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NATIONWIDE MASS PROTESTS MUST LEAD TO DIRECT ENCIRCLEMENT OF PALACE

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Estrada is dying politically but is not yet dead. The final death blow is still to be delivered. If this cannot be delivered before the end of the year, a crippled Estrada will stagger on until next year, aggravating the ruin of the economy and stirring up more political turmoil.

It is not enough to hope for the LAMP allies of Estrada to abandon him and give way to impeachment in the Lower House and conviction in the Senate. It is also not enough to hold mass protests away from the presidential palace.

If Estrada is to be removed from power before the end of the year, the current nationwide buildup of mass protest actions must lead to a climax, which is the direct encirclement of the presidential palace before the start of the Christmas holidays.

All streets leading to the palace can and must be filled up by at least one million people, who are ready to camp out until Estrada announces his resignation or indefinite leave of absence.

Such a demonstration of mass strength is necessary in order to put to an end Estrada's arrogant presumption that he has the license until 2004 to ride roughshod over the Filipino people and intensify their oppression and exploitation for the benefit of his foreign masters, his multiple families and his cronies.

To paralyze and render inutile any order of Estrada to his military and police loyalists to attack the people, a number of actions must be coordinated with thronging the streets around the palace. Such actions include the following:

1. Owners can leave their motor vehicles at various choke points, paralyze the movement of military and police vehicles and allow the people to march from various points of Metro Manila to the vicinity of the palace.
2. In front of the barricades set up by the military and police loyalists of Estrada, the religious organizations, women's organizations and prominent political leaders can be at the head of the demonstrators in order to discourage Estrada from ordering any physical attack.
3. Active and retired military and police officers can make calls to the military and police forces to respect the democratic right of the people to undertake the gigantic mass action and to ignore any order of Estrada to attack the people.

Without the direct encirclement of the presidential palace by the people, Estrada will continue to ignore or rebuff demands for his resignation. He will tough it out, kill the impeachment process on a technicality and prolong his stay in power. However, the armed revolutionary movement of the Filipino people and the Bangsamoro will gain precious time for delivering more powerful blows on the thoroughly isolated regime, particularly its troops in the countryside. #

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