



# UPDATES PHILIPPINES

RELEASED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES

Amsterdamsestraatweg 50, 3513AG Utrecht, The Netherlands  
T: : +31 30 2310431 | E: [updates.philippines@ndfp.org](mailto:updates.philippines@ndfp.org) | W: [updates.ndfp.org](http://updates.ndfp.org)

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## EDITORIAL

### Déjà vu... but not quite

In a few days, on 21 September, the Filipino people will mark the 48th anniversary of the imposition of martial law by Ferdinand Marcos. But we see again the dark days of Marcos under the present President Rodrigo Duterte. Déjà vu.

Like Marcos, Duterte's thirst for power is unquenchable. Duterte spits and tramples on people's rights. On his order, armed state agents engage in rampant killings and violence against the poor and against anyone who stands and fights for the people. In four years, Duterte has surpassed Marcos in terms of mass murder.

Like his hero Marcos, Duterte's hunger for wealth is insatiable. He colludes with China in the over-priced, high-interest loans for development projects for his profits. He coddles big drug lords whose wares come mostly from the Chinese mainland. He has plundered the public treasury of his own government under the cover of Covid-19.

Emulating Marcos, Duterte is now on a foreign borrowing spree of enormous sums for which Filipino future generations will have to pay for.

But Duterte is not quite up to Marcos in many counts. He seems to have displeased his US masters faster than the old dictator did. It took close to two decades, from 1966 leading up to the assassination of Benigno Aquino in 1983, when the US imperialists began to have misgivings about the usefulness of Marcos to them.

Now the US, in just four years, is offended by Duterte's subservience to China especially in the question of China's aggressiveness in the South China Sea and the West Philippine Sea. The US is also not satisfied with Duterte's ability to defeat the revolutionary armed movement.

Duterte lamely appeases his bigger master by successively withdrawing notice of termination of the Visiting Forces Agreement and letting his underlings express the boycott of Chinese companies involved in the building of illegal structures in disputed islands, atolls and shoals in the West Philippine Sea. He has granted full pardon to a US Marine convicted of killing a Philippine transgender and now asserts the validity of the decision of the Permanent Arbitration of the UNCLOS that debunks the Chinese 9-dash line territorial claim in the South China Sea.

But the greatest difference between the Marcos era and today is the much bigger extent and depth of the present resistance to Duterte's fascist regime, composed of the broad democratic movement and the revolutionary movement.

Just to cite an example, the New People's Army now has thousands of Red fighters operating in 110 guerilla fronts in 73 out of the country's 81 provinces, augmented by tens of thousands of people's militia and hundreds of thousands in the self-defense units of the revolutionary villages.

Déjà vu? Not quite. **UP**



## NDFP appeals to 46 UNHRC member states to approve report on the Philippines

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), as the national liberation movement representing the Filipino people in their struggle for justice, national and social liberation, and for just and lasting peace, issued a strong appeal in early September 2020 to 46 member states of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

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The NDFP called on the UNHRC members to give a vote of YES to the [report issued on June 2020 by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet](#) about the worsening human rights situation in the Philippines. The powerful report, which won the majority YES vote of the UNHRC in June 2020, demanded an independent investigation of the numerous human rights violations of the Philippine regime of President Rodrigo Duterte.

The June 2020 Report of Her Excellency Michelle Bachelet is due for another vote during the UNHRC session on 14 September to 6 October 2020. All 47 UNHRC member-states, including 14 new members and the 33 incumbent members, are due to vote on this June 2020 approved Resolution.

Signing on behalf of the national liberation movement of the Filipino people was Mr. Luis G. Jalandoni, NDFP Chief International Representative and Member of the NDFP National Executive Committee. Jalandoni is also the Senior Adviser of the NDFP Negotiating Panel engaged in peace negotiations with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP).

In appealing to the 46 governments, Jalandoni said, “the cry of the families of numerous victims of human rights violations by the current regime has reached a boiling point. The brutal murder of human rights worker Zara Alvarez, 39, mother of an 11 year old daughter, last August 17 and the torture and murder of peasant leader Randall Echanis, 72, Peace Consultant of the NDFP last August 10, have sparked national and international protests.”

He also cited the news report of 30 August whereby 500 rights advocates in the Philippines and abroad called for a stop to the killings of activists.

The NDFP appeal to the governments in the UNHRC excluded the Government of the Republic of the Philippines under President Duterte. **UP**

See also:

- <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25924&LangID=e>
- <https://vimeo.com/425483262/4fe00958a5>



Photo: kodao | bulatlat.com

## 500 human rights advocates call for end to killings of activists

500 human rights advocates in the Philippines and abroad called on the Duterte administration to stop the ‘red-tagging’ and killings of activists and critics of the government. The collective statement was issued on the occasion of the country’s National Heroes Day, 30 August 2020. It stated that the killings of peasant leader Randall Echanis, human rights worker Zara Alvarez and Bayan Muna regional coordinator Jory Porquia, highlighted the increasing number of extrajudicial killings of activists, political dissenters and members of the opposition under

the government of President Rodrigo Duterte.

Echanis, Zara Alvarez and Porquia were branded as communists and ‘enemies of the state’ by government officials before they were murdered. The statement called for an impartial and independent investigation into these killings as well as that of other victims of extrajudicial killings.

The statement was signed by lawmakers, religious leaders, academics, artists, environmental defenders, social media personalities and social activists. It called on President Duterte to “stop inciting the police, military and even ordinary civilians to commit such horrible acts”.

Signatories of the statement include Catholic bishops Broderick Pabillo and Gerardo Alminaza, Benedictine nun Mary John Mananzan of the Movement Against Tyranny, Bro. Armin Luistro of the La Salle Brothers, former Chief Justice Ma. Lourdes Sereno, and opposition senators Francis Pangilinan, Leila de Lima and Risa Hontiveros. Opposition members of the House of Representatives were led by Minority Leader Bienvenido Abante, Deputy Minority Leader Carlos Zarate, Albay representative Edcel Lagman and Quezon City representative Jose Christopher Belmonte.

More than 100 Philippine lawyers, including members of the National Union of People’s Lawyers, the Free Legal Assistance Group and the Concerned Lawyers for Civil Liberties, signed the statement, as well as more than 50 lawyers and lawyers organizations from around the world.

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Close to a hundred academics and educators from different fields also supported the call, as well as trade unions and activist groups from across the political spectrum.

The Philippine National Police admitted that 6,000 suspected drug users and pushers have been killed in police operations. Other estimates put that number to as high as 27,000. Human rights groups have reported more than 300 political killings of activists or suspected communists or communist sympathizers in the last few years.

The recently signed Anti-Terror Law opens the way for more attacks against political dissenters. **UP**

## Duterte pardon for US marine killer of transgender earns widespread condemnation

Filipino patriots and the LGBTQ community worldwide condemned the ‘absolute pardon’ granted on 7 September by Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte to convicted killer US Marine Lance Corporal Joseph Scott Pemberton. The presidential pardon was branded an act of subservience to the US, a grave injustice to transgender victim Jennifer Laude and her family, an act of national indignity and as ‘treachery to the Filipino people’.

Pemberton was convicted in December 2015 for killing Jennifer in October 2014 in a hotel room, after discovering she was a transgender. She was strangled and her head was rammed into a toilet. Pemberton was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Despite the conviction and sentence rendered by Philippine courts however, Pemberton was never placed under the jurisdiction of the Philippine Bureau of Prisons. He was kept instead inside Camp Aguinaldo, the headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, in a ‘special prison facility’ maintained by US military personnel and under the authority of the US Embassy. The facility was beyond the jurisdiction of Philippine courts. Not even the AFP Chief of Staff was allowed to enter without the permission of the US government.

On 13 September, Pemberton was escorted by Philippine immigration officials to a US military cargo plane to be ‘deported’ back to the US.

Marco Valbuena, Chief Information Officer of the Communist Party of the Philippines, said, “we join the Laude family and the Filipino people in condemning the granting of absolute pardon to convicted killer Joseph Scott Pemberton. The Party echoes the Filipino people’s call for the abrogation of the US-RP Visiting Forces Agreement, as well as all unequal treaties, including the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty and the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement.”

The VFA, Valbuena said, gives US military personnel extraordinary rights which exempts them from the jurisdiction of local laws. “Under the VFA, several killings and a number of abuses committed by American servicemen remain unpunished,” he said.

Duterte declared in February 2020 that he will abrogate the VFA but then took back this declaration in June.

Valbuena said, “Duterte clearly aims to please US President Trump and the US military in the face of growing discontent within the US State Department over his corrupt deals with China, in the hopes of neutralizing those calling for his early removal.” **UP**







## Samar villages combat Covid-19 amid intense militarization

17 revolutionary villages in Samar island, central Philippines, are successfully combating the spread of the Covid-19 disease. Local branches of the Communist Party of the Philippines, units of the New People's Army and revolutionary mass organizations have worked hand-in-hand to establish health protocols, prepare quarantine facilities and implement precautionary measures in order to prevent the spread of the disease among the villages' population.

Despite intensified armed attacks of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, units of the NPA were able to undertake the health campaign in the 17 villages, providing vital education about Covid-19, its spread and how to prevent its spread.

Starting in June 2020, basic medical trainings were conducted for the local health committees. The newly-trained medics were able to launch mass clinics in their areas. In one guerilla front, the health committees were able to provide free medical and dental services to at least 400 residents of four villages.

Red fighters wear face masks and follow protocols on social distancing and sanitation when interacting with the local population. NPA units utilize herbal medicine and acupuncture. In order to address the shortage of food and commercial drugs, Red fighters have also been spearheading the production of food crops as well as crops which can be processed for herbal medicine.

Meanwhile, soldiers from the AFP's 8th Infantry Division are preventing villagers in two Samar towns from harvesting their crops in order to coerce them to 'surrender' to the military. In San Jose de Buan town, at least 39 families were told to admit being NPA members and to surrender, or else they will not be allowed to tend to their farms and harvest their crops. Out of fear, 60 families have already fled their communities. **UP**

*NPA unit on the march. File photo.*



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