



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

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EDITORIAL

Terrorists, terrorists everywhere!

Listening to the declarations of Duterte government officials of late, you will get the horrifying impression that 'terrorists' are creeping up and overwhelming every corner of Philippine society.

Suddenly, women celebrities Miss Universe 2018 Catriona Gray, Liza Soberano and Angel Locsin are branded as terrorist sympathizers and threatened to die like New People's Army women fighters. Manila mayor Francisco Moreno has been similarly branded as a terrorist sympathizer.

According to Duterte officials, these celebrities advocating for women and children's rights are playing into the hands of the women's organization Gabriela. Gabriela, so the officials claim, is a terrorist sympathizer organization, a recruiting ground of the 'communist terrorists' Communist Party of the Philippines and New People's Army. According to the same officials, these types, communist terrorists thus, are destined to be killed by Duterte security agents.

Mind you, the CPP is leading an armed revolutionary movement which is fighting for national sovereignty, national industrialization and the democratic interests of the oppressed Filipino people. In a country where more than three-quarter of the population suffer crushing poverty and where foreign powers and a handful elite plunder the nation's resources, it is no wonder that this armed movement has flourished and is now occupying several thousands of rural villages. Such enduring oppression also results in widespread criticism and popular protests, even if unarmed.

So you get the grim scenario of President Rodrigo Duterte and his top officials accusing anyone who criticizes their policies as terrorist sympathizers and terrorists. And with the Anti-Terrorism Law to back them up, they now have the legal underpinning for these utterly wild, obscene and deadly accusations. Very grim indeed when placed alongside Duterte's so-called anti-drug war, which has already led to tens of thousands of unsolved murders, illegal arrests and inhuman detention. Government enforcers publish lists of 'drug personalities', warn the civilian population 'to change their ways' and then conjure up 'evidence' after they've killed or arrested a civilian.

Terrorists? No need to look far: Duterte and his minions are the terrorists! They utilize state power to threaten and murder the civilian population. They fatten themselves with public funds and corporate commissions. They build their complex of loyal and rabid supporters. They are battling to maintain the bankrupt semi-feudal and neocolonial ruling system.

These terrorists deserve all the indignation and censure they're receiving from the international community and the Filipino people themselves. The rising tide of criticisms from celebrities, legal actions, popular protests and tactical offensives of the people's army all combine to righteously and effectively fight against these terrorists. **UP**



Photo: *Philippine Star* | *Manila Collegian*

Protests, legal challenges greet Anti-Terror Law implementing rules

A storm of protests and legal petitions from legal experts, lawyers groups, human rights organizations and several other groups greeted the announcement on 14 October of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the 2020 Anti-Terrorism Law.

The Anti-Terrorism Law, signed by President Rodrigo Duterte on 3 July, created the Anti-Terrorism Council which is empowered to designate individuals and groups

as terrorists. Those designated can be placed under surveillance, arrested without court warrants, detained for 24 days and their bank accounts sequestered.

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Numerous protest actions on the streets, in web conferences and on social media platforms have been mounted calling for the abolition of the law. The Integrated Bar of the Philippines, the National Union of People's Lawyers, former Supreme Court Justices Antonio Carpio and Conchita Carpio-Morales, human rights alliance Karapatan, legal experts and several grassroots organizations filed petitions to the Supreme Court similarly calling to abolish the law for being unconstitutional.

As of this writing, 37 legal challenges have been submitted to the Supreme Court. The Anti-Terrorism Law and the accompanying Implementing Rules and Regulations, say the petitioners, violates rights and liberties enshrined in the Constitution. The law curtails freedom of speech, the right to due process, the presumption of innocence, the right to bail, the right against incommunicado detention, the right against unreasonable searches and seizures, and the rights to privacy of communication, association and public information.

Amnesty International slammed the IRR, saying it will “worsen the risks posed by this patently dangerous law. The government should scrap the flawed provisions of the law instead of trying to justify them through the IRR.”

Earlier, the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights Michelle Bachelet and the European Parliament had already warned about worsening violations of human rights in the Philippines under the Anti-Terror Law.

Even prior to the law's approval, Duterte security agents have ramped up their operations on illegal surveillance, harassments, ‘red-tagging’, warrantless arrests and extrajudicial killings of suspected anti-government personalities. Troopers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines launched aerial bombings and artillery shelling of rural villages, encamped within civilian communities and forced civilians to ‘surrender’ to the government.

Now, three months later, the law's Implementing Rules and Regulations specify the legal grounds for carrying on with these heinous operations. The Anti-Terrorism Law and its Implementing Rules and Regulations are seen by many as the embodiment of Martial Law even without a formal declaration. **UP**



#NoToRedTagging #YesToRedLipstick

Filipino women, led by women's organization Gabriela, launched an ‘infectious’ online campaign on 23 October against the ‘red-tagging’ campaign of the Duterte government. Dubbed #NoToRedTagging #YesToRedLipstick, women began posting photos of themselves wearing red lipstick and denouncing red-tagging.

The protest quickly spread, with celebrities and ordinary citizens – women and men – also posting photos on

Facebook, Instagram and Twitter sporting red lipstick and denouncing red-tagging. People abroad have also expressed solidarity and joined in on the creative protest campaign.

On 22 October, Lt. Gen. Antonio Parlade, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Southern Luzon Command chief and spokesperson of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict issued veiled threats against actress Liza Soberano after she spoke in a Gabriela Youth webinar about sexual harassment and abuse.

Gen. Parlade said Soberano might suffer the same fate as Josephine Lapira who died in 2017 in an alleged armed clash between the AFP and the New People's Army. He similarly warned 2018 Miss Universe Catriona Gray, telling her not to support Gabriela and other groups the way another celebrity, Angel Locsin, does.

On 23 October, Gen. Parlade also threatened Manila City Mayor Francisco Moreno, after the mayor ordered the removal of large banners hanging in the city which said that the Communist Party of the Philippines, New People's Army and National Democratic Front of the Philippines were ‘persona non grata’ in Manila. Lt. Gen. Parlade asked Mayor Moreno whether he means to welcome the NPA ‘terrorists’ into the city.

Individuals and organizations who criticize the Duterte government and its policies are increasingly at the receiving end of the ‘red-tagging’ campaign. They are branded by security officials as communists,

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communist sympathizers or terrorist sympathizers. Several of them have been murdered by suspected agents of the Duterte government.

Mrs. Soberano, Gray and Locsin denied they are part of the NPA and stressed on their freedom to speak and advocate on issues they believe in. Ms. Locsin said, “We live in a country where our freedom to speak and express ourselves are enshrined and protected by the Constitution”.

Atty. Juanito Lim, speaking on behalf of Ms. Soberano, said, “We denounce in the strongest terms the ‘red-tagging’ of Ms. Soberano. Expressing her love and respect for women and children is her personal advocacy.” **UP**



*Protesters marching towards the Presidential Palace in Manila on 21 October.
Photo: Carlo Manalansan | bulatlat.com*

Farmers protest worsening poverty, hunger & repression

Poor landless farmers from different parts of the country gathered outside the Presidential Palace in Manila on 21 October to protest “worsening poverty, hunger and repression”.

Danilo Ramos, Chairperson of the peasants’ alliance Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), called on the Duterte government to enact a genuine agrarian reform law, to respond to the aspirations of the farmers and fisherfolk who comprise 75% of the Philippine population of 110 million people.

In the island of Negros, farmers from Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental provinces convened at the Provincial Capitol in Bacolod City on 21 October. The Negros farmers echoed the calls in Manila for genuine land reform. They demanded the junking of Duterte’s Rice Tariffication Law, which they say drastically reduces the price of their rice produce. They sought a dialogue with Negros Occidental provincial governor Eugenio Lacson to tackle their concerns and demands.

The farmers also demanded justice for the farmers and activists who had been murdered by suspected government agents in Negros island. They recalled the Sagay Nine Massacre on 20 October 2018. Local farmers were then cultivating plots of idle land in a farm in Sagay City when they were mercilessly massacred by military agents and armed goons of local landlords.

Instead of going after the perpetrators, Duterte government officials vilified the victims and their families. Charges were also filed against lawyers who assisted the victims and their families.

Arje Marangga, Secretary General of the National Federation of Sugar Workers said the 2018 massacre incident was an attempt of the state to derail a growing peasant movement for land rights. He declared that the massacre was the start of a spate of killings in Central Philippines. President Duterte declared a ‘state of lawlessness’ in Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental, Samar and Bicol provinces and ordered the deployment of hundreds more military personnel.

At least 168 people had been killed in Negros island since 2018. Majority of the victims were poor farmers. According to the KMP, since Duterte came to power in July 2016, 288 farmers had been killed across the country for defending land rights.

Cristina Palabay, Secretary General of human rights alliance Karapatan, declared that all perpetrators have links to the military, paramilitary groups or private armed groups.

Human rights group Isaiah Ministry called on the authorities to “immediately act” on the spate of killings. The group’s Lead Convenor Fr. Dionito Cabillias said, “acts of injustice toward the country’s food producers is a national concern because all of us rely on agriculture for sustenance”. He said it is the duty of all Filipino citizens to put pressure on the government “to impose policies that would protect land tillers and address the roots of poverty.” **UP**