

Philippines

Head of state and government **Benigno S. Aquino III (replaced**

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in June)

Death penalty **abolitionist for all crimes**

Population **93.6 million**

Life expectancy **72.3 years**

Under-5 mortality (m/f) **32/21 per 1,000**

Adult literacy **93.6 per cent**

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More than 200 cases of enforced disappearances recorded in the last decade remained unresolved, as did at least 305 cases of extrajudicial execution (with some estimates ranging as high as 1,200). Almost no perpetrators of these crimes have been brought to justice. Private armed groups continued to operate throughout the country, despite government commitments to disband and disarm them. Despite its 2010 deadline, the previous administration failed to “crush” the communist insurgency, and in August the new Aquino administration announced that counter-insurgency operations would be extended. Tens of thousands reportedly remained displaced in Mindanao two years after the end of the internal armed conflict, although the actual number was not known.

Background

National elections were held in May and local elections in October. Both were marred by politically motivated killings. In May Benigno Aquino III, son of former President Corazon Aquino and assassinated senator Benigno Aquino Jr., was elected President.

The resumption of peace talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) remained delayed. However, in July, the government named its negotiating panel. In September, the MILF said it was ready to begin peace talks and named its peace negotiators.

Peace talks remained elusive between the government and the communist New People's Army (NPA).

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Unlawful killings

During both the May and October elections, the number of political killings increased. Political party supporters faced intimidation and violence, including grenade attacks.

Hundreds of cases of extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances from the last decade remained unresolved and perpetrators were not brought to justice. Almost none of the victims' families received reparations. At least 38 alleged political killings were reported during the year.

At least six journalists were reportedly killed in 2010. In the course of a single week in June, radio reporters Desiderio Camangyan (Mati City, southern Philippines) and Joselito Agustin (Laoag City, northern Philippines), and print journalist Nestor Bedolido (Digos City, southern Philippines) were shot dead.

In September, the trial of the suspected perpetrators of the 2009 Maguindanao massacre began after significant delays. Fifty-seven people, including 32 journalists, were killed in the massacre, which took place in the run-up to national elections. At least 83 suspects were arrested and charged, including at least 16 policemen and members of the powerful political Ampatuan family. One hundred and thirteen suspects in the massacre remained at large.

- Suwaid Upham, who was allegedly one of the gunmen during the massacre, came forward in March and was willing to testify in court as a possible witness. However, in June he was shot dead. Reportedly,

despite efforts on his part, he had been unable to enrol in the Witness Protection Programme. Two suspects were arrested in connection with his murder.

The Philippine National Police reported that there were 117 private armed groups in February. In May, the Independent Commission Against Private Armies reported that there were at least 72 active private armed groups in the country, and that another 35 had already been dismantled by the police and military.

Many members of government-established, armed “force multipliers” – including Civilian Volunteer Organizations (CVOs), police auxiliary units, and the Citizens’ Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) – were also members of private armed groups. A former army general and member of the Independent Commission Against Private Armies told the media that local officials often used these volunteer groups and auxiliary units as private armies. In November, the President vowed that he would disband and disarm identified private armed groups, but refused to abolish CVOs, the CAFGU and police auxiliary units, saying that they needed to be professionalized instead. The Armed Forces stated that it needed to increase the number of CAFGUs. In the wake of the Maguindanao massacre, the police said it had suspended recruitment for police auxiliary units.

In February, the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines announced that it had recorded 777 cases of extrajudicial executions and 251 cases of enforced disappearance since 2001. In September, human rights group Karapatan recorded 1,206 extrajudicial executions and 206 victims of enforced disappearance during the same period. A report published in September, commissioned by the United States Agency for International Development and NGO the Asia Foundation recorded 305 cases of extrajudicial executions with 390 victims from 2001 to 2010. The same report stated that only 1 per cent of reported cases resulted in a conviction, and that members of the armed forces were implicated in 20 per cent of cases.

Civilians continued to be killed as the military’s counter-insurgency plan failed to differentiate between civilians and members of the NPA. In some cases, the police or the military claimed that the deaths occurred during “legitimate encounters”.

- In November, botanist Leonardo Co and two other members of his team were shot dead in Leyte province, central Philippines, while collecting indigenous tree species. Military officials claimed that they were caught in the crossfire between the army and the NPA. However, a surviving member of the botanist’s team denied this.

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Torture and other ill-treatment

- In August, Philippine media broadcast a video of a plain-clothes police officer in a Manila police station torturing Darius Evangelista, a suspect apparently held for petty theft, while uniformed police officers looked on. The footage showed the suspect naked, being yanked by a cord attached to his genitals and whipped with a rope. The video prompted the authorities to suspend all 11 police officers involved. Darius Evangelista was arrested by policemen in March, but has not been seen since. There were no records of his arrest in the police logs. Darius Evangelista’s wife filed a formal complaint against nine police officers stating that his case was a violation of the Anti-Torture Act of 2009.
- In January, 40-year-old Ambrosio Derejeno was reportedly subjected to enforced disappearance. A family member last saw him in the custody of CAFGU members in Samar province. He was tied up and surrounded by men in camouflage uniform pointing their guns at him. Under the Anti-Torture Act of 2009, the act of using firearms to threaten someone who is restrained constitutes torture.

In December, the President signed the Implementing Rules and regulations for the Anti-Torture Act.

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Indigenous Peoples' rights

In June, members of an Indigenous Dumagat community from Rizal province, northern Philippines, were reportedly driven from their homes by the military. One of the community members said that the soldiers tied up the men and abducted at least one of them. Three members of the community, who were reportedly members of a left-leaning Indigenous Peoples' party, were killed by unknown perpetrators in July.

According to a media report, the Army revived the vigilante group *Alsa Lumad* (Rise, Indigenous Peoples) in September in its campaign against the NPA. The report further stated that the government had resorted to arming Indigenous Peoples as part of its counter-insurgency operations against the NPA.

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Sexual and reproductive rights

In September, the President stated that "the government is obligated to inform everybody of their responsibilities and their choices," and announced that the authorities would provide contraceptives to poor couples who requested it. The influential Catholic Church expressed its strong opposition to the move.

In August the Centre for Reproductive Rights issued a report which found that more than 560,000 women terminated their pregnancies each year and about 1,000 of them died annually after clandestine illegal abortions.

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