



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing

The Human Rights Consequences of the War on Drugs in the Philippines

Thursday, July 20, 2017

10:00 – 11:30 AM

2200 Rayburn House Office Building

Opening Remarks of Rep. Jackie Speier, Member of the Commission

As prepared for delivery

Thanks to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission for holding this important hearing, and to the witnesses, particularly Ellecer Carlos, for being here today.

I'm proud that my district is home to the largest Filipino communities in the continental United States. I've heard increasing concerns from my constituents who are appalled at the human rights violations taking place under Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's regime.

I was disgusted that President Trump invited Duterte to the White House. His murderous, extra-judicial campaign has drawn condemnation from around the world - except from President Trump, who had a "very friendly" conversation with the man who once said, "I don't care about human rights" and who called President Obama a "son of a whore" for speaking out against atrocities Duterte has committed against his own people.

The latest estimates of the number of deaths related to the drug war run as high as 8,000, based on figures released by the police and independent counts by human rights groups. We need

to call this deranged policy out for what it is: state-sanctioned vigilantism that contravenes the rule of law and damages the international standing of the Philippines.

All that being said, I remain proud that the Philippines is one of our closest allies, but also deeply concerned that this great country is falling prey to bloody demagoguery. Duterte's campaign of vigilantism and extrajudicial execution is unacceptable in a modern democracy. It is critical that both Congress and the President condemn Duterte's unacceptable human rights abuses in the strongest possible terms, and take concrete action to ensure that the United States is not enabling these practices.

I am heartened by the bipartisan introduction of S. 1055, the Philippines Human Rights Accountability and Counternarcotics Act, into the Senate. This important bill would restrict the export of certain defense items to the Philippine National Police, support human rights and civil society organizations in the Philippines, and report on sources of narcotics entering that country. The next step is to introduce a bipartisan version of this bill into the House, and I am working hard to support those efforts.

We must also not forget the sacrifices that the people of the Philippines made during WWII, fighting alongside us, and the promise we made to them, committing that we would provide them with the veterans' benefits that they earned on the battlefield. This promise remains unfulfilled and I'll continue to work to ensure that this promise is ultimately kept.

Thank you again for your hard work and sacrifices in combating the scourge of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines. Our country, your country, and the world are lucky to have you fighting for human rights for everyone.