



The Philippines Country Report October 2023

The Philippines is in a [territorial conflict](#) in the South China Sea after many encounters with Chinese vessels in the economic zone claimed by the Philippines. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has directed his focus away from suppressing rebel attacks to this conflict with China. He called on the U.S. to protect his country's "[identity and integrity](#)". President Biden promised to defend the Philippines against Chinese aggression.

Marcos' focus on Chinese expansionism has become a red herring in attempts to [hinder further investigations](#) by the International Criminal Court (ICC) into crimes against humanity committed during the Duterte regime's "war on drugs."

This state-sanctioned "war" [continues](#) under the Marcos government as the ICC [resumes](#) its investigations. In the year since Marcos Jr took office, an additional [300+](#) killings of drugs users and dealers have taken place. The Marcos Jr. government continues to [arbitrarily](#) imprison and deny bail to key civil society leaders, including Leila de Lima, who is being held without charges or evidence.

'Red-tagging' human rights activists and labor leaders, by accusing them of being members of the communist New People's Army, became a common justification for extrajudicial executions during Duterte's regime. Police murders are justified because the victims "fought back" while in police custody. The practice has [increased](#) under Marcos Jr. The country has [refused](#) United Nations recommendations to end the infamous practice.

Those who are "red-tagged" are accused of affiliation with the 'Left', with communists, or with Islamist [rebel groups](#). Under the [Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020](#), people accused of "red" affiliation may be detained without charges. They then have no right to trial or habeas corpus proceedings. Detention often leads to torture, death, or [coercion into 'fake surrenders' to authorities and the military](#).

Forced [disappearances](#) of journalists, activists, and [farmers](#) are widespread. Vice President [Sara Duterte](#) actively stifles pleas by the Philippines Commission on Human Rights. She has introduced 'red-tagging' into the schools, accusing teachers of being communist sympathizers.

The military has declared some regions to be [free](#) of Abu Sayyaf, a Maoist terrorist army connected to the Islamic State. But Islamist terrorism continues in Mindanao. The Philippine Army remains at war against decades-old [Muslim insurgencies](#). These armed conflicts endanger the peace and election process in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, where [election-related violence](#) has already begun.

During the Second World War the Japanese military subjected Filipina women to sexual slavery. Filipina women still suffer from generationally transmitted trauma. The Philippine government [has failed to address this trauma](#). It has not provided aid to these women or their descendants, focusing only on male veterans.

The Marcos Jr. government continues to deny the harm the Japanese military inflicted on these women and continues to [discriminate](#) against them in rehabilitation programs. The Philippine government [obstructs](#) all pleas to Japan for compensation to Filipina women and their descendants.

Genocide Watch considers The Philippines to be at **Stage 5: Organization; Stage 6: Polarization; Stage 8: Persecution; and Stage 10: Denial** in the Ten Stages of Genocide.

Genocide Watch recommends to the government of the Philippines:

- It should cooperate with the ICC in investigations of crimes against humanity in its "war on drugs."
- It should repeal the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020.
- It should immediately release all detained journalists and human rights activists.
- It should support appeals by victims of sexual slavery for reparations from Japan.