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Police conduct door-to-door drug test

PHILIPPINE DRUG WAR

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MANILA: Philippine police were knocking on doors in one of the poorest neighbourhoods here yesterday to encourage people to take on-the-spot drug tests, a campaign condemned by rights groups as harassment that could endanger lives.

Carrying drug testing kits, police officers accompanied by community officials were seen going to houses asking residents if they were willing to submit urine samples.

Payatas, one of the most populated sub-districts, or *barangays*, in the capital's Quezon City neighbourhood, has been identified as a crime-prone area with a serious drug problem.

Community leaders said they requested help from police, and

testing was voluntary.

Dozens of Payatas residents have died during President Rodrigo Duterte's ferocious 14-month-old war on drugs, which has killed thousands of Filipinos, many in what critics said were suspicious circumstances.

Yesterday, a small number of Payatas residents lined up to be tested, but the police did not say how many were found clean or to be drug users.

Community leaders did not say what would happen to people who tested positive for drug use, or to those who refused to be tested.

"Our goal is to have a drug-free *barangay* this year," Payatas *barangay* secretary Marlene Ocampo said, adding that the village council agreed to fund and

conduct free and voluntary drug testing, which could take four to five months.

"We only asked the police to help us and we are grateful," she said. "We have more than 133,000 residents."

She said there were no complaints, and many residents agreed to undergo tests.

"This is also good for us," said Maria Luisa Valdez, a 37-year-old food vendor.

"We are clean. We don't do drugs, so why would we be afraid to take the test?"

The head of the National Union of People's Lawyers, Edre Olalia, said police were on a "fishing expedition" to draw up a list of drug users and doubted the testing was voluntary.

Reuters