



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

RELEASED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES

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EDITORIAL The Sword of Damocles

The Anti-Terrorism Bill, having been hastily passed by both Houses of Philippine Congress despite the strongest opposition from the people, has now been submitted to President Duterte for signing into law. Many rightfully fear that this law will thrash the whole Bill of Rights of the 1987 Constitution. It is a veritable Sword of Damocles hanging over the heads of the Filipino people.

In fact, this Anti-Terrorism Bill is just the latest measure of the Duterte regime in an already long list of ever escalating violent repression, oppression and exploitation constantly being imposed on a suffering people.

As soon as Duterte gained presidential power in 2016, he began on a campaign of killing suspected drug users and petty drug dealers. The number of victims has now surpassed 30,000 according to human rights organizations.

His military and police forces have increasingly cracked down on Filipinos critical of the regime, employing strong-arm tactics of red-tagging, harassment, illegal arrests and murder.

He exploited the Covid-19 pandemic in order to seize emergency powers, inflict harsh militarist lockdowns, detain and kill government critics, suppress the freedom of the press and plunder hundreds of billions of pesos earmarked for medical and relief services.

But there is now a growing consensus among the Filipino masses that the Duterte tyranny is a plague worse than Covid-19. The economy is ruined and Duterte cannot save it and himself with more foreign loans. The unprecedented fall of the global GDP by 4.9 to 6 percent this year will have the worst impact on underdeveloped and heavily indebted economies like the Philippines.

The suffering people have had enough. Conditions are now so many times more favorable for the armed revolution than in 1972 when Marcos imposed Martial Law. The revolutionary forces today are now on a national scale and so many times stronger.

Duterte seems not to know the fatal weaknesses of his position. He seems to suffer from psychopathic narcissism, the overweening arrogance of the tyrant and dependence on the use of state terrorism. He derives extreme self-satisfaction from the plunder that he and his bureaucratic and military gangmates have achieved.

The Sword of Damocles has now shifted over Duterte's head. **UP**



Unprecedented: 31 UN Special Rapporteurs decry Philippines rights violations

In an unprecedented and powerful joint statement, 31 United Nations Special Rapporteurs issued a call for on-the-ground independent and impartial investigation into "the staggering cost of the relentless and systematic assault on the most basic rights of Filipinos at the hands of the (Duterte) Government."

This is a powerful follow up to the call made a year ago of 11 UN human rights experts. They then called on the UN Human Rights Council to establish an independent investigation into human rights violations in the Philippines. It likewise follows the 4 June 2020 report of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights Michelle Bachelet "which confirmed findings and warnings issued over the last four years."

The 31 UN Special Rapporteurs cited the scale and seriousness of the violations: 8,663 killings and 223,780 'drug personalities' arrested resulting from the regime's 'war on drugs'; at least 208 human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists, including 30 women and at least 40 legal professionals killed since 2015.

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Many of these professionals were working on politically sensitive cases for land and environmental rights of farmers and indigenous peoples and housing rights of the urban poor.

The joint statement sharply criticized President Duterte's authorization of the police and security forces to kill protesters, citing his speech: "Do you understand? Dead. Instead of causing trouble, I'll send you to the grave!"

They also warned that Duterte is fast-tracking the passage of an Anti-Terror Bill that will mean further serious violations of the human rights of the people.

This call for an on-the-ground investigation is an open challenge to President Duterte who has insulted UN Special Rapporteur Agnes Callamard and declared he would have her arrested if she dared to come to the Philippines. He also threatened International Criminal Court (ICC) Chief Prosecutor Ms. Fatou Bensouda to feed her to the lions, should she dare come to issue him a subpoena or arrest warrant.

The Special Rapporteurs likewise are calling on the ICC to expedite and prioritize the completion of its preliminary examination of the situation in the Philippines. Human rights defenders in the Philippines are also calling for the ICC to move from preliminary examination to the preliminary investigation phase, and issue the warrants of arrest to President Duterte and other accused violators of human rights and international law.

In a recent online forum sponsored by ECU Rise, its President, Dr. Edith Burgos, mother of Desapericido Jonas Burgos, called for all fighters for human rights to become a Symphony of Peace in militantly upholding human rights. **UP**



*Tribute to revolutionary martyrs.
Photo: bulatlat.com*

NPA medic, hors de combat Lorelyn Saligumba killed by AFP

A unit of the New People's Army (NPA) conducting a medical mission in the village of Mangangan Uno, in Baco, Oriental Mindoro, was ambushed by elements of the 203rd Infantry Brigade of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) on 4 June resulting in the wounding of NPA Medical Officer Lorelyn Saligumba. The wounded Lorelyn was subsequently captured, interrogated and eventually killed by the AFP.

According to Armando Cienfuego, spokesperson of NPA-Southern Tagalog Region, Lorelyn sustained a gunshot wound to her leg which she was able to mend herself. "The enemy caught up with her at a brook while she was crawling away," he said. "She was interrogated and strangled, before she was mercilessly killed, her body riddled with bullets by the fascists."

The regional organs of the NPA, Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) condemned the murder of Lorelyn "who was already wounded and without the capacity to fight, instead of just arresting her and applying appropriate medical attention."

They said, "(The AFP's) act is a clear violation of the Geneva Conventions and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law" signed between the NDFP and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) in 1998.

The revolutionary movement in Southern Tagalog rendered Lorelyn the highest tribute, calling her a "hero and martyr of the revolution and of the people. She was a health worker who decided to commit her whole life to rendering service to the masses who have been deprived of medical and decent livelihood by the rotten system."

They said, "She was a wife, daughter and good mother to her children. Her footsteps will be followed by thousands upon thousands of people who desire to cure the rotting cancer of Philippine society just as she did."

Meanwhile, Cinfuego also condemned the AFP for refusing to return the remains of fallen NPA comrades to their families. "For more than a month now," he said, "the 80th Infantry Battalion has been blocking the return of the remains of Comrade Noel Levanta who was martyred in Puray, Rodriguez, Rizal." He said that the AFP is also refusing families' requests for the return of the remains of Ermin Bellen and Lucio Simburoto, who were victims of extrajudicial killings by military and police elements in Antipolo, Rizal in December 2019. **UP**



Philippine LGBTQ groups protest against the 'Anti-Terrorism' bill. Photo: altermidya.net

Manila police disrupt Pride March, arrest 20

Twenty activists participating in the Pride March in Manila on 26 June were arrested by elements of the Philippine National Police. The protesters were about to start a program after a short march when riot police closed in on them.

Among those arrested were members of LGBTQ+ organization Bahaghari, Philippine women's alliance GABRIELA, and other organizations. Joan Salvador, GABRIELA Deputy Secretary General was among those arrested.

One PNP officer forcibly took the key of a van used by the protesters and drove it to the police station.

The protestors were commemorating Pride Month and calling for the respect of LGBTQ rights, free mass testing for COVID-19, non-discriminatory financial assistance for Filipinos affected by the pandemic and an end to the Anti-Terror Bill which is now pending approval of President Duterte.

They were observing social distancing and other health protocols when the police disrupted their program and started arresting them.

PNP officials claim the marchers did not have a permit. Those arrested were later charged with disobedience of persons in authority in relation to the Law on Reporting of Communicable Diseases. They are also charged with illegal assembly and are now detained by the Manila Police District. The charges have been submitted to the Manila prosecutors' office, but court hearings will be delayed due to COVID 19 restrictions.

The arrested Pride marchers, now known as PRIDE 20, have received massive support and solidarity not only in the Philippines but also from other parts of the world.

According to human rights group Karapatan, "queers have the right to protest, speak out, and to take action against a draconian terror law that will impact on citizens' rights." **UP**

Defiant. Arrested protesters raise clenched fists in Manila police station. Photo: altermidya.net



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