



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

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Amsterdamsestraatweg 50, 3513AG Utrecht, The Netherlands

T: : +31 30 2310431 | E: updates.philippines@ndfp.org

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EDITORIAL License to kill

“Shoot them. If they resist violently, shoot them. If they die, I do not care.”

“Just because you’re a journalist you are not exempted from assassination.”

“Hitler massacred 3 million Jews... there’s 3 million drug addicts. I’d be happy to slaughter them,”

These are just a few of the extremely deplorable proclamations that Rodrigo Duterte has been making in the past three years. Approving nods from US President Donald Trump and China President Xi Jinping embolden him to make more such proclamations.

These are not ‘figures of speech’ but are consistent with the policies of brutality and repression of the Duterte government. According to UN human rights experts, these policies have resulted in “a staggering number of unlawful deaths and police killings in the context of the so-called war on drugs, as well as killings of human rights defenders... the law has been weaponised to undermine press freedom, and the independence of the judiciary is undermined.”

In the face of these terrorist attacks, the clamor of the Filipino people for the ouster of the Duterte regime continues to mount. This is the most urgent task of the Filipino people at the moment, one in which the solidarity and support of the international community can play an important role. **UP**



Statement of Support & Solidarity with Lawyers of the People

We, lawyers and members of the legal profession, express grave concern over the heightening attacks against our colleagues in the Philippines. In particular, we are disturbed by the labelling, accusations and threats against the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL) and its members.

The red tagging of NUPL is contrary to basic rules of evidence, due process and fairplay. Dissent and criticism are an exercise of democratic rights. Political harassment undermines the rule of law and substitutes it with the law of rulers.

We have known, worked with, or journeyed with the brave and dedicated NUPL, pro bono human rights lawyers. Their track record is beyond question. Their passion and the advocacies they pursue against all odds give hope to their poor, persecuted and marginalized clients. Labelling, discrediting, threatening, and attacking lawyers are against the basic principles of lawyering: the State's duty to protect them and the delivery of justice. More importantly, these attacks beg the fundamental question of whether there are valid reasons to dissent, criticize and advocate change, and how to obligate them for the people's benefit.

We stand in solidarity with our fellow lawyers irrespective of the clients they professionally represent and the public interest advocacies they pursue. We support the cases and actions to defend NUPL and all lawyers under attack because of the exercise of their profession and the performance of their duties. We shall also cooperate and collaborate in all fora to hold accountable those responsible for these attacks.

AN ATTACK ON ANY OF US IS AN ATTACK ON ALL OF US.

Lawyers close ranks vs political threats & attacks

Declaring that “an attack on any of us is an attack on all of us”, legal luminaries from around the world came out in force against the threats and attacks on human rights lawyers in the Philippines.

In a half-page spread on the 7 June issue of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, the [“Statement of support and solidarity with](#)

[Lawyers of the People”](#) expressed “grave concern over the heightening attacks against our colleagues in the Philippines... particularly against the National Union of Peoples’ Lawyers (NUPL) and its members.”

The NUPL and its members reported being tailed, their offices being surrounded by unidentified armed men, receiving threatening text messages, being vilified in radio programs, and being accused of membership in the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and New People’s Army (NPA). In early April, Maj. Gen. Antonio Parlade, Deputy Chief-of-Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) publicly accused the NUPL of links to the CPP because of NUPL’s clients who he claims are “high profile communist terrorist cadres”.

According to the NUPL, 55 lawyers have suffered such attacks since Rodrigo Duterte came to power in June 2016; 36 of them have been murdered.

Among those who signed the Statement of Solidarity were Jeanne Mirer, President of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL); Bill Bowring, President of the European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights; Robert Sabata Gripekoven, President of the European Democratic Lawyers; Jun Sasamoto, Secretary General of the Confederation of Lawyers in Asia Pacific; Sabah Al-Mukhtar, President of the Arab Lawyers Association; Issouf Baadhio, President of the Union Internationale des Avocats; Russell Fraser, Chair of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers; Susan Brazilli, Director of the International Women’s Rights Project; Gail Davidson, Executive Director of the Lawyers’ Rights Watch Canada; and several officials of the US National Lawyers Guild; Movement of Attorneys for Brotherhood, Integrity and Nationalism; and Free Legal Assistance Group.

In an earlier development, the Philippine Supreme Court granted on 3 May the [NUPL’s petition to issue writs of amparo and habeas data](#). It ordered government officials, including President Duterte in his capacity as AFP commander-in-chief, to make a verified return of the writ and to comment on the NUPL’s petition. Duterte and his officials have thus far ignored the Supreme Court order. **UP**



Ms. Agnes Callamard, UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. UN photo

UN human rights officials call for investigation of Duterte's violations

Eleven UN human rights experts on 7 June called on the UN Human Rights Council to set up an independent investigation on the government of President Rodrigo Duterte, "given the scale and seriousness of the reported human rights violations and the climate of official impunity in which they occur."

The unprecedented [joint statement](#) seeks to galvanize international action in the UNHRC which is set to convene its 41st Regular Session on 24 June. "There are now thousands of grieving families in the Philippines," the UN experts said. "We call on the international community to do everything possible to ensure there will be no more."

The Duterte government admits having killed more than 5,000 victims since its 'war on drugs' began in June 2016. The Philippine Human Rights Commission however, believes the number may be closer to 27,000.

The joint statement was released by Ms Agnes Callamard, Special Rapporteur (UNSR) on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Ms Meskerem Geset Techane, Chair of the Working Group (WG) on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice; Ms Hilal Elver, UNSR on the right to food; Mr. Michel Forst, UNSR on the situation of human rights defenders; Mr. David Kaye, UNSR on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Mr. Clément Nyaletsossi Voulé, UNSR on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association;; Mr. José Antonio Guevara Bermúdez, Chair-Rapporteur, WG on Arbitrary Detention; Mr. Dainius Pūras, UNSR on the right to health; Ms Victoria Lucia Tauli-Corpuz, UNSR on the rights of indigenous people; Ms Dubravka Šimonović, UNSR on violence against women, its causes and consequences; and Mr. Diego García-Sayán, UNSR on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers.

The UN experts took aim at wide-ranging abuses beyond the war on drugs. They cited extrajudicial killings of children, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, trade union representatives and land rights activists. They also drew attention to accusations of arbitrary detention, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, violence against women, attacks on the independence of judges and lawyers, attacks on the freedom of expression and assembly, as well as the denial of people's right to food and health. "Sad to say," they declared, "those cases are just the tip of the iceberg."

Duterte's spokesman Salvador Panelo branded the UN experts as "foreign propagandists masquerading as human rights protectors" and declared their accusations as "unpardonable violations of the Philippines' sovereignty."

In late 2016, then UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein said that the Manila government should investigate Mr. Duterte for murder over his boasts that he had killed people he considered suspects. That drew a vitriolic response from Duterte who called him "a son of a bitch" and "an idiot!" **UP**



Church leaders call for resumption of peace talks

The Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP) called on newly-elected members of the Philippine Senate and House of Representatives to push for the resumption of stalled peace talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

In a [statement released on 5 June](#), the Christian Church leaders called on the outgoing Congress to pass a resolution calling for the resumption of peace negotiations in order to address the roots of the armed conflict. "We urge you to let peace be the legacy of the 17th Congress," they implored.

They also called on the incoming 18th Congress to work for the resumption of the peace talks, saying that "the Filipino people deserve no less."

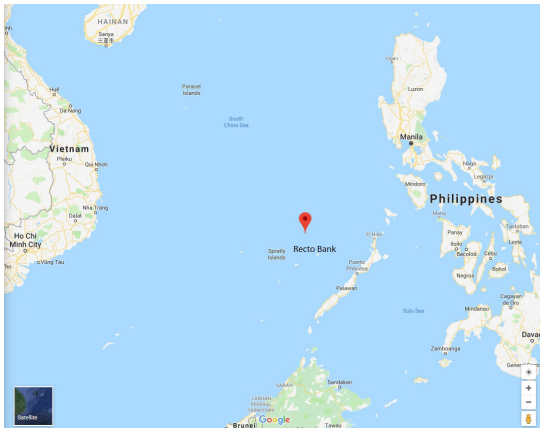
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The PEPP is the largest ecumenical peace movement in the Philippines. It is composed of Church leaders from the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC), Ecumenical Bishops Forum (EBF) and the Association of Major Religious Superiors Men and Women in the Philippines (AMRSP).

The statement was signed by Archbishop Antonio J. Ledesma (CBCP), Rev. Fr. Rex R.B. Reyes, Jr. (NCCP); Bishop Deogracias S. Iniquez, Jr. D.D. (EBF), Bishop Noel A. Pantoja (PCEC) and Sr. Mary John Mananzan, OSB (AMRSP).

The Church leaders expressed sadness that the peace negotiations “(were) not a central issue of concern during the May 2019 elections.” They said that while some candidates pledged to work on the issue, those who were elected were silent on the matter. **UP**



Chinese vessel sinks Philippine fishing boat in West Philippine Sea

In the latest incident of aggressive intrusions into Philippine territory, an unknown Chinese vessel rammed the Philippine fishing vessel F/B Gimver1 in the night of 9 June off the Recto Bank, causing the latter to sink.

All 22 Filipino fishermen onboard were rescued by a Vietnamese fishing vessel. According to the survivors, the Chinese vessel left the scene without stopping.

Gen. Delfin Lorenzana, Secretary of National Defense of the Duterte government, reported the incident to the media on 12 June.

The Recto Bank (Reed Bank) is located in the West Philippine Sea off the west coast of Palawan island, in central Philippines, well within the country’s 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

The Department of Foreign Affairs reportedly sent a diplomatic protest against China. As of this writing, Duterte himself has yet to issue a statement.

Duterte has repeatedly praised China and even joked about the Philippines becoming a province of the Asian superpower. He also claimed that China, which has supported his ‘war on drugs’, has assured him that it will back him against ouster attempts.

Speaking before an international conference in Tokyo on 31 May, Duterte questioned for the first time China’s territorial claims over the South China Sea. “I love China,” he said. “It has helped us a bit. But it behooves upon us to ask: Is it right for a country to claim the whole of the ocean?”

He meekly added, however, “My country is very small. It has progressed a little over the years... But I cannot afford a war with anybody.”

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), in its [statement marking the 121st Anniversary of the Declaration of Philippine Independence from Spain](#) on 12 June, blasted Duterte’s treachery. “Duterte is a two-sided traitor.”

“While heading the neocolonial client-state under American rule and serving US economic, military and geo-political interests, he has allowed the rising imperialist China to infringe on the country’s maritime territory and plunder the country’s economic resources,” the CPP asserted.

[In a separate statement](#), CPP Founding Chairman Prof. Jose Maria Sison branded the sinking “a consequence of Duterte’s treason.”

Sison reveals: “The Duterte ruling clique justifies its treasonous behavior by its expectations of large loans for infrastructure projects from China... The loans are at exorbitant interest rates and the infrastructure projects are overpriced. Thus, the Duterte ruling clique is expected to receive huge kickbacks on a scale even grander than that at the time when Duterte’s infamous idol Marcos milked the foreign loans and infrastructure projects.”

Earlier on 10 June, the Philippine Coast Guard reported spotting a Chinese warship 7 to 12 nautical miles off Panatag Shoal. The warship was sailing with two Chinese Coast Guard vessels, and two other Chinese boats.

Internationally known as Scarborough Shoal, Panatag is also located in the West Philippine Sea, around 120 nautical miles off the coast of Zambales province in northern Philippines. **UP**