



Shooting in the Eye of the **DRUG STORM**

DANIEL BEREHULAK, THE RECIPIENT OF THE PRESS CLUB'S DANIEL PEARL AWARD, FOUND AN ASSIGNMENT LIKE NO OTHER IN THE PHILIPPINES

BY ALEXANDRA BERZON

After reports emerged last year of the Philippines' bloody drug war, including the murders of thousands of drug users and dealers at the hands of police, freelance photojournalist Daniel Berehulak went to Manila to document it for *The New York Times*. His photos of murder victims and their families, along with jail cells and vigil sites—and the essay he wrote to accompany them—revealed that the government's account of the drug war was not the same as what was being experienced on the streets. Published in December 2016, his work was a vivid wake-up call. It won the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news photography.

Berehulak, who has worked in hot spots around the globe, is the recipient of the Los Angeles Press Club's Daniel Pearl Award for Courage and Integrity in Journalism. We spoke to him from Mexico City, where he now lives.

How did you get started as a photojournalist?

I grew up in Sydney, Australia, on a farm. I studied history in university and had no idea what I wanted to do, but I was able to travel

through playing sports. I took my camera with me and was curious about traveling and discovering the world. I came across the World Press Photo Exhibition in Vienna when I was 23. My sister also passed away, which led me to throw everything in and realize life is short. I started studying photography in a course and then I dropped out. I was freelancing for a small agency at that time. I worked with amazing photographers and learned mostly from them in the field.

What drew you to the Philippines story?

I noticed when Rodrigo Duterte was campaigning for president, there was alarming rhetoric coming from the Philippines. He was known for death squads. When he came to power, he had based his campaign on fighting corruption and fighting crime and equated drugs and high levels of users to high crime rates. The way he was going to combat that was by tackling the drugs. In the first month or two, the bodies started piling up in the streets and it was a very bloody war. There were local journalists covering the story. It was something I felt was kind of under-reported. I had been in touch with Filipino friends whom I had worked with in Pakistan and other places, and I spoke with them and they said the story is still going on and there is no end in site. That led me to pitch it to my editor. I landed in Manila September 28 last year.

How did the work proceed?

I was reaching out to friends and colleagues and found an amazing local journalist. She was my fixer. We worked together over the duration of 35 days to report the story. When I met up with Rica Concepcion and started going out with the local journalists, accompanying them, we would start with the crime scenes. I found out what the story was at that time.

Daniel Berehulak accepts the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news photography.



Left: In June, 2012, anti-Ahmed Shafiq protesters gesture at military police through a barbed wire barricade outside the Supreme Constitutional Court in Cairo, Egypt.

Clockwise, below: Pakistan, 2011, Mueen Ibrahim peers from behind his grandfather Ghulam Qadir, recreating the portrait taken as they returned to see their home for the first time as flood waters receded in 2010.

Land washed away by flooding is seen from a Pakistan Army helicopter during relief operations in Sindh province, Pakistan.

Late 2015, Chinese, Chilean and Russian priests, scientists and logistics personnel play football in a dome gym at the Chilean Air Force base on King George Island, Antarctica.

Left: A year after the March 2011 tsunami, chairs are seen strewn in a Kadosowaki Elementary School classroom in Ishinomaki, Japan.



DANIEL PEARL AWARD DANIEL BEREHULAK



October 2016, clockwise: Heavy rain falls on the body of Romeo Joel Torres Fontanilla, killed by two gunmen on motorcycles. He is one of 3,400+ unsolved homicides in the Philippines since President Rodrigo Duterte took office June 30 and started a brutal crackdown on drug users and sellers.

Inmates sleep on a basketball court at Quezon City Jail, one of the country's most congested jails.

A family lives in a tent erected atop a tombstone at the Manila North Cemetery.

Berehulak witnessed murder scenes almost everywhere. Michael Araja was gunned down outside a "sari-sari," a kiosk that sell staples on the street, by two men on a motorcycle, a common modus operandi known as a "riding in tandem" killing. Officers from SOCO, the scene of the crime unit, gather evidence.

What did you find?

The first night really set the tone for what the next 35 days would be. The first scene I went to was a triple homicide. The police said it was a shootout. There were 30 journalists at the scene and in 30 seconds everyone cleared out. I remember leaving that scene thinking, how do we find out exactly what happened in terms of interviewing witnesses or family members? We quickly realized we had to work at a slower pace and go back to these places and interview people and follow up. The police were telling us one thing, saying it was all legitimate police operations, and only after interviewing, only after speaking to the families and the eyewitnesses, we got a completely different story.

It seems a bit unusual that you, the photographer, were also the main reporter and writer on the story. How did that happen?

It was a month shy of the U.S. elections. They were trying to get me to match up with a reporter, but they weren't able to find the resources. What my editor has done in the past is have us do journals and write about our experiences out there. After a week I realized there wasn't anyone coming out, and I would have to be writing the story as well. I was doing a lot more follow-up interviews with families and just trying to get an understanding of what was going on, how it was going down, to better understand the story.

How much pushback did you get from police?

From the police at the scenes, they weren't really pushing back. Sometimes they wanted us there as well because at the start I think they were kind of proud of what they were doing and believed it was the right thing. It was this level of impunity they were acting with. They would present the information like it was a "buy bust" operation and say here are the drugs in the pocket of the guy and the gun they tried to shoot us with. But then we realized so many of the killings had these same details. It appeared they were planting the drugs, planting guns; and that some of the people weren't even involved in drugs at all.

What was the impact after your story ran?

The president put out a statement directly after the story ran saying it was completely biased and completely one-sided. But we were only reporting and using the figures the Philippines national police had given us. The U.S. apparently halted aid that was heading to the Philippines. We don't know if that was direct result of the reporting, but there certainly was so much more attention on the story. I was targeted by Duterte trolls and supporters and received death threats, dozens and dozens of death threats and emails. On the flip side, I had so many emails from people all over the world reaching out and saying how can we help, how can we donate money?

What is it like now for journalists in the Philippines?

They are doing amazing work there. This is something happening on their doorstep. We report on a 35-day period and go home, but these guys are covering this day in and day out. The group doing the nightshift there are young, energetic journalists who find it deeply disturbing that this is happening in front of them.

What was the most difficult moment for you in the reporting?

One night we made it late to a scene, and all I could hear down the street as we were approaching were the cries of a widow. You get there and you miss the scene but it was kind of—it just made you understand how futile in a way my efforts were.

At certain times it just felt overwhelming and disheartening. I talked about this a lot with the guys we were working with. We all agreed that what we were doing was important because people in 15 years time will read what was happening in history books. If we weren't doing our job it would be a completely one-sided account of official police operations trying to combat drug usage, and all of the voices of the families wouldn't be recorded. We were doing something that was important, writing history and giving a balanced account of what was going on. 🙏

"How he did it, to me, is truly remarkable. To be listening in one language and then speaking it in the other, immediately, while doing the play-by-play. He has to be truly acknowledged as the fine broadcaster that he is."

- Vin Scully on his friend Jaime Jarrin
ESPN.com, May 8, 2017

From his 'toughest assignment' at Arlington National Cemetery in 1963, international broadcasts with presidents and foreign leaders, to bringing baseball home to millions of fans, Security Benefit is proud to honor Jaime Jarrin's Hall-of-Fame career spanning nearly seven decades.

Thank you for your contributions to journalism and the game of baseball. Congratulations on receiving the L.A. Press Club's Public Service Award.



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