

# PREVENTING THE REINTRODUCTION OF THE DEATH PENALTY IN THE PHILIPPINES

## Civil Society, Risks and Perspectives

There are various civil society organisations, academic institutions, and religious communities working to prevent the reintroduction of the death penalty in the Philippines.

The Australian National University and Monash University conducted interviews with these actors at the request of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty.

They compiled the results into a confidential report, which this 2-page document summarises. The aim was to better understand the threats facing local civil society efforts to combat reintroduction of the death penalty and the risks involved with reintroducing the death penalty in the Philippines.



**Abolitionist for all crimes:**  
 24 June 2006



**Ratification of Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:** 20 November 2007



**United Nations General Assembly Moratorium Resolution:**  
 voted Yes from 2007 to 2014,  
 abstained in 2016 and 2018.

▶ May 2016	▶ Sept. 2016	▶ Nov. 2016	▶ March 2017
Election of President Duterte, who campaigned in favour of reinstating the death penalty for drug-related offenses.	Bills to reintroduce the death penalty for drug offences tabled in the House of Representatives.	Sub-Commission on Judicial Reforms approves a draft law that would reinstate the death penalty .	House of Representatives approves Bill 4727, which would authorise the death penalty for several drug- related offences: importation, trafficking, manufacture, sale, and distribution.
▶ May 2017	▶ May 2019	▶ July 2019	▶ Sept. 2019
• <b>Bill 4727 is under consideration in the Senate.</b> Senate Committee suspends hearings owing to questions addressed to the Department of Justice and the Department of Foreign Affairs regarding the ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR.	• <b>Midterm elections.</b> A majority of the elected Senators are members of the President’s party.	In his State of the Nation address, President Duterte calls for the death penalty for drugs and plunder.	<b>18 bills to reintroduce the death penalty are tabled in the House of Representatives.</b> Hearings begin on 24 September.

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## Key findings

**There are several civil society organisations working to prevent the reintroduction of the death penalty in the Philippines.**

The FLAG Anti-Death Penalty Task Force, which was established in 1993, serves as an umbrella organisation to coordinate these organisations' activities. The Task Force is comprised of ten organisations including religious groups, civil society organisations, lawyers' groups, universities, and the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines. In 2016, NoBox Philippines - an organisation that promotes drug policy reform - joined the Task Force. NoBox's inclusion is significant because the government of the Philippines seeks to legitimise reintroduction of the death penalty by promoting a narrative that is false - yet popular with the elites and the public - portraying the execution of drug traffickers as the solution to crime, poverty, and other social problems.

There was a strong sense that Congress would pass a bill to reintroduce the death penalty in 2019. At the time of the interviews (June and July 2019), the Task Force was preparing a 'unified position paper' and had plans to engage with the newly elected Senators in September and October 2019.

## Recommendations

**1 That the World Coalition host a local strategy seminar to allow the Task Force to present the 'unified position paper' to organisations that are not currently involved in drafting the paper.**

This seminar would facilitate exchange of information among all relevant parties, foster new collaborations, and encourage a division of labour among organisations to coordinate campaigns effectively. The seminar could also bring together international NGOs and other international stakeholders (e.g. UN, AICHR, EU, diplomats) to discuss what role they could play (if any) in preventing the reintroduction of the death penalty in the Philippines. Local organizations could thus collaborate with international NGOs and obtain their help in organizing local actions. This event would need to take into account the highly politicized national debate around the death penalty.

**2 Based on the discussions and needs identified in the seminar, the World Coalition will locate funding to support coordinated campaigns to prevent the reintroduction of the death penalty in the Philippines.**

Every organisation interviewed reported a lack of funding as the key obstacle to their planned campaigns.

**3 The World Coalition will seek written advice on how best to manage social media harassment and to protect IT data security. The World Coalition will circulate the written advice to all the civil society groups and academics identified in the report.**

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