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EDITORIAL

NDFP opposes anti-peace comments of incoming Manila government

Clarita Carlos, the incoming National Security Adviser of the Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. government, declared last week that their government is “done with the peace talks!” This declaration totally ignores all the peace agreements already signed between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, from 1992 until the most recent in 2018.

On 1 September 1992, the two parties signed The Hague Joint Declaration, a formal agreement of non-capitulation and parity, paving the way for resolving the roots of the country’s decades-long armed conflict through negotiations. Three years later, the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees provided safety and immunity to all participants in the peace talks, both from the NDFP and the GRP. In 1998, the landmark Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law was signed in The Hague. The Presidents of the Republic of the Philippines and the Chairman of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines approved all these agreements.

As late as 8 June 2018, official representatives of the NDFP and the Duterte government signed a “Stand Down Agreement”, calling for a temporary cessation of hostilities to prepare for a meeting in Norway between President Duterte and NDFP Chief Political Consultant Prof. Jose Maria Sison. The agreement also called for the signing of an Amnesty Proclamation and the Release of Political Prisoners.

Will the incoming Marcos, Jr. government renege on the agreements signed by his predecessors? Aside from declaring an end to peace talks with the NDFP, the incoming NSA Clarita Carlos further declared her intention to retain the services of the National Task Force for the Elimination of the Communist Armed Conflict. Yes, the same anti-communist witch hunting agency widely condemned by human rights advocates in the Philippines and internationally!

“There is no choice for the New People’s Army,” said Prof. Sison. “If they don’t want peace negotiations, the NPA will continue to fight and fulfill its revolutionary duty. People will anticipate an escalation of state terrorism.”

Julietta de Lima, Interim NDFP Negotiating Panel Chairperson, declared: “Tuloy pa rin ang laban! The struggle will continue. We negotiate as we fight and we fight as we negotiate. What we want is a just and lasting peace!” **UP**



‘Anti-Terrorism Council’ labels Jalandoni, 5 others as terrorists

“I am not a terrorist,” declared Luis G. Jalandoni, upon learning of his designation as a terrorist by the Duterte government’s ‘Anti-Terrorism Council’. He added, “I have worked for more than three decades for a just and lasting peace in the Philippines.” Jalandoni is a Senior Adviser of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines Negotiating Panel in peace talks with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines. Prior to 2016, he served as

Chairperson of the NDFP peace panel for more than 20 years.

The ‘Anti-Terrorism Council’ issued its Resolution No. 31 dated 25 May 2022, but publicly released only on 15 June, labelling Jalandoni and five others as “terrorist individuals” for allegedly being leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NDFP.

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CPP Chief Information Officer Marco Valbuena said, “The Party and the revolutionary movement firmly denounces the shameless, baseless and outrageous claim... It was made without basis and cites no specific judicable facts. It aims to slander them and restrict their democratic rights.” He added, “It is the US-supported Philippine reactionary state that is, in fact, the biggest terrorist... Its armed forces and police carry out extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, torture, hamletting of communities, imposing curfews, food blockades and conducting aerial bombing, strafing and shelling of civilian communities.” **UP**



Armed police violently disperse and arrest farmers, supporters. Photo: altermidya.

Tarlac police arrest 97 farmers, supporters

The Philippine National Police arrested 97 agrarian reform beneficiaries and their advocates in a hacienda in Tarlac province, northern Philippines, on 9 June 2022. Among those arrested are six farmer beneficiaries, four minors, two senior citizens, 45 farmer advocates, 30 students, 11 social researchers and three drivers. The police accused them of membership in the New People's Army and charged them with obstruction of justice, some with malicious mischief.

Earlier, police officials ordered the farmers to stop their 'bungkalan' – collective farming – in Hacienda Tinang and attempted to arrest Felino Cunanan, Jr, Chairperson of the local agrarian reform advocacy group MAKISAMA-Tinang. The police then later violently disrupted the assembly and program of the farmers and their advocates. They also dismantled the huts where about 90 assembly participants sought refuge from the violence.

The farmers have been calling on the Department of Agrarian Reform to install the 236 agrarian reform beneficiaries who are all holders of Certificate of Land Ownership Awards. Local DAR officials had earlier confirmed that the farmers are legitimate beneficiaries under the 1988 Comprehensive Land Reform Program. However, the same officials did not stop the repressive police actions against the beneficiaries.

Human rights groups, both domestic and abroad, condemned the violent dispersal and arrests. Philippine human rights alliance Karapatan denounced the arrests and the undue force used against the protesters. “We call on those poised to file complaints to drop these complaints, and for the [police] to immediately release all detained... We likewise ask the Commission on Human Rights to ensure that the rights of those detained, their families, paralegals, and lawyers are respected.”

National peasant alliance Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas declared, “Planting food and supporting farmers are no mischief, and the right to assembly is guaranteed by the highest law in the land.” Leon Dulce of Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment, added, “We condemn these dirty tactics that seem bent on sabotaging the distribution of the 200-hectare sugarcane estate to rightful beneficiaries.”

Farmworkers union Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura, Amihan peasant women's alliance, and urban poor organization Kadamay likewise denounced the police violence and illegal arrests. Peasant advocacy group NNARA-Youth condemned what they said was the “biggest mass arrest” of farmers and peasant advocates under the Duterte regime.

Abroad, the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines called on the international community to demand the immediate release of those arrested. They also called on the Department of Agrarian Reform to defend the agrarian reform beneficiaries who, since 1995, are being robbed of their right to till their land. “Agrarian reform beneficiaries and advocates, and their activities to advance agrarian reform, should not be criminalized. The use of bungkalan to help sustain daily food subsistence in order to survive is not a crime,” said Peter Murphy, ICHRP Chairperson.

The Philippines marked 9 June 2022 as the 34th anniversary of the implementation of the Agrarian Reform Law. **UP**

Marcopper Mining ordered to pay mining disaster victims

After a legal battle of 21 years, the Marinduque Regional Trial Court in central Philippines ruled on 16 May 2022 to grant the damages plea of 30 complainants against the Marcopper Mining Corporation

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Humanitarian disaster.
File photo: Aubrey SC Makilan | bulatlat.com

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for causing the one of the country's worst mining disasters in December 1993. The court ordered Marcopper to pay PhP200,000 (US\$3,800) in temperate damages and PhP100,00 (US\$1,900) in moral damages to each of at least 30 plaintiffs that filed the case in 2001. Marcopper was also ordered to pay PhP1 million (US\$19,000) in exemplary damages to all the plaintiffs.

The court said Marcopper was negligent in the operation and maintenance of its Maguila-guila tailings dam, causing it to breach and spilling toxic mine tailings into the Mogpog River. The heavily silted floodwaters submerged

and destroyed properties and sources of livelihood, and exposed the residents of Marinduque to serious health risks.

"This is a victory for the plaintiffs who had waited two decades for justice, as much as it is for the other plaintiffs who had unfortunately died in the course of this case," said Elizabeth Manggol of the Marinduque Council for Environmental Concerns.

"The Marcopper disaster is a warning we should heed with the ongoing and planned large-scale projects in the country," said Atty. E.M. Taqueban, Executive Director of the Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center (LRC), a non-government organization that served as the legal counsel for the plaintiffs. He stressed, "Large-scale mining projects present inevitable damage."

Atty. Ryan Roset, LRC Legal Services Coordinator added, "This emblematic case should serve as a warning for communities who wish to embrace mining. Litigating mining-related cases like this celebrated case is a slow march to justice. Communities must think their decisions through for the impact of the environment can be irreversible. In the case of Marinduque, the river affected by the spill is all but dead."

Marcopper began its copper mining operations in the Marinduque island province in 1969. Its operations dumped about 50 million tons of mine waste into Calancan Bay, prior to the tailings dam disaster in 1993. Another disaster took place in March 1996, when mine tailings spilled from a drainage tunnel into the Boac and Makulapnit rivers.

Meanwhile, Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment described the court's decision as "a celebration of the people's determination and will to hold big mining accountable." The environmental group however said the people must "be steadfast and vigilant in guarding against attempts to reverse this legal victory. We must continue demanding the full rehabilitation of the Marcopper-affected areas." **UP**



NPA stops illegal logging operations in Sultan Kudarat

A unit of the New People's Army successfully stopped an illegal logging operation in the southern Philippine province of Sultan Kudarat on 1 June, when it stopped two operators working with the illegal logging operations of D.M. Consunji Incorporated. The NPA Red fighters explained to the operators the need to defend the indigenous peoples' ancestral lands and to care for the environment.

The operators committed to stop their illegal operations and cooperation with the DMCI.

On 31 May, a separate unit of the NPA-Sultan Kudarat ambushed elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines 37th Infantry Battalion along the highway in Kalamansig town. Five soldiers were killed while seven others were wounded. The AFP soldiers in the province serve as guards to the destructive logging operations of the DMCI.

Earlier, on 14 May, the NPA ambushed elements of the AFP 57th Infantry Battalion aboard a military truck in Lebak town. Three soldiers were killed in action while four others were wounded.

The indigenous Lumad Dulangan-Manobo and Moro residents celebrated the successful stopping of the environmentally destructive logging operations and the victorious offensives against the AFP armed elements. They have long decried the threats, harassment and forced surrender campaigns committed by various AFP units against their communities. **UP**