



EDITORIAL:

Marcos Jr. and AFP's callous use of "disaster response" as pretext for military operations

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EDITORIAL:

Marcos Jr. and AFP's callous use of "disaster response" as pretext for military operations

The Marcos Jr' administration's callous and duplicitous use of disaster relief as a front for its 'counterinsurgency' operations is a glaring betrayal of the victims of the recent floodings in the country. Last week, while the Bicol region lay in devastation following severe floods and landslides, the administration chose not to prioritize emergency relief for affected communities. Instead, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), under orders from its US imperialist master, mobilized troops in a purely combative mission under the guise of "relief operations." In Barangay Matanglad, Pio Duran, Albay, the AFP's 49th Infantry Battalion conducted military operations, not to deliver aid to affected communities but to confront a unit of the New People's Army (NPA). The operation began in the morning amid hostile weather conditions and ended in an encounter that saw at least one AFP soldier wounded. In a swift response, the NPA unit, forewarned by local residents about approaching soldiers, successfully disengaged, allowing the NPA to regroup and refocus efforts to providing immediate relief to affected areas. Contrary to the AFP's narrative, no relief goods were seen; the soldiers were armed and primed for combat, not for relief operations. AFP's excuse – that it was on a humanitarian mission – adds insult to injury for the almost 70,000 families displaced by severe tropical storm "Kristine" (international name Trami) in Bicol. The local community and barangay officials in the area confirm that they witnessed zero relief distribution efforts by the military. The shameless manipulation of relief reports for propaganda underscores the administration's readiness to exploit even the most tragic circumstances for its militaristic ends. This misuse of disaster relief as a counterrevolutionary ploy shows how the Marcos Jr. administration prioritizes military operations over immediate, life-saving assistance for disaster-affected communities.

This disturbing incident of using disaster response as a pretext for militarization is not an isolated incident. Last August 14-19, under the guise of "humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations," American troops launched its Pacific Airlift Rally 2023 in Clark Air Base in Mabalacat, Pampanga, Villamor Air Base in Pasay City, and Ebuena Air Base in Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu. The said war games were instead focused on the US continuing strategy to use the Philippines as a launching pad for its war provocations towards China.

This further exposes this administration's allegiance to the interests of US imperialism, which has long supported the militarization of rural areas under the pretense of "stabilizing" the Philippine countryside. So-called 'counterinsurgency' tactics of the AFP, including psychological warfare and military occupation of communities, continue to violate international humanitarian laws. While communities cry out for genuine disaster relief, the Marcos Jr. and the AFP instead perpetuates relentless militarization and deceit. 

GRP attacks on NDFP consultants create hostile conditions for peace talks

In a statement signed by Panel Chairperson Julie De Lima, the NDFP Peace Negotiating Panel assailed the recent illegal arrests and detention of NDFP consultants Simeon Naogsan, Porferio Tuna, and Wigberto Villarico and said that the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) is deliberately creating "hostile conditions" to obstruct the peace negotiations.

The NDFP Peace Panel emphasized that the illegal arrests and arbitrary detention of these consultants are yet another in a string of blatant violations by the GRP of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), signed to provide both parties to the negotiations the conducive conditions to engage without the threat of arrest, killing or harassment.

The NDFP Peace Panel also firmly rejected GRP's National Security Council (NSC) spokesperson Jonathan Malaya's claim that JASIG is no longer in effect.

"The effectivity of these agreements cannot be simply rescinded through a mere press conference or media statement. Such agreements are the product of formal negotiations and mutual commitment, rooted in both national and international legal principles, and cannot be undone unilaterally or casually. The termination of an agreement like JASIG requires formal procedures as stipulated in the document signed by both parties in 1995," De Lima asserted.

According to De Lima, consultants and negotiators of the NDFP have been repeatedly subjected to arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, and torture.

In 2022, NDFP Peace Panel negotiators Benito Tiamzon and wife Wilma Austria were abducted, brutally tortured and murdered by GRP's




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Armed Forces of the Philippines with the help of US special forces. In 2019, NDFP Peace Panel spokesperson Randy Malayao was gunned down by GRP assassins, and in 2020, key NDFP consultant for the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) Randall Echanis was brutally tortured and killed in his home also by GRP assailants. Several other key NDFP consultants were either extrajudicially killed or arrested and detained.

“By repeatedly violating these protections, the GRP has disregarded its own commitments and continues to push the ongoing talks to the brink of collapse” the NDFP stressed.

“How can we possibly engage in meaningful negotiations when our negotiators and consultants are subjected to arrests, killings, and torture? This issue is both a practical and political obstacle to the ongoing talks, as it threatens not only the safety of the NDFP consultants, negotiators and staff but also undermines the very foundation of trust and dialogue necessary for any productive peace negotiation to continue,” the NDFP Peace Panel strongly stressed.

In another statement, the progressive lawyers’ group National Union of People’s Lawyers, said the recent killings and arbitrary arrests of NDFP consultants reveals more than a lack of sincerity by the Philippine government in pursuing peace but is an outright disregard for both human rights and humanitarian law, and a blatant refusal to honor the commitments it has made through formal agreements.

“If the Marcos administration is serious in its claim of pursuing peace negotiations with the NDFP, it must begin by adhering to international law, the CARHRIHL, the JASIG and other agreements they voluntarily adopted, and that includes the obligation to respect the safety and security of NDFP consultants. The government must accept that fact that nothing less than addressing the root causes of armed conflict will put an end to it,” the NUPL concluded. 

NDFP urges UN to hold GRP accountable for child rights violations

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) urged the United Nations (UN) to conduct “thorough, balanced investigations” in the Philippines to be able to hold accountable those truly responsible for violations of children’s rights in the country. In response to an October 21 report to the UN Security Council, NDFP Special Office for the Protection of Children (SOPC) chief Coni Ledesma said their group is committed to protecting the rights and welfare of children in all aspects of their struggle.

In stark contrast, the NDFP demonstrated the violations committed by the Marcos Jr. administration in the past year:

- On June 9, just a few days after the International Day for the Protection of Children, the Armed Forces of the Philippines’s (AFP) 7th Infantry Battalion (7th IB) shot dead a 16-year old Grade 9 student Kuni Cuba in Sultan Kudarat, Mindanao.
- On June 2, fascist soldiers of the 74th IB opened fire on and illegally arrested 11 farmers, including 7 minors in Sitio Canonghan, Barangay Osmena, Palapag, Northern Samar.
- On April 25, 2024, elements of the 79th IB arrested Adonis Alforque, 16 and Jonidel Alforque, 17 in Sitio Humayan, Barangay Pinowayan,



image: philippinerevolution.nu

- Don Salvador Benedicto, Negros Occidental, and falsely claimed the two brothers were “NPA child soldiers.”
- On March 28, a drunken soldier of the 59th IB molested and sexually exploited a young girl in Sitio Sales, Barangay Pook, Balayan, Batangas. Apart from this, the soldier involved also mauled the girl’s 14-year-old boy companion.
- On February 23, state forces abducted a father (“Berting”) alongside his two minor children one of whom is four years old in Barangay Campagao, Bilar, Bohol.

The UN report admits that the AFP and the Philippine National Police (PNP) detained a total of 6 children in the period between January 2022 to December 2023, consistent with the AFP’s pattern of abducting children and using them to force their Red fighter parents to surrender. It can be recalled how in 2021, the reactionary government took Baby Marx, a newborn baby of Red fighters, away from his grandparents in Talisay City, Negros Occidental. Four years since, Baby Marx remains hostaged by the 79th IB and the NTF-Elcac in the province. The fascist state forces refuse to give Baby Marx back to his grandparents who have been fighting hard to get him back.

In 2000, the NDFP SOPC released its Program of Action and Declaration on the Rights and Welfare of Children, which expressly prohibited the recruitment of children in armed activities. According to Ledesma, the principles laid out in the NDFP Program of Action align with, and often exceed, the standards set by international humanitarian law.

“The NDFP’s policies reflect its steadfast dedication to protect children’s rights and any suggestion to the contrary is a misrepresentation of its stance and practices,” the NDFP concluded. 

LAB-NDFP raises concerns on fully automated elections in PH



image: philippinerevolution.nu

The *Liga ng Agham para sa Bayan* (LAB), or People’s League for Science, one of the 18 member organizations of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, criticized the regime’s upcoming National Elections in May, 2025, as a means to maintain the semicolonial and semifeudal social system in the Philippines.

According to LAB, the ruling US-Marcos regime clearly has the upper hand, wielding many weapons to rig the elections. One of them is the FASTrac or Full Automation System with Transparency Audit/Count, which is just a rehash of the Automated Election System (AES) instituted by law in 1997 and amended in 2007.

With the AES, the imperialist US has tightened its grip on the reactionary elections in the Philippines by being in control of the supply, use, and management of the necessary technology and machinery until the release of the election results, said LAB.

This ensures that one of its puppets from the local ruling classes will win the national elections, a direct interference with Philippine sovereignty. Besides, the American company Smartmatic earned more than Php 25 billion in the elections held between 2010 and 2022 despite failed services and cheating of the regime that used it.

For the coming national election in 2025, the Marcos regime awarded Miru Systems Co Ltd, a South Korean company in cahoots with imperialist US, with a Php 18 billion contract and another, i-One Resources, with Php 1.4 billion. The Commission of Elections (Comelec) boasted that the latter uses technology like the one used by the US Central Intelligence Company and US military services.

LAB said rampant corruption and fraud dominated the use of the technology of the two companies. Two examples stand out. Former Comelec Commissioner Andres Bautista was charged with hundreds of million Philippine pesos in malfeasance while present Commissioner George Bautista accused with billions. LAB asserts, traditional methods of election malfeasance like vote buying, use of flying voters, misuse of government funds, terror tactics using private armed groups, military and police and massive disinformation in the media are still employed.

In contrast, elections in areas occupied by the revolutionary movement’s organs of political power (OPP) are peaceful. No one uses violence, intimidation or bribery.

“The OPP is an expression of the organized forces of the revolutionary masses to mobilize for the victory of the revolution. One of its main duties is to advance the People’s Democratic Revolution against the imperialist domination of the US and the local ruling class. Presently, it exists in different forms and levels depending on the power and extent of the revolutionary forces. It is commonly at the village level, moving towards municipal and provincial levels and ultimately establishing the People’s Democratic Republic. Because under the colonial and feudal system, revolution is the only and true solution to achieve freedom and true democracy,” concluded LAB. 