



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing

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

July 20, 2017

10:00 – 11:30 AM

2200 Rayburn House Office Building

Opening Remarks by Co-Chair Randy Hultgren, as prepared for delivery

Good morning and welcome to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission's hearing on the Human Rights Consequences of the War on Drugs in the Philippines. I would like to thank our witnesses for taking time to share their expertise with us, and furthermore for dedicating their lives to ensuring the preservation of human rights around the world.

According to the Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2016 by the Department of State, there has been a significant increase in the number of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines over the past year. And while extrajudicial killings are not new to the Philippines, the recent increase has been referred to as an "appalling epidemic" by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Under President Rodrigo Duterte, the Philippines government launched its "Operation Open Barrel" campaign in 2016 as an alleged "war on drugs." To date, police have killed 7,000 alleged drug dealers and users without bringing charges and without trial.

The Philippines is a valuable ally of the United States and is the largest recipient of United States assistance in East Asia. For these reasons, it is paramount that human rights violations are not an unintended consequence of the "war on drugs."

Human rights are fundamental – every person is born with dignity. As such, they should be afforded the protection and due process of the law. It is our obligation to not only advocate for,

but to defend those human rights which include freedom from torture, unjustified imprisonment, summary execution, or persecution as stated in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I look forward to learning more from the panel and to hearing the experts' policy recommendations for ways that the Commission and Congress can maintain bilateral cooperation with our ally without jeopardizing human rights in the Philippines.

###