Activism Trolled: Online Harassment against Human Rights Organisations in the Philippines

Dr Aim Sinpeng
University of Sydney
aim.sinpeng@sydney.edu.au
Projects: Digital Media and Politics in Duterte’s Philippines (Aries Arugay, UP Diliman)


Facebook and Hate Speech in the Asia Pacific (Philippines, Indonesia, India and Myanmar)
Questions

› What is the nature of online harassment faced by human rights organisations under the Duterte Administration?

› How does online trolling impact the work of human rights organisations?
Why the Philippines?

Hostile government to human rights organisations who has been widely reported to use political trolls to manipulate conversation online

“Feed the United Nations human rights team to the crocodiles” – Rodrigo Duterte, 10 Mar 2018, Zamboanga City

“If they [human rights organisations] are obstructing justice, you shoot them.” – Rodrigo Duterte, 16 Aug 2017

Reports of use of political trolls against critics (Bradshaw and Howard 2017, Ong and Cabanes 2018, Rappler 2016/2020, Mahtani and Cabato 2019)

- Current subject of Senate investigation (May 2020)
Trolling

Anti-social behaviour aimed to disrupt conversations, sow discord and cause harm in online communities

(Buckles, Trapnell, Paulhus 2014, Hannan 2018, March 2019)

Some trolling comments constitute ‘hate speech’
1. Political polarisation increases trolling against human rights organisations

2. The extent to which human rights organisations can manage trolling and negativity on social media depends on the strength of its online support base
Focus Organisations: Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHR), Human Rights Watch Philippines (HRW), Amnesty International Philippines (AI)

Data: 3 years of all Facebook data (2,847 posts and 12,988 comments) from June 2016 – June 2019

Interviews with Facebook staff, page admins of organisations and their social media teams
The recent bombing in Jolo, Sulu is cruel and inhuman. No one should be made to suffer from such violence.

In aid of pursuing justice, CHR through our concerned Regional Office shall also be investigating the case.

READ: https://bit.ly/34tIHFF
Findings: Volumes of Trolling

- Amnesty International: 53% Trolling, 20% Non-Trolling, 27% Junk
- Human Rights Watch: 51% Trolling, 15% Non-Trolling, 34% Junk
- Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines: 31% Trolling, 46% Non-Trolling, 23% Junk

Institutions: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines

Categories: Trolling, Non-Trolling, Junk
Trolling Concentrated in 2017

Trolling Comments by Year

- Amnesty International
- Human Rights Watch
- Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines
Sentiment Analysis

- Amnesty International: 56% Negative, 6% Neutral, 11% Positive
- Human Rights Watch: 48% Negative, 7% Neutral, 11% Positive
- Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines: 52% Negative, 12% Neutral, 13% Positive
Trolling comments tend to be ‘first-movers’

Trolling comments start early and are more active: AI post made at 17:47
Type of Political Trolling: Pro-Duterte

- Amnesty International
  - 95%
  - 5%
- Human Rights Watch
  - 80%
- Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines
  - 95%
  - 5%
Key Issues by Pro-Duterte Trolls

1. War on Drugs

2. Reimposition of Death Penalty

3. Lowering criminal age responsibility

4. Slashing CHR budget
Trolling begets trolling

HRW post

1T

1S

10T

Majority inauthentic accounts

3S

15T

Mixed authentic & inauthentic
Fact Increases Trolling

Amnesty International Philippines

Erratum: On Amnesty International Philippines’ official Facebook and Twitter accounts, the post regarding deaths under the ‘war on drugs’ was incorrectly written as 13M. The correct post should read 13K.

An erratum was also sent to members of the media via sms on Saturday, 11 November, after the update was posted.

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Paulo Orejudos
13k is still wrong. What the hell is wr0ng wth you people?

Like · Reply · 1y

6 Replies

Jake Rien Phillip Robles
Your erratum is still wrong bunch of idiots. There’s no 13k casualties in the war on drugs. Where did you get your bloated figure?

Like · Reply · 1y

Drake Tanner
what an epic fail! 13Million.... so fake news! even if you update it to 13K is still fake news. What is your source? PNP says it’s only 3K.. did you include all homicide and murder case to make it 13K

Like · Reply · 1y

Edna LolaAktibista Aquino
An erratum does not rectify the erroneous figure in your earlier post if it’s still there. why not take it down or change it.

Like · Reply · 1y

Aibun Felarca
13k deaths source rappler: the home of fakenews, bias reporting, and exaggerated figures. 😂😂😂

Like · Reply · 1y

Jake Jacob
I don’t believe you...you know that it was wrong, but you posted it anyway coz as Loida Nicolas used to say... (I know you know her, you’re of the same color) " It doesn’t have to be true, it just have to look that way."...we were not born yesterday so stop what
Trolling can induce hate speech

CNN's Chrstiane Amanpour grills Secretary Perfecto Yasay of the Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs on the killings in the Philippines' brutal "war in drugs." Yasay defends not just the killings but...

Alan Alan
Keep up the good work Duterte, keep killing the Drug Lords and Dealers. If you are doing a great job, they will get the message. Stop the Drugs.

Wakumi French
Killing them people like animals, Killing them faster than they could investigate. I doubt if anything will come out of their investigations except course planted evidences.

Elizabeth Sepe
You have no right approving all these killings Someday, you will get yours.
Page Admin Interviews

› Page admins received harassment through other channels

› Page admins’ preferred method of dealing with trolling comments is to leave them alone (non engagement)

› Reporting to Facebook is ineffective

› Negativity on the page and high volumes of trolling comments change how organisations operate
Take Away Points

1. Trolling can be commonplace, but not always effective

2. Strong online supporters fight back against trolls

3. Page admins are the ‘gate keepers’ of bad behaviour