



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

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EDITORIAL

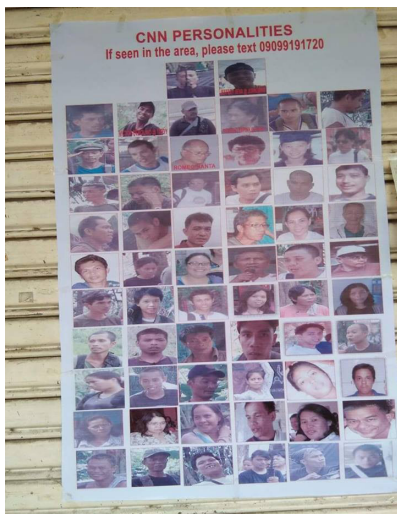
Support the Filipino people vs the Duterte government

In a span of less than two years, the government of President Rodrigo R. Duterte is proving to be more vicious than the Marcos fascist dictatorship. We can only manage to present in this issue a small portion of its horrendous human rights violations.

Fortunately, the rest of the world has not been blind to these horrors. International multilateral agencies, foreign governments, international human rights groups, global religious organizations and other civil society groups have been roundly criticizing the Duterte regime over the more than 23,000 victims of his 'war on drugs', harassment and illegal detention of opposition leaders and activists, and media repression, among others.

These are not enough however. The people themselves, in their millions, need to organize and mobilize themselves in order to topple the tyrant. Much like the way the people have toppled the US-supported Marcos and Estrada regimes. At the same time, the people need to exert greater efforts in eradicating feudal & semifeudal exploitation, and in further expanding and strengthening the People's Democratic Government.

In these efforts, the revolutionary forces of the NDFP warmly welcome the solidarity and various forms of support from the international community. **UP**



WANTED poster of human rights defenders being spread by Duterte security forces. Included in this poster are the late Bernardino Patigas & Atty. Benjamin Ramos.

Human rights advocates threatened, gunned down

A lone gunman shot and killed Escalante City councilor and human rights advocate Bernardino Patigas on 22 April, in Negros Occidental province in central Philippines. Days later on 1 May, 28-year old Archad Ayao was gunned down in Cotabato City in southern Philippines. Ayao was an investigator of the Bangsamoro Regional Human Rights Commission.

The gruesome incidents bring to 138 the total number of human rights defenders assassinated since President Rodrigo Duterte came to power in June 2016.

The killings follow a systematic, organized pattern. According to human rights group Karapatan (Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights), the criminals wear masks and ride in motorcycles without plate numbers. Police investigators then announce questions and falsehoods about the victim, their family and associates. The killings are preceded by threats, harassment and slander, including officials of the Duterte government publicly declaring the victims as terrorists or communists.

Prior to his death, Patigas' photo appeared in a poster disseminated in Negros Occidental province by Duterte security forces, sometime in early 2018. Lawyer Benjamin Ramos' photo was also on that poster. He was

killed on 6 November 2018.

Meanwhile, other forms of gross human rights violations have also escalated under the Duterte government. According to the [Information Bureau of the Communist Party of the Philippines](#), in 2018 alone, 24,700 people have been forcibly evacuated; 54 cases of community attacks; 22 cases of indiscriminate bombing and strafing of villages; and more than 4,000 individual cases of threats, harassments and intimidation – all committed by security forces of the Duterte government.

To date, there are 540 political prisoners, 203 of which were arrested under the Duterte government. Among the detainees are 40 elderly, 120 sickly, 56 women and 5 under the age of 18. Seven of the detainees are consultants of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) in peace negotiations with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP). **UP**



Photo: Carlo Manalansan | bulatlat

Duterte terminates human rights monitoring body

In a move to drive the final nail on the coffin of peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), the Duterte government in April terminated the services of its Secretariat in the Joint Monitoring Committee for the implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement for the Respect of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL).

Maria Carla Munsayac-Villarta of the Office of the Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process (OPAPP) sent an email to the NDFP informing the latter of the termination.

The CARHRIHL, a landmark agreement signed in 1998 by Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) President Joseph E. Estrada and NDFP Chairperson Mariano Orosa, called for the establishment of a committee and secretariat composed of delegates and observers from both contending parties tasked with processing reports of violations of the human rights agreement. [Read the [CARHRIHL here](#)]

The talks stalled during the presidencies of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Benigno Aquino III, and was [resumed at the start of Duterte's presidency in 2016](#) with negotiations for the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER). In mid-November 2017, bilateral teams initialed two of the most important parts of CASER: Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ARRD) and National Industrialization and Economic Development (NIED). The Parties also agreed in principle to free land distribution to landless peasants and agricultural workers.

However, Duterte unilaterally declared the termination of the GRP-NDFP peace talks on 23 November 2017. Despite the formal termination, the GRP panel held back channel talks with the NDFP in the Netherlands from March to June 2018. This resulted in the signing on 8 June of a Stand Down Agreement, an initial ceasefire, to pave the way for the resumption of formal peace talks in Oslo, Norway.

After meeting with his military officials however, Duterte unilaterally nullified the Stand Down Agreement and announced on 15 June 2018 the cancellation of the scheduled Oslo talks.

According to NDFP Senior Adviser Luis Jalandoni, "The NDFP has declared its openness to resume peace talks with any GRP administration – whether of Duterte, or his successor – so long as it is willing to seriously negotiate on basic social, economic and political reforms beneficial to the people." **UP**

Philippine Army sows terror in Samar villages

A series of terror attacks by suspected Philippine Army operatives have recently been plaguing remote communities in Samar island in central Philippines. Two motorcycle riding men shot and killed 63-year old Apolinario Lebico and injured his companion Jeremy Capoquian, on 25 April in Las Navas town, Northern Samar province.

Lebico, the village council chairman of San Miguel, Las Navas, was calling for the removal of the Philippine Army's 20th Infantry Battalion encamped in their community. The residents were outraged after a grenade blast killed 9-year old Armando Remolde on 17 April. The Philippine Army reported the incident as an attack by the New People's Army on their patrol base. Residents however reported no incidents of firefight that day.

On 7 May, the same military unit shot and killed 35-year old Melvin Obiado Cabe, and seriously wounded his young son, in Tagab-iran village, Las Navas town. His son was able to escape and inform community residents of the incident. The two victims were out hunting in the woods when they encountered the criminals. On 9 May, residents decided to evacuate their community and sought refuge in the Las Navas town center. They demanded the removal of all Philippine Army units from their villages.

Fr. Santiago Salas, Spokesperson of the NDFP in Eastern Visayas [expressed support for the terrorized villagers](#). The evacuation, he says, is a form of protest, in order to "banish military forces from their town, file a case against the 20th Infantry Battalion as the mastermind behind the killing of Lebico, and finally expose the rotten system of the fascist Duterte regime."

"Duterte is using alleged 'NPA attacks' to justify militarization in Eastern Visayas. Since November 2018, the GRP has concentrated 11 battalions in the region, redeploying some from Mindanao."

Meanwhile, on 26 April, in the village of Beri in Calbiga town, Western Samar, 375 residents were forced to evacuate after their village chairman was shot dead by masked men. Wilmar Calutan, 40, was killed on 25 April inside his home. Evacuating villagers reported that Philippine Army soldiers are "checking their homes". They suspect the soldiers to be behind their village chief's killing.

[See [photos of evacuations on twitter](#)] **UP**