

Rodrigo Duterte 'Profoundly, Deeply' Sorry for Comparing Himself to Hitler

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte apologized "profoundly and deeply" to the Jewish community on Sunday, and said his references to the Holocaust while discussing his war on drugs were to hit back at critics who had likened him to Adolf Hitler.

Duterte said he recognized the comments made in the early hours of Friday had caused outrage among Jewish communities around the world, but he insisted his mention of the Nazi leader was to show how opponents had sought to portray him.

"I would like to make it now, here and now, that there was never an intention on my part to derogate the memory of the six million Jews murdered," he said in a speech at a festival carried live on television.

"The reference to me was, I was supposedly Hitler, who killed many people."

He added: "I apologize profoundly and deeply to the Jewish community ... it was never my intention, but the problem was I was criticized, using Hitler comparing to me."

More than 3,100 people have been killed since Duterte took office three months ago and launched a promised drugs war that was the bedrock of his campaign for elections, which he won by a large margin.

Most of those killed so far have been drug users and pushers, with some deaths during shootouts in police operations and others the work of vigilantes, police say.

Duterte, 71, has been nicknamed "the Punisher" for his tough

stance on crime. He said on Friday he had been portrayed by critics as being “a cousin of Hitler” and said he would “be happy to slaughter” three million Filipino drug users and peddlers.

The comments caused outrage, and follow other provocative public outbursts in the past few months.

Duterte’s narcotics crackdown has broad support among Filipinos fed up with drugs and crime, and he has lashed out at those who have challenged it, including U.S. President Barack Obama and U.N. chief Ban Ki-moon.

He had vented his frustration again on Sunday at human rights groups and what he called “stupid” lawyers of the European Union.

Duterte’s spokesman on Saturday said Duterte rejected the Hitler label and his remarks the previous day were an “oblique deflection” of him being portrayed as a mass murderer. {eoa}

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