded-enemy-of-state-shot-outside-home)

63 Ma Ceres P. Doyo, ‘Rural Missionaries of the Philippines denounces military’s red-tagging’, Global Sisters Report, 15 April 2019, www.globalsistersreport.org/news/ministry/rural-missionaries-philippines-denounces-militarys-red-tagging-56085

64 Oliver Holmes, ‘Human rights group slams Philippines president Duterte’s threat to kill them’, The Guardian, 17 August 2017, [theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/17/human-rights-watch-philippines-president-duterte-threat](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/17/human-rights-watch-philippines-president-duterte-threat)

65 UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Philippines’, A/HRC/44/22, 4 June 2020, 9.



MURDER OF CHURCH MINISTERS AND MEMBERS UNDER THE DUTERTE ADMINISTRATION

The following table provides a summary of church ministers, and members, who have been murdered in circumstances involving the military, the police or that appear to be linked to their human rights, environmental or social justice activities.

Table 1. Summary of church ministers and members murdered in circumstances involving the military, the police or that appear to be linked to their human rights, environmental or social justice activities during the Duterte Administration.

Name	Social related activities	Date of murder	Perpetrators
Wilmer Agorde	He campaigned around land ownership and unlawful encampment of soldiers in communities.	February 2017	Unknown
Melinton Catampongan	Advocate for impoverished farmers.	10 July 2017	Unknown
Erning Arkid	He advocated for the rights of Indigenous people.	15 September 2017	Unknown
Segundo Malig-on Jr		20 September 2017	Unknown
Perfecto Hoyle	Advocate for the rights of impoverished farmers.	16 November 2017	Unknown
Pastor Lovelito Quinones		3 December 2017	Members of the Regional Mobile Group
Father Marcelito Paez	He advocated for the rights of impoverished farmers and Indigenous people.	4 December 2017	Unknown
Father Mark Ventura	He advocated for Indigenous people and against mining.	29 April 2018	Unknown
Father Nilo Richmond		10 June 2018	Suspect arrested
Valentin Acabal, Edgardo Avelino, Ismael Avelino	They advocated for the rights of impoverished farmers.	30 March 2019	Police and military
Neptali Morada	Advocated for those experiencing poverty	17 June 2019	Unknown
Salvador Romano	Member of local human rights group	7 July 2019	Unknown
Pastor Ernesto Javier Estrella		2 August 2019	Unknown
Zara Alvarez	Advocated for human rights and worker rights. Highlighted extrajudicial murders.	17 August 2020	Unknown



— Wilmer Agorde – Murdered February 2017

Wilmer Agorde, aged 64, was an executive committee member of the Promotion of Church People's Response in North Cotabato, and auditor of Mailuminado Farmers Association Incorporated – an affiliate of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (Farmers Movement in the Philippines). He used to lead campaigns in the struggle for land ownership of idle agricultural land-reservation. He was also at the forefront of their efforts against the unlawful encampment of soldiers in their community, which was dubbed as "Peace and Development Outreach Programs". Wilmer was stabbed and shot dead by an unknown assailant in front of his two young grandchildren in February 2017 at President Roxas, North Cotabato.⁶⁶

— Melinton Catampongan – Murdered 10 July 2017

Melinton Catampongan was a chairperson of the town chapter of Nagkahiusang Mag-uuma sa Surigao del Norte (NAMASUN, United Farmers in Surigao Del Norte), and also a parish council member of IFI church at Alegria Parish of the Diocese of Surigao. He was shot dead by an unidentified man wearing a black jacket and bonnet at 12:55pm on 10 July 2017 in front of Alegria National Highschool. Mr Catampongan's family reported that he was harassed and was the subject of army surveillance operations in March 2017.⁶⁷

— Erning Arkid – Murdered 15 September 2017



Erning Arkid and Aylan Lantoy were Benli village councillors of Bulalacao, Oriental Mindoro. They were shot dead, about 150 metres from a detachment of the 4th Infantry Battalion of Armed

Forces of the Philippines, by two masked assailants riding a motorcycle at 11am on 15 September 2017.

Erning, aged 45, was a lay minister of the IFI church and a key person of Hagibbat Mangyan, an organisation of Mangyan Tribes in Mindoro. As an advocate of Indigenous People's rights, he defended their land rights against aggressive mine projects and dam construction. He was falsely tagged as a member of the NPA. He had also been questioned by the military regarding his affiliation with IFI. He received various threats which had heightened after an exchange of fire between soldiers and the NPA in March 2017.⁶⁸

— Segundo Malig-on Jr. – Murdered 20 September 2017

Malig-on was a councillor of Labo villages in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental. He was a former parish officer and lay member of Labo Parish under the IFI church. He suffered multiple gunshot wounds outside his home from two unidentified men riding in a motorcycle.

- 66 Joint Written Statement submitted by Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches, in the General Consultative: Human Rights Against Churches and Church People Under the Duterte Administration, UN Human Rights Council 44th Session, Agenda Item No.3, 4 June 2020.
- 67 Ramento Project for Rights Defender, 'RPRD Laments Killings of 3 Church Workers', 27 October 2018, <http://rprd.ph/rprd-laments-killings-of-3-church-workers/>; Ramento Project for Rights Defender, 'Statement of Aktionsbündnis Menschenrechte – Philippinen Denouncing Human Rights Violations in the IFI', 9 November 2017, <http://rprd.ph/statement-of-aktionsbundnis-menschenrechte-philippinen-denouncing-human-rights-violations-in-the-ifi/>; and Resolution Directing the Committee on Human Rights to Conduct an Investigation, in Aid of Legislation, on 10 July 2017, Extrajudicial Killing of Melinton Catampongan, Municipal Chairperson of Nagkahiusang Mag-uuma sa Surigao Del Norte (NAMASUN) by Two Unidentified Men in Alegria Town, Surigao Del Norte, Caraga Region. House Resolution No.1349, 17th Congress, 2nd Session, 2017.
- 68 Joint Written Statement submitted by Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches, in the General Consultative: Human Rights Against Churches and Church People Under the Duterte Administration, UN Human Rights Council 44th Session, Agenda Item No.3, 4 June 2020.

Perfecto Hoyle – Murdered 16 November 2017



Late one November evening, two masked gunmen broke into the home of 60-year-old Perfecto Hoyle. They fatally shot the lay worker and peasant leader. The incident happened in Agusan del Norte, where the 29th Infantry

Battalion of the Philippine Army was encamped. Neighbours made repeated calls to the police for help. The local members of the Philippines National Police reportedly ignored their pleas. The perpetrators stayed by Hoyle's body until 2 am. Hoyle was also a preacher with the UCCP and a leader of Unyon sa mga Mag-uuma sa Agusan Del Norte (Union of Farmers in Agusan Del Norte). He lived in Brgy Canaway, Kitcharao, Agusan del Norte.

Pastor Lovelito Quiñones – Murdered 3 December 2017

Pastor Lovelito Quiñones was just five minutes away from his home in Sitio Anapla, Brgy, when he was fatally shot in the chest by Philippines security forces while riding his motorcycle.

The security forces also planted a .45 calibre pistol next to his body to try to link the pastor to the NPA, his family said. Pastor Quiñones later tested negative to a gunpowder residue test, confirming that he had not fired any weapons. Pastor Quiñones, of the Kings Glory Ministry, was shot by members of the Regional Mobile Group, a part of the security forces, in Oriental Mindoro, Din Pedro, Mansalay. Pastor Quiñones had earlier in the day ridden past an alleged encounter between the Regional Mobile Group and the NPA in Sitio Anapla. The 203rd Brigade of the army claimed that Pastor Quiñones was a member of the NPA. The pastor's family and his congregation have refuted this.

Father Marcelito Paez – Murdered 4 December 2017



Retired priest Father Marcelito Paez had just facilitated the release of a political prisoner when he was shot while driving in San Leonardo town, Nueva Ecija province, on the island

of Luzon. He died three hours later in hospital. Father Paez, 72, was a board member of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, a national, inter-diocesan and inter-congregational organisation of priests and laypeople who work with peasants and indigenous people. He was the group's Central Luzon co-ordinator. Unidentified men shot Father Paez just hours after he arranged the release of Rommel Tucay, an organiser of a farmers' group who had been arrested by soldiers nine months earlier.

In a statement issued on 5 December 2017, the Diocese of San Jose denounced the killing and called on authorities to investigate.

"Kami, ang kaparian ng Diyosesis ng San Jose City, Nueva Ecija, kaisa ng mahal na Obispo, ay mariin na kinukundina ang di-makatarungan at marahas na pagpaslang kay Fr Tito Paez. Kami ay nananawagan sa mga kinauukulan sa pamahalaan na bigyang linaw at katarungan ang kanyang kamatayan," said the statement by the diocese, signed by Bishop Roberto Mallari.

“ (We, the priests of San Jose City, Nueva Ecija Diocese, in unity with our beloved Bishop, strongly condemn the unjust and violent killing of Fr Tito Paez. We are calling the government authorities to come into the light and give justice to his death.) ”



Fr Mark Ventura, Murdered 29 April 2018



Fr. Mark Ventura, 37, was a missionary priest who was shot dead as he was blessing children after the Mass in Gattaran, Cagayan province. The priest was known for his stance against mining and for

helping Indigenous peoples in the province of Cagayan.⁶⁹ The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines said in their statement in response to his murder:⁷⁰

“ We are totally shocked and in utter disbelief to hear about the brutal killing of Fr Mark Ventura, the Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Tuguegarao. Right after celebrating the Sunday Eucharist at eight o'clock in the morning today, he was shot to death by murderers riding in tandem. We offer our prayers for Fr Ventura, for his bereaved family, and the lay faithful of Tuguegarao. We also pray for Archbishop Sergio Utleg, his priests and the religious of the archdiocese who, this year, in union with the whole Church in the Philippines, are celebrating the Year of the Clergy and Consecrated Persons.

We condemn this evil act!

We make our appeal to the authorities to act swiftly in going after the perpetrators of this crime and to bring them to justice. ”

Father Rey Urmeneta – shot 6 June 2018

Father Rey Urmeneta of St. Michael the Archangel parish in Calamba City survived an attack by two assassins. He had served as chaplain for the Philippine police.⁷¹

Father Nilo Richmond – murdered 10 June 2018



Fr Nilo Richmond was gunned down while preparing his Mass at the chapel of Nuestra Señora de las Nieves in Mayamot Village, Zaragoza, Nueva Ecija.⁷² In front of 70 churchgoers, he was shot seven times through the window of the chapel.

He dropped dead at the foot of the chapel's crucifix.

The police investigated and detained a suspect, linking the murder to personal disputes. However, church members are still calling for justice on his death, demanding a fair and thorough investigation to establish the motive for the murder.

69 Paterno Esmaguell II, 'Fr Mark Ventura's bishop hits 'unfounded rumors' on his murder', Rappler, 22 May 2018, <https://rappler.com/nation/duterte-mark-ventura-killing-cagayan-tuguegarao-archbishop-sergio-utleg>.

70 Romulo Valles, 'CBCP Statement on the Brutal Killing of Fr Mark Ventura of the Archdiocese of Tuguegarao', CBCP News, 29 April 2018, <https://cbcnews.net/cbcnews/cbcp-statement-on-the-brutal-killing-of-fr-mark-ventura-of-the-archdiocese-of-tuguegarao/>

71 Ted Regencia, 'Philippine Catholic Priests: 'They are killing us'', Aljazeera, 14 June 2018, aljazeera.com/news/2018/06/philippine-catholic-priests-killing-180613073921062.html

72 Ibid.

Valentin Acabal, brothers Edgardo and Ismael Avelino, and 11 other men – murdered 30 March 2019



Philippines police and the military co-ordinated an operation in the province of Negros Oriental that murdered church workers and members of

organisations campaigning for the rights of impoverished farmers. The 14 men targeted were summarily executed. They had already surrendered to police, according to their families. The murders of eight men took place in Canlaon City, four in Manjuyod, and two in Santa Catalina. Valentin Acabal, the chieftain of Barangay Candabong in Manjuyod town, was asleep with his wife and two of his children when the police broke down their door at around 4 am.

Valentin's wife, Angenate, said that when police broke into their house, the family knelt and prayed. The policemen then forced her and her daughter out of the room. Despite pleading for his life, Valentin was shot dead. Valentin's wife said she heard her husband utter, "*Gino-o, gitugyan nako kanimong tanan*" (Lord, I leave everything up to you). The medical examination by the Manjuyod Municipal Health Office showed that Valentin was shot seven times.

Argie Acabal, one of Valentin's sons who had been working in Qatar, said the crime scene was not secured or investigated by police officers. The police had also not announced when they broke into the house that they had a search warrant. Argie said the police took all the money that was in the house - "the 30,000 Philippines pesos (\$820) I sent to my family; and the 7,000 pesos (\$190) that was kept in a locked box." The 7,000 pesos was from the church where Angenate is the treasurer. The National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) stated at the time of the murders that it:

“ ... condemns in the strongest terms the mass killings of 14 farmers by police officers in Canlaon City and Manjuyod and Santa Catalina towns in Negros Oriental. We embrace in prayer and solidarity the families of the victims, as we join the call for a thorough and independent investigation. May God comfort those who mourn in this time of grief. ”

Neptali Morada – murdered 17 June 2019

Neptali Morada had been subject to a lengthy campaign of vilification and harassment over his social justice and political activities. He had been subjected to surveillance, and fabricated charges were filed against him. Soon after, he was gunned down at around 7:30 am while riding his motorcycle to the provincial capital in Pili. Unidentified men in a white pick-up truck shot him in Barangay San Isidro, Naga City, Camarines Sur.

The NCCP paid tribute to Neptali, saying: "Nep was raised in the ecumenical family. He is one of our own, who exemplified his life in serving Christ by serving the people, especially the least of the least." Neptali was a former chairman of the League of Christian Youth (1996-1998) and a member of the Iglesia Unida Ekyumenikal (United Ecumenical Church). He was the brother of a pastor of the UCCP.

The NCCP stated at the time of the murder:

“ Poverty and social inequalities are the ones which should be eliminated and not those who show genuine compassion for the vulnerable and downtrodden. ”



We call on the faith community to exercise our prophetic role and remember what God has told us, “Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.” Isaiah 1:17

We appeal to the faithful to pray and seek justice for our slain human rights defenders. Let us continue to raise our voices: to STOP THE KILLINGS and an END to IMPUNITY! Justice for Nep Morada and all victims of extrajudicial killings! ”

Neptali was also a staff member of the former Camarines Sur vice-governor Ato Peña. He was a former regional head of the political party Bayan Muna and served as the head of the campaign committee of Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) in Camarines Sur.

His brother, a minister in the UCCP, said of him:

Nep was the bunso of 12 siblings. Son of a tenant farmer. He had a deep sense of a farmer’s struggle. He was a graduate of Philippine Mariners Institute in Naga City. He led the students of mariners in the historic walkout during his student days that signalled the students’ protest movements in Naga City in support to farmers’ struggle in the Bicol region.

Upon his graduation, he went to Manila to seek employment in the maritime industry. While in Manila he joined the ecumenical youth movement- 3KP and the Student Christian Movement. While in the youth movements, he already earned the ire of the military intelligence group. He was a frequent visitor at our house.

He was instrumental in the organising of a disaster relief NGO in Bicol. I tried to entice him to join the ministry by way of enrolling

at UTS. But he said he preferred to serve the broader concerns of the Filipino people. While working with the NGOs in Bicol, he met his lady who became his wife. They had two children, both girls. They stayed in Metro Manila at the birth of his first daughter. It was at that time that he joined Bayan Muna [a left-wing political party] secretariat and was exposed to politicians during election campaign periods. He was assigned again in Bicol as Bayan Muna Regional Secretary.

While at Bayan Muna, he was subjected to military harassment. He was charged with false accusations of murder and frustrated murder. The first case in Albay was dismissed by the court.



After the first case was dismissed, he responded to the offer from elected vice governor of Camarines Sur to work in his office. It was the time he bid farewell to Bayan Muna. While working on his clearances as a requirement to a regular appointment at the Provincial Governors office, he discovered two more false cases of murder and frustrated murder had been filed against him. He was granted bail by the court. He was on bail for the last two cases when he was killed. At the time he was working with the vice governor's office, he was frequently visited by NISA [a government security agency], almost two times a week. He was asked to confess and sign a statement prepared by the military intelligence admitting that he was a member of the RUFC [an armed opposition group]. He was being enticed to join the NISA with all its benefits provided he signed the confession.

At his stint in Bayan Muna, he decided to stay in our community. He built their small house and farm the fields we acquired through negotiated acquisition with the landowner. He planted fruit-bearing trees na masagana kung mamunga.

He was elected and served as treasurer of our congregation in Carolina, Naga City until he was gunned down. In the police report of his murder said, "Nepthali R. Morada, secretary of RUFC was gunned down between 7:00 am – 8:00 am in barangay San Isidro, Naga City. He died due loss of blood from gunshot wounds by an M16 rifle that pierced through his lungs."

At his death, Bayan Muna staged a mammoth indignation rally in Naga City denouncing extrajudicial killings.

Under Filipino law, frustrated murder is when the victim was wounded in the attempted murder, but due to medical intervention their life was saved. If the wound was not life-threatening, then the charge is attempted murder.

Salvador Romano – Murdered 7 July 2019



Salvador Romano, 42, was shot four times by two unknown assailants using .45 calibre pistols while riding a motorcycle at 12:30 pm in Brgy. Tupas in Manjuyod, Negros Oriental.⁷³ He was an active member of the IFI church and the adviser of its youth committee. He was also a volunteer of local human rights group Karapatan in Negros Oriental. Romano was on his way home from church when the assailants gunned him down. He sustained multiple gunshot wounds and was pronounced dead on arrival at Bais City District Hospital.

Pastor Ernesto Javier Estrella – murdered 2 August 2019

Assassins on motorcycles gunned down Pastor Ernesto Javier Estrella at about 7:15 am in Antipas, Cotabato. The 51-year-old was a pastor in the UCCP. Pastor Estrella's involvement in social justice organisations in the Philippines is suspected of having been the motive for the murder. The UCCP stated in response to the murder:⁷⁴

“ We deplore this grisly act of terror committed against our prophet as we also call for justice for the growing number of victims of extrajudicial killings. We are aghast that ferocious acts like this continue to be perpetrated despite the existence of Martial Law in Mindanao - a clear indication that Martial Law is not an apt solution to the problem of violence in the country. Killings and all forms of violence MUST STOP!

73 'Salvador Romano', HRD Memorial: Celebrating those who were Killed in Defending Human Rights. Accessed 13 July 2020, <https://hrdmemorial.org/hrdrecord/salvador-romano/>

74 United Church of Christ in the Philippines Pastoral Statement, 'Stop Killing Our Prophets', 7 August 2019.

We call for justice in favour of Rev Tata Estrella and an end to the climate of impunity! Let us not wait until the whole nation drips in blood.

In calling for justice, we also echo the words of Matthew in condemning such acts of terror committed against our prophets and all advocates of peace: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! Thou who murderest the Prophets and stonest those who have been sent to thee! How often have I desired to gather thy children to me, just as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not come!” (Matthew 23:37)

STOP KILLING OUR PROPHETS! Justice for REV ERNESTO “Tata” ESTRELLA! Stop Extrajudicial Killings in Negros and elsewhere! Let Just-Peace Prevail! ”

Zara Alvarez – Murdered 17 August 2020



At 8 pm on 17 August 2020, Zara Alvarez, aged 39, was gunned down by unidentified assassins who escaped on a motorbike along Sta. Maria St., Brgy. Mandalagan, Bacolod City. She was heading home after buying dinner when she was shot six times outside a convenience

store. Zara was a human rights worker of Karapatan, a paralegal and an ecumenical volunteer for the Church Workers Solidarity Group in San Carlos Diocese.



She had recently documented extrajudicial executions by Philippines security forces and other human rights abuses for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights report. Before her murder, Zara had long been a target of military and police harassment and intimidation. She received death threats for more than a year as a result of her human rights work.

Zara had previously been imprisoned in 2012 for two years while clearing her name of a trumped-up murder charge brought against her by the Philippines military.





Zara documented many stories of the violation of the rights of farmers and sugar cane workers.

She was the mother of an 11-year-old daughter.

In 2018, the Philippines Government included her on a list of 649 people they accused of being terrorists, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous People.⁷⁵ Labelling people as terrorists by the Philippines Government often results in them being targeted by death squads that operate in the Philippines.

The Philippines was slowly losing its soul due to the spate of killings, the Ecumenical Bishops Forum said in response to Zara's murder.

The bishops called on the public to turn the grief, sadness and outrage over Alvarez's death into fuel for calls for peace and justice. "Those who

are unjustly killed are the sowers of the seeds of a caring and loving society that even now can be experienced amidst the efforts of those who wish to weed it out," the bishops said.

The National Council of Churches of the Philippines (NCCP) also expressed anger at Zara's murder. "We feel righteous indignation over her untimely death."

"We pray that God's comfort is with her bereaved family at this time of mourning," said Bishop Reuel Norman O. Marigza, the general secretary of the NCCP. "We call on the president to stop these killings."

In 2018, Zara was included on posters that were placed up around Bacolod City labelling her and other human rights defenders as supporters of the armed communist opposition in the Philippines.

75 UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Philippines', A/HRC/44/22, 4 June 2020, 10.



DEATH THREATS AND HARASSMENT AGAINST CHURCH MINISTERS AND MEMBERS UNDER THE DUTERTE ADMINISTRATION

The following section outlines death threats and harassment against 29 bishops, church ministers and church members under the Duterte administration. Those listed here are:

- ▶ Father Amado Picardal
- ▶ Father Albert Alejo
- ▶ Father Flaive Villanueva
- ▶ Father Robert Reyes
- ▶ Archbishop Socrates Villegas
- ▶ Bishop Pablo Virgilio David
- ▶ Bishop Hamuel Tequis
- ▶ Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza
- ▶ Rev Irma Balaba
- ▶ Rev Edwin Edgar
- ▶ Rev Luisito Saliendra
- ▶ Rev Dan San Andres
- ▶ Rev Ian Loid Delos Santos
- ▶ Rev Marcelino Mariano
- ▶ Daisy Mariano
- ▶ Jennybeth Mariano
- ▶ Karlo Manano
- ▶ Rachel Mariano
- ▶ Jeoff Larua
- ▶ Pastor Jimmy Teves
- ▶ Jodito Montecino
- ▶ Eliseo Andres
- ▶ JP Romana
- ▶ Rodrigo Medes
- ▶ Roger Sabanal
- ▶ Bishop Carlo Morales
- ▶ Aldeem Yanez
- ▶ Rev Joel Bengbeng
- ▶ Rev Brian Asuit

The NCCP stated in June 2020 concerning the harassment and intimidation of church people:⁷⁶

“ Most of the church people targeted in this way are those primarily fulfilling the Christian mandate and mission of ministering to the poor and the marginalized. They undertake their prophetic task as Christians to be with the people, especially in times when the basic human rights of people and communities are being undermined. Their Christian mandate compels them to be with the last of the least and with the poorest of the poor to defend God’s image in every human being. Their faith compels them to accompany people in asserting and attaining their full rights, but they are vilified, harassed and even killed for doing so. ”

— Father Amado Picardal

In a blog post on Sunday, 26 August 2018, Father Amado Picardal narrated threats made against him.⁷⁷ Father Picardal wrote: “Two weeks ago, I almost became a victim of extrajudicial killing, and the fourth priest to be killed under the Duterte regime had I stuck to my routine.” Fr Picardal said he had received information that on the afternoon of 11 August, about six men on three motorcycles “with full-

76 Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches to the UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/44/NGO/116, 26 June 2020, 4.

77 Jodesz Gavilan, ‘Activist priest recounts ‘close call’ with death squad’, Rappler, 27 August 2018, www.rappler.com/nation/210477-amado-picardal-priest-threats-davao-death-squad

faced helmets” had stationed themselves near the entrance of the monastery he frequented in Cebu. It was usually the time he would go out, following his usual routine. “Had I gone out, there would have been no escape for me,” he wrote.

“I recognised their modus operandi – that’s what I learned from a former member of the Davao Death Squad when we were documenting the extrajudicial killings years before.” “It was a close call, I thank God for protecting me,” the priest added.

——— **Jesuit Father Albert Alejo, Divine Word Father Flavie Villanueva, Father Robert Reyes and Archbishop Socrates Villegas**

In March 2019, three Catholic priests, known for being outspoken against a wave of drug-related extrajudicial killings, said they had received death threats.⁷⁸ They had argued that the ‘drug war’ had targeted the urban poor and left drug lords mostly untouched.

Jesuit Father Albert Alejo, Divine Word Father Flavie Villanueva and Father Robert Reyes⁷⁹ told a news conference they feared for their lives. Flavie Villanueva is a priest who runs the St Arnold Janssen Kalinga Centre that serves the poor and the homeless in Manila. He said he had been under government surveillance since he held a forum on extrajudicial killings. Closed-circuit TV footage had picked up masked men skulking around his centre.⁸⁰ Father Albert Alejo, a priest and social anthropologist, teaches at Ateneo de Manila University.

He said his work protecting whistleblowers in the ‘drug war’ had put him at risk. He said he began receiving death threats in mid-February 2019 in the form of “incessant” profanity-filled phone calls, which later became invective-filled text messages⁸¹.

The threats against the three priests came soon after Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Caloocan, the diocese where most drug-related extrajudicial killings have occurred, and Archbishop Socrates Villegas of Lingayen-Dagupan, a vocal critic of President Duterte, announced they had received death threats.

Fr Reyes said there was no evidence linking President Duterte to the threats but that the president’s verbal assaults against church officials could encourage attacks. “The deadly words of Duterte against Catholics are like a dagger pointed at us,” Fr Reyes said. “The message is clear. It’s not only people that he wanted dead but our faith as well.”⁸²

——— **Bishop Pablo Virgilio David**

President Duterte threatened to have the “head cut off” an unnamed bishop called “David”⁸³; believed to be Duterte critic Pablo Virgilio David, the Bishop of Caloocan. Bishop David later confirmed to the media that he had received death threats from unknown people.

On 5 December 2018, President Duterte cast bishops as “greedy” and has urged people to “rob” and even murder them.⁸⁴

78 Catholic News Service, ‘In Philippines, 3 outspoken priests say they’ve received death threats’, National Catholic Reporter, 12 March 2019, nronline.org/news/world/philippines-3-outspoken-priests-say-theyve-received-death-threats

79 Ibid.

80 Julie McCarthy, ‘Philippine Clergy Reports Death Threats As President Duterte Rails Against Church’, NPR, 3 April 2019, npr.org/2019/04/03/708819730/philippine-clergy-reports-death-threats-as-president-duterte-rails-against-church

81 Ibid.

82 Jim Gomez, ‘3 Philippine priests say they, Catholic bishops under threat’, AP news, 12 March 2019, apnews.com/1d96c1fa73b345518a7adee33e6825a8

83 Judy Quiros, ‘Duterte threatens to have bishop’s head cut off’, The Inquirer, 27 November 2018, newsinfo.inquirer.net/1057402/duterte-threatens-to-cut-off-bishops-head

84 Julie McCarthy, ‘Philippine Clergy Reports Death Threats As President Duterte Rails Against Church’, NPR, 3 April 2019, npr.org/2019/04/03/708819730/philippine-clergy-reports-death-threats-as-president-duterte-rails-against-church





“These bishops, kill them, those fools are good for nothing. All they do is criticise,” he said.⁸⁵

85 Pia Randa, ‘Kill bishops, all they do is criticise’, says Duterte’, The Rappler, 6 December 2018, [rappler.com/nation/218312-duterte-says-kill-bishops-all-they-do-is-criticize](https://www.rappler.com/nation/218312-duterte-says-kill-bishops-all-they-do-is-criticize); and Crux, ‘Philippine president says he will ‘really kill’ molesting priests’, 26 March 2019, [cruxnow.com/church-in-asia/2019/03/philippine-president-says-he-will-really-kill-molesting-priests/](https://www.cruxnow.com/church-in-asia/2019/03/philippine-president-says-he-will-really-kill-molesting-priests/)

— Bishop Hamuel Tequis

Bishop Hamuel G Tequis, an assigned bishop of UCCP in Southeast Mindanao Jurisdiction, received various threats, intimidation and has faced trumped-up charges. The harassment and threats appear to relate to him fulfilling his Christian duty to advocate for human rights, especially of the Lumads (Indigenous peoples in Mindanao).

On 13 August 2020, posters of him together with other human rights advocates were put up near the building of Sta Ana Catholic Church and on power poles in Davao City. The posters accused the human rights defenders of being associated with the NPA.

— Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza and Rev Irma Balaba

Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza is the former General Secretary of UCCP and incumbent General Secretary of the NCCP. He was accused of being a communist when he spoke out against the new *Anti-Terrorism Act*. His picture was posted on a Facebook troll page “Timek ti Cagayan”.

Rev Irma Balaba, an NCCP program assistant for Christian Unity and Ecumenical Relations and a church worker of the UCCP United Metropolis Conference, had her picture posted on the Facebook page of the Southern Luzon Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The post was attributed to Lt General Antonio Parlade Jr. Rev Balaba was tagged as having confessed to being a member of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NPA.

— Rev Edwin Egar and Rev Luisito Saliendra

Rev Edwin is a church worker in Batangas Associate Conference. He is an environmental advocate and a human rights defender.

In previous years, particularly in 2019, he was subjected to harassment by members of the military. Last March, a person followed him on a bus and took a video of him. At the back of his home, he also found a .45 calibre bullet, often used as a death threat.

The military has tagged him, together with Rev Luisito Saliendra, as members of the NPA. A soldier alleged that Rev Egar and Rev Saliendra were part of an NPA group that exchanged fire with soldiers on 13 June 2020 in Sitio Mawan, of Barangay Panaytayan, Manslay, Oriental Mindoro.

In August 2020, one church member warned him after hearing a conversation of Philippine Air Force members accusing him of being a member of the NPA.

— Rev Dan San Andres

Rev Dan San Andres is an assigned church worker of UCCP Sipocot, Camarines Sur, and is also a human rights defender in the Bicol area. He was accused of being part of an armed ambush against the military on 13 May 2018 that resulted in the killings of two Philippine Army members. A subpoena was issued against him and Jenelyn Nagrampa, also a human rights defender. They refuted the allegations in December 2019, supported by church member witnesses. Church members stated that Rev San Andres was presiding over a Mother's Day worship service at the time he was supposed to be part of the ambush. He was arrested on 9 July 2020 and was released on 24 July 2020.

However, even after he was released, five soldiers filed another baseless case against him as further harassment.

— Rev Ian Loid Delos Santos

Rev Ian Loid Delos Santos is a Conference Minister, an environmental defender and human rights advocate. He is assigned to the UCCP Occidental Mindoro Associate Conference (OMAC). On 7 August 2020, he helped a hospitalised Amada Khaya Canham who later died in San Jose District Hospital

from kidney problems and pneumonia. Mr Canham, a Filipino-South African, partnered with UCCP OMAC with their relief operations to the Mangyans Indigenous people. After his death, the Southern Luzon Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief tagged Mr Canham as a member of the New People's Army. The chief falsely reported that Mr Canham's death was due to COVID-19. However, these claims were all untrue and were being used to intimidate and harass those who helped him.

On 21 August 2020, at 10:30 am, two men riding in a motorbike were looking for Rev Ian Delos Santos. One pretended to be John Bautista when introducing himself to a church pastor assigned to San Jose Occidental Mindoro. Later on, he introduced himself as Henry Bautista to people in the home of Rev Ian Delos Santos in Bulalacao. The two men asked for Rev Ian Delos Santos' whereabouts and asked for his contact number. The UCCP Occidental Mindoro Associate Conference, Christian Witness and Service Committee, expressed concern that the two men were part of a death squad. They stated:

“ **Although this is the dark plight of our people against the corrupt and heartless leaders we have elected, we at the UCCP - OMAC Christian Witness and Service Committee will continue to serve the poor especially the Indigenous Mangyans of Mindoro, even if our lives are put in danger in the hands of the wicked and the heartless. They can kill our bodies, but they cannot kill our faith which inspires us to serve. We believe that there are still good leaders who want good change. We also believe that we are with them to oppose those who want evil change.** ”



— Rev Marcelino Mariano, Daisy Mariano, Jennybeth Mariano

Rev Marcelino Mariano and his wife, Daisy, and daughter, Jennybeth, were tagged as communist rebels by members of the 7th Infantry Division deployed in Ilocos in June 2020. Rev Mariano is a UCCP minister of the North Luzon Amburayan Conference. It was alleged that military representatives told municipal officials that the family members were a front for the NPA and acted as recruiters for the organisation.

Jennybeth Mariano has been the target of Facebook trolls uploading posts accusing her of recruiting for the NPA. Unknown persons also hung a banner in the central business district of San Fernando City, La Union, tagging Jennybeth as a communist rebel the day before the country's Independence Day.

Rev Mariano is the spokesperson of Ilocos Network for the Environment and a member of the Ilocos Regional Ecumenical Council. The Ilocos Network for the Environment has opposed destructive mining in the area.

Daisy Mariano is the deputy secretary of the Ilocos Human Rights Alliance.

Jennybeth heads the Christian Youth Fellowship of the UCCP North Luzon-Amburayan Conference.

— Karlo Manano

Karlo Manano is a youth who advocates for children's rights and is a member of UCCP. He is the brother of murdered youth leader and human rights defender Isaias Manano Jr. Isaias

was murdered in 2004, and his case was one of those presented in the Synod and UCCP report in 2006. He was falsely accused of being a member of the NPA with whom the military had an armed encounter.

— Rachel Mariano

Rachel Mariano is the health program co-ordinator of the Community Health, Education, Services and Training in the Cordillera Region (CHESTCORE). CHESTCORE is the health unit of the Centre for Development Programs in the Cordillera (CDPC). Rachel, an Indigenous Ibaloi woman and human rights defender, has worked as the health program desk co-ordinator of CHESTCORE since 2004. She was subjected to trumped-up murder and attempted murder charges as a means of harassment and intimidation. Rachel is a member of the UCCP.

Rachel was detained in the provincial jail in Bantay, Ilocos Sur from late 2018 until September 2019.

Members of the 81st Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army based in Ilocos Sur filed a case of one count of murder, two counts of frustrated murder, and six counts of attempted murder against Rachel, over an alleged firefight between soldiers and the NPA, in Patacan, Quirino, Ilocos Sur on 15 October 2017 where a soldier was killed.

Two more trumped-up charges were filed against her and four other female human rights defenders (Sarah Abellon, Sherry Mae Soledad, Joanne Villanueva and Asia Gepte). One case covered four counts of attempted and frustrated homicide related to an alleged armed



clash between soldiers and the NPA in Sigay, Ilocos Sur on 4 August 2017. The other case with ten counts of attempted homicide related to another army and NPA firefight that occurred in Salcedo, Ilocos Sur on 22 July 2017.

On 4 September 2019, Rachel was freed after Judge Mario Anacleto Bañez of Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 25 acquitted her of the trumped-up charges. The judge accepted Rachel's alibi, complete with witnesses and affidavits, that she was in Baguio City at that time of the attack on the soldiers.

The judge said the soldiers who accused Rachel of taking part in the attack on them had changed their original affidavits and included Rachel weeks or even months after the incident.

The judge said of Rachel, "She considered that speaking about human rights abuses by the AFP [Armed Forces of the Philippines] and PNP [Philippines National Police] is part of her job as a health worker at CHESTCORE because she believed that the social, political, and economic conditions of a country affect the health of the people."

Rachel is married to Bill, a pastor in the UCCP, and they have three children.

Judge Mario Anacleto Bañez was assassinated on 5 November 2019 while driving home. The murderers shot him while riding a motorcycle.⁸⁶ The judge was a religious person, having been a former seminarian.⁸⁷ In late November 2019, the head of the police task group investigating the murder identified Napoleon Talino as the alleged organiser of the murder and Vladimir Binayug Arcain as the gunman. Police stated there were two more suspects, one of whom was a woman. The motive for the murder was believed to be related to the judge's work.⁸⁸

86 Julia Mari Ornedo, 'Ilocos Sur judge shot dead in La Union', GMA News, 5 November 2019.

87 Erwin Beleo, 'Suspects in murder of judge in La Union charged', Tempo, 28 November 2019.

88 Ibid.

89 Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches to the UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/44/NGO/116, 26 June 2020, 2.

90 Ibid., 2.

91 Ibid., 3.



Jeoff Larua

Jeoff Larua is a youth member of the United Methodist Church and the secretary-general of the Cordillera People's Alliance, Tongtongam ti Umili. He has received death threats from five different mobile numbers. The messages falsely claim that he is a member of the NPA.⁸⁹

Pastor Jimmy Teves, Jodito Montecino, Eliseo Andres, JP Romana, Rodrigo Medes, and Roger Sabanal

On 26 June 2019, soldiers of the 62nd infantry battalion arrested Pastor Jimmy Teves, a UCCP pastor who has been serving 17 local UCCP churches in Himamaylan, Negros. The soldiers also arrested farmers Jodito Montecino, Eliseo Andres, JP Romana, Rodrigo Medes, and Roger Sabanal, who are members of the UCCP, the Catholic Church and the Iglesia Filipina Independiente church. They were subjected to trumped up charges of murder and attempted murder.⁹⁰

Bishop Carlo Morales

Bishop Carlo Morales of the IFI-Ozamis was arrested in May 2017 on fabricated charges of illegal possession of explosives. Bishop Morales is a well-known peace advocate defending the rights of Indigenous communities against large scale mining. After almost a year in prison, he was released on bail due to the failure of the prosecution to present a strong case.⁹¹

Aldeem Yanez

Aldeem Yanez is an IFI church worker and former NCCP Vice Chairperson. In February 2019, his home was visited by agents from the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) and Military Intelligence Brigade. He was monitored for a week by two suspicious persons on motorcycles.⁹²

On 14 February 2019, agents of the NICA and Military Intelligence Brigade asked neighbours about the whereabouts of Aldeem. The neighbours observed men conducting surveillance of his home on 15 and 16 February. They also took photographs in the neighbourhood.⁹³

“The government is coming after church people to silence their prophetic voice. But our faith sustains us in our work for peacemaking,” Aldeem said.

On February 27, two suspected state agents were again conducting surveillance of the Yanez’s residence. One even approached Yanez’s relative and asked if he is around.⁹⁴

Rev Joel Bengbeng

Rev Joel Bengbeng is the superintendent of the United Methodist Church in the Ilocos South District of the Northwest Philippines. In April 2020, he stated that officers of the Philippines Army had harassed him.⁹⁵ On 4 March 2020, soldiers visited Rev Bengbeng at Candon City United Methodist Church in Ilocos and accused him of being connected to the NPA. The soldiers urged him to sign a document confessing he was a member of the NPA.⁹⁶

“I regard this intimidation as an attack not only against me but the United Methodist Church as well. It is meant to silence the prophetic voice of the church, to distract us from discharging our sacred duty to uphold justice, especially in these trying times”, said Rev Bengbeng.

“I fear for my life. I persist not to go out by myself. I seek help from a relative to accompany me or drive for me.”

Rev Bengbeng said he suspected that the intimidation might be due to his participation in a movement opposing the construction of a dam in Salcedo, Ilocos Sur. The dam project threatened to displace families from their homes.⁹⁷

Rev Bengbeng stated that he and his fellow ministers: “Will continue to follow the way of Christ who challenged the powerful. We will persist to live out our baptismal vows to reject evil and injustice. We will strive to fulfil our ordination vows to seek justice, peace and freedom for all people.”

Rev Brian Asuit

Rev Brian Asuit a minister at the San Pedro United Methodist Church in Santa Cruz, Ilocos Sur. He was visited by soldiers in May 2019 at his previous church, Bacao United Methodist Church in Tagudin. Soldiers visited him several times in 2019 at his current church assignment.⁹⁸

In March 2020, army officers again visited him several times. They asked Rev Asuit to sign a prepared statement and take an oath of allegiance. They took his picture.⁹⁹

92 Ibid., 3.

93 Ramento Project for Rights Defenders, ‘Mindanao church worker sustains peacemaking amid state security attacks’, 9 March 2019, <http://rprd.ph/mindanao-church-worker-sustains-peacemaking-amid-state-security-attacks/>

94 Ibid.

95 Gladys Mangiduyos, ‘Filipino pastors fear for safety’, UMNNews.org, 2 April 2020, <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/filipino-pastors-fear-for-safety>

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABS-CBN News, 'Duterte reaches record-high 'excellent' satisfaction rating: SWS', 21 January 2020, news.abs-cbn.com/news/01/21/20/duterte-reaches-record-high-excellent-satisfaction-rating-sws

Al Jazeera, 'Rodrigo Duterte: 'I don't care about human rights'', 8 August 2016, [aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/rodrigo-duterte-human-rights-160806211448623.html](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/rodrigo-duterte-human-rights-160806211448623.html)

Amnesty International, "'If you are poor, you are killed". Extrajudicial executions in the Philippines "War on Drugs"', ASA 35/5517/2017, January 2017.

Amnesty International UK, 'More than 7,000 killed in the Philippines in six months, as president encourages murder', January 2017, [amnesty.org.uk/philippines-president-duterte-war-on-drugs-thousands-killed](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/philippines-president-duterte-war-on-drugs-thousands-killed)

Associated Press, '\$121K Decapitation Bounty Offered For Gang Leader', CBS News, 26 October 2012, [cbsnews.com/news/121k-decapitation-bounty-offered-for-gang-leader/](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/121k-decapitation-bounty-offered-for-gang-leader/)

Associated Press, 'Philippines police plant evidence to justify killings in drug war says report', The Guardian, 2 March 2017, [theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/02/philippines-police-plant-evidence-to-justify-killings-in-drug-war-says-report](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/02/philippines-police-plant-evidence-to-justify-killings-in-drug-war-says-report)

BBC News, 'Duterte Confirms He Killed Three Men', 16 December 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-38337746>

Becket, Adam, 'World Council of Churches denounces 'smear' on NCCP', Church Times, 15 November 2019, [churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2019/15-november/news/world/world-council-of-churches-denounces-smear-on-nccp](https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2019/15-november/news/world/world-council-of-churches-denounces-smear-on-nccp)

Beleo, Erwin, 'Suspects in murder of judge in La Union charged', Tempo, 28 November 2019.

Capeda, Mara, 'Red-tagged Oxfam, NCCP slam military for malicious careless attack', Rappler, 6 November 2019, [rappler.com/nation/244252-red-tagged-oxfam-nccp-slam-military](https://www.rappler.com/nation/244252-red-tagged-oxfam-nccp-slam-military)

Catholic News Service, 'In Philippines, 3 outspoken priests say they've received death threats', National Catholic Reporter, 12 March 2019, [ncronline.org/news/world/philippines-3-outspoken-priests-say-theyve-received-death-threats](https://www.ncronline.org/news/world/philippines-3-outspoken-priests-say-theyve-received-death-threats)

CBS News, 'Filipino President-Elect Tells Citizens To Go Kill Bad Guys In The Streets', 5 June 2016, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/rodrigo-duterte-president-elect-philippines-citizens-shoot-bad-guys/>

Chan, Melissa, 'Philippine President-Elect Urges Citizens To Shoot And Kill Drug Dealers', Time, 5 June 2016, <https://time.com/4357763/rodrigo-duterte-reward-kill-drug-dealers/?iid=sr-link7>

Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches, in the General Consultative: Human Rights Against Churches and Church People Under the Duterte Administration, UN Human Rights Council 44th Session, Agenda Item No.3, 4 June 2020.



Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches to the UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/44/NGO/116, 26 June 2020.

Commission on Human Rights, 'Statement of CHR spokesperson, Atty Jacqueline Annde Guila, on the death of 14 farmers in Negros Oriental', 31 March 2019, <https://chr.gov.ph/statement-of-chr-spokesperson-atty-jacqueline-ann-de-guila-on-the-death-of-14-farmers-in-negros-oriental/>

Conde, Charles H., 'Killings in Philippines Up 50 Percent During Pandemic', Human Rights Watch, 8 September 2020.

Crux, 'Philippine president says he will 'really kill' molesting priests', 26 March 2019, cruxnow.com/church-in-asia/2019/03/philippine-president-says-he-will-really-kill-molesting-priests/

Doyo, Ma Ceres P., 'Rural Missionaries of the Philippines denounces military's red-tagging', Global Sisters Report, 15 April 2019, www.globalsistersreport.org/news/ministry/rural-missionaries-philippines-denounces-militarys-red-tagging-56085

Esmaguell II, Paterno, 'Duterte: I Killed 700? No, Make That 1,700', Rappler, 8 December 2015, <https://rappler.com/nation/elections/duterte-killings-amnesty-international>

Esmaguell II, Paterno, 'Fr Mark Ventura's bishop hits 'unfounded rumors' on his murder', Rappler, 22 May 2018, <https://rappler.com/nation/duterte-mark-ventura-killing-cagayan-tuguegarao-archbishop-sergio-utleg>.

Espina, Marchel, 'Cops in bloody Negros Oriental operations took victims' money', Rappler, 6 April 2019, rappler.com/nation/227528-cops-took-victims-money-negros-oriental-killings-april-6-2019

Farmer, Rachel, 'Alarm after Philippine government links churches with communist terror groups', Anglican Communion News Service, 13 November 2019, anglicannews.org/news/2019/11/alarm-after-philippine-government-links-churches-with-communist-terror-groups.aspx

Ferreras, Vince, 'Gabriela, NGOs slam red-tagging by AFP, Defence Dept', CNN Philippines, 6 November 2019, www.cnn.ph/news/2019/11/6/Gabriela-NGO-slam-red-tagging-by-AFP-DND-.html

Fonbuena, Carmela, 'Philippines: US rights volunteer branded 'enemy of state' shot outside home', The Guardian, 8 August 2019, theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/08/philippines-us-rights-volunteer-branded-enemy-of-state-shot-outside-home

Gavilan, Jodesz, 'Activist priest recounts 'close call' with death squad', Rappler, 27 August 2018, www.rappler.com/nation/210477-amado-picardal-priest-threats-davao-death-squad

Gomez, Jim, '3 Philippine priests say they, Catholic bishops under threat', AP news, 12 March 2019, apnews.com/1d96c1fa73b345518a7adee33e6825a8

The Guardian and Agence France- Presse, 'Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte Urges People To Kill Drug Addicts', 1 July 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/01/philippines-president-rodrigo-duterte-urges-people-to-kill-drug-addicts>.

Holmes, Oliver, 'Mass murder' complaint filed against Philippines' President Duterte at ICC', The Guardian, 25 April 2017, theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/25/mass-complaint-launched-against-philippines-president-duterte-at-icc



- Holmes, Oliver, 'Human rights group slams Philippines president Duterte's threat to kill them', The Guardian, 17 August 2017, [theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/17/human-rights-watch-philippines-president-duterte-threat](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/17/human-rights-watch-philippines-president-duterte-threat)
- Human Rights Watch, "'Licence to Kill". Philippine Police Killings in Duterte's "War on Drugs"', 2 March 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/03/02/license-kill/philippine-police-killings-dutertes-war-drugs>
- Human Rights Watch, "'Our Happy Family Is Gone". Impact of the "War on Drugs" on children in the Philippines', 2020, [hrw.org/report/2020/05/28/our-happy-family-gone/impact-war-drugs-children-philippines](https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/05/28/our-happy-family-gone/impact-war-drugs-children-philippines)
- International Criminal Court, 'Preliminary Examination. Republic of Philippines', <https://www.icc-cpi.int/philippines>
- International Criminal Court, 'Statement of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda, on opening Preliminary Examinations into the Situations in the Philippines and Venezuela, 8 February 2018, [icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=180208-otp-stat](https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=180208-otp-stat)
- Lacorte, Germelina, 'Duterte On Criminals: 'Kill All Of Them'', Inquirer Mindanao, 15 May 2015, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/691527/dutertes-secret-in-keeping-davao-city-phs-safest-kill-criminals>.
- Macfie, Nick, and Chang, Richard, 'Philippine Leader Says Once Threw Man From Helicopter, Would Do It Again', Reuters, 29 December 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-duterte-helicopter-idUSKBN1410DH>.
- Mangiduyos, Gladys, 'Filipino pastors fear for safety', UMNews.org, 2 April 2020, <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/filipino-pastors-fear-for-safety>
- Marshall, A., and Mogato, M., 'Philippines death squads very much in business as Duterte set for presidency', Reuters, 25 May 2016, [reuters.com/article/us-philippines-duterte-killings-insight/philippine-death-squads-very-much-in-business-as-duterte-set-for-presidency-idUSKCN0YGOEB](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-duterte-killings-insight/philippine-death-squads-very-much-in-business-as-duterte-set-for-presidency-idUSKCN0YGOEB)
- McCarthy, Julie, 'Philippine Clergy Reports Death Threats As President Duterte Rails Against Church', NPR, 3 April 2019, [npr.org/2019/04/03/708819730/philippine-clergy-reports-death-threats-as-president-duterte-rails-against-church](https://www.npr.org/2019/04/03/708819730/philippine-clergy-reports-death-threats-as-president-duterte-rails-against-church)
- Murdoch, Lindsay, 'Duterte Tells Soldiers To Shoot Female Rebels In Their Genitals', The Age, 13 February 2018, <https://www.theage.com.au/world/asia/duterte-tells-soldiers-to-shoot-female-rebels-in-their-genitals-20180213-p4z03t.html>
- Ornedo, Julia Mari, 'Ilocos Sur judge shot dead in La Union', GMA News, 5 November 2019.
- Paddock, Richard C., 'Charge Rodrigo Duterte With Mass Murder, Lawyer Tells the Hague', The New York Times, 24 April 2017, [nytimes.com/2017/04/24/world/asia/rodrigo-duterte-philippines-icc-complaint.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/24/world/asia/rodrigo-duterte-philippines-icc-complaint.html)
- Petty, Martin, and Morales, Neil Jerome, 'Jail me, hang me: Philippines' Duterte says won't answer to ICC', Reuters, 20 December 2019, [reuters.com/article/us-philippines-drugs/jail-me-hang-me-philippines-duterte-says-wont-answer-to-icc-idUSKBN1YO184](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-drugs/jail-me-hang-me-philippines-duterte-says-wont-answer-to-icc-idUSKBN1YO184)



- Quiros, Judy, 'Duterte threatens to have bishop's head cut off', The Inquirer, 27 November 2018, newsinfo.inquirer.net/1057402/duterte-threatens-to-cut-off-bishops-head
- Ramento Project for Rights Defender, 'Statement of Aktionsbündnis Menschenrechte – Philippinen Denouncing Human Rights Violations in the IFI', 9 November 2017, <http://rprd.ph/statement-of-aktionsbundnis-menschenrechte-philippinen-denouncing-human-rights-violations-in-the-ifi/>
- Ramento Project for Rights Defender, 'RPRD Laments Killings of 3 Church Workers', 27 October 2018, <http://rprd.ph/rprd-laments-killings-of-3-church-workers/>
- Ramento Project for Rights Defenders, 'Mindanao church worker sustains peacemaking amid state security attacks', 9 March 2019, <http://rprd.ph/mindanao-church-worker-sustains-peacemaking-amid-state-security-attacks/>
- Randa, Pia, 'Kill bishops, all they do is criticise', says Duterte', The Rappler, 6 December 2018, rappler.com/nation/218312-duterte-says-kill-bishops-all-they-do-is-criticize
- Regencia, Ted, 'Philippine Catholic Priests: 'They are killing us'', Aljazeera, 14 June 2018, aljazeera.com/news/2018/06/philippine-catholic-priests-killing-180613073921062.html
- Reuters, 'Philippines: Duterte threatens to arrest International Criminal Court Prosecutor', The Guardian, 13 April 2018, theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/13/philippines-duterte-threatens-to-arrest-international-criminal-court-prosecutor
- SCMP, 'Philippines names Oxfam a front for communist terror', Deutschs Asienforschungszentrum, 11 November 2019, dafz.org/regional-affairs/asean/philippines/philippines-names-oxfam-a-front-for-communist-terror/
- UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Philippines', A/HRC/44/22, 4 June 2020.
- United Church of Christ in the Philippines Pastoral Statement, 'Stop Killing Our Prophets', 7 August 2019.
- Valles, Romulo, 'CBCP Statement on the Brutal Killing of Fr Mark Ventura of the Archdiocese of Tuguegarao', CBCP News, 29 April 2018, <https://cbcnews.net/cbcnews/cbcp-statement-on-the-brutal-killing-of-fr-mark-ventura-of-the-archdiocese-of-tuguegarao/>
- Villamor, Felipe, 'Ex-Officer in Philippines Says He Led Death Squad at Duterte's Behest', The New York Times, 20 February 2020, nytimes.com/2017/02/20/world/asia/rodrigo-duterte-philippines-death-squad.html
- Whaley, F., 'Rodrigo Duterte's Talk of Killing Criminals Raises Fears in Philippines', The New York Times, 17 May 2016, nytimes.com/2016/05/18/world/asia/rodrigo-duterte-philippines.html







Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA