



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

RELEASED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES

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EDITORIAL

UNHRC to train Philippine assassins?

It truly seems that way. For, despite overwhelming evidence of systematic and rampant violations of human rights in the Philippines, and amidst worldwide calls to investigate these violations, the UN Human Rights Council instead adopted a resolution on “technical cooperation and capacity building for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Philippines”.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights herself already verified in her June 2020 report what local and international human rights organizations have been saying all along: Spurred by President Rodrigo Duterte’s hate speeches and glorification for murder, state security agents and their armed minions have been conducting a monstrous campaign of persecution and death upon the Filipino people!

And those who actively campaign against these monstrosities – human rights defenders, opposition activists, lawyers and journalists – are being targeted for harassment, vilification and assassination by these same government agents!

The UNHRC has done a great disservice to the thousands of victims, their families and colleagues calling for support and justice. They do not expect that this “cooperation and capacity building” will stay the assassins’ hands. In fact, top officials of the Duterte government have happily welcomed the resolution. A vindication, they said, of domestic efforts to uphold human rights! Police and military officials will soon proclaim themselves UN-trained human rights protectors!

However, make no mistake: the UNHRC resolution is still a recognition of systematic human rights violations in the Philippines. The Duterte regime has succumbed to domestic and international pressure and will accept the entry of UN mechanisms for “cooperation and capacity building”. And the UNHRC member states, especially those who co-sponsored the resolution, have staked their credibility that their resolution will indeed result in the protection of human rights in the Philippines.

It is also a clear message that it is upon the Filipino people themselves to continue their resolute defense of their collective interests, freedoms and rights. That, with or without the support of UN agencies, the fight against injustice and tyranny will be fought and won by the Filipino people themselves. **UP**



*Victims’ families demand impartial investigation of extrajudicial killings.
Photo: bulatlat.com*

Human rights groups slam ‘weak’ UNHRC resolution

The United Nations Human Rights Council resolution of 7 October 2020 on technical cooperation and capacity building for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Philippines was severely criticized by Philippine and international human rights groups as “totally inadequate” and “weak”. The groups claim that it falls short of widespread demands for an independent investigation of the many thousands of human rights violations under the government of President Rodrigo Duterte.

The June 2020 report of the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights Michelle Bachelet to carry out an independent human rights investigation was defeated by a compromise solution presented by the governments of the Philippines, Hungary, Iceland, India, Nepal, Norway, Thailand and Turkey.

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), as the representative of the revolutionary peoples of the Philippines, had written 46 UNHRC Member States, appealing on behalf of the Filipino people, for a decisive YES vote on the UNHRC resolution. Several hundred organizations supported the powerful appeal.

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Human rights organizations in the Philippines, including Karapatan human rights alliance, National Union of People's Lawyers, Ecumenical Voice for Human Rights and Peace (EcuVoice) and political prisoners support group Kapatid, expressed great disappointment over the UNHRC resolution. They declared that they will continue to pursue every avenue to secure justice for the many thousands of victims of human rights violations under the Duterte regime.

Expressing support for human rights defenders in the Philippines, World Council of Churches Director for International Affairs Peter Prove said, "Civil society activists who speak out against the Duterte regime are labelled terrorists and communists. They face harassment, threats and in some cases death and assassinations."

Prove said, "Indigenous peoples have been particularly targeted, and even churches have not been spared." The WCC declared their support for the National Council of Churches of the Philippines, as the NCCP is one of those that have been "red tagged" and subjected to such harassment. **UP**



Political prisoner Reina Mae Nasino with newborn baby River Nasino. Photo: KAPATID.

Political prisoner's 3-month old baby dies

The legal battle for the freedom of political prisoner Reina Mae Nasino took a tragic turn on 9 October when her three-month old baby River Nasino died due to complications of pneumonia.

Baby River was born in prison on 1 July. Her 23-year old mother Reina Mae, a human rights worker for the urban poor, was in her first trimester of pregnancy when Metro Manila police arrested her on dubious charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives.

Reina Mae was not provided prenatal care during detention, which resulted in River being born weak and underweight at 2.45 kg. The Manila Regional Trial Court denied Reina Mae's appeals to stay in the hospital with River or to let her take the baby with her inside the jail.

Her lawyers also asked the court to allow her to express breastmilk and be given access to the jail's nursing mothers facilities. The Court likewise denied these requests and instead ordered that the baby be turned over to Reina Mae's relatives.

On 24 September, Baby River was rushed to the hospital because of diarrhea. She was later diagnosed with acute respiratory distress syndrome. Her condition worsened until she was no longer responding to medication and died on 9 October.

Responding to a manifestation filed by Reina Mae's lawyers and relatives on 12 October, the Court granted her a three-day furlough to attend the wake and burial of baby River. On the same day however, jail authorities requested the Court to reduce the furlough to two days "due to lack of personnel", that she not be allowed to join the funeral procession and not be allowed to stay more than three hours in the wake.

Local and international human rights groups have been protesting Reina Mae's separation from her baby and the Court's denial to allow her to visit her sick baby.

The Ateneo Human Rights Center (AHRC) condemned the "total disregard of a mother's right to be with her newborn child, and the right of a newborn child to be nurtured by her mother." This, it added, violates several international human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (also known as The Bangkok Rules).

These conventions recognize specific rights, such as mothers and children both getting adequate prenatal and post-natal care, and detained mothers getting to breastfeed their newborn children. **UP**



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NPA ambushes adhere to Geneva Conventions -- CPP

The Communist Party of the Philippines on 11 October refuted the Philippines Commission on Human Rights which alleged that three recent tactical offensives carried out by the New People's Army violated international humanitarian law.

The allegations were made by CHR spokesperson Atty. Jacqueline de Guia on 10 October, referring to two ambushes in Surigao del Sur province in the southern island of Mindanao and another tactical offensive in Samar island in central east Philippines.

"With all due respect, we take exception to the CHR's presumption that the attacks were 'senseless violations on the right to life,'" said Marco Valbuena, CPP Chief Information Officer.

"The three ambushes referred to by the CHR were all aimed at military targets and are legitimate acts of war as stipulated in the Geneva Conventions," Valbuena said.

The 4 October ambush in Lianga, Surigao del Sur was against the Magahat-Bagani paramilitary troops of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Three enemy combatants were killed in the firefight, including their leader Hawudon Jomar Bucales. Bucales is known as the mastermind of the 2015 massacre of civilians in Lianga. The Philippine Army's 3rd Special Forces Battalion mobilizes these paramilitary troops for their combat and psychological warfare operations.

The 7 October ambush in Lanuza town, Surigao del Sur, was against Philippine Army Private First Class Ariel Guinsod Maca. Local NPA spokesperson Sandara Sidlakan dismissed claims that Maca was tortured.

PFC Maca was known locally as a recruiter of paramilitary troops and coerced Lumad residents to surrender as 'NPA members'.

In a related development, the CPP commended the NPA for scores of successful tactical offensives across the country in the past two months. The guerilla fighters have taken the initiative in the provinces of Cagayan, Albay, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Capiz, Iloilo, Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental, Northern Samar, Eastern Samar, Samar, Surigao del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Misamis Oriental, Agusan del Sur, Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani.

The CPP said that at least 289 enemy troops, the equivalent of a battalion, have been killed in action since the start of the year. **UP**

NPA-Negros slams AFP lies against revolutionary taxes

The New People's Army in Negros island recently condemned the lies being peddled by mercenary officials of the Duterte government about the revolutionary taxes being levied by the People's Democratic Government. The NPA likewise condemned the threats and harassments against local businesses who pay the taxes.

Brig. Gen. Noel Baluyan, commander of the 302nd Infantry Brigade of the Armed Forces of the Philippines gathered business owners and managers of Negros Oriental province on 29 September to persuade them against paying revolutionary taxes. He warned them that complying with their tax obligations is "tantamount to financing terrorism".

Provincial Prosecutor Atty. Eugene Salon, in the same meeting, issued similar threats. "The one who provides the material aid can be prosecuted as principal to the commission of the crime against the Anti-Terror Law," he said. He said that suspects can be searched, arrested and their bank accounts scrutinized. If found guilty, their properties can be forfeited or seized and their finances frozen.

Estrella Banagbanag, spokesperson of the NPA Rachele Mae Palang Command of Southeast Negros, strongly condemned the Duterte government officials. Ms. Banagbanag reminded Gen. Baluyan that the People's Democratic Government is a belligerent power in the five decade civil war, it is one of the existing governments in the Philippines, and possesses an inherent right to collect taxes.

She explained that taxes are levied on businesses operating within the jurisdiction of the local organs of political power and NPA areas of operation. "It's a duty imposed for their privilege to do business in the people's democratic government territory," she said. The revolutionary authorities ensure that such businesses comply with social and environmental regulations and will not be detrimental to the people.

Banagbanag said, "Hopelessly labelling the PDG as terrorist and criminal, exploiting the deplorable Anti-Terror Act, and bullying the petty and middle bourgeois of Negros Oriental clearly exposes how desperate and futile are the attempts of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines at gaining an upper hand in the civil war." **UP**