

AI Index: ASA 35/001/2005

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Text of action to be posted on AI Asia-Pacific website, February 2005.

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## **DRAFT—DRAFT—DRAFT—DRAFT Philippines: Sharp rise in “vigilante” killings as human rights activist’s death remains unsolved**

### **“Vigilante” killings in Davao City, Philippines — an urgent need for effective investigations**

[Photo and caption: © Private. Bobby Alia was 14 years old when he was killed by unidentified assailants in November 2002. He had been accused of theft and possession of a knife and had reportedly been released from a police station the previous day. After his two older brothers were killed the year before, his mother is said to have been warned that Bobby would be next.]

[Photo and caption: © Private. Jacinto “Rashid” Manahan. The banner behind him reads “Citizens against summary killings and the death penalty”.]

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Jacinto “Rashid” Manahan, a well known local human rights activist, was killed in Davao City in August 2004. He was shot dead outside a hotel as he prepared to leave for a university forum on the death penalty and summary executions.

Rashid Manahan had organized the forum to discuss rising numbers of “vigilante” killings in Davao City. More than 320 people have reportedly been killed in the city since 1998, the majority of whom are suspected of involvement in crimes such as drug pushing, solvent abuse and petty theft. To Amnesty International’s knowledge no one has been brought to justice for any of these killings and investigations have failed to identify the perpetrators. Most of the victims, who include street children and youth gang members from the city’s poorest communities, were shot dead by unidentified gunmen on motorcycles. The rate of killings has risen each year since 2000 with the first few weeks of 2005 seeing a further sharp rise. At least 34 people have been killed since the beginning of this year according to press reports.

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Local human rights groups have repeatedly voiced fears that government agents may be responsible for the killings, or may have incited or colluded with private “vigilante” gangs. The authorities have denied this.

Such fears have been heightened by repeated public statements by the Mayor of Davao City apparently suggesting that extreme measures including extrajudicial executions are an acceptable and effective way of combating crime. At an election rally in 2004 the Mayor reportedly told a crowd, “If I win, more criminals will get killed because I have vowed to protect the people of this city... Davao City will be very, very dangerous for criminals. I’ve been telling criminals it’s a place where you can die any time. If that’s a cue for anybody, that’s fine.” Responding to Amnesty International’s expressions of concern he has said, “we will solve it my way”. Amnesty International fears that his statements encourage “vigilante” attacks.

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The man who killed Rashid Manahan escaped with an accomplice on a motorcycle and has not been brought to justice. While motives for the murder remain unclear, Rashid Manahan’s work against summary executions and the attacker’s methods prompted speculation that

“vigilantes” may have also been responsible. His death has been seen as symptomatic of the authorities’ failure to ensure respect for the rule of law and human rights in Davao City, further undermining public confidence in the criminal justice system.

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Amnesty International is increasingly concerned at a lack of progress in police investigations into a series of killings of street children and others by unidentified “vigilantes” in Davao City, (Mindanao). According to news reports at least [270] suspected criminals, mostly alleged drugs pushers, solvent abusers and petty thieves, and including street children and youth gang members, have been killed in the city since 1998. The victims were often shot dead by unidentified gunmen on motorcycles.

Local human rights groups have repeatedly voiced fears that government agents may have been responsible for this pattern of extrajudicial executions of suspected criminals, or have colluded with private “vigilante” gangs carrying out such killings as part of an attempt to tackle crime and “clean up” Davao’s streets.

Alarm at reports of a least [75] “vigilante” attacks since January 2004 intensified in August when a well known local human rights defender, **Jacinto ‘Rashid’ Manahan**, was also shot dead. He was killed outside a hotel at midday as he prepared to leave for a university forum he had organised to discuss the abolition of the death penalty and concerns over the local “vigilante” killings. His attacker escaped with an accomplice on a motorcycle.

While the motives for Rashid Manahan’s killing remain unclear, his human rights work and the attacker’s methods prompted speculation that “vigilantes” may again have been responsible. With the police as yet unable to identify and charge his killers, Rashid’s Manahan’s death has been seen as symptomatic of a failure on the part of the authorities to ensure respect for the rule of law and human rights in Davao, and has further undermined public confidence in the criminal justice system.

There are continuing concerns that repeated public statements by Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte appear to suggest that extreme measures, including extra-judicial executions, are an acceptable and effective means to combat criminality and ensure the safety of the community. In August in response to Amnesty International’s expressions of concern, Mayor Duterte commented that the organisation should not meddle Davao’s responses to criminality and said that “we have a problem here and we will solve it my way”. Amnesty International fears that such statements help create a climate within which “vigilante” attacks are condoned.

Amnesty International remains unaware of any investigations in recent years which have led to the prosecution of those responsible for “vigilante” killings. The organization fears that the climate of impunity may become further entrenched, and that further killings are likely. Since June 2004 alone Amnesty International has recorded the killing of at least 45 individuals, including **Melvin Abiso, Rogelio Gallego, Rolando Canono, “John John”, Julius de la Calsada y Flores, Leonardo Dumanacal, Gregorio Yu, Allen Teeson, Ronald Catulay, brothers Ryan and Michael Maraya, Menilio Lumanta, Allan Ampo, Roger Balibay, Rey Donaire, Renato Maylas, Samer Escoras, Reynaldo “Rey” Gorgonio, Angelo Sungahid, Jemar Nacua, Manuelito Marbel, Manuel Garcia, Joseph Lirog, Hilario Daylo, Danilo Mandelo, Edward Timtim, Zalde Adegue, Rolando Custodio, Ryan Milan, Allan Jamsola, Johnny Moneza, Joel Alison, Zandro Bajala, Arlene Abellana, Emilio Verano, Rey Morales, Mark “Inday” Quizo, Brocel Lopez, Rodel Simbajon, Roberto Gawin, Abraham Aquino, Benjamin Jabonete, Armando Marin, Dindo Capote, and Sabino Villarte Jr.** While eighteen of the above are reported to have been less than 25 years of age, three victims, Mark “Inday” Quizo, Angelo Sungahid, and Jemar Nacua are reported to have been 15 years old or less.

While Amnesty International recognises the right of every government to fight criminality and to protect the community, this should never be at the expense of human rights. The Government of the Philippines has a duty to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all its

~~citizens. This includes an obligation to exercise due diligence to protect individuals or groups from abuse perpetrated by “vigilante” groups — or others acting outside of the state authority — and to conduct prompt, effective, independent and impartial investigations into allegations of abuse.~~

~~Rather than encouraging public misconceptions that “vigilante” killings of criminal suspects serve to “deter” crime, government officials at all levels should send a clear public message that all unlawful killings will not be tolerated, and that effective responses to crime lie instead with the building of a professionalized police force and criminal justice system, adequately resourced and trained, and fully respectful of human rights and the rule of law.~~

### Take Recommended Action!:

You may use this sample letter or write your own if you prefer:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Please write politely worded appeals or letters to the authorities in English or your own language:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dear

~~•I am writing to express my grave concern at a pattern of alleged Expressing grave concern at persistent reports of a pattern of “vigilante” killings of suspected criminals in Davao Ceity. More than 320 people have reportedly been killed since 1998 and the rate of killings has risen year by year. Those killed include children, many from Davao City’s poorest communities. None of the perpetrators are known to have been brought to justice.~~

~~\_\_\_\_\_ I call on you to take urgent steps to protect all members of the community from extrajudicial executions, to conduct prompt, effective, independent and impartial investigations into the killings and to bring those found responsible to justice.~~

~~I am particularly concerned about the killing in August 2004 of local human rights defender Jacinto “Rashid” Manahan who was murdered while on his way to a human rights forum about the extrajudicial executions. I call on you to step up the investigation into his case in order to bring those responsible to justice.~~

~~While I recognize that the authorities have a duty to protect the community from crime, this must never be at the expense of human rights. I am particularly concerned at statements by local government officials which appear to encourage or condone the killing of criminal suspects.~~

~~I urge you to make clear public statements condemning all unlawful killings. It should be made clear that effective responses to crime lie with the building of a professionalized police force and criminal justice system, adequately resourced and trained to respect human rights and the rule of law.~~

Yours sincerely,

~~•Urging the authorities to conduct prompt, effective, independent and impartial investigations into the at least [75] extrajudicial killings reported in Davao since January 2004, and to bring those found responsible to justice.~~

~~•Expressing grave concern at the killing of human rights defender, Jacinto ‘Rashid’ Manahan in August 2004, and urging the authorities to step up investigations with a view to swiftly bringing those responsible to justice.~~

~~•Urging the government to publicly condemn “extra-judicial killings”, and to ensure that the police force is adequately trained and resourced to fight criminality while respecting human rights and the rule of law.~~

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**Please send appeals to:**

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo  
Malacañang Palace  
J.P. Laurel St - San Miguel  
Manila 1005, Philippines  
Faxes: ~~+632 736 2495, +632 733 2107~~, +632 736 1010  
Salutation: Dear President Arroyo

Secretary of Justice Raul Gonzales  
DOJ Main Building  
Padre Faura Street  
Manila 1004, Philippines  
~~Fax: +632 521 1614~~  
Salutation: Dear Secretary of Justice

Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte  
City Hall,  
City Hall Drive  
Davao City 8000, Philippines  
Fax: +63 82 227 4877  
Salutation: Dear Mayor

If you wish, you may also write to the following newspapers describing AI's concerns and saying that you have written to the authorities urging them to take action:

Sun Star Davao  
Editor in Chief: Stella Estremera  
Granland Door 5 and 6, Warehouse and Business Center, R. Castillo St., Agdao, Davao City  
Email: [ed\\_davao@sunstar.com.ph](mailto:ed_davao@sunstar.com.ph)  
Website: [www.sunstar.com.ph](http://www.sunstar.com.ph)

Philippine Daily Inquirer  
Yague cor. Mascardo Sts.  
Pasong Tamo, Makati City,  
Philippines 1220  
E-mail: [feedback@inquirer.com.ph](mailto:feedback@inquirer.com.ph)  
Website: [www.inq7.net](http://www.inq7.net)

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