

‘Kingdom of Jesus Christ’ Group Raided by Hundreds of Police, Multiple SWAT Teams

Hundreds of police officers backed by riot squads raided a vast religious compound in a southern Philippine city Saturday in search of a local preacher accused of sexual abuse and human trafficking, police officials said.

A supporter of the group, called Kingdom of Jesus Christ, reportedly died due to a heart attack during the massive police raid that started at dawn in the group’s compound in Davao city, livestreamed online by a local TV network owned by the group, police said, adding that the death was not related to the police operations.

Officers brought equipment that could detect people behind cement walls. But by mid-afternoon, they found no sign of Apollo Quiboloy in the compound – some 30 hectares (75 acres) that includes a cathedral, a school, a living area, a hangar and a taxiway leading to Davao International Airport.

Quiboloy and his lawyer have denied the criminal allegations against him and his religious group, saying these were fabricated by critics and former members, who were removed from the religious group after committing irregularities.

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Quiboloy’s followers, many filming the police raid with their cellphones, yelled at the police, questioning the legality of the raid and pronouncing the innocence of Quiboloy, who was a close supporter and spiritual adviser of former President Rodrigo Duterte.

Duterte had criticized previous attempts by large numbers of police to arrest Quiboloy as overkill.

Quiboloy claims to be the appointed son of God. In 2019, he claimed he stopped a major earthquake from hitting the southern Philippines.

Police Brig. Gen. Nicolas Torre III, who led the raid, said officers wanted to serve warrants for the arrest of Quiboloy for various criminal cases, including child abuse and human trafficking. He justified the large deployment, saying there were more than 40 buildings and structures to be searched in the religious compound, where large numbers of Quiboloy's followers heckled and opposed the raid noisily.

"We won't leave here until we get him," Torre told reporters as sirens blared in the background. "We have no-bail warrants for Quiboloy and four others for very grave crimes, including human trafficking, child abuse and other cases."

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In 2021, United States federal prosecutors announced the indictment of Quiboloy for allegedly having sex with women and underage girls who faced threats of abuse and "eternal damnation" unless they catered to the self-proclaimed "son of God."

Quiboloy and two of his top administrators were among nine people named in a superseding indictment returned by a federal grand jury and unsealed in November 2021.

The superseding indictment contained a raft of charges, including conspiracy, sex trafficking of children, sex trafficking by force, fraud and coercion, marriage fraud, money laundering, cash smuggling and visa fraud.

Quiboloy's group said then that he was ready to face the charges in court, but he went into hiding after a Philippine court ordered his arrest and several others for child and sexual abuse. The Philippine Senate has separately ordered Quiboloy's arrest for refusing to appear in committee hearings that was looking into criminal allegations against him.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has urged Quiboloy to surrender and assured him of fair treatment by authorities.

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