



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

RELEASED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES

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EDITORIAL

Puppets & parrots

The latest intrusions of Chinese vessels into the West Philippine Sea, punctuated by the ramming of a Filipino fishing vessel at the Recto Bank on 9 June, is drowning Philippine sovereignty to a new low. Amid the tragedy, the Duterte government is dancing and squawking to the tune of their Chinese imperialist master.

But imperialist US is far from abandoning its security and economic interests in the region. Duterte officials – military generals most especially – have been parroting demands of the US to increase troop presence on Philippine soil and naval patrols in the South China Sea.

Away from the tangle of puppet strings and squawking in the Manila government, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines has been consistently upholding the principles of national sovereignty and mutual cooperation in its territories. The revolutionary forces welcome programs and activities of both local and foreign entities which promote the socio-economic development of the Filipino people, and help lay the ground for a just & lasting peace. Needless to say, these activities uphold the people's sovereign rights on their natural resources, respect human rights and help protect the environment.

These principles are being ignored, ridiculed and demonized by Duterte and his officials. These principles, after all, will not fatten their larder with Chinese commissions and kickbacks. Nor offer support for the harassment, illegal detention, forced evacuation, and murder of tens of thousands of the impoverished and fighting Filipinos. **UP**



*Duterte pro-China, un-Filipino, TRAITOR!
Photo: kodao.org*

Duterte support for China in Recto Bank ramming sparks condemnations

The ramming of a Filipino wooden fishing boat by a larger Chinese steel-hulled boat on the night of 9 June has been generating a crescendo of protests in the Philippines and abroad. Protesters point out that the ramming is just a step in China's ambition to fully control the South China Sea.

Filipino protesters are particularly enraged at President Rodrigo Duterte's support for China and contempt for the 22 Filipino fishermen who were victims of the ramming.

The youth group [Anakbayan \(Nation's Children\)](#) blasted

[Duterte](#) for choosing to "stand and support China in its continued aggression and greed to conquer our sovereignty. Duterte did not choose to stand with his own people, instead he betrayed the Filipino nation!"

Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang on 13 June claimed it was an "ordinary maritime traffic incident". He further claimed that the Chinese vessel fled the scene because "it was besieged by seven or eight Filipino fishing vessels."

Duterte soon after broke his silence and echoed China. He further claimed that the Chinese vessel, sailing within the 200 nautical miles of the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone, is not in violation of Philippine sovereignty. Duterte officials, who earlier condemned China, also uniformly reversed their statements.

China has the largest fishing fleet in the world with 2,600 long-distance ships. Majority of these are 'maritime militia', trained by the People's Liberation Army and deployed to disputed waters in the South China Sea. [According to maritime security experts](#), China regularly sends swarms of its fishing boats to confront other nations' fishing boats. Then the fleet is reenforced with the Chinese Coast Guard, land reclamations are built up, and finally military bases are established on the artificial and natural islands.

The Recto Bank ramming incident was reminiscent of the [ramming and sinking of a Vietnamese fishing boat](#) off the disputed Paracels islands in May 2014.

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The Duterte regime is a willing collaborator in Beijing's aggression. [According to the Communist Party of the Philippines](#) (CPP), "The incident is evidence of the increasing arrogance of China in transgressing and plundering Philippine maritime territory. Such impunity is a consequence of the Duterte regime's slavishness and complete failure to uphold Philippine sovereign rights and laws.

"Duterte is spineless because he is in China's pockets. Duterte fears losing the millions of dollars of bribe money and other favors he and his cohorts are receiving from the state monopoly capitalists of China in exchange for the onerous and odious loans."

At the same time, the CPP points out, "The US is condemnable for taking advantage of the Recto Bank incident to aggressively push its geopolitical aim of establishing its military presence in the Philippines and South China Sea.

"The US is acting like an imperial overlord when it announced a few days ago its plans of deploying the USS Stratton, a US Coast Guard cutter, purportedly to help the Philippines and other countries who cannot defend their own exclusive economic zones (EEZ)."



Photo: bulatlat.com

Resistance against China-funded Kaliwa Dam intensifies

Amid the worsening water supply crisis affecting Metro Manila, the government of President Rodrigo Duterte is moving mountains to build dams as its lasting solution to the crisis. Meanwhile, indigenous peoples, local communities and the revolutionary movement are intensifying their resistance against the dam-building projects.

Duterte has revived plans to build the Kaliwa Dam, a 62 meter concrete-faced, rock-filled dam with a projected capacity of 600 million liters per day. The Kaliwa Dam will be

the first in a series of dam constructions called the [New Centennial Water Source Project](#) (NCWSP).

The project will tap water from the Sierra Madre mountain range in the provinces of Rizal and Quezon, northeast of the Philippines. It is expected to flood a watershed area of about 9,700 hectares, comprising the ancestral lands of the Dumagat and Remontado tribes, and home to numerous vulnerable and endangered plant and animal species. The dams would submerge large parts of five villages, affecting about 10,000 families.

Members of the indigenous communities, environment groups, [Church officials](#), as well as town officials of Infanta, Quezon and Tanay, Rizal, have been [vehemently opposing the dams](#).

Local units of the New People's Army (NPA) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) vowed to support the people's resistance. According to [Eliza de la Guerra, spokesperson of the NPA-Quezon](#), "This project had no free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) from the Dumagat and Remontado tribe."

"This was started by the Marcos regime. The succeeding regimes of Fidel Ramos, Joseph Estrada, Gloria Arroyo and Benigno Simeon Aquino III tried to continue but (were all) forced to shelf the project because of the organized resistance of the people."

During the first quarter of 2019, NPA units sabotaged project construction operations in the towns of Real, General Nakar and Infanta in Quezon province. The people's army destroyed several backhoe excavators, dump trucks, transport mixers and other heavy road-construction equipment.

The NCWSP is part of the Build, Build, Build program of the Duterte government. 85% of contract costs for the Kaliwa Dam, equivalent to about US\$211 million, will be funded by loans from China at 2% interest per year. Preconditions for the loan include contracting the China Energy Engineering Corporation for the construction, using Chinese equipment and hiring of Chinese workers. Defaulting on the loan will grant China the right to confiscate the nation's resources.

According to Ms. de la Guerra, the onerous loan conditions were approved in exchange for largesse for Duterte and "his favored oligarch, military henchmen and Chinese 'Friends'."

To quell the widespread opposition of the people against the dam, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Philippine National Police (PNP) guard the dam construction. They are under strict orders to suppress and quell the people's movement against the Kaliwa Dam Project. **UP**



Karapatan staffers Nelly Bagasala (left, inside the tricycle) and Ryan Hubilla (on the ground) gunned down in Sorsogon City.
Photo: pinoyweekly.org

7 human rights defenders killed in 9 days

Seven human rights defenders were gunned down by suspected military agents of the Duterte government in a span of nine days this month. Six of the victims were killed in the Bicol region, in northeast central Philippines.

On Sunday night 9 June, Arnie Espenilla was gunned down inside his home in Lahong village, San Fernando town, in the province of Masbate, by unidentified armed men. The following afternoon on 10 June, in Buenavista village of the same town, armed men barged into the home of Zando Alconzendas and shot the latter to death. A few days after on 14 June, the same fate as Alconzendas met Pizo Cabug as he was about to retire in his home for the night.

All three victims were members of the Masbate People's Organization, a member organization of the human rights alliance Karapatan (Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights).

According to the [Jose Rapsing Command of the New People's Army](#) (NPA), the murderers belong to a so-called Peace and Development Team of the Philippine Army under a certain Sgt. Chalas. The latter has been accusing the victims of being members of the NPA.

Elsewhere in the Bicol region, on 15 June, Karapatan staffers Ryan Hubilla and Nelly Bagasala were gunned down in broad daylight by two as yet unidentified armed men in Cabid-an village, Sorsogon City. [According to Karapatan](#), both victims were involved with assisting the release of political prisoners the day before they were killed.

All those who assisted the released prisoners reported being tailed and accosted by suspected military agents.

The following day on 16 June, three armed men killed Nonoy Palma outside his home in San Fernando town, Bukidnon province, in southern Philippines. Palma is a local member of peasant group Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP, Peasant Movement of the Philippines). [Witnesses identified one of the gunmen](#) as a member of the paramilitary group Alamara.

Alamara operates under the supervision of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

On 17 June in Naga City, yet again in the Bicol region, gunmen aboard a white pickup truck shot and killed Neptali Morada while the latter was riding his motorcycle. Morada was a regional official of opposition political party Bayan Muna (The People Foremost).

The [National Council of Churches in the Philippines \(NCCP\) condemned the killing](#) "in the strongest possible terms", and called on the faithful to "seek justice for our slain human rights defenders." The NCCP said that Morada was an active ecumenical leader in his youth, a former chairperson of the League of Christian Youth in the Philippines and a senior friend of the Student Christian Movement of the Philippines.

The staggering increase of summary killings of human rights workers in the past months is being attributed to President Duterte's issuance of Memorandum Order No. 32 in November 2018. He ordered his government's military, intelligence and police units to suppress "all forms of lawless violence" in the Bicol region and in the islands of Samar and Negros.

[According to the Defend Negros network](#), 66 farmers and activists have already been gunned down since Duterte took office. The victims include lawyer Benjamin Ramos, and human rights defenders Bernardino Patigas and Elisa Badayos. Eleven of the victims were women and two were minor. **UP**



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