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January 4, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President-elect of the United States of America
Trump Tower
725 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear President-elect Trump:

Since his election seven months ago, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's government has engaged in a violent campaign of extrajudicial killing, known as Project Tokhang, under the guise of a "war on drugs." Duterte has pledged to kill tens of thousands of people connected to illegal drug activity. This campaign has primarily targeted drug users suffering from addiction and low level drug dealers. In addition to directing police forces to carry out this operation, he has urged vigilantes to execute people who use illegal drugs, many of whom struggle with addiction. A recent *New York Times* article indicates that you praised Duterte's approach as "the right way" despite the merciless slaughter happening under the auspices of an antidrug campaign.¹ I urge you to reexamine your stated views on President Duterte's campaign of violence and unequivocally denounce it as morally reprehensible and antithetical to counter-drug approaches that focus on the treatment and rehabilitation of those addicted to drugs, and the fundamental obligation to protect the due process rights of those accused of violating drug laws.

Since President Duterte took office on June 30, an estimated 2,000 people have been slain at the hands of the police and more than 3,800 unsolved homicides were inadequately investigated, many of which are believed to be a result of vigilantes carrying out Duterte's bidding.² Persistent and growing reports of these widespread extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations in the course of President Duterte's putative quest to eliminate illegal drugs raises grave concerns for the global community, as does your apparent endorsement of these activities.

¹ http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/12/07/world/asia/rodrigo-duterte-philippines-drugs-killings.html?emc=edit_ta_20161207&nliid=73053086&ref=cta

² Ibid.

According to the 2016 United Nations World Drug Report,³ the number of people suffering from drug use disorders has increased to more than 29 million. Drug addiction is a challenging chronic disease in which access to treatment and recovery services are crucial to rehabilitation. This past April in a special General Assembly, the United Nations adopted a new framework for addressing the world drug crisis, identifying the need to adopt balanced approaches to drug control that put the health and well-being of people, families, and communities at the center of all responses. In contrast, Duterte's supposed "*war on drugs*" is actually a killing spree aimed largely at people struggling with drug use disorders. This is thoroughly contrary to sound counter-drug policies which treat drug addiction as the public health problem it is while at the same time using effective and just processes to enforce laws against drug trafficking. President Duterte's murderous tactics should be denounced, not praised.

The Duterte regime's perception of drug addiction as a moral failing does not excuse the execution of those who need access to treatment and other public health interventions. *The New York Times* reported many of those who have been killed were not drug dealers, but rather drug users who voluntarily identified themselves to the government seeking help for their substance use disorder. Instead of receiving much needed help, they were murdered.

While effective and professional law enforcement activities can contribute to the fight against illegal drug sales and reduction of drug supply, extrajudicial killings and vigilante violence, especially against those suffering with a substance use disorder, violate basic human rights and should be categorically condemned, not touted as a righteous solution.

President Duterte has threatened to kill an additional 20,000-30,000 people in his so-called war against the country's drug problem. This pledge combined with current conditions of serious prison overcrowding and lack of due process signal a bleak future for many Filipinos struggling with addiction while this dangerous president pursues his murderous crusade.

Our great nation thrives on principles of protecting basic human rights. We have learned from our past attempts to address the drug crisis in the United States that we are most successful when we combine law enforcement activities with public health prevention, treatment and recovery tools that work together to reduce supply and demand for illicit drugs. As President-elect the words you choose and the sentiments you share have the power to help, or the power to harm people in the United States and abroad. It is critically important that you use that power judiciously, immediately condemn President Duterte's campaign of mass killings, and call on Filipino institutions and the international community to hold him, and those carrying out this campaign, accountable for these crimes.

³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, World Drug Report, New York, 2016.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further, please have a member of your staff contact Avenel Joseph or Phil McGovern at (202) 224-2742.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edward J. Markey". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

cc: The Honorable Michael R. Pence
Vice President-elect of the United States of America
Director, Presidential Transition
1800 F Street, N.W., Room G-117
Washington, D.C. 20270