



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

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EDITORIAL

Negotiating with a murderous tyrant

With his own proclamations and orders since November 2017, President Rodrigo Duterte has closed the possibilities of resuming peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). He has instead unleashed his security and intelligence forces to brutally suppress both the clandestine armed revolutionary movement led by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), as well as the legal grassroots organizations which the Duterte regime brands as 'communist fronts'. Duterte's security forces are accused of murdering dozens of opposition leaders and activists. Dozens more are being arrested and detained based on politically-motivated trumped-up charges.

Fake news are constantly generated about the surrender of revolutionaries, dismantling of guerilla fronts and wiping out of the armed revolutionary movement. Bogus surveys proclaim the unblemished popularity of Duterte, despite the ever-worsening poverty, joblessness, inflation and economic backwardness.

It is within this backdrop that Duterte recently announced his intention to resume peace talks with the NDFP, on the condition that these are held in the Philippines.

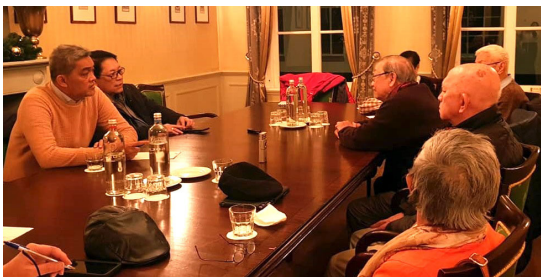
The revolutionary forces of the NDFP are always open to peace negotiations with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) whether under the current regime or any other president.

The solid foundations for talking peace even while the armed conflict is still raging, have been laid down by previous GRP-NDFP bilateral agreements, such as the 1992 Hague Joint Declaration, 1995 Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and the 1998 Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). A key provision in the JASIG is the holding of the talks in a neutral foreign venue.

Significant progress has already been made in drafting the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER), before Duterte withdrew from the talks in 2017. The resumption of the peace negotiations and the signing of the CASER will benefit the Filipino people.

But the tyrant and his security minions need to show sincerity in pursuing peace. Duterte has not revoked his proclamations and orders against the peace talks, the armed revolutionary movement and the legal grassroots organizations. He has refused to release hundreds of political prisoners, even those who are sickly and elderly. And he continues to pursue his murderous anti-drug war and counter-insurgency campaigns.

Ever mindful of the dangers of negotiating with the Duterte regime, the NDFP will always keep the door open. In the meantime, the worsening economic and political conditions engendered by Duterte's policies are fueling further the advance of the revolutionary movement all over the country. **UP**



GRP delegation (left) Hernani Braganza and Sec. Bello III. Across the table is the NDFP delegation. Photo: FB Hernani Braganza.

Duterte opens door for resumption of peace talks

In a surprise announcement on 11 December, Secretary Silvestre Bello III of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) said that peace talks between the GRP and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) would likely be resumed next year. He made the declaration in Manila upon his return from the Netherlands, where he spoke to members of the NDFP Negotiating Panel and NDFP Chief Political Consultant Prof. Jose Maria Sison.

President Duterte had earlier ['killed' the peace negotiations](#)

in November 2017 through his [Presidential Proclamation 360](#), "Declaring the Termination of Peace Negotiations with the NDFP - Communist Party of the Philippines - New People's Army."

He also issued [Proclamation 374](#) in December 2017 designating the CPP and NPA as 'terrorist organizations' and [Executive Order No. 70](#) in December 2018 institutionalizing the 'whole-of-nation approach' aiming to end the armed conflict through military means.

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Backpedalling on his orders, Duterte announced on 5 December that he was sending Secretary Bello III to the Netherlands to discuss the possibility of resuming peace talks with the NDFP. Prof. Sison welcomed the announcement, stating that the NDFP never closes the door to peace negotiations, “the NDFP has to be open to any possibility for the benefit of the Filipino people.”

On 6 December however, Duterte’s National Security Adviser Gen. Hermogenes Esperon declared their precondition that the talks should be resumed in the Philippines.

Prof. Sison responded that such a precondition is unacceptable as it would put the entire peace negotiations “in the pocket of the Duterte regime and under the control and surveillance of the bloodthirsty military and police who engage in mass murders and other heinous crimes with impunity.”

Suspected security agents of the Duterte government murdered NDFP consultant Randy Felix Malayao on 30 January 2019. Manila’s security forces have also arrested NDFP consultants, including Vicente Ladlad, Reynante Gamara, Adel Silva, Alex Birondo and his wife Nona, and Rey Casambre, based on spurious possession of firearms charges.

Sec. Bello met with the NDFP Negotiating Panel and Prof. Sison on 7 and 8 December in the Netherlands. On his return to Manila, Bello also announced that Duterte would send his negotiating panel to meet with the NDFP negotiating panel in March 2020.

Prof. Sison explained that in order to resume the peace talks, it is necessary for Duterte to repeal his proclamations that ‘killed’ the peace talks and for his government to reaffirm all previous bilateral agreements between the GRP and NDFP. He also called for goodwill measures, including the release of political prisoners who are sickly and elderly, especially NDFP consultants who were participating in peace negotiations but who have been arrested on trumped-up criminal charges.

“I think that the informal meetings will be able to thresh out the problems. The method to be used is to hold informal meetings until agreements are ready for finalization and signing in a formal meeting,” Sison explained. **UP**

NDFP forces mobilized as Typhoon Kammuri batters Philippines

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) on 3 December called on units of the New People’s Army (NPA) and revolutionary mass organizations to actively assist communities along the path of Typhoon Kammuri (local name Tisoy), including organizing evacuation efforts in calamity-prone mining and logging areas of the country.

Anticipating the typhoon’s disastrous effects, the Party called on revolutionary forces “to prepare the necessary equipment and resources, and link up with various local and international relief organizations in order to help in emergency situations, as well as in rebuilding farms and homes after the storm.”

Typhoon Kammuri made landfall over the Bicol region in the southeastern tip of Luzon Island in the late hours of 2 December. It brought heavy rains and 165 km/h up to 215 km/h winds. It moved westward through Marinduque and Mindoro islands, before dissipating in the West Philippine Sea.

Initial estimates say more than 500,000 people have been adversely affected by the typhoon. Agricultural damage to the Bicol region and Occidental Mindoro province is estimated at PhP811 million. Worst hit were Mindoro Island, Northern Samar Province and the Bicol region.

In response, the Romulo Jallores Command of the New People’s Army (NPA-RJC) declared a one-week unilateral ceasefire for the entire Bicol region from 6 to 12 December, “to pave the way for various forms of assistance to reach Bicol residents affected by the typhoon.”

NPA-RJC Spokesperson Raymundo Beunfuerza called on the people of the region “to uphold the spirit of collective aid and rise amidst the disaster.” He declared that “all guerrilla fronts, revolutionary mass organizations and local revolutionary government units will undertake appropriate social service campaigns for all those wracked by Typhoon Tisoy.”

The NPA Melito Glor Command in the Southern Tagalog region called on its units “to assist in repairing houses, roads, bridges and other infrastructure damaged by the typhoon. They need to assist the peasants in rehabilitating damaged farms.” It reiterated, “as part of the revolutionary government, it is our responsibility to ensure that aid and support will reach all those affected by the storm in our region.”

Meanwhile, the CPP cautioned the NPA to “remain vigilant over attacks of the AFP conducting relentless military operations in Eastern Visayas, Bicol region, Southern Tagalog region, as well as in northern and central Luzon.” It also urged the people to demand that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) “not to militarize the relief operations” as this “prevents help from reaching those who need it.” **UP**