



THIRD WORLD STUDIES CENTER

P.O. BOX 210, LOWER GROUND FLOOR, PALMA HALL, COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND PHILOSOPHY, ROXAS AVENUE
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Call for Input to inform the High Commissioner's report to the Human Rights Council on the impact of casualty recording

Submission by the University of the Philippines Third World Studies
Center

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The University of the Philippines Third World Studies Center (UP TWSC) is engaged in the recording of reported drug-related killings covering the period from 2016, during former president Rodrigo Duterte's "War on Drugs" campaign, until the current administration of Pres. Ferdinand "Bongbong" R. Marcos Jr. UP TWSC is a member of the [Casualty Records Network](#) convened by Every Casualty Counts.

For brevity, our running count is referred to as the Dahas Project of the UP TWSC. "Dahas" is Filipino for "violence." We use dahas in our social media platform: <https://twitter.com/DahasPH>, and in our website, <https://dahas.upd.edu.ph/database/>. At the moment, the Dahas Project is the only publicly accessible monitor of drug-related killings in the Philippines that provides regular weekly updates.

This undertaking started in 2018 from the much larger research and advocacy project done in collaboration with Ghent University and funded by the Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad-Universitaire Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (VLIR-UOS). It entailed assembling a research network composed of academics, civil society activists, and veteran journalists to provide an incisive and evidence-based analyses on the state of violence, human rights, and democracy in the Philippines at the backdrop of Duterte's authoritarian inclinations and propensity to govern with violence. With the project's conclusion in 2022, the Center has decided to independently continue building its database of reported drug-related killings and record the still-increasing number of drug war casualties happening under the administration of President Marcos Jr.

Duterte's drug war sanctioned and saw a severe escalation of lethal violence on alleged drug personalities, including potentially unlawful killings inflicted by both law enforcers and non-state elements. The staggering sight ushered disparate efforts from various organizations to monitor and record these deaths, oftentimes presenting conflicting and confusing figures that cannot be validated due in large part to the lack of transparency and rigor in their respective methodologies. Troubled by these estimates and its implications for accessing justice for the victims and their kin, the Center devised a methodology to systematically document drug-related killings, many of which may be unlawful killings constituting extrajudicial executions, with a clear set of parameters on what constitutes drug-related deaths, and how they can be recorded by other concerned parties. The goal is to eventually produce a comprehensive database of drug-related killings that provides individual level information from each case,



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where key trends in the circumstances of the deaths may be identified, and where an effective critique against the drug war and call for accountability may be launched.

In brief, the methodology we have developed extracts defined data points from news reports (both from traditional and social media) on incidents of drug-related killings, which contain information coming directly from the local police. Victims and incidents that meet our established criteria for a drug-related killing are encoded in the database. In particular, the following variables are pulled from the reports : 1) demographic information; 2) assailant information; 3) the victim's drug involvement, and; 4) incident information (e.g. time and location). Following our commitment to transparency and verifiability, the project has made the detailed methodology publicly available through our website <https://dahas.upd.edu.ph/database/>.

In 2021, we began a more active effort to disseminate the findings of our casualty recording, mainly through our online platforms, in particular through Twitter (<https://twitter.com/DahasPH>). These came in the form of regularly released infographics that show a rundown of drug-related killings that we recorded in the past week, month, and quarter, which can, at times, garner around 27,000 impressions online.

For more extensive analyses, we have also released several [feature articles](#) discussing in more detail our data on drug-related killings. Some major news organizations in our country have also caught sight of our efforts and now regularly cite our data vis-à-vis the state's in news tackling the drug war. It consistently shows the disparity between our tally and theirs on account of them only including killings from official anti-drug operations (to which even that we have found instances of underreporting). Journalists from other countries have also taken interest in incorporating our work in their features on the drug war in the Philippines. Our work has sustained public awareness of reported drug-related killings despite the change in the government leadership from Duterte to Marcos Jr.

Our data has also fed into human rights advocacy efforts carried out by well-established non-government organizations in this field such as [Human Rights Watch](#). In 2020, we have made a direct manifestation to the UN OHCHR and data from our Dahas Project is cited in the 29 June 2020 UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' report on the human rights situation in the Philippines ([A/HRC/44/22](#)). The US State Department's "[Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2021](#)" for the Philippines also cited data from our Dahas Project.

Steadily, our casualty recording has been gaining ground as an evidence-based counter-archive to the state's numbers and rhetoric on the war on drugs that diminishes, outright denies, or justifies the bloodbath it has instigated mainly on the poor and defenseless. We strive to cement the victims' names and humanity on record and aid in demanding justice and reparations from a state that is bent on quick fixes made at the expense of human rights and democracy.