

Modern World History H  
Sept. 5, 2017

Current Events  
Duterte's War on Drugs

“There is three million drug addicts...I'd be happy to slaughter them” - President Duterte (Holmes 1). On June 30, 2016, Rodrigo Duterte took office as president, declaring the war on drugs in the Philippines. From then up until now, seven thousand people have been killed by the police, on account of President Duterte, and his goal to kill all of those related to drug use in the Philippines. This behavior from Duterte came from a backlash due to the former President's actions. Duterte's actions have been supported by most of the Philippines, encouraging him to go further, though those against him have a strong force behind them, as a fatal mistake of the killings was acted upon too late by Duterte, which could be the downfall of his fight. President Duterte's war on Drugs caused a 17-year-old to be unrightfully killed, the violence of Duterte reflects off of a prior president's behavior, and Duterte's mistake could lead to the end to the war and a change to power.

As a man against crime and drugs, President Duterte has allowed the police to kill anyone that got in their way of cleansing the Philippines. This behavior has continued through August, hitting a potential ending wall for President Duterte. On August 16, 2017, a 17-year-old boy, Kian Loyd Delos Santos, was killed by the Filipino police. Even though this was just one out of the thousands of killings, it has had the most impact. As said by Karen Gomez-Dumpit, a Human Rights Commissioner, “The reason why Kian's case has resonated is because it hit close to home. Kian could be our son, [he] could be our brother”, which caused a lot of focus on this case, as it was not an adult who was killed (Jazeera). Due to the uproar, the police attempted to

cover themselves up, claiming that Kian was armed, and they only shot him out of self-defense. This was then quickly proven false by CCTV records that showed the police leading him down an alley, giving him a gun, him running away, then the police shooting him. Five days later, Duterte responded to the public, saying that the police that killed Kian would “rot in jail”. Though the public took this response as “too little, too late”. Not only is he being criticized by human rights workers, but the Senate, including those for Duterte, has issued an investigation towards the war on drugs. President Duterte stepped too far, taking the wrong actions at the wrong time, which has turned his own followers against him.

Prior to President Duterte, the Philippines president was Benigno Aquino III. As a president, he was seen as lazy, and unwilling to take action on the issues that were in the Philippines. This behavior was not accepted by the public, causing them to get outraged at the fact that nothing was changing about the corrupt judicial system that Aquino campaigned about. This untrust in the government, caused the people to feel “unprotected from crime”, so they needed a new leader. With this insecurity, the people needed a leader who would take action, no matter how violent, because they just wanted the problems to be fixed immediately. As a result, President Duterte made success through the presidential race as he was a strict and forceful mayor in Davao City, even gaining the nickname the “Punisher”. After becoming president, Duterte had a 91% approval rating, when he started his harsh announcements towards the war on drugs. Since the public was so in need of action, they encouraged it, allowing Duterte to kill the thousands of people he has. These results all were sparked by the unwillingness of President Aquino to take action.

The killing of Kian Loyd Delos Santos could mean the end to Duterte and the views he stands for. Due to the death of Kian, many people have opened their eyes and are seeing what human rights crimes they are supporting. Not only the public but the Senate that was with Duterte, is now starting to second-guess themselves, starting actions against Duterte. This could eventually cause enough backlash against President Duterte, that he could be thrown out of office by the public. As a direct response, the public could either elect a president that has Duterte's views, but less harsh of behavior, or they could go completely against Duterte and some of his political views, electing someone that is the polar opposite of President Duterte. If a polar opposite scenario were to occur, then the complete governmental position in the Philippines could change, potentially upsetting current allies of theirs. These events may take place due to the killing of 17-year-old Kian Loyd Delos Santos.

President Duterte's actions led to a 17-year-old getting killed, they were caused by the people's annoyance of President Aquino, and what has happened could lead to a politically different Philippines. What has happened in the Philippines is a story of history repeating. A similar case of the war on drugs occurred in Thailand in 2003, giving a great reflection onto the war on drugs in the Philippines. When Duterte said he would be happy to slaughter the three million drug addicts, he didn't know how far he could go, before it was too far.

## Works Cited

- "Death of Philippine Teenager Stokes Opposition to Duterte's Drug Crackdown." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 23 Aug. 2017. Web.
- "Duterte Drug War: Manila's Brutal Nightshift." *BBC News*. BBC, n.d. Web.
- Holmes, Oliver. "Rodrigo Duterte Vows to Kill 3 Million Drug Addicts and Likens Himself to Hitler." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 30 Sept. 2016. Web.
- Jazeera, Al. "Duterte's War on Drugs and Those Reporting It." *Philippines | Al Jazeera*. Al Jazeera, 26 Aug. 2017. Web.
- Mydans, Seth. "A Wave of Drug Killings Is Linked to Thai Police." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 07 Apr. 2003. Web.
- Ott, Tim. "Rodrigo Duterte." *Biography.com*. A&E Networks Television, 27 Oct. 2016. Web.
- "Philippines' 'War on Drugs'." *Human Rights Watch*. N.p., n.d. Web.
- Ranada, Pia. "Duterte: If Police Murdered Kian Delos Santos, They Will 'rot in Jail'." *Rappler*. N.p., n.d. Web.
- Taub, Amanda. "How Countries Like the Philippines Fall Into Vigilante Violence." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 11 Sept. 2016. Web.