

In the 1989 Thriller, “License to Kill”, James Bond goes rogue and sets out to find an infamous drug lord and take revenge for his friend’s death. The expression “license to kill”, referring to permission given by a government or authority to kill for the purpose of getting a job done, has been widely used in espionage cinema (spy movies) and various forms of literature. In real life, this approach has been widely discussed by the International community. In 2010, Philip Alston, the former UN special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary, or Arbitrary Executions, warned that, “failure of states to comply with their human rights law and IHL (International Humanitarian Law) obligations to provide the transparency and accountability for targeted killings is a matter of deep concern. To date, no State has disclosed the full legal basis for targeted killings...The refusal by States who conduct targeted killings to provide transparency about their policies violates the international legal framework that limits the unlawful use of lethal force against individuals.”<sup>1</sup>

This concept of a “license to kill” has taken on a new life in the Philippines. President Rodrigo Duterte was elected President of the Philippines in May of 2016. His main objective: put an end to the drug addiction in his country by way of brute force. In September of 2016, BBC news quoted Duterte saying, “Hitler massacred three million Jews. Now, there is three million drug addicts. I'd be happy to slaughter them...” Though he may have been wrong about the numbers, Duterte made his intentions clear, and just three months after he rose to power, over 3,000 so-called “drug-addicts” had been killed. The drug-war was only beginning.

On August 16, 2017, Duterte made his most controversial decision yet. As Human Rights Watch (hrw.org), a nonprofit human rights awareness group, stated, “...Duterte instructed Philippine National Police personnel to “shoot those who are part of [drug activity]. If they [members of human rights organizations] are obstructing justice, you shoot them.” Duterte gave the green light to his police force to extrajudicially kill civilians to get the job done.

Less than a year and a half after his rise to power, Duterte has become an international poster-boy for violations of human rights because of his use of police brutality. As the Human Rights Council of the United Nations, one of our main missions is: “...to contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights through both immediate and long-term action.” Because of this, countries such as China, France, and The United States have come at odds with the Filipino president in recent months for his extrajudicial tactics. But in the past, countries such as Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, and Indonesia have taken a similar approach to the Philippines when dealing with drug-trafficking problems.

Food for thought:

- Should Duterte’s method of ridding his country of drugs by extrajudicially killing those he thinks to be drbe considered a violation of human rights?
- Is using a country’s police force or inciting violence by vigilantes a good way to deal with any

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<sup>1</sup>Wilmshurst, Elizabeth, editor. “Gaza/A Separate Conflict with Hamas?” *International Law and the Classification of Conflicts*, Oxford University Press, 2012, pg. 306.

type of problem?

- How has your country dealt with a drug problem in the past? If your country has not dealt with this particular issue, extrapolate from similar situations to find a solution.

For your viewing pleasure, here is a video clip explaining the situation in the Philippines as well as a few of Duterte's colorful comments on it.

<https://youtu.be/S2KtLTXXej8>

A few more resources:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/17/philippines-duterte-threatens-human-rights-community>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/21/world/asia/rodrigo-duterte-philippines-president-strongman.html?mcubz=3>

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/22/philippines-un-rights-body-should-ensure-accountability-unlawful-killings>

<https://www.hrw.org/tag/philippines-war-drugs>

As always, please reach out to me at [jasenders@gmail.com](mailto:jasenders@gmail.com) if you have any questions throughout your research and preparation for the conference!

Sincerely,

Joey Senders

Chair, UNHRC

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