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Bachelet renews call for accountability in Philippines war on illegal drugs



UN Photo/Antoine Tardy | UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet addresses the High-level segment of the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

30 June 2020 | [Human Rights \(/en/news/topic/human-rights\)](#)

The Human Rights Council

(<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/pages/home.aspx>) should consider supporting new accountability measures against perpetrators of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines' so-called war on illegal drugs, the UN's top rights official said on Tuesday.

campaign.

Terror law 'dilutes safeguards'

In an address to Member States in Geneva on the opening day of the Council's 44th session (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session44/Pages/44RegularSession.aspx>), Michelle Bachelet also reiterated concerns over proposed new anti-terror legislation that are now before President Rodrigo Duterte, for signing into law.

The proposed 2020 Anti-Terrorism Act "dilutes human rights safeguards, broadens the definition of terrorism and expands the period of detention without warrant from three to 14 days, extendable by another 10 days", the UN human rights office (OHCHR (<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/pages/home.aspx>)) report insisted.

"The recent passage of the new Anti-Terrorism Act heightens our concerns about the blurring of important distinctions between criticism, criminality and terrorism," the High Commissioner for Human Rights said.

"The law could have a further chilling effect on human rights and humanitarian work, hindering support to vulnerable and marginalized communities...So I would urge the President to refrain from signing the law, and to initiate a broad-based consultation process to draft legislation that can effectively prevent and counter violent extremism, but which contains some safeguards to prevent its misuse against people engaged in peaceful criticism and advocacy."

According to Ms. Bachelet's office, the campaign against illegal drugs has been linked to the deaths of 73 children. These figures "are not exhaustive...the youngest victim was five months old," the OHCHR report noted.

Killings widespread, systematic

Echoing these concerns, Ms. Bachelet underscored that the operation was being carried out "without due regard for the rule of law, due process and the human rights of people who may be using or selling drugs. The report finds that the killings have been widespread and systematic – and they are ongoing"

The High Commissioner also addressed long-running concerns of "near-impunity" for perpetrators of illegal killings during police operations highlighted in the report.

It details how the Philippines Police Internal Affairs Service (IAS) automatically investigates any deaths that occur during police operations, and yet of more than 4,580 investigations, "the Government has cited only one case – that of 17-year-old Kian delos Santos – where three police officers were convicted of a drug campaign-related killing".

Ms. Bachelet added: "The State has an obligation to conduct independent investigations into the grave violations we have documented. In the absence of clear and measurable outcomes from domestic mechanisms, the Council should consider options for international accountability measures."

Government rebuttal

Rejecting to the High Commissioner's concerns, Philippines Justice Minister Menardo Guevarra said that the report's claims "find no anchor in a system that provides every avenue to examine, establish and pursue a claim of wrongdoing by a State actor, if such claim is substantiated with facts".

President Duterte had promised a drug-free Philippines and had "discharged this mandate fruitfully", the Minister added, noting "widespread support" for him across the country.

Myanmar debate

The #Rohingya (https://twitter.com/hashtag/Rohingya?src=hash&ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw) refugee crisis has effectively become protracted, with no solution in sight. #Myanmar (https://twitter.com/hashtag/Myanmar?src=hash&ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw) should take immediate steps to address this chronic situation, incl. by amending 1982 Citizenship Law & restoring Rohingya citizenship – @mbachelet (https://twitter.com/mbachelet?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw): <https://t.co/FlqaoS4job> (<https://t.co/FlqaoS4job>)#HRC44 (https://twitter.com/hashtag/HRC44?src=hash&ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw) pic.twitter.com/qtHQ6wLSoT (<https://t.co/qtHQ6wLSoT>)

– UN Human Rights (@UNHumanRights) June 30, 2020
(https://twitter.com/UNHumanRights/status/1277921715230855169?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)

Ms. Bachelet also updated Member States on disturbing developments regarding Myanmar's treatment of the mainly-Muslim ethnic Rohingya and "several" other minority communities.

Armed conflict continued to intensify in Rakhine and Chin States, the High Commissioner said, with communities allegedly threatened by Government Tatmadaw soldiers to leave their villages or be considered members of the separatist Arakan Army.

Some 10,000 residents had reportedly fled a Tatmadaw advance last weekend, Ms. Bachelet continued, following a clearance operation in the Kyauktan area of Rathedaung township in Rakhine.

Alleging a pattern of serious rights violations by Myanmar security forces, the High Commissioner highlighted “airstrikes, shelling of civilian areas, and the destruction and burning of villages”.

These developments among others meant that the human rights situation for Rohingyas in Rakhine State has not improved, she said, “and that conditions for their safe, dignified and sustainable return from Bangladesh are still not in place”.

Last month, the Tatmadaw reportedly burned large areas of Buthidaung township where Rohingyas lived, before fleeing in their hundreds of thousands to neighbouring Bangladesh, Ms. Bachelet said.

Villages turned to ash

“According to eyewitnesses and satellite images, areas where up to a dozen Rohingya villages once stood, lay in ashes. Only five months ago, the International Court of Justice issued an order to prevent the destruction of evidence of allegations of genocide. It is imperative that Myanmar take immediate and urgent measures to cease reckless military operations, and to preserve what remains in those areas.”

In response, Permanent Representative of Myanmar Kyaw Moe Tun insisted that “the Rakhine issue” was “only one of the many challenges” facing the country.

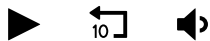
Security threats were growing in Rakhine State, he added, noting that the Government was “relentlessly striving to achieve its goal of bringing sustainable peace, stability, harmony, and development”, but that it needed “time and space” to do so.

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16 June 2020 | **Human Rights** (</en/news/topic/human-rights>)

The conviction of prominent Filipino journalist Maria Ressa has been described (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25962&LangID=E>) by an independent UN expert as “a new low in the Philippines’ protection of the freedom of expression” and “the ability of an independent media to function in the country”.



(/en/story/2020/05/1064152)

Support stepped up for Rohingya camps as first COVID-19 infections are confirmed (/en/story/2020/05/1064152)

15 May 2020 | Migrants and Refugees (/en/news/topic/migrants-and-refugees)

After confirmation that the first cases of COVID-19 infection have been identified in a vast and overcrowded refugee camp in Bangladesh, UN humanitarian on Friday announced additional measures and appealed for funds to prevent the disease from spreading.

Michelle Bachelet's (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/HighCommissioner.aspx>) appeal follows publication of a report by her office indicating that many thousands of people – and possibly more than 25,000 - have been killed in police and vigilante operations since the launch of the government's 'Double Barrel' campaign, on 1 July 2016 through to 31 January this year.



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I urge @UN_HRC to remain active & vigilant on the situation in the #Philippines – @mbachelet: In the absence of clear & measurable outcomes from domestic mechanisms, the Council should consider options for international accountability measures.

ow.ly/dqo750AlwP3

#HRC44



UN Human Rights  @UNHumanRights

New report shows heavy-handed focus on countering national security threats & illegal drugs has resulted in serious rights violations in the #Philippines

"People who use or sell drugs do not lose their #HumanRights" – UN Human Rights Chief @mbachelet ow.ly/RoRq50zYr8l

5:48 AM · Jun 30, 2020



75



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In February 2018, the International Criminal Court (<https://www.icc-cpi.int/>) announced that it intended to open a preliminary examination of the situation in the Philippines and analyse crimes allegedly committed in the State, since at least 1 July 2016, in the context of the "war on drugs"