

Philippine mayor calls for extrajudicial killing

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Rodrigo Duterte, vice mayor of Davao City, the largest city on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao, issued a brazen call for the extrajudicial killing of the alleged head of a major crime syndicate. On October 25, Duterte, previously a long-time mayor of the city, promised a bounty of four million pesos (over \$US88,000) and additional one million pesos if the decapitated head was literally delivered to him on ice. Far from any action being taken against him, this month Duterte publicly increased his offer by one million pesos.

The target of the manhunt is Ryan Yu. According to police, Yu is the head and the financier of a major ring of car thieves, termed a “carnapping syndicate.” The police admit, however, that they have no documented evidence implicating Yu in any crime.

This is the second time that Yu has been accused of heading a crime syndicate. Last year, the police claimed to have busted up another large carnapping syndicate. They trumpeted the recovery of dozens of allegedly stolen cars and named Yu and two other men as the syndicate’s leaders. One of the three was said to have been arrested, but a week later he was declared to have been killed in an ambush. The story has the hallmarks of a cover up for a summary execution.

Yu and the other “leader” were not heard of again, until last month when police operations across Mindanao resulted in the arrest of four men, one of whom was allegedly a driver for Yu. The sting led to the retrieval of dozens of allegedly stolen cars. The police once again claimed to have busted up a major crime syndicate, of which Yu was the sole leader.

Shortly after the arrests, Duterte announced the reward for the taking of Yu’s life. During the press

conference, Duterte accused Yu of falsely linking Duterte’s son, Paolo, to the carnapping and car smuggling operations. He vented his ire by threatening not only Yu but his entire family, who, Duterte alleged, were also involved in illegal activities.

Duterte is running again for Davao City mayor in next year’s local elections and his son is running for vice mayor. The allegations against his son, reportedly raised by the Department of Interior and Local Government secretary Mar Roxas at the behest of President Benigno Aquino III, cut across Duterte’s posturing as a tough upholder of “law and order.”

Yu is facing one charge of masterminding the theft of a car, based on the confession of his purported driver. The police are apparently scrambling to shore up their case. According to the *EDGEDavao.com* news website, the police are also accusing Yu of personally stealing the car of a policeman. Yu remains at large.

Duterte’s flagrant disregard for legal and constitutional rights is no surprise. He is an open supporter of “summary justice.” During his six terms as Davao City mayor, a system of extrajudicial executions was fashioned in which informers and neighborhood leaders would make hit lists of people accused of various petty crimes. Duterte read out the names of targeted individuals on his radio or TV program, and killers would mete out death for the reported rate of 5,000 pesos (\$US120) per victim.

From 2005 to 2008 alone, according to a government anti-corruption body, 720 people were killed in Davao City by suspected death squads. Needless to say, no one involved in organised crime with political connections has been killed. The victims were mostly accused of petty crimes and came from poverty-ridden

neighborhoods. They included minors and street children.

Major political figures are implicated in Duterte's rise to power and his activities. He first came to prominence in 1986 when President Corazon Aquino appointed him officer-in-charge of Davao City soon after the ouster of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos. President Fidel Ramos, President Joseph Estrada and President Gloria Arroyo, who ousted Estrada in 2001, all sought to appoint him as their local government department secretary.

As this post has direct supervisory control of the police and all local government units, Duterte was implicitly offered a mandate for his brutal methods nationwide.

At present, Duterte is a political ally of President Benigno Aquino, who also reportedly offered him the post of secretary of the local government department. Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile and Senator Tito Sotto are also indebted to Duterte, after he supported them in the last national elections. None of these politicians has condemned Duterte's system of summary justice or his blatant call for extrajudicial execution.

Neither has the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) or any of its front organizations, such as the political parties Makabayan and Bayan Muna. Duterte is their political ally too. He supported the senatorial bid of Makabayan candidates Satur Ocampo and Liza Maza in the 2010 national elections. A Bayan Muna member is a Davao City councilor, having won her seat under the banner of Duterte's party. She is running for re-election next year, once again under Duterte's banner.

Last year, the CPP's National Democratic Front named Duterte a consultant to its negotiating panel in peace talks with the Philippine government. Duterte initially accepted the offer, and declined only after he received express orders to do so from the Philippine government.

One of the few to express opposition to Duterte is

Presidential Commission on Human Rights chairperson Etta Rosales. But this posturing is self-serving. Rosales is a member of Akbayan, a so-called "left" party that emerged out of the break-up of the Maoist CPP in the early 1990s. Akbayan is currently engaged in a fierce turf war with CPP front party Bayan Muna. Rosales' opposition to Duterte is an attempt to undercut an ally of her rivals.

In contrast to her criticism of Duterte, Rosales has remained conspicuously silent on charges raised by human rights organizations against the President Aquino's government, with which Akbayan is allied. According to a *Philippine Star* report, at least 100 people have already been the subject of extrajudicial killings under Aquino's government.

The widespread and increasingly blatant character of these murders is a warning to the working class of the brutal police-state methods that will be used against any resistance to attacks on their jobs, conditions and democratic rights.



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