

1946

1946

The Philippines gains independence.

1969

Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) is founded and its New People's Army (NPA) begins a guerilla war. Over the next five decades, 43,000 will die.

1972

President Ferdinand Marcos declares martial law.

1976

The Tripoli Agreement—MNLF and the government agree to Moro autonomy, but the deal collapses.

1986

Marcos loses a snap election to Corazon Aquino, millions join the People Power protests to force his resignation, and democracy is restored.

1996

Final Peace Agreement with the MNLF. Its leader Misuari is elected governor of ARMM.

2001

People Power II—President Estrada is overthrown by street protests in Manila backed by security forces. Vice-President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo becomes president.

2008

Breakthrough deal with MILF declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. Over 400 people are killed and more than 750,000 displaced in renewed fighting.

2010

Benigno Aquino III, son of Corazon Aquino, becomes president.

2014

Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro with the MILF. Congress begins debating the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) to implement the pact.

2015

The Mamasapano Incident—44 police are killed in a botched counterterrorism raid in Maguindanao, along with 18 Moro insurgents and five civilians. Public outrage derails the BBL.

2017

Radical, IS-aligned armed groups take over Marawi City, displacing 360,000 and killing over 800. Duterte declares martial law in Mindanao.

1968

The Jabidah Massacre—Moro soldiers mutiny and are killed by their Philippine army officers.

1969

Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) is founded by Nur Misuari.

1972

MNLF clashes with Philippine government forces escalate on Mindanao. In the decades-long insurgency that ensues, 153,000 will die.

1981

Former MNLF fighters split to form the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

1987

New constitution calls for an Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), created in 1989.

2000

President Estrada declares “all-out war” against the MILF. More than 750,000 civilians are displaced, and over 1,000 die.

2006

President Arroyo declares “all-out war” against the CPP-NPA, leading to 900 extrajudicial killings and 180 disappearances of leftist activists.

2009

The Maguindanao Massacre—Ruling family in Maguindanao ambushes political rival, killing 58 in deadliest-ever incident of electoral violence.

2012

Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro with the MILF outlines path to a new autonomous region on Mindanao.

2014

Several radical armed groups on Mindanao pledge allegiance to the Islamic State (IS).

2016

Rodrigo Duterte becomes the first president from Mindanao.

2016

President Duterte launches a war on drugs. Police kill 3,811 alleged drug dealers in the first year; thousands more are killed by unknown assailants.

2017

Philippines

At a glance



National civil war
Absent



Communal/ideological conflict
Shifted from high to medium



National political conflict
Shifted from high to low



Local political and electoral conflict
High



Transnational terrorism
Medium



Local resource conflict
Medium



Separatism and autonomy
Shifted from high to medium



Urban crime and violence
High

** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

Overview

President Rodrigo Duterte was elected in May 2016, promising to crack down on crime and pursue peace with communist and Muslim insurgents. The main pillar of Duterte's efforts to restore public order has been the war on drugs. Since he took office, police have killed more than 3,800 alleged drug dealers. Thousands more are estimated to have been killed by unidentified assailants. The communist New People's Army (NPA) has waged a low-intensity war for decades. Peace talks restarted in 2011 but sputtered out. Duterte resumed negotiations, but they have made little progress. The parties disagree over a ceasefire and the release of detainees. On the southern island of Mindanao, the long-running peace process to resolve an insurgency waged by the Muslim minority, known as the Moros, continues. Landmark agreements on autonomy were signed with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2012 and 2014. Congress began deliberating a bill to implement the agreements. Yet popular support for the peace deal proved weak following an incident in January 2015 in which 67 people—including 44 police—were killed in a counterterrorism operation. Duterte supports the revised version of the bill submitted to Congress in mid-2017. Meanwhile, an array of smaller, more radical armed groups that reject the peace process have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (IS). Despite military operations against them, these groups have been able to recruit locally and are also hosting growing numbers of foreign fighters. In May 2017, they seized Marawi, a provincial capital on Mindanao and a symbolic center for Moros.



National civil war

Not present in the Philippines.



National political conflict

Since independence from the United States in 1946, the Philippines has grown from a population of around 18 million to more than 105 million. During the first two decades of the post–World War II era, the country was relatively stable and enjoyed steady economic growth. Violence and instability increased in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A nationwide communist insurgency began, and Moros in the country’s far south launched an armed resistance (see below). After a period of authoritarian rule from 1972 to 1986, the Philippines returned to democracy. However, electoral fraud, corruption, and coup attempts continue to mar national politics.

President Ferdinand Marcos was first elected in 1965 and won a second term in 1969. Allegations of fraud and campaign overspending triggered civil unrest in early 1970 (known as the First Quarter Storm). In 1972, Marcos imposed martial law to quell opposition. State security forces persecuted individuals perceived to oppose government policies, mainly on the left. Three thousand two hundred and fifty-seven extrajudicial killings and 737 enforced disappearances were registered, and approximately 35,000 were tortured and 70,000 incarcerated.¹ Martial law ended in 1981, but state violence continued. Reports of widespread corruption by Marcos and his wife further inflamed the opposition: over 20 years, Marcos reportedly embezzled around USD 10 billion.²

Opposition to Marcos intensified in the early 1980s. In 1986, he called a snap election, which he lost to Corazon Aquino, the widow of a leading figure of the opposition, Senator Benigno Aquino. A mass campaign of civil disobedience to force Marcos to cede power ensued. The protests gained support from the Catholic Church and the security forces, notably Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and General Fidel Ramos. Marcos fled to the United States. This nonviolent popular uprising, known as “People Power,” restored democracy. In 1987, Congress promulgated a new constitution which imposed a single-term limit on the presidency.

35,000 tortured
70,000 jailed
under the Marcos regime

Fidel Ramos was elected president in 1992, succeeding Corazon Aquino. Under his leadership, the Philippines was stable and the economy grew. Ramos's vice president, Joseph Estrada, won the 1998 presidential election, buoyed by strong support from the poor. Once in office, however, Estrada lost the support of the middle class and elites as allegations of cronyism and embezzlement mounted. In January 2001, Estrada was overthrown by another broad-based, popular revolt supported by security forces, known as "People Power II." He retained the support of the poor, who protested his arrest on corruption charges in April the same year.³ Transparency International estimated that, in less than three years as president, Estrada amassed USD 78–80 million.⁴

Estrada's vice president, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, then assumed the presidency in 2001. Her administration, too, was marred by cases of large-scale corruption, patronage, money laundering, election rigging, coup attempts, and political killings.⁵ When Arroyo sought reelection in 2004, there were 189 election-related killings, and another 126 deaths were registered during the 2007 midterm polls.⁶ During her nine-year tenure, press freedom declined and killings of journalists surged (107 deaths).⁷ She faced two coup attempts. In 2003, around 300 Philippine soldiers staged a mutiny, briefly occupying part of the central business district of Metro Manila. In 2006, Arroyo responded to threats of a coup by declaring a state of emergency and arresting opponents in the media, military, civil society, and government.

The victory in 2010 of Benigno Aquino III, son of former president Corazon Aquino, ushered in the promise of reform and cleaner government. President Aquino targeted corruption under the previous administration, arresting Arroyo and some allies on charges of plunder in 2012, although she was released in 2016. The Philippines experienced a period of economic growth.

The 2016 presidential election was won by Rodrigo Duterte, the former mayor of Davao, the largest city in the southern Philippines and third-largest in the country. Securing 39 percent of the popular vote, he won a surprise victory as an outsider without links to the traditional patrons and money politics in the capital. He won over a wide spectrum of voters across the country, including in Metro Manila, where his anticrime message and promise to restore order resonated with a broad cross-section of voters.⁸ He is the country's first president from Mindanao, and has made peace in the southern Philippines a priority.



Transnational terrorism

The Philippines' archipelagic waters, porous borders, and weak state presence in large swathes of the country's south provide opportunities for transnational terrorism. Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), an Indonesia-based network, used the southern Philippines as a training ground in the 1990s.⁹ Individuals involved in the 2002 bombing in Bali, Indonesia, hid for years in Mindanao. International links such as these between domestic armed groups and international networks have persisted despite extensive foreign counterterrorism assistance, including a U.S. Joint Special Operations Task Force present in the Philippines from 2002 to 2015. Foreign extremists have been sheltered by the major insurgent organizations—including by the MILF in the 1990s and early 2000s—and by smaller groups that emerged after 2010, like Khilafah Islamiyah Mindanao (KIM) and Ansar al-Khalifa Philippines (AKP). Often foreigners swap expertise in bombmaking and armed conflict for safe haven.

The domestic armed groups that currently harbor foreign extremists reject peace talks with the Philippine government. The most prominent is the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), which broke off from the original insurgent organization, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), in the 1990s.¹⁰ The ASG has traditionally operated on the Zamboanga Peninsula and in the island provinces of Basilan and Sulu, though its members travel elsewhere in Mindanao and to eastern Malaysia. The ASG initially received funding from al-Qaeda, but has also relied from the start on banditry and kidnap-for-ransom to raise funds.¹¹ It was responsible for the 2004 SuperFerry

116 die

in the SuperFerry bombing, the deadliest single terror attack in the Philippines

bombing that killed 116 people, which it carried out with the Luzon-based Rajah Solaiman Movement (RSM) of radicalized Muslim converts. The ASG lost strength after Khadaffy Janjalani, the brother of deceased founder Abdurajak Janjalani, was killed in Sulu in 2006. Other ASG figures continued operations. They host extremists from elsewhere in Southeast Asia and draw support from communities that benefit from ransom payments.¹²

International links, as well as alliances among the smaller, more radical armed groups in Mindanao, have strengthened since the Islamic State (IS) was declared in Syria and Iraq in June 2014. Shortly thereafter, the ASG released several videos with its current leader, Isnilon Hapilon, known as Abu Abdullah, swearing allegiance to IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. IS subsequently recognized Hapilon as its *amir* in Southeast Asia. In June 2016, IS released a video urging Southeast Asian extremists to go to Mindanao if they could not get to Syria and Iraq.¹³ The video also featured the first Filipino confirmed to be in Syria, Mohammad Reza Kiram. The recognition of Hapilon's leadership has forged closer ties among other groups that have pledged allegiance to IS. Most important is the Maute Group (also called IS-Ranao), which is based in Butig, Lanao del Sur, in central Mindanao. The first joint operation carried out by the Maute Group in collaboration with ASG was the September 2, 2016, bombing of the night market in Davao—the largest city in Mindanao—which killed 15.¹⁴

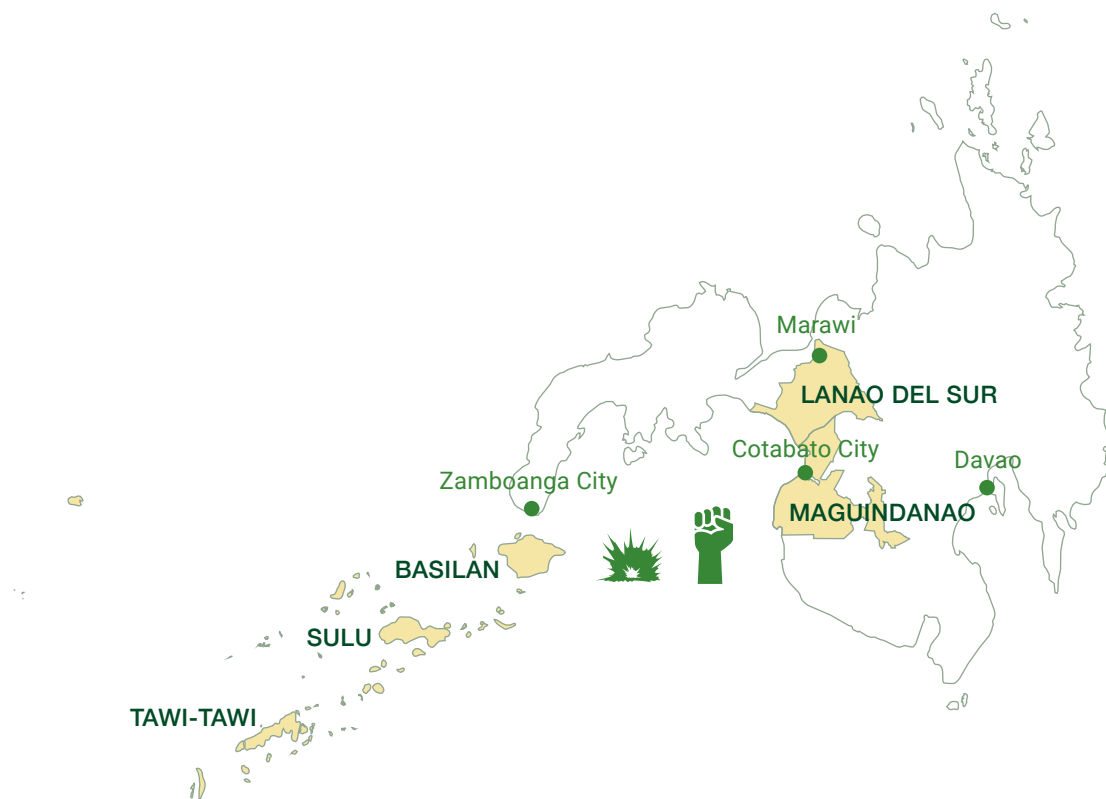
Violence escalated dramatically on May 23, 2017, when an attempted raid by the Philippine military to capture Hapilon prompted a large-scale attack by the Maute Group in large portions of Marawi City, the capital of Lanao del Sur Province and a symbolic center for Moros.¹⁵ The ensuing street clashes and bombing have so far killed at least 800 people as the Philippine government has tried to regain control of the city.¹⁶ Approximately 360,000 people have been displaced.¹⁷ Reports have emerged of foreign fighters—primarily Malaysians and Indonesians, but other nationalities as well—being killed alongside Maute recruits in Marawi.

Subnational level



Separatism and autonomy

Conflict in central and western Mindanao has sporadically pitted Moro insurgents against security forces. Since 1972, an estimated 153,000 lives have been lost. Although the Philippine government has been in stop-start negotiations with the two largest insurgent organizations—the MILF and the MNLF—for decades, a political solution to the conflict has proven elusive. State presence is weak, and provincial and municipal governments are controlled by local elites who use patronage and violence to stay in power. Poor governance, clan and ethnic rivalries, and the insurgency are deeply intertwined.



Prior to the arrival of the Spanish in the Philippines, Mindanao had a predominantly Muslim population ruled by sultans and *datus* (indigenous chiefs). When Spain colonized the majority of the Philippines in the 16th century, Muslims resisted conversion to Catholicism. Spain ceded control of the Philippines to the United States in 1898, but the Philippine public was not consulted, and the Moro population never acceded to the new arrangements. The American colonial regime passed a series of land laws¹⁸ that favored Christian settlers and private corporations at the expense of the Moros and indigenous peoples. This, along with the implementation of land titling, anchored in a property-rights regime alien to Moro and indigenous customs,¹⁹ led to massive dispossession of the Moro people by Christian settlers and investors. After independence, land resettlement programs accelerated, and settlers from the northern Philippines gained power and established land claims. This increased tensions between settlers and Moros due to growing land scarcity. The resettlement policy marginalized the Muslims economically and politically as settlers exploited the natural resources of their homeland.

In 1968, at least 28 young Moro military recruits were killed by their superiors when they refused to carry out their secret mission to infiltrate and foment unrest in Sabah, in eastern Malaysia. Sabah was formerly part of the Sulu sultanate and is claimed by the Philippines. The incident, known as the Jabidah Massacre, triggered more unrest and was a key motivation in the formation of armed Moro separatist groups.

Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The MNLF was founded in 1969 by Nur Misuari with the initial goal of fighting the Philippine state for an independent Moro nation in Mindanao. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) brokered the Tripoli Agreement, signed in Libya in 1976,²⁰ which was to grant autonomy to Muslim Mindanao. However, the deal quickly

collapsed. In 1989, President Corazon Aquino signed a law that set up the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) pursuant to the 1987 constitution. The ARMM is composed of two noncontiguous areas: the provinces of Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur in central Mindanao, and the island provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi off western Mindanao.²¹ Throughout this period, infrequent armed battles continued between government and MNLF forces. The MNLF did not participate in ARMM's establishment, and peace negotiations continued.

A more significant deal was signed in 1996. The Final Peace Agreement paved the way for Misuari to run for office; he was elected ARMM governor the same year. Around 7,000 MNLF forces were to be integrated into the Philippine military and police; however, implementation was problematic. The MNLF weakened after the peace agreement, but was never disbanded. It splintered into at least four factions, some of which continued to clash with the Philippine military. Misuari has a tense relationship with the MILF leadership, which separately began negotiating with the government in 1997.

In September 2013, Misuari's supporters triggered a siege in Zamboanga City, in western Mindanao. The incident, apparently aimed at thwarting the government's peace deal with the MILF (see below), paralyzed the city of over a million residents and reduced 30 to 40 hectares to rubble. Fighting lasted for three weeks, leaving 218 dead and hundreds more wounded. Over 100,000 residents fled to evacuation centers. In October 2013, a court charged Misuari and his MNLF allies with rebellion and other criminal charges.²² In mid-2014, the OIC convened a Bangsamoro Coordination Forum as a venue for direct talks between various MNLF factions and the MILF on the peace agreement in Mindanao.

Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The MILF, formed in 1981 after a split from the MNLF led by Hashim Salamat in 1978, is the country's largest Muslim armed group, with an estimated 10,000 to 30,000 members.²³ It is dominated by ethnic Maguindanao and Maranao from central Mindanao, and aspires to create a new, self-governing region referred to as the Bangsamoro in Muslim Mindanao.

Clashes between the MILF and the Philippine military increased after the 1996 agreement with the MNLF. These occurred intermittently despite a ceasefire agreement that was signed in 1997. Peace negotiations, facilitated by the Malaysian government, culminated in the breakthrough Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain in mid-2008. However, the Supreme Court declared the deal unconstitutional. In the turbulence following the Supreme Court decision, some MILF elements attacked Christian villages. This prompted military retaliation; the fighting in central Mindanao, which lasted until early 2009, displaced 750,000 and killed almost 400.²⁴ In December 2010, one of the MILF commanders, Ameril Umbra Kato, whose fighters had initiated clashes in 2008, broke away to form the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF). Amid this sporadic violence, the Philippine government and the MILF agreed to set up a range of domestic and international mechanisms to monitor the ceasefire and investigate violations, as well as to exchange information on criminal and extremist activity.²⁵

Formal negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF accelerated after President Benigno Aquino held talks with MILF leader Al-Haj Murad Ebrahim in Tokyo in 2011.²⁶ Subsequent talks in Kuala Lumpur, facilitated by Malaysia and supported by the International Contact Group, made up of concerned governments and NGOs, led to the signing of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro in October 2012 and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro in March 2014.²⁷ These peace agreements called for the abolition of ARMM and the creation of a new autonomous region in the Bangsamoro with more powers and territory, a greater ability to generate its own revenue, and new security arrangements (which would include the handover of MILF weapons). Congress began deliberating the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), which would turn the agreements into law.

7,000 MNLF forces integrated into the military & police

A major setback occurred on January 25, 2015, when police conducting a counterterrorism operation against a Malaysian militant clashed with MILF and BIFF fighters in the municipality of Mamasapano in Maguindanao. Forty-four police, eighteen MILF, and five civilians died in the Mamasapano incident.²⁸ The deaths of the police aroused widespread public anger, and deliberations on the draft BBL in Congress were suspended. Public distrust of the peace process grew, and Congress failed to pass the legislation before Aquino’s term ended.

President Duterte unveiled a new approach to the peace process shortly after he took office in June 2016. He envisions the new autonomy arrangements negotiated with the MILF, and the previous arrangements negotiated with the MNLF, being subsumed under a new federal constitutional framework. A plebiscite on federalism is provisionally planned for the 2019 midterm elections.²⁹ At different times, government officials have suggested that the BBL will be passed in advance of federalism as a test case for regional autonomy, while others have suggested that federalism will be the first step in renegotiating that balance of powers. A revised version of the BBL was submitted to Congress in mid-2017.

Table 1. Armed groups, their forces, and firearms as of October 2014

Armed Group	Forces	Firearms
Moro National Liberation Front (rogue MNLF elements)	558	314
Moro Islamic Liberation Front	11,600	7,700
Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters	450	479
Abu Sayyaf Group	386	318
CPP-NPA-NDF	4,386	5,192

Source: Armed Forces of the Philippines



Large-scale communal and ideological conflicts

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) was established in 1969 and is one of the oldest communist insurgencies in the world. It aims to overthrow the Philippine government through an armed revolution using a guerrilla-style “protracted people’s war.” Its New People’s Army (NPA) has waged war against government forces for more than four decades. Between 1969 and 2008, more than 43,000 fatalities related to the CPP insurgency were recorded.³⁰

The CPP-NPA was strongest during the Marcos era. An internal split in the early 1990s cost it many supporters. Since the return to democracy, left-aligned groups have set up political parties

that have successfully stood for Congress. Leftist activists have continued to be the target of state violence. After President Arroyo declared “all-out war” against communist insurgents in 2006, approximately 900 leftists were victims of extrajudicial killings and 180 were disappeared.³¹

The NPA remains active in mountainous and neglected areas countrywide, but current estimates suggest it has fewer than 4,000 fighters.³² The Philippine military reports that 12 out of 23 NPA guerrilla fronts are located in Mindanao, in the three Davao provinces and the Compostela Valley. These fronts have a combined force of 800 guerrillas. NPA rebels from some of these fronts operate in nearby areas such as the Caraga, North Cotabato, and parts of Bukidnon.³³ The MILF also operates in the latter two areas; the NPA considers the MILF a “revolutionary force,” and the two have had a tactical alliance since 1999. The CPP-NPA also has a dedicated Moro committee.³⁴

Peace negotiations between the CPP’s political arm and the government have been infrequent. President Aquino attempted to relaunch negotiations in 2011, hosted by the Norwegian government in Oslo. But talks stalled at the preliminary stage, with the CPP-NPA’s representatives demanding the release of detainees and the abolition of the government’s peace and development programs.

In June 2016, prior to his inauguration, President Duterte resumed peace talks with the CPP in Oslo. He also extended an offer of cabinet posts to the CPP; these positions are held by members of the movement’s political parties rather than the CPP itself.³⁵ Talks broke down in early February 2017 before being rescheduled for April in the Netherlands. Although the parties agreed to a temporary joint ceasefire, the NPA resumed its attacks on the military and the police in May after Duterte declared martial law in Mindanao in response to the violence in Marawi. Communist insurgents later agreed to suspend their offensives. However, an NPA ambush in North Cotabato in July that injured members of the presidential security group caused Duterte to cancel the next round of talks.

Local level



Local political conflict and electoral violence

Philippine elections are among the most violent in Asia. The most recent elections, in 2016, were marred by significant electoral violence. More than 230 incidents were reported,³⁶ with 15 murders prior to the polling and 10 more people killed on election day.³⁷ According to an election observation in Mindanao by the Carter Center, 17 election-related killings were documented, 11 of which were in the ARMM, from early April to June 8.³⁸ Overall, the polls in 2016 were more violent than in 2013, when there were 81 election-related incidents of violence in the five months before election day.³⁹ The 2016 violence matched levels seen in previous elections: 180 cases in 2010 and 229 cases in 2007.⁴⁰

Mindanao is a hotspot, particularly the Moro areas, as a large number of local politicians have private armies, often funded from the public purse. The country’s worst episode of electoral violence was the 2009 Maguindanao Massacre, which was rooted in political rivalry between the Ampatuan and Mangudadatu clans. The Ampatuan clan sought to prevent Toto Mangudadatu from running against them for the provincial governorship. Their private army killed 58 family members, supporters, and journalists who were en route to file the paperwork for Mangudadatu’s candidacy.⁴¹

Rido, or clan feuding, flows from political rivalry in Mindanao. It involves recurring hostilities between families and kinship groups characterized by serial acts of violent retaliation to avenge perceived affronts or injustices. Factions can be historical (geographic, ethnic, linguistic, insurgent); rivalries are often due to personal, family, clan, or political feuds. Conflicts can erupt over

land, marriage, elections, business deals, or personal grudges and often cut across and through families, clans, and insurgent groups. Rido has wider implications for conflict in Mindanao, because it tends to interact with separatist conflict and other forms of armed violence,⁴² especially when the conflicting parties are aligned with armed groups.⁴³ An inventory compiled by the Regional Reconciliation and Unification Commission in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao listed 228 rido cases in the region, with 64 percent remaining unresolved.⁴⁴ Survey research has shown that most people are more concerned about the prevalence of clan conflict and its negative impact on their communities than the conflict between the state and rebel groups in Mindanao.⁴⁵



Local conflict over resources and community rights

The Philippines has a long history of agrarian unrest. The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) began in 1988, under Corazon Aquino's presidency, and promised to redistribute public and private agricultural lands to farmers. The government claims it distributed 89.9 percent of the CARP target (8.25 million hectares out of 9.2 million hectares earmarked for redistribution) to farmers by the end of 2013.⁴⁶ However, the program has been criticized for its weak implementation and legal loopholes. There have also been numerous reports of farmers being harassed and killed by landlords who disagreed with the program. Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), a militant movement of landless peasants, claimed that 96 farmers were killed during the Aquino administration and more than 500 were victims of agrarian-related extrajudicial killings.⁴⁷

Another key part of the legal framework governing land issues is Republic Act 8371, known as the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA), which took effect in 1997. It gives indigenous peoples—who comprise 10–15 percent of the total population—the right to their ancestral domains. It enables them to obtain special titles, called certificates of ancestral domain title or CADTs.

A World Bank study reported that complicated land-management structures and lack of coordination between institutions disadvantage the poor and most vulnerable. They do not understand and struggle to follow procedures intended to protect their rights. Land issues have the potential to become political and to escalate from small-scale boundary disputes to major conflict involving the military and nonstate armed groups.⁴⁸

Climate change and natural disasters can be another cause of conflict in the Philippines. Drought caused by El Niño led to a demonstration on March 31, 2016, by at least 6,000 farmers, who blocked the Cotabato-Davao highway in Kidapawan City, demanding government subsidies including 15,000 sacks of rice. Police efforts to disperse the protestors turned violent, causing three deaths and hundreds of injuries.⁴⁹



Urban crime and violence

The Philippines' national homicide rate in 2014 was 9.9 per 100,000 population, one of the highest in Southeast Asia. Urban crime remains a significant concern in the Philippines. Crime significantly increased in 2013, to 631,406 recorded incidents, up from 217,812 in 2012.⁵⁰ More than 25 percent of crimes were recorded in the National Capital Region, which may be due to more accurate reporting.⁵¹ The trend continued, with a slight increase to 714,632 crimes in 2014, but later dropped by 5.34 percent to 675,813 in 2015. In 2016, amid Duterte's war on drugs, the number of crimes dropped by 13 percent from 2015, to 584,809.⁵² The Philippine National Police claim that crime has decreased since Duterte took office in July 2016, with 78,941 cases reported between July 1, 2016, and March 24, 2017, compared to 158,879 cases from July 1, 2015, to June 30, 2016, under Aquino.⁵³ Theft remains the most common crime, followed by physical injury and robbery.⁵⁴

Between $\frac{2}{3}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ of firearms are owned by **civilians**

Gun ownership is high in the Philippines; the rate of civilian firearm possession—both legal and illegal—is 4.7 per 100 people. This is the second-highest rate of civilian ownership in South-east Asia, after Thailand.⁵⁵ Over the past fifteen years, between two-thirds and three-quarters of all firearms in circulation in the Philippines have been owned by civilians rather than the government.⁵⁶

The Philippines both consumes and produces illegal drugs. In 2015, 27 percent of *barangays* (the smallest administrative district)—more than 10,000 nationwide—were identified as drug affected.⁵⁷ The country has been identified as a transshipment point and a destination for large shipments of methamphetamine, and it is also a center of money laundering for significant proceeds from international narcotics trafficking.⁵⁸ President Duterte’s public campaign against drugs has led to many killings of alleged drug dealers and users. According to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency’s official numbers on the government’s antidrug campaign, 70,854 antidrug operations were conducted between July 1, 2016, and August 29, 2017, with a total of 107,156 drug “personalities” arrested and 3,811 killed.⁵⁹ Thousands more have been killed in operations that were not carried out by the police, but exact numbers are unclear.⁶⁰ Duterte also planned to bring back the death penalty, even though capital punishment was abolished in 2006. The bill to reimpose the death penalty on heinous crimes pertaining to illegal drugs was approved in the Philippine House of Representatives in March 2017, but has not progressed in the Senate.



Domestic and gender-based violence

The Philippines is the best performer in the Asia-Pacific region when it comes to gender equality, placing ninth in a global index that ranks 142 countries on their ability to close the gender gap in four key areas: economic equality, political participation, health and survival, and educational attainment. Based on the *Global Gender Gap 2014* report, the Philippines was able to maintain its first-place ranking on two indicators—education and health.⁶¹

Reported cases of violence against women have increased in the last decade. From 2006 to 2011, the number of reported cases increased almost threefold, from 4,954 to 12,948. One possible reason for the increase is the introduction and greater awareness of laws, specifically Republic Act (RA) 9262, the Violence against Women and their Children Law, which expanded the definition of abuse to domestic violence and physical, emotional, and economic harm. The law allows third parties to report offenses.⁶²

The national increase in reporting may obscure some variation across the Philippines. The provinces with the highest ranking on the Gender Disparity Index are Maguindanao, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Basilan in the ARMM. In these areas, women, especially migrant workers, are disadvantaged compared to men in terms of standard of living, educational attainment, and life expectancy. In 2014 and 2015, ARMM recorded the fewest incidents of gender-based violence of all regions in the Philippines. Given that a high level of gender inequality is often linked to higher rates of gender-based violence, incidents in Moro areas may be underreported.⁶³

Notes

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- 3 Paul D. Hutchcroft and Joel Rocamora, "Strong Demands and Weak Institutions: The Origins and Evolution of the Democratic Deficit in the Philippines," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 3, no. 2 (2003): 281–282.
- 4 Nathan Gilbert Quimpo, "The Philippines: predatory regime, growing authoritarian features," *Pacific Review* 22, no. 3 (2009): 342.
- 5 Quimpo, "Predatory regime," 345. Arroyo was considered the "most corrupt" president of the country for the past 21 years, according to a 2007 Pulse Asia survey.
- 6 Carlos H. Conde, "Toll Rises to 46 in Philippine Election Unrest," *New York Times*, November 24, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/25/world/asia/25phils.html?_r=0.
- 7 Manuel Mogato, "Massacre tests judicial reform in the Philippines," *Reuters*, June 23, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/24/us-philippines-impunity-idUSBRE85N01A20120624>.
- 8 Malcolm Cook and Lorraine Salazar, "The Differences Duterte Relied Upon to Win," *ISEAS Perspective* 2016, no. 34 (June 22, 2016), https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2016_34.pdf.
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