



**JUBILEE CAMPAIGN
ECOSOC Special Consultative Status (2003)
PREDA FOUNDATION**

**United Nations Human Rights Council
Universal Periodic Review – THIRD CYCLE
Submission to the 41st session of the Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review
October – November 2022**

Republic of the Philippines

**A Vital Voice for Those Suffering in Silence
9689-C Main Street • Fairfax, VA 22031-3746 TEL: (703) 503-2260 FAX: (703) 503-0792
EMAIL: jubilee@jubileecampaign.org**

**P.O. Box 700 • Addlestone • Surrey, KT15 9BW • United Kingdom
JUBILEE CAMPAIGN IS A NON-PROFIT, TAX EXEMPT, CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES**

**United Nations Human Rights Council
Universal Periodic Review of the Republic of the Philippines**

I. Background

1. **Jubilee Campaign**, in special consultative status with ECOSOC, submits this analysis of religious freedom and human rights in the Republic of the Philippines as a contribution to the Universal Periodic Review. Jubilee Campaign is a non-governmental organization focusing on promoting the rights of religious and ethnic minorities and raising the status of vulnerable women and children – to protect them from bodily harm and sexual exploitation.
1. **PREDA Foundation** is a registered, licensed and accredited non-government organization in the Philippines. Preda's mission is to defend and promote human rights and dignity through direct action in rescuing, protecting, healing and empowering exploited, trafficked and abused children, giving legal assistance, and aftercare. It aims to prevent exploitation through sustainable development, and fair trade for poverty alleviation.

II. Scope of international obligations and cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and bodies.

2. The Philippines has ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming to the abolition of the death penalty; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
3. The Philippines has not ratified the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Interstate communication procedure under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Recommendation(s)

We urge the Republic of the Philippines to:

4. Ratify the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Interstate communication procedure under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

III. Violations of international human rights obligations, considering applicable international humanitarian law

A. Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion

5. Section 5 of the Philippines' Constitution of 1987 states that "no law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever be allowed." Moreover, parents and guardians are permitted to educate their children according to their faith.¹
6. Section 4 of the Philippines' Revised Penal Code of 1930 discusses "Crimes against religious worship", including a de facto blasphemy law in Article 133: "Offending the religious feelings. – The penalty of *arresto mayor* (suspension of suffrage) in its maximum period to *prison correccional* (correctional prison) in its minimum period shall be imposed upon anyone who, in a place devoted to religious worship or during the celebration of any religious ceremony shall perform acts notoriously offensive to the feelings of the faithful".² The blasphemy law was applied in 2012 when HIV/AIDS awareness activist Carlos Celdran was charged with "offending religious feelings" for his public protest against the Catholic Church's opposition to the Reproductive Health Law. The upholding of Celdran's charges compelled him to go into self-exile in Spain in January 2019; he died at the age of 46 nine months later of cardiac arrest.
7. In 2017, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama ("Ahok"), the Christian governor of Jakarta, was arrested and convicted of blasphemy in 2017; previously, during a gubernatorial campaign in September 2016, Ahok had suggested that Islamic leaders were using Koranic verses to mislead and discourage Muslim voters from voting for a Christian governor. During his initial trial, Ahok apologized for offending people with his remarks but denied doing anything morally wrong. In January 2019, Philippine authorities released Ahok from prison early on account of his good behavior; Jubilee Campaign commends this action and encourages authorities and the judicial system to take similar steps in acquitting and releasing other prisoners of conscience.³

¹ [Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines](#), 2 February 1987.

² Humanists International, [The Freedom of Thought Report: Philippines](#), 27 October 2020. ; [Philippines], [The Revised Penal Code](#), Act No. 3815, 8 December 1930.

³ BBC News, ["Ahok: Former Jakarta governor released early from prison"](#), 24 January 2019.

8. President Duterte has a reprehensible track record of unfairly denigrating the Catholic Church; his vitriol surely has emboldened state and non-state actors who have engaged in persecution and violence towards Church members and leaders. In November 2018, Duterte mocked Catholics for honoring saints, calling saints “gago” (fools) and “lasenggo” (drunkards).⁴ One month later, he stated, “these bishops that you guys have, kill them. They are useless fools. All they do is criticize”.⁵ In January 2020 at the celebration of the 120th anniversary of the Baptist Church in the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte disparaged the Catholic Church, but he was met with a shocked and angered audience. Among President Duterte’s remarks were: “When the results of the elections came in, I got seven, six million over the next (candidate). And so maybe it’s good to bullshit the popes. It might make you win.” ; “You’d notice that they’re no longer complaining even if I said (the bishops are) bullshit ... they don’t respond anymore. That is how to win the war against the Catholic Church. All you have to say is ‘you sons of a whore, and you win.’” ; “I wanted to call him up and tell him, ‘Pope, you (expletive deleted), go home. Do not visit here anymore.’”⁶
9. Last October, Uniting Church in Australia and the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) reported that between 2017 and 2020, at least 16 church members and leaders had been murdered for false allegations that they were involved in the New People’s Army, a militant movement. Many more have been targeted for attempted murders and death threats but have survived, including bishops, priests, ministers, and laypeople, notably from the UCCP, the Roman Catholic Church, the Iglesia Filipino Independiente (IFI) church, and the United Methodist Church. As such, “most of the church people targeted in this way are those primarily fulfilling the Christian mandate and mission of ministering to the poor and the marginalised. They undertake their prophetic task as Christians to be with the people, especially in times when the basic human rights of people and communities are being undermined. [...] Their faith compels them to accompany people in asserting and attaining their full rights, but they are vilified, harassed and even killed for doing so”.⁷ Though the perpetrators are rarely, if ever, identified, some witnesses have reported that some of the attacks were committed by local authorities.
10. In March 2021, Redemptionist Father Alex Bercasio received a death threat in the form of a letter stating that “your days are numbered”; Bercasio has been advocating for the rights of indigenous people, and because of the threat he had to relocate. In July 2021, Redeptemptorists’ Laoag Mission Community compound was desecrated with a tarpaulin covered in phrases accusing the community of being communists. On an unspecified date, Father Warren Francis Puno was returning to his convent when he started being trailed by a

⁴ ABS-CBN News, [“Palace on Duterte’s remarks on saints: Just a joke, ‘not a religious slight’”](#), 3 November 2018.

⁵ Ted Regencia, “Philippines’ Duterte: ‘Kill those useless bishops’”, 5 December 2018.

⁶ Ernesto M. Hilario, [“No let-up in Duterte’s attacks on Catholic Church”](#), *LICAS News*, 20 January 2020.

⁷ United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) & the Uniting Church in Australia, [Just Act: News & resources from the Justice and International Mission Cluster](#), October 2020.

white vehicle for two hours; weeks earlier one of his colleagues received a letter stating “silence that priest [Puno] because if you won’t make him stop, we will”.⁸

11. In January 2021, Catholic priest Rene Bayang Regalado was found deceased on the side of the road near Malaybalay Carmel Monastery on the Philippine island of Mindanao. Father Regalado’s body exhibited injuries consistent with being beaten and shot, including bruising on his face and bullet wounds. It is believed that Father Regalado was attacked while he was returning to St. John XXIII College Seminary where he lived.⁹
12. In May 2020, Catholic priest Raymond Montero Ambray alleged that the Filipino military has circulated his photograph on the internet alongside the inflammatory captions “deliverer of evil”, “an ally of the tribal group MAPASU that protects the communist rebels”, and “using the word of God to manipulate and destroy the lives of the indigenous people”. MAPASU (Malahutayong Pakigbisog Alang sa Sumusunod/Preserving Struggle for the Next Generation) has been repeatedly baselessly tagged as a rebel group.¹⁰
13. In August 2020, human rights activist, women’s rights activist, and volunteer of Church Workers Solidarity Group, Zara Alvarez, was shot and killed by unidentified assailants, likely in revenge for her work documenting human rights violations committed by state actors as part of a submission to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.¹¹ Alvarez’s murder came a year after the rights’ groups Karapatan, Gabriela, and Rural Missionaries of the Philippines submitted a petition for the writs of amparo (protection) and habeas data (prohibition of information against) on Alvarez’s behalf, though it was rejected. Alvarez’s death could have been prevented had she been granted protection.
14. In early December 2020, Islamist militant group Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters attempted to set fire to the Catholic Sta. Teresita Parish Church in Cotabato City; though they failed to do so, they fire gunshots through the windows of the church. Criminal charges were filed regarding the terrorist attack.¹²
15. Numerous Catholic clergy who had a history of being openly critical of President Duterte’s extremely violent policies as part of his war on drugs – including extrajudicial killings - have faced death threats and have also been charged with “conspiracy to commit sedition”. In October 2020, priests Albert Alejo and Flaviano Villanueva were still maintaining their innocence against baseless sedition charges from 2019 and they released the following statement:

⁸ Mark Z. Saludes, [“Priests, church people under attack for standing for environment, human rights”](#), *Oeconomedia*, 24 August 2021.

⁹ Vatican News, [“Catholic priest murdered in the Philippines”](#), 25 January 2021.

¹⁰ Mark Saludes, [“Catholic priest in Mindanao decries red-tagging”](#), *LICAS News*, 11 May 2020.

¹¹ Lian Buan, [“Zara Alvarez asked for protection, but she died before the court could give it”](#), *Rappler*, 20 August 2020.

¹² Minnie Agdeppa, [“Southern Philippines Catholic Parish Attacked by Extremist Islamic Group”](#), *Christianity Daily*, 6 January 2021.

“We know that these charges are made up by the government, so we pleaded not guilty and we will continue our pursuit of truth and justice, and our duty to God to fight for the oppressed”.¹³

16. Four bishops who were charged alongside Priests Alejo and Villanueva in 2019 – Archbishop Socrates Villegas and Bishops Pablo Virgilio, Honesto Ongtioco, and Teodoro Bacani – finally had their baseless sedition charges dropped in February 2020 on account of lack of evidence.¹⁴

Recommendation(s)

We urge the Republic of the Philippines to:

17. Repeal Section 4 of the Philippines’ Revised Penal Code of 1930, as laws criminalizing blasphemy are inconsistent with human rights and freedom of religion or belief;
18. Investigate any and all direct and indirect links between President Duterte’s incendiary remarks about the Catholic Church and rates of violence towards or attacks of faith minorities and/or their houses of worship;
19. Fully condemn and prosecute all perpetrators of religiously-motivated violence/attacks or any violence/attacks targeting faith minorities involved in rights advocacy, social welfare activities, political criticism, etc.

B. Violence against Children (VAC), Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC), Child Neglect & Other Rights Violations

20. The Philippines’ national legislation which covers sexual abuse of children include *Republic Act No. 8353 – Anti-Rape Law of 1997* which criminalizes statutory rape of children under the age of 16 years¹⁵; it also criminalizes sexual intercourse with a minor younger than 18 if such circumstances involve force, threat, or intimidation. *Republic Act No. 7610 – Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act* criminalizes the use of children under the age of 18 in the production or distribution of pornography, and imposes the maximum penalty required if the victim is below the age of 12 years.¹⁶ *Republic Act No. 9775: Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009* expands on the aforementioned crime.¹⁷ Finally, *Republic Act No. 10364: Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2012* criminalizes “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, adoption or receipt of a child for the purposes of exploitation” including sexual exploitation, sexual servitude, sexual

¹³ Jose Torres Jr., “[Jesuit, SVD priests pled not guilty of sedition before Philippine court](#)”, *LICAS News*, 22 October 2020.

¹⁴ The Catholic World Report, “[Filipino priest to stand trial for sedition charges after speaking out on president’s drug policies](#)”, 14 January 2021.

¹⁵ Filane Mikee Cervantes, “[Bill raising statutory rape age to 16 hurdles bicam](#)”, *Philippine News Agency*, 25 November 2021.

¹⁶ [Philippines], *Republic Act No. 7610: Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act*, 17 June 1992.

¹⁷ [Philippines], *Republic Act No. 9775: Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009*, 17 November 2009.

tourism, pornography, and prostitution.¹⁸ Among these legislations, punishment ranges up to 40 years in prison and fines of five million pesos (≈ USD \$97 thousand).

21. Despite that the government of the Philippines continued to make efforts to combat and prosecute perpetrators of online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) and child sexual abuse (CSA), these remained major societal issues, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.
22. Cameleon Association reveals that more than 70% of sexually abused children in the Philippines are between the ages of 10 and 18; another 20% are under the age of 6.
23. The COVID-19 pandemic has unsurprisingly tremendously exacerbated cases of Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC) as more children were forced to remain in their homes and perpetrators – who are often biologically related to the victims – began facilitating OSEC as a form of supplemental or primary income during pandemic-induced economic hardship. The Philippines’ Department of Justice recorded a three-fold increase in the number of OSEC cases beginning in March 2020 after the first set of pandemic lockdown regulations.¹⁹
24. In its *Global Threat Assessment 2021*²⁰, Philippines had experienced a 265% increase in OSEC cases in just the two month period between March and May 2020. The report also found that 69% of perpetrators were financially-driven adult female relatives of the victims. The problem of OSEC in the Philippines is aggregated by supposed cultural beliefs that “harm is not caused if the child is not touched, as well as the expectation that children should help their families financially”. Indeed, there are some OSEC cases in which children are not necessarily forced to perform sexual activities on camera but instead are forced to simply stand in front of a camera for the sexual pleasure of viewers.²¹
25. Regrettably, there appears to be an issue of child sexual abuse in the Philippine Catholic Church, but cases are often swept under the rug and ignored, perpetrators are never brought to justice [no single Philippine priest has been convicted of sexual misconduct], and victims receive no support. American priest, Father Kenneth Hendricks, sexually abused at least seven altar boys in the Diocese of Naval, Biliran Province, until he was finally arrested in December 2018.²² In June 2020, a young girl in Cadiz City, Philippines, revealed that she had been sexually assaulted at the tender age of five by Reverend Aron Buenacosa; an investigation is currently underway, though the

¹⁸ [Philippines], *Republic Act No. 10364: Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2012*, 23 July 2012.

¹⁹ Our Grandfather Story, “[The dark truth behind the rising online child sex abuse cases in the Philippines](#)”, 9 May 2021.

²⁰ WeProtect Global Alliance, *Global Threat Assessment 2021*.

²¹ *Supra note 20*.

²² Union of Catholic Asian News, “[Clerics get away with child abuse in the Philippines](#)”, 21 December 2021. ; Cameron Knight, “[Five things to know about priest Kenneth Hendricks accused of molesting altar boys in the Philippines](#)”, *The Enquirer Cincinnati*, 6 December 2018.

pandemic has disrupted routine trial proceedings.²³ Fortunately, in 2019 the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines expressed its intentions to establish an office to investigate clerical abuse²⁴; also in 2019, Pope Francis enacted *Motu Proprio Vos estis lux mundi* to protect child sexual abuse victims and prosecute clerical perpetrators.²⁵

26. In September 2020, the Philippine Supreme Court acquitted a man of child sexual abuse charges. Originally, he had been convicted in 2012 of impregnating a 12-year-old girl; she once again became pregnant as a result of the abuse before he was formally sentenced in 2016 to 14 years in prison. The justices' unacceptable decision was that the court was "not prepared to punish two individuals and deprive their children from having a normal family simply because" the mother was a minor at the times of her impregnation. The justices also ruled that the benefits of keeping the 'family' together far outweighed "any perceived dangers" of the relationship between the girl and her perpetrator.²⁶
27. In February 2021, Prosecutor Ria Nina Sususco convicted two male minors who were involved in the trafficking in persons of children and child abuse for their activities pimping a 15-year-old boy to teacher Franco Aranas of New Cabalan National High School in Olongapo.²⁷ In October 2021, the Regional Director of the Department of Education dismissed Aranas on the grounds that he committed "grave" acts of misconduct after three minor victims testified during an investigation and revealed that Aranas had groomed, sexually abused, and raped them at Sunshine Lodge.²⁸
28. In April 2021, social workers rescued 14-year-old Analisa [pseudonym] and transported to Preda Foundation's home for abused children. Analisa came from a broken home, having only met her biological father for the first time when she was 12 years old. Having very little education, Analisa was seduced into entering a sexual relationship with a 27-year-old man after he offered her gifts; her mother agreed. Though the relationship eventually ended, Analisa's mother then brokered her daughter into a sexual relationship to another man aged 26 years; her mother, however, now wishes to get Analisa out of the relationship as the man is not paying her for the 'services'.²⁹ Fortunately, Analisa is receiving physical treatment, counseling and therapy, and legal assistance from PREDA.
29. PREDA is currently assisting Paula and her sister Maria. For years, 14-year-old Paula and Maria were being sexually abused by their father, brother, and their father's drinking partner. Finally, Paula was permitted to become a domestic

²³ Shibani Mahtani & Regine Cabato, "[In Philippines, a child alleges abuse by Catholic priest – and tests Vatican promise for global reckoning](#)", *The Washington Post*, 23 June 2020.

²⁴ Ernesto M. Hilario, "[Philippine Church moves to check clergy sexual abuse](#)", *LICAS News*, 2 March 2020.

²⁵ Panay News, "[Reporting child abuse in the Church, 1](#)", 21 December 2021.

²⁶ Chad De Guzman, "[The Philippines Is Raising the Age of Consent. That May Not Be Enough to Protect Its Children](#)", *Time*, 7 January 2022.

²⁷ Written Communication with Father Shay Cullen, Founder of PREDA Foundation, 18 February 2021.

²⁸ Francis B. Bermido, Jr., "[Olongapo Teacher Ordered Dismissed from Service for Sexual Abuse](#)", 18 October 2021.

²⁹ Written Communication with Father Shay Cullen, Founder of PREDA Foundation, 25 April 2021.

worker and revealed to her new employer what she and her sister were subjected to. The employer, together with PREDA, rescued the two young women who have now pressed charges against their abusers and are receiving therapy and education.

30. In November 2021, authorities from the Philippines National Police's Women and Children Protection Center (WCPC)'s Transnational Crime Investigation Force (TCITF) and Mindanao Field Unit (MFU) rescued six OSEC minor victims and arrested one perpetrator in Ozamiz City. At the same time, WCPC's Visayas Field Unit arrested a 62-year-old British male citizen for sexually abusing and exploiting a five-year-old boy and 15-year-old boy online.³⁰
31. On 29 October 2021, authorities in Bagong Silang arrested a woman for facilitating in OSEC. Her 16-year-old cousin and her 8-year-old niece – who were rescued on the same day – were sexually exploited online for the perpetrator's financial gain.³¹
32. On 29 September 2021, four children were rescued from OSEC by Philippine authorities; the perpetrator, who was the victims' uncle, was arrested and charged.³²
33. In June 2021 in two separate incidents, authorities rescued five victims [a 16-year-old girl, a 15-year-old boy, a 16-year-old boy, a 17-year-old boy, and a 19-year-old man] and arrested two male perpetrators aged 27 and 23.³³
34. Philippine authorities and international law enforcement officials in August 2020 at two different locations in Bislig City, Surigao del Sur conducted simultaneous sting operations which led to the rescue of 15 child OSCE victims and five perpetrators; all suspects were adult females between the ages of 18 and 29.³⁴
35. In July 2020, with the help of a tip-off from Australian authorities, Philippine police arrested two 27-year-old facilitators of OSCE and rescued four children between the ages of 2 and 8 years old. The victims were sexually abused on camera in exchange for money; two of the victims were children of one of the suspects and the remaining two victims were the niece and nephew of the second suspect.³⁵
36. In June 2020, authorities from the Philippine National Police arrested a 30-year-old female facilitator of OSCE and eight victims including four boys aged 2, 4, 11, and 14, two girls aged 3 and 15, a 32-year-old woman, and a 27-year-old

³⁰ IJM, "[Philippines Police Rescue 6 Children from OSEC and Arrest British suspect](#)", 3 November 2021.

³¹ IJM, "[Police rescue two girls from online sexual exploitation in the Philippines](#)", 29 October 2021.

³² IJM, "[Four children rescued from online sexual exploitation](#)", 29 September 2021.

³³ IJM, "[Police rescue 4 minors and 1 adult, arrest 2 suspects in back-to-back operations against online sexual exploitation of children](#)", 23 June 2021.

³⁴ IJM, "[13 children and 2 adults in Bislig City rescued from online sexual exploitation, 5 traffickers arrested](#)", 24 August 2020.

³⁵ IJM, "[Joint operation rescues 4 minors, arrests 2 suspects of online sexual exploitation of children](#)", 24 July 2020.

deaf woman. The 27-year-old victim was the perpetrator's sister, and two of the other victims were the 27-year-old's children. Another victim was a child of the suspect.³⁶

37. In May 2020, police arrested a 28-year-old woman who was apprehended for offering to livestream the sexual abuse of six girls between the ages of one and 19 years old. Fortunately, the at-risk children had not yet been victimized by the suspect.³⁷
38. In May 2020, David Timothy Deakin became the first foreign national to be convicted of cybersex trafficking offenses in the Philippines three years after his home was raided in 2017, at which point he was arrested and authorities confiscated drug use paraphernalia and hard drives containing child sexual exploitation materials (CSEM). When he learned of the arrest, one of Deakin's victims stated [translated to English] "This is good news. It's good because he won't be able to victimize anyone anymore. Thank God."³⁸
39. In May 2020, authorities rescued three girls who were forced to perform sexual acts via webcam; the perpetrator, a 34-year-old female, was arrested.³⁹ A week earlier, prior to Philippine Mother's Day, another three girls who were subjected to identical abuses were rescued and their 41-year-old female perpetrator was arrested.⁴⁰
40. In April 2020, Philippine authorities detained a 25-year-old female sex trafficker and rescued seven children and teens between the ages of 3 and 14. Also in April, another female adult cybersex trafficker was arrested a year after the victim – her underaged cousin – was rescued.⁴¹
41. Nonsexual violence and abuse against children similarly has experienced a dramatic uptick during the pandemic, and "the more household income that has been lost owing to COVID-19, the higher the reporting of violence in the home by both children and parents/caregivers".⁴² The Philippine NGO Center for Women's Resources revealed that even prior to the pandemic and subsequent lockdown measures, at least one woman or child was physically, psychologically, or sexually abused every ten minutes.⁴³ The most recent research study on nonsexual violence against children in the Philippines dates back to 2016, and it reported that three out of five children (60%) have experienced physical or psychological violence.⁴⁴

³⁶ IJM, "[Taguig online sex trafficker arrested, 7 children and one vulnerable adult rescued](#)", 18 June 2020.

³⁷ IJM, "[Police arrest online sex trafficker in Butuan City, rescue 13 victims and children at risk](#)", 21 May 2020.

³⁸ IJM, "[Press Release: First Foreigner Convicted for Cybersex Trafficking Offences](#)", 27 May 2020.

³⁹ IJM, "[Press Release 3 Children Rescued, One Trafficker Arrested](#)", 14 May 2020.

⁴⁰ IJM, "[Authorities Conduct Operations Rescuing 3 Children, 6 Days before Filipino Mother's Day](#)", 5 May 2020.

⁴¹ IJM, "[7 Minors Rescued and OSEC Suspect Arrested](#)", 24 April 2020.

⁴² Save the Children Philippines, "[The Hidden Impact of COVID-19 on Child Protection and Well-Being](#)".

⁴³ Rorie Fajardo-Jarilla, "[Philippines: Sweeping Violence Under the Carpet](#)", *Institute for War & Peace Reporting*, 27 May 2020.

⁴⁴ Rory Visco, "[The hidden pandemic of domestic violence, abuse vs women, children](#)", *Business Mirror*, 1 December 2021.

42. The Philippine government's 'War on drugs', sponsored by President Duterte, has led to likely thousands of extrajudicial killings committed by state actors, and a study by the World Organisation Against Torture investigating child deaths between July 2016 and December 2019 estimates that no fewer than 122 Philippine children have been killed during Duterte's 'War on drugs'; however, the report recognizes that this number is likely a major underestimate.
43. In February 2021, the bodies of two deceased 15-year-old boys, Chormel Buenaflor and Carl Justine Banogon, were found floating in the sea adjacent to Isla Puting Bato; the boys were last seen in late January before they were abducted. Both of the bodies displayed injuries consistent with physical torture, including slit throats, and their limbs were bound with tape. Police Captain Henry Navarro of the Manila Police District Homicide Division reported that one of the boys had a tattoo of Batang City Jail Gang's symbol on his body, implying that he may have been targeted for killing as the result of a gang war. The perpetrators have not been identified.⁴⁵
44. In 2020, 16-year-old Jun [pseudonym] came under the care of PREDA. Jun was born in Negros Occidental and lived his early years with his mother and abusive step-father before he ran away to Manila. Jun began working as a motorcycle driver, and once while he was transporting a passenger Jun was arrested for not having a license and for "stealing" as he did not have the motorcycle's registration papers with him. While in detention at Bahay Pag-asa, Jun was forced to sleep on the cold concrete floor, was fed expired food, and was forced to clean toilets and wash clothes; meanwhile, Jun was severely physically beaten by detainees while prison guards stood by. In one incident that occurred on his birthday, Jun was covered with a blanket and beaten to near unconsciousness. Fortunately in July 2020, Jun's case was dismissed and he was released from detention, after which he was transferred to PREDA for care. Jun is recovering well, is excelling in his studies, enjoys playing basketball, and is soon to be meeting his biological father.⁴⁶
45. In January 2020, 8-year-old Ronjhay Furio was in Manila's Santa Ana district looking to buy food when four plainclothes gunmen on motorcycles shot indiscriminately in order to kill their target, 52-year-old Roberto Cudal; Furio was struck in the chest by a stray bullet and was declared dead by the time he was rushed to Ospital ng Maynila Medical Center. Both Furio's family and human rights activists believe the shooting was the result of the war on drugs.⁴⁷

Commendation(s)

46. We offer our deepest commendations and praise for the activities of both Philippine and international organizations aimed towards eliminating OSEC.

⁴⁵ Margret Fermin, "[Gang war possible motive behind killing of two teenagers in Tondo](#)", *Philippines Lifestyle News*, 10 February 2021. ; Written Communication with Father Shay Cullen, Founder of PREDA Foundation, 18 February 2021.

⁴⁶ Written Communication with Father Shay Cullen, Founder of PREDA Foundation, 24 September 2021.

⁴⁷ JC Gotinga, "[8-year-old boy killed by stray bullet in Manila shooting incident](#)", *Rappler*, 28 January 2020.

Recommendation(s)

We urge the Republic of the Philippines to:

47. Expand prosecution of perpetrators and facilitators of online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC), child sexual abuse (CSA), cyber-sex trafficking, as well as nonsexual physical violence against children (VAC);
48. Expand and promote health services and psycho-social services tailored to treat child survivors of OSEC/CSA/VAC and encourage incident reporting among victims and witnesses, even in cases in which perpetrators are biological relatives;
49. Circulate child-friendly education material on how to identify OSEC/CSA/VAC and indicators/risks of OSEC/CSA/VAC, and how to access reporting mechanisms;
50. Take measures to eradicate unlawful extrajudicial killings of children as a result of the nation's war on drugs.