

# Israel's Netanyahu extends hand of friendship to fascistic Philippines President Duterte

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The fascistic president of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte, has completed a four-day visit to Israel, the first-ever visit to the country by a Philippine head of state.

Duterte met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as well as President Reuven Rivlin and officials from Israel's military and intelligence agencies. Among his entourage were 46 senior politicians, officials and military and security personnel, as well as a 150-strong delegation of business leaders.

The butcher Netanyahu is a fitting host to Duterte, who took office in 2016. "We remember our friends and that friendship has blossomed over the years and especially over the last few years," Netanyahu said.

With Duterte's visit, Netanyahu has added yet another far-right figure to Israel's stable of allies.

The Philippine president's visit follows visits by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Azerbaijan's İlham Aliyev, not to mention the coterie of far-right figures who attended the opening ceremony of the US embassy in Jerusalem earlier this year.

Duterte began his visit with an address to an audience of Filipinos in Jerusalem, where he defended his earlier remark, "If there are many beautiful women, there will be many rape cases as well," as an exercise in "democracy and freedom of expression."

Speaking last Monday after his meeting with Netanyahu, Duterte said, "May we continue to be blessed with a strong relationship," adding cynically, "We share the same passion for peace. We share the same passion for human beings." Then came a pledge of support for Israel's repression of the Palestinians and its recent military threats against Syria, Iran and Lebanon.

"But," added Duterte, "we also share the same passion of not allowing a family to be destroyed by those who [have] corrupt ideologies... In this sense, Israel can expect

any help that the Philippines can extend."

Duterte's passion for human beings involves building a police state under the guise of a war on drugs. According to official statistics, the police killed 4,279 people between July 1, 2016 and May 15, 2018. Even more died at the hands of unofficial death squads, with the Duterte administration listing as one of its "key accomplishments" in the war on drugs an estimated 16,355 additional homicides in 2017 alone.

Duterte's host likewise has the blood of thousands on his hands. Netanyahu heads the government of a state based on the oppression of an entire people. The Israel Defense Forces have killed more than 170 unarmed Palestinians—including children, journalists and paramedics—and injured some 13,000 in the weeks of protests near the border between Gaza and Israel that started on March 30 to demand the right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and villages. The Israeli military has used live bullets, tear gas and rubber bullets against unarmed protesters who posed no threat to Israel or its border fence.

Israel's assault on the Palestinians follows its crippling 11-year-long blockade of the tiny enclave and its murderous wars on Gaza in 2008-09, 2012 and 2014, which killed 1,417, 147 and 2,250 Palestinians respectively and destroyed much of Gaza's basic infrastructure and tens of thousands of homes.

Duterte said that Israel had aided the Philippines on intelligence matters on multiple occasions and thanked Netanyahu for helping his country "win its war on terror." This was a reference to Israel's arms supply during what became known as the Marawi Siege on the southern island of Mindanao in 2017, which left much of the city in ruins. More than 1,000 people were killed and 400,000 were forced to flee their homes in what began as a war

between rival armed gangs, including Islamic State militants.

Following his meeting with Netanyahu, Duterte went to Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial museum, where he laid a wreath. In 2016, he compared his crackdown on drug dealers and users to the Holocaust, saying, "Critics compare me to Hitler's cousin... Hitler massacred three million Jews... there's three million drug addicts... I'd be happy to slaughter them."

At Yad Vashem, he piously pledged to fight "insane rulers" like Hitler and called for learning the lessons of that "horrific and benighted period of human history."

Duterte also chaired a business seminar at his hotel for CEOs from Israel and the Philippines. Ministers signed three bilateral agreements, adding to the existing 14 bilateral agreements relating to scientific cooperation, investment and the employment of the 24,000 Filipino caregivers—out of some 29,000 Filipinos working in Israel—that would cut the cost of employing every caregiver by \$12,000.

The Filipinos were also expected to sign an oil exploration license for the Israeli-owned company Ratio Petroleum, which is seeking to exploit the Philippines' offshore oil. The company has a stake in Israel's Leviathan offshore natural gas production site in the eastern Mediterranean and licensing rights and options overseas, including in Guyana, Surinam, Malta and Ireland.

On Tuesday, Duterte met President Rivlin in Jerusalem. He was met by dozens of demonstrators. Prior to the visit, Israeli human rights groups had urged Rivlin not to welcome the "mass-murderer." Appealing on behalf of at least 24 human rights groups, Israeli lawyer Eitay Mack argued that Duterte "poses a threat not just to Philippine citizens, but also to the peace of the whole world." Welcoming Duterte was a tacit endorsement of massacres "against specific population groups," "legitimizing other murderous leaders" across the globe.

Israel is not only legitimizing murder, it is facilitating it. The main purpose of Duterte's trip to Israel was to explore future arms deals, including advanced weaponry and equipment and, potentially, aircraft. Duterte told Rivlin his country would in future buy weapons and military equipment only from Israel due to its lack of restrictions on their use. The US is "a good friend," he said, "but if we buy there, there are limitations, also with Germany and China."

The US and other countries have been forced, publicly at least, to refuse to sell Duterte arms due to gross human

rights violations committed during his brutal crackdown. His tilt towards China has also angered Washington.

Israel is one of the largest arms dealers in the world, with nearly 60 percent of its defense exports going to the Asia-Pacific region. Since Duterte became president, Israel's export of arms to the Philippines, including radar, armoured vehicles and anti-tank equipment, has risen from \$6 million to \$21 million.

According to the Global Militarisation Index, Israel has been the most militarised nation on the planet every year since 2007, and last year became a "cyber superpower," selling about 10 percent of the world's computer and network security technology. Its particular expertise is the "pacification industry," the suppression of civilian unrest, based on its decades-long experience of suppressing the Palestinians.

Israel has a record of supplying arms to murderous regimes, including the Philippines, training and arming the death squads of the brutal dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos in the 1970s and 1980s, Augusto Pinochet's military regime in Chile from 1973 to 1991, and the military juntas in Argentina and Bolivia in the 1970s. It sold arms used in the Rwandan genocide, the Bosnian war and Sri Lanka's war against the Tamil Tigers.

Last year, human rights groups accused Israel of training Myanmar's special forces and supplying them with "advanced weapons," including tanks and gunboats used during the ethnic cleansing campaign against the Muslim minority group, the Rohingya.

In September 2017, the Israeli High Court banned the reporting of Israeli arms sales to Myanmar after an appeal by the defense ministry. Myanmar's navy showcased its Israeli-made gun-boats bought in defiance of EU and US arms embargos on the country. Israel has also violated the embargo on providing weapons and training to South Sudan, fueling the civil war there.



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