



WITNESS IN HIDING. Harra Kazuo, the live-in partner of alleged drug pusher Jaypee Bertes, covers her face to protect her identity during an interview at the Commission on Human Rights office in Quezon City, north of Manila, the Philippines, in this September 7 file photo. Bertes was allegedly shot to death by police following a drug raid that is part of the continuing anti-drug campaign of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte. The Commission on Human Rights has feared for her safety while it probes her case and has put her under an extraordinary witness-protection program. (AP Photo/Aaron Favila, File)

Speaking out for drug war victims, Filipina goes into hiding

By Todd Pitman
The Associated Press

MANILA, The Philippines — When police shot to death Harra Kazuo's common-law husband and his father following a drug raid in the Philippines, she sought one thing: justice.

In a television interview shortly after their deaths in July, the 26-year-old mother accused two officers of killing them in cold blood. She then recounted the allegations before a Philippine senate committee investigating the country's brutal drug war in testimony broadcast nationwide.

What Kazuo has gotten instead, though, is a life lesson in the consequences of speaking out. Today, she lives with her three children in hiding, sheltered by an extraordinary witness-protection program run by the country's independent Commission on Human Rights, which has feared for her safety while it investigates the case.

That such a program exists is a powerful indictment of the lack of trust many have in the country's notoriously corrupt police, who are spearheading an anti-drug campaign that has left more than 4,000 people dead in just a few months. It also illustrates the failures of a broken justice system few believe can hold anyone to account.

Kazuo said she is pushing the case because "what is happening is not right."

"I want them to feel how they treated my husband," she told The Associated Press. "I want them to feel what it's like for a family to lose a loved one."

Although both officers have been suspended and have attended preliminary hearings, city prosecutor Orlando Mariano said they remain free and neither has been indicted. If prosecutors determine the evidence is too weak, both men could be end up being absolved.

Jose Luis Martin "Chito" Gascon, who directs the Manila-based rights commission, said no police have been charged criminally in court since the drug war began despite persistent reports of security forces summarily executing drug suspects. National police spokesman Dionardo Carlo, however, said police have been arrested and charged, but he could offer no details.

Either way, the killing of Kazuo's family members "is the highest profile case we've had so far, and it's not even in court yet," Gascon said. "So what do you think's going to happen to the rest — the ones that got no attention and have already been forgotten?"

President Rodrigo Duterte unleashed his campaign to rid the country of narcotics immediately after taking office June 30. The effort has been praised by a population exasperated by corruption and crime, but it has been condemned by the United Nations, foreign governments, and activist groups because of its staggering death toll and apparent disregard for human life.

Kazuo acknowledges that her husband, Jaypee Bertes, was a small-time methamphetamine dealer. But she insists he only pushed the drug because he could find no other work.

Just before midnight on July 6, police raided their tiny one-room apartment in a Manila slum. The officers could not find any drugs, but they hauled 28-year-old Bertes away anyway, along with his father, 49-year-old Renato. When Kazuo visited them at a police station the next morning, both men were severely bruised. Hours later — after she left — they were shot dead at the end of a narrow corridor, each three times.

Police said the men were killed after one of them attempted to grab a firearm belonging to the officers. But commission officials, who conducted their own forensics investigation, said the detainees had been beaten so badly

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Railway for Myanmar's main city is a slow-paced window into past

By Elaine Kurtenbach
The Associated Press

YANGON, Myanmar — Myanmar's commercial capital is fast shedding its sleepy backwater trappings as the city builds new roads, hotels, and office buildings, but the Circle Line railway remains a world apart from the traffic jams and chaos of Yangon's streets.

Long overdue for upgrades, the 28-mile line slowly trundles through 38 stations around the city, past tin shacks and fields of watercress, palm trees, and bananas, gated communities, and factory zones.

The railway opened in 1877 when Myanmar, then known as Burma, was a colony of Britain. British forces destroyed Yangon's ornate central station in 1943 during World War II, as they fled the city ahead of Japanese troops.

The station appears little changed since it reopened in 1954. At 100 kyats to 200 kyats (8 cents to 16 cents) a ride, depending on distance, it's the cheapest public transport option for travelling around the city of 7.4 million, carrying more than 100,000 people a day.

Commuters traipse across its tracks, squatters bed down on the train platforms. Hawkers board to sell fish, tangerines, and SIM cards, and then climb back off to wait for more customers.

A group of kids, not quite teenagers, climbs aboard, hauling homemade bird houses leftover from a day of peddling downtown. Back and forth through the carriage, they take turns gazing out the door before eventually alighting, chattering and laughing, at a stop far out in the suburbs.

Japan's aid agency has drawn up a master plan for rebuilding Yangon station and modernizing the trains. Yangon invited tenders for the project, but progress has lagged.

Only travelling at most a bit over 12 miles an hour, the train is clean but no frills, its open windows the only



RELIC RAILWAY. A hawker walks among passengers while trying to sell cellphone cards on a Circle Line train in Myanmar (also known as Burma). The country's commercial capital is fast shedding its sleepy backwater trappings as the city builds new roads, hotels, and office buildings, but Yangon's Circle Line railway is a world apart from the traffic jams and chaos of the city's streets. (AP Photo/Elaine Kurtenbach)

breeze on a stuffy evening. The view: an intimate glimpse into kitchens, open-air sports bars packed with men watching soccer on big-screen color televisions, fathers holding toddlers up to watch the train pass.

Only after the sun has disappeared and dark has fully fallen are dim lights switched on, as the train slowly heads back toward the Yangon terminus.



HEALTH HAZARD. A boy sits on the shoulders of his mother while participating in a protest against air pollution in New Delhi, India. Even for a city considered one of the world's dirtiest, the Indian capital hit a new low — air so dirty you could taste and smell it; a gray haze that makes a gentle stroll a serious health hazard. According to one advocacy group, government data shows that the smog that enveloped the city was the worst in the past 17 years. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)

Other Indian cities join Delhi in air pollution emergency

LUCKNOW, India (AP) — The sickening air pollution that led the Indian capital to shut schools and construction sites prompted similar measures in neighboring cities.

Officials in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh dealt with acrid smog that blanketed the state.

For more than a week, New Delhi's skies were filled with a thick haze that has made people's eyes sting and their throats sore.

Air pollution experts blame myriad pollution sources, from diesel-burning cars and seasonal crop burning to garbage fires and stoves fuelled with kerosene and cow dung. Winter weather patterns also mean there is less wind to circulate the air.

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