



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

RELEASED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES

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EDITORIAL

An international pariah strikes back

Rodrigo Duterte has now become an international pariah much like his idol Ferdinand Marcos before he was ousted.

The Communist Party of the Philippines asserted this after the European Parliament adopted a resolution criticizing brutal violations of human rights in the Philippines under President Duterte. These violations include the widespread extrajudicial killing of opposition activists and suspected illegal drug users and pushers, suppression of news media organizations like ABS-CBN and Rappler, and even the persecution of traditional political oppositionists in the Philippine House of Representatives and Senate.

The European Parliament's resolution was welcomed by Filipinos and various organizations from the US, Europe and elsewhere in the world.

To add to Duterte's international isolation, members of the US Congress introduced the Philippine Human Rights Act, calling for the US government to suspend military assistance to the Duterte government in the face of his security forces' continuing brazen violations of human rights.

Welcoming the proposed US bill, Rev. Michael Yoshii, Secretary General of the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines, demanded the US to withdraw military support from the Duterte dictatorship. He said that it's objectively clear to the world that the Duterte regime is tyrannical and laden with abuse and atrocities.

In reaction, Duterte, through his spokesman Harry Roque, tried to blame the Communist Party of the Philippines for influencing the European Parliament's vote. He then similarly accused Facebook of listening to the communists when it closed down hundreds of fake accounts linked to the regime's security forces.

True to form, the international pariah struck back: he threatened to close down Facebook. **UP**



Parlamentum Europaeum

European Parliament calls for international inquiry on Philippines rights abuses

The European Parliament on 17 September "strongly condemned" the large-scale and grievous human rights violations being perpetrated under the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte and called on EU Member States to support the UN Human Rights Council resolution for an "independent international investigation into rights violations committed in the Philippines since 2016".

The [European Parliament resolution](#) was adopted by 626 MEPs in favor, 7 against and 52 abstentions. It expressed "deepest concern at the rapidly deteriorating human rights situation under President Duterte" and strongly condemned "the thousands of extrajudicial killings related to the so-called war on drugs". It called on the Duterte government to put an end to the killings and to disband private and state-backed paramilitary groups.

It said that the International Criminal Court should "continue its inquiry into the allegations of crimes against humanity in the context of the 'drug war' killings" and called on the Duterte government "to cooperate fully" with the ICC's procedures.

It also called on the EU Commission to "immediately initiate the procedure" to withdraw the GSP+ preferences for the Philippines "in the absence of any substantial improvement" in the country's human rights situation. The GSP+ scheme grants zero tariffs to the Philippines' exports to Europe.

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Officials and political allies of the Duterte government rejected the resolution and threatened action against Members of the European Parliament. During a hearing in the House of Representatives, Secretary of Foreign Affairs Teodoro Locsin Jr. echoed Duterte's political supporters, criticizing the European Parliament for taking up "nonsensical issues" such as the shutting down of media giant ABS-CBN which he said showed "they have descended to the level of stupidity".

In media interviews, Duterte spokesman Harry Roque said that the Europe resolution was based on "misinformation" fed by the Communist Party of the Philippines and CPP Founding Chairman Jose Maria Sison, who is residing in the Netherlands as a political refugee.

"It is the height of this regime's paranoia to claim that the CPP influenced the Members of the European Parliament," said Marco Valbuena, CPP Chief Information Officer. "What is already obvious," he said, "is that Rodrigo Duterte is a murderous, vengeful tyrant, intent on destroying his own people to further his fascist ambitions."

Valbuena welcomed the European Parliament resolution. He said that the resolution "confirms how isolated the Duterte regime is, not only from the Filipino people, but from the international community as well".

He said, "Much like Marcos before his ouster, Duterte has now become an international pariah." **UP**



Pennsylvania Rep. Susan Ellis Wild (Democrat). Photo: wikipedia

US bill proposes cutting military aid to the Philippines over rights violations

On 23 September 2020, members of the US Congress filed the Philippine Human Rights Act (PHRA), a bill calling for the United States government "to suspend security assistance to the Philippines until such time as human rights violations by Philippine security forces cease and the responsible state forces are held accountable."

In speaking about the bill, Pennsylvania Congresswoman Susan Ellis Wild of the Democratic Party said, "Rodrigo Duterte's brutal regime is using the pretext of a so-called Anti-Terrorism Law to ramp up efforts targeting labor organizers, workers and political opponents. This law allows suspects to be detained by the police or military without charges for as long as 24 days and placed under surveillance for up to 90 days."

Rep. Wild said, "Let us make clear that the United States will not participate in the repression. Let us stand with the people of the Philippines."

Also supporting the bill are 19 Democratic Party representatives. They include Reps. Jim Costa, Zoe Lofgren, Debra Haaland, Jan Schakowsky, Ro Khanna,

Jim McGovern, Bobby Rush, Hank Johnson, Andy Levin, Barbara Lee, Eleanor Holm Norton, Jaimie Raskin, Alan Lowerthal, Ilhan Omar, Mark Pocan, Pramila Jayapal, Jimmy Gomez, Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez and Danny Davis.

The proposed bill was welcomed by many organizations, among them the human rights alliance Karapatan. Cristina Palabay, Karapatan Secretary General, said that the Philippines is the largest recipient of US military aid in Southeast Asia. Between 2016-2019, this totaled US\$554 million. From this amount, \$267 million was allocated for bombs, firearms, bullets and other war materiel.

The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), the largest federation of unions in the US, joined the growing call to cut US military aid to the government of President Rodrigo Duterte. It issued a resolution endorsing the proposed bill.

It said, "In the four years since the election of Rodrigo Duterte as president of the Philippines, we have been increasingly troubled by the increased repression of labor, human rights, environmental and political activists in the Philippines... At least 48 labor leaders and activists have been murdered.

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“Meanwhile, the United States continues to provide taxpayer dollars to the Philippines military and police forces that are actively engaged in these human rights violations.”

Earlier on 16 July 2020, US Rep. Jan Schakowsky and 49 other members of the US Congress called on the Duterte government to rescind the Anti-Terror Law. In a letter delivered to Philippine Ambassador to the US Jose Manuel Romualdez, the lawmakers raised the documented cases of human rights violations and extrajudicial killings that have occurred in the four years of the Duterte administration.

“With a long track record of using drug laws and martial law in parts of the country to target innocent activists who did nothing other than speak out against government policies, we clearly are left with no option but to view this as just the latest and most egregious effort to silence those fighting for basic and fundamental human rights in the Philippines,” they said. **UP**



Nathaniel Gleicher, Facebook head of Cybersecurity Policy. Image: ft.com

Facebook takes down fake accounts linked to Philippine military & police

On 22 September 2020, social media giant Facebook announced the deletion of hundreds of social media accounts supportive of President Rodrigo Duterte and meant to mislead Filipinos, saying that these accounts were engaged in “coordinated inauthentic behavior”.

The announcement was made by Facebook Head of Cybersecurity Policy, Nathaniel Gleicher, who revealed

that the accounts were found to have links to the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police. He said that 57 Facebook accounts, 31 Facebook pages and 20 Instagram accounts were removed, belonging to a network based in the Philippines, with hundreds of thousands of followers.

On the same day, Facebook also announced the removal of a network of accounts based in Fujian, China, composed of 155 Facebook accounts, 11 Facebook pages, nine Facebook groups, and six Instagram accounts. This network, publishing in Chinese, English and Filipino languages, look small but around 133,000 accounts followed these Pages, around 61,000 people joined these Groups and about 150 accounts followed the Instagram accounts.

The fake accounts posted deceptive news and events including Philippine domestic politics, military activities against so-called terrorism, the then pending anti-terrorism bill, and various forms of criticisms against communism, youth activists, Duterte’s political opponents, the Communist Party of the Philippines, New People’s Army, and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines.

Facebook said that the networks posted contents supportive of Duterte and his daughter Davao City mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio’s potential run for the 2022 Presidential Elections. They also posted about global news and current events, including Beijing’s interests in the South China Sea and Hongkong.

Philippine human rights alliance Karapatan welcomed the removal of the fake social media accounts and the exposure of their links to security agents of the Duterte government. Karapatan Secretary General Cristina Palabay said, “Facebook’s takedown of fake accounts linked to the PNP and AFP is a damning evidence of State-sponsored online attacks, red-tagging and mass deception in the social media platform.” **UP**



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