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## ADMIN TO ALLOW UN PROBE OF ABUSES IN DRUG WAR BUT NOT BY CALLAMARD

The administration will allow a United Nations investigation of alleged human rights abuses in President Duterte's war on drugs, but not if it is conducted by the current UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial killings, presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said on Tuesday.

More than 30 mostly Western countries have called on the Philippine government to allow the UN special rapporteur, Agnes Callamard, to look into the thousands of killings in Mr. Duterte's 19-month-old crackdown on illegal drugs.

Callamard's specialist areas under the United Nations are extrajudicial killings, summary and arbitrary executions.

Roque, a lawyer, said the Duterte administration welcomed any investigation if the United Nations would send a "credible, objective and unbiased" rapporteur and "an authority in the field that they seek to investigate."

Callamard does not fit that description, Roque said.

### 'It's her fault'

"Definitely not Agnes," he told a news briefing. "It's her fault the home state does not want her here."

Callamard has drawn the ire of Mr. Duterte for criticizing his violent war on drugs.

She further angered Mr. Duterte in May last year when she gave a speech in an unofficial capacity at a policy forum during a visit to Manila.

More than 4,000 mostly poor drug suspects have been killed by police since the launch of the crackdown in June 2016.

Thousands more have been killed by unidentified assailants, who critics say are hired guns working for the police or are policemen themselves.

Human rights groups and Mr. Duterte's political opponents say the execution of drug users and small-time peddlers was widespread and systematic.

The authorities deny the charge and claim those killed were all dealers who put up resistance.

A prosecutor at the International Criminal Court in The Hague earlier this month started a preliminary examination into a complaint accusing Mr. Duterte and at least 11 of his officials of crimes against humanity.

Mr. Duterte has welcomed the examination.

### State parties' consent

Roque recalled that another UN special rapporteur, Philip Alston, was allowed to investigate political killings in 2007, during the administration of then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

"To those familiar with the special rapporteur system, all investigations must be consented to by state parties. And there's no one that can compel a state party to allow an investigation if it does not want to do so," Roque said.

His comments came in re-

sponse to calls, including from Iceland, for the Philippines to allow an investigation of alleged extrajudicial killings in the drug war without conditions.

During the 36th session of the UN Human Rights Council last September, Högni Kristjánsson, Iceland's permanent representative to the United Nations, spoke on behalf of almost 40 countries urging the Philippine government "to work with civil society and the United Nations

to promote and protect human rights, including by welcoming a visit from the special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, without preconditions or limitations."

Roque said on Tuesday: "Of course, the statement of the Iceland ambassador is an expression of his home state, but it's an expression we don't have to heed."

Mr. Duterte has previously said he would welcome a probe by Callamard on certain conditions, including having a public debate with her.

Callamard turned down the President's conditions.

Roque, who is also the presidential adviser on human rights, said he had a lawyer in mind who could do the job instead of Callamard, but he would not say who. —REPORTS FROM DJ YAP AND REUTERS INQ

\* DRUGS