



In a rare display of serious speech delivery, President Rodrigo Duterte stuck to his prepared 3rd State of the Nation Address (SONA) on July 23, 2018.

Without his usual off-the-text comments, for 50 minutes, he stuck to his prepared address.

Despite that, he still invited the attention of critics when he read two sentences in his speech, which, was addressed to those who have been criticizing his widely-reported

Human lives, human rights

Written by Manuel Caballero

Thursday, 02 August 2018 12:59

disregard for human rights as evidenced by the extrajudicial killings of thousands of suspected drug users around the Philippines in the last two years.

Duterte's lines went this way: "Your concern is human rights. Mine is human lives."

The two sentences appear to be in contradiction against each other because of the widely-held belief in civilized society that every human being, even a baby in a mom's tummy, has human rights.

Vice President Leni Robredo quipped after the speech, "The right to life is one of the most basic human rights."

An opinion maker in a Manila newspaper remarked, "This line fuels the ignorance about how human rights are integral to the protection of human life."

Len Mercado, human rights advocate and international development worker, branded the President's sentences as "false dichotomy between human rights and human life."

The outspoken Bishop Pablo David of Caloocan City raised the question, "Is not the right to life the most basic human right?"

In a post-SONA analysis, columnist Richard Heydarian of the South China Morning Post, opined that President Duterte had a serious reason for sticking to his prepared address without his usual "thunderous rhetoric."

The writer observed, and we have no reason to disagree, that at the time of SONA delivery and up to this day, Mr. Duterte's "approval ratings are at a historic low, domestic opposition is crystallizing, infighting among allies has intensified, and the public has begun to sour on his major policies, including his rapprochement with China."

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If the above situation continues, it would be extremely difficult for Mr. Duterte to continue implementing his programs.

When a leader loses the trust and respect of his own people, his insecurity triggers the buttons on how to cling to power.

It is a common observation that the most insecure people are those who are at the top.