



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

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EDITORIAL

Marie Hilao-Enriquez: Advocate for human rights, justice and peace

It was with great sadness that we heard the news of the passing of Amaryllis Hilao-Enriquez on 24 April. We join the Filipino people in mourning the passing of our beloved and most admired Marie, and we extend our deepest condolences to her family, colleagues and friends.

Quoting the message from the Peace Negotiating Panel of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, “Marie will forever be remembered as the indefatigable, courageous and daring advocate of justice and peace. Having carried its torch for the Filipino people she served so selflessly, she faced the enemy firmly and determinedly to protect and defend their interest.

“After the Negotiating Panels of the NDFP and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines signed the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, Marie was asked to be an Independent Observer of the Joint Monitoring Committee of the NDFP. She gave valuable advice and input in the exercise of this task.

“She fought for the interests and well-being of political prisoners and other victims of human rights violations. She never ceased to bring justice to victims of human rights violations especially those from the toiling masses. She felt their pain, anger and desire for justice. After all, she and other members of her immediate family were themselves arrested, tortured and imprisoned during the Marcos dictatorship. Her sister Lilia Hilao was one of the first tortured and killed during the Marcos dictatorship.

“She was indefatigable. She knew how important it was to inform the international community on the dire situation of human rights in the Philippines. So even when her health was deteriorating she still travelled to attend international forums, investigating committees and courts. Her voice became the voice of those in prison, of those in their graves.

“She believed that one must fight exploitation, oppression and injustice for a people to be genuinely free. For Marie, upholding human rights is not just an advocacy, it is a passion. Marie always said that the souls of those who suffered arrest, torture, disappearance and extra-judicially killing are crying out for justice. Thus, justice must be served.”

In the last five years, the Duterte regime has caused the murder of tens of thousands. Tens of thousands more are suffering from illegal arrest, torture, forced disappearance, political assassinations, forced evacuations, indiscriminate bombings, harassment, censorship and harassment. It seeks to aggravate further these sufferings by imposing the Marcos-Duterte tandem on the Philippine electorate in the 9 May elections. It aspires to wipe away the heinous crimes of the Marcos and Duterte fascist regimes against the Filipino people.

Let us honor Marie’s life by fighting ever more resolutely against exploitation, oppression and injustice. Until justice is served. **UP**



NDFP celebrates 49 years

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines celebrated its 49th Founding Anniversary on 24 April. Messages of congratulations poured in from the NDFP allied organizations, led by the Communist Party of the Philippines: “Let us celebrate the achievements and victories of the NDFP in its work of uniting the Filipino

people and mobilizing them along the path of the national democratic revolution.

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“In the coming year, let us continue to vigorously promote the national democratic program and aspirations of the Filipino people, expand the ranks of the NDFP and its allied organizations at an unprecedented rate, as we look forward to celebrating the NDFP’s golden anniversary next year.”

Several gatherings took place in various parts of the Philippines, as well as abroad, to celebrate the 49th Founding Anniversary of the NDFP.

The CPP declared in its message, “The NDFP represents the people’s democratic government, which is the collective expression of the thousands of organs of political power at the village and higher levels, spread throughout the country... In its territories, the NDFP implements the program for land reform, raising agricultural production and supplementary income from sideline occupation, campaigns for public health, education and literacy, maintaining peace and order, resolving contradictions among the people, and people’s defense.”

The Party acclaimed the NDFP for mobilizing and helping the Filipino masses in coping with the pandemic and providing public health care services – information campaign, sanitation drives, mass clinics – and its educational work among the masses.

It also praised the NDFP for “brilliantly representing the people’s democratic government” in the field of foreign relations. “It has established state-to-state, state-to-people, and people-to-people solidarity relations and has been at the forefront and active participant in international anti-imperialist formations. It has formal relations with foreign governments and various international agencies, humanitarian organizations and peace institutions.”

The CPP further extolled the NDFP for engaging the Government of the Republic of the Philippines in peace negotiations, “without falling into the fascist trap of pacification, demobilization and capitulation. It has succeeded in establishing the principle for a just and lasting peace attainable by addressing the social, economic and political roots of the armed conflict, and demonstrating how this framework is vastly superior to the militarist notion of ‘localized peace’ attained through military suppression of the people’s rights and resistance.” **UP**



US reports on systemic rights abuses by Duterte regime

The US Department of State chided the government of President Rodrigo Duterte for its systemic human rights violations when it released its 2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices on the Philippines on 12 April, claiming “credible reports that members of (Duterte’s) security forces committed numerous abuses”. The report cited unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, torture, harsh and life-threatening prison conditions, and arbitrary detention committed “by and on behalf of the government”.

The report said, “Significant concerns also persisted about the impunity for other security forces, civilian national and local government officials, and powerful business and commercial figures.” It highlighted problems with the independence of the judiciary, including violence, threats of violence, and unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists.

The report reflected in small part the results of UN-sponsored and other international independent investigations on the human rights violations committed by the security officials of the Duterte government since 2016. Philippine human rights alliance Karapatan, in its 2021 Year-End Report, cited that apart from the more than 30,000 victims of extrajudicial killings in connection with Duterte’s ‘war on drugs’, there were in addition 427 activists and human rights defenders assassinated by suspected Duterte security forces.

Karapatan also cited other abuses, including indiscriminate bombings of rural villages, forced evacuations and illegal arrests that victimized thousands of Filipinos, under an atmosphere of impunity. On March 29, Amnesty International pointed out that lack of accountability among perpetrators had provided the breeding ground for human rights violations to flourish under President Duterte.

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Meanwhile, on 17 April, the Communist Party of the Philippines pointed out that the US State Department report is a “belated and muted acknowledgment of the fact that there are rampant cases of human rights violations perpetrated by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police in the course of the bogus ‘war on drugs’ and counterinsurgency operations”.

The CPP countered, “The Filipino people must hold the US equally culpable for these rights violations... The AFP receives and buys weapons from the US government and is guided by US doctrine.”

The AFP and PNP, the CPP stressed, “have been taught by the US military in accordance with its doctrines of ‘counterinsurgency’ and ‘counter-terrorism’... the same US tactics used in its failed wars of intervention in Vietnam (Operation Phoenix) and Afghanistan (whole-of-nation approach), characterized by aerial bombings, assassinations, torture and the relentless onslaught against the civilian population and non-combatants.”

The CPP called on the Filipino people to demand an end to US military intervention in the Philippines, the abrogation of unequal military agreements with the US, and an end to US-dictated doctrine of total war against the people. **UP**



Mudslides bury Leyte villagers. Photo: cpp.ph

CPP sends out rescue and rehabilitation teams for Typhoon Agaton victims

The Communist Party of the Philippines declared on 11 April that it is dispatching units of the New People’s Army to carry out rescue and rehabilitation efforts in areas affected by Typhoon Agaton, in parts of Eastern Visayas, Cebu Island and northern Mindanao. CPP Chief Information Officer Marco Valbuena said, “The NPA must immediately prepare rescue, medical and construction teams composed of Red fighters, militias and local activists to respond to any urgent needs of the people.”

Valbuena stressed, “It is the civic duty of the NPA to extend all possible assistance to the people in the face of calamities and disasters.” He also urged all revolutionary forces to organize efforts to ensure the quick delivery of supplies for relief and rehabilitation work.

Tropical Storm Agaton (International name: Megi) is the first tropical cyclone that hit the country this year. Agaton, classified as a weak tropical depression, packed maximum sustained winds of 75 kilometers per hour near the center with gusts of up to 105 kph. It pummeled the Philippines from 8 – 13 April.

The tropical depression brought incessant heavy rains and strong winds, resulting in widespread flooding and landslides across the eastern and central Visayas regions. The typhoon left nearly half a million people affected. In Leyte Island, the heavy rains brought disastrous landslides on 12 April, burying farming and fishing communities in Abuyog and Baybay towns.

Lamenting with the people of the Leyte towns, the CPP said, “These tragedies are a result of the widespread destruction of the environment caused by decades of logging and forest clearing for commercial plantations. Communities in mountains, valleys and plains have been made vulnerable to landslides and flooding by deforestation and siltation of rivers.”

The Party called on the Filipino people “to unite, defend the environment and their livelihood, and demand an end to destructive commercial and plunderous operations of big capitalists.” It reiterated its commitment “to enforce the policy of the people’s democratic government prohibiting large scale commercial logging and plunderous mining operations. It aims to achieve greater successes in enforcing this policy as we look forward to preserving the country’s resources for the future use of the people and their truly democratic government.” **UP**