



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

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EDITORIAL No more room for Peace

Rodrigo Duterte echoed the wishes of his military minions and US masters last week, “There will be no ceasefire ever again under my term... Ceasefire is dead.” He must be repeating himself, right? These late-night ramblings of an opiate-doped chief executive isn’t really news.

As early as three years ago, in November 2017, he already made this official with his aptly numbered and titled Proclamation 360, “Declaring the termination of peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front – Communist Party of the Philippines – New People’s Army.” The following month, three years ago, he designated the CPP and the NPA as ‘terrorists’.

Armed with the Anti-Terrorism Law, however, the Duterte government is now officially targeting opposition parliamentarians, opposition political parties, cause-oriented groups, journalists and human rights defenders, who will shortly be designated as ‘terrorists’. Not being able to defeat the armed revolutionary movement, Duterte will take aim at the unarmed and legal opposition groups. Their organizations will be outlawed, they will be hunted down, arrested and, based on the formula of Duterte’s security officials, gunned down ‘while resisting arrest’.

Duterte critics = terrorists = incarceration or death. There is no space for democratic discourse, no space for respecting civil and political rights, no more room for peace under the Duterte regime.

Our hopes for a just and lasting peace must then rest on uniting in greater numbers, facing greater challenges and sacrifices and fighting more resolutely to see an end to the tyrannical regime. **UP**



*Officials of IndustriALL Global Union protest against growing repression in the Philippines.
Photo: industriall-union.org*

Council of Global Unions condemns arrests of Philippine labor leaders

The Council of Global Unions strongly condemned the arrests on International Human Rights Day of trade union leaders in the Philippines. The Council demanded the immediate release of the six labor leaders, together with Manila Today editor Lady Ann Salem, who is also the Communications Officer of the International Association of Women in Radio and Television.

Arrested in simultaneous raids in the early morning of 10 December and subjected to trumped-up criminal charges

of illegal possession of firearms and explosives were Dennise Velasco of Defend Jobs Philippines; Romina Astudillo, Deputy Secretary General of labor center Kilusang Mayo Uno - Metro Manila; Mark Ryan Cruz, Regional Executive Committee Member of KMU Metro Manila; Jaime Gregorio, Jr, KMU - Metro Manila; Joel Demate, Solidarity of Labor Rights and Welfare (SOLAR); and Rodrigo Esparago of Sandigang Manggagawa sa Quezon City (SMOC).

A few days before, Jose Bernardino of the Workers’ Alliance in Region III was also arrested on the same trumped-up charges under the newly approved Anti-Terror Law. Mr. Bernardino is an organizer of workers in industrial zones and jeepney drivers, and is the former President of Young Christian Workers.

Elmer Labog, KMU National Chairperson, declared “This is yet another blow of the Duterte regime against the Philippine trade union movement! Its aim is to criminalize and illegalize the KMU and prevent it from organizing workers into unions and associations. The regime wants to deprive the workers of their freedom of thought and expression, stifling dissent and organized action.”

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Bayan Muna Congressional Representative Carlos Zarate vigorously condemned the illegal arrests of the trade union leaders: “This is how the Duterte administration commemorates Human Rights Day, violating more human rights and arresting human rights defenders! All (those arrested) must be released immediately!”

The Global Unions called on international bodies, the UN Human Rights Council and the International Labor Organization to consider as an emergency the deteriorating human rights condition in the Philippines and to employ all official and diplomatic venues available, including sending their missions, to investigate the human rights and trade union repression in the country and help reverse the situation.

The Council of Global Unions is composed of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), which has 175 million members in 151 countries, ten Global Union Federations and the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the OECD. **UP**

Duterte slams door on ceasefire, peace talks

President Rodrigo Duterte of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines on 7 December ruled out any possibility of having a ceasefire or resumption of peace negotiations with the revolutionary National Democratic Front of the Philippines in his remaining year-and-a-half term as President.

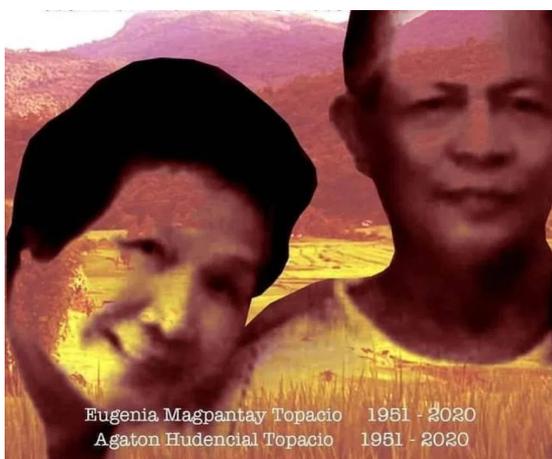
Duterte yielded to demands of his security officials who are against ceasefires and peace talks. “For all intents and purposes, the ceasefire is dead,” he said. He also rejected any possibility of resuming peace negotiations during his term.

Responding to the declaration, NDFP Chief Political Consultant Prof. Jose Maria Sison said, “It is good to be reminded by Duterte himself that he is against peace negotiations and ceasefire of any kind with the NDFP. In the first place, he has terminated the peace negotiations (in November 2017) with Proclamation 360 and designated the CPP and New People’s Army as ‘terrorists’ (in December 2017) with Proclamation 374.”

Marco Valbuena, Chief Information Officer of the Communist Party of the Philippines, said, “Duterte has time and again proved himself opposed to any effort to end the civil war in the country through peace negotiations. (He and his generals) are only interested in profiting from the war while they are in power.”

He added, “Duterte’s anti-peace declaration further justifies the demand of broad sectors in the Philippines for an end to his reign of terror through his resignation or ouster.”

Speaking about prospects for peace, Prof. Sison said, “For the Filipino people to be able to hope for a just peace through social, economic and political reforms, they must unite to fight the Duterte gangster clique and oust it from power. They have no alternative but to wage all forms of struggle so long as the tyrannical, traitorous, mass murdering, plundering and swindling Duterte regime persists.” **UP**



Eugenia Magpantay Topacio 1951 - 2020
Agaton Hudencial Topacio 1951 - 2020

*Comrades Eugenia Magpantay (L)
and Agaton Topacio. Image: kodao.org*

Unarmed ailing revolutionaries gunned down

At 03:00 in the morning of 25 November, in Angono town, just 30 km. southeast of Manila, close to a battalion of the Philippine National Police sprayed with bullets the house of NDFP Consultants Eugenia Magpantay and Agaton Topacio, killing the couple instantly. The police claimed to be serving warrants of arrest, that the couple resisted arrest and were killed during the firefight.

Eugenia and Agaton, both in their late 60s, had recently retired from the revolutionary movement due to ill health. Eugenia recently suffered a stroke and was recovering from her coma, while her husband Agaton was suffering from hypertension and an enlarged heart.

Family and comrades decry the bloodbath as a case of extrajudicial killing. They attest that the couple could not have handled any weapon nor had the capacity of fighting back as the PNP operatives claim.

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Eugenia was formerly the Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Philippines. She once headed the National Education Department and was among the Party cadres who convened the Second Party Congress in 2016. Agaton was a member of the National Operational Command of the New People's Army and served as NPA regional commander in Central Luzon. He also served as Secretary of the CPP's Central Luzon Regional Party Committee.

Marco Valbuena, CPP Chief Information Officer said, "The CPP pays tribute to Magpantay and Topacio for their decades of service to the revolutionary cause and service to the oppressed and exploited masses. Both were former members of the CPP Central Committee. Magpantay was also a former member of the Party Political Bureau.

"Their contributions to building the Party and the New People's Army (NPA), especially in Central Luzon, are invaluable and will never be forgotten," Valbuena said.

In another development, on 10 December, International Human Rights Day, Alvin Luque, also known as Ka Joaquin Jacinto, spokesperson of the NDFP in Mindanao, and his companion, were killed by elements of the 4th Infantry Division of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

At the time of his death, Ka Joaquin was unarmed and recovering from partial paralysis.

In speaking about Ka Joaquin, Valbuena, states, "Recognizing Ka Joaquin's keen political sense, he was assigned as NDFP-Mindanao spokesperson in 2016. He granted interviews with the media to clarify the position of the revolutionary movement on pressing issues in Mindanao and the whole country. For his steadfast defense of the revolutionary cause, Ka Joaquin became the subject of intensified liquidation operations of the AFP."

The entire revolutionary movement mourns the deaths of Eugenia Magpantay, Agaton Topacio and Ka Joaquin (Alvin Luque). **UP**

Revolutionaries call for intensified armed resistance against state terrorism

NDFP allied organizations throughout the Philippines sounded calls to the Filipino people to intensify their armed resistance against the US-Duterte fascist regime. This is in response to the regime's escalation of brutal arrests and killings of unarmed political activists, even right up to the 47th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

In the Cordillera region in northern Philippines, the federation of revolutionary workers' associations KASAMA-Cordillera People's Democratic Front, called on the increasing numbers of urban poor to join the armed struggle. KASAMA-CPDF spokesperson Kris S. Madayaw said, "Political activists in the urban centers are targeted by state security for 'surveillance' and 'vilification'. It is best to join the New People's Army in order to end the exploitative conditions of the people."

Just south of Manila, Karina Mabini, spokesperson of revolutionary youth organization Kabataang Makabayan in Southern Tagalog, enjoined the youth to serve the people and join the NPA. "We should hold all perpetrators and enablers of human rights violations accountable," she said. "Nowhere is safe when the youth is tortured and killed from the cities to the countryside. Leaving us with no other choice but to take up arms and fight."

In the southern peninsula of Luzon island, Maria Roja Banua, spokesperson of NDFP-Bicol, called on the people of Bicol to join the armed revolutionary movement that is borne by hundred years of suppression by US imperialism and its local ruling class lackeys. Farther south, in Panay island, Concha Araneta, spokesperson of the NDFP-Panay, exhorted and welcomed activists, patriots and genuine democrats to take up arms against the Duterte dictatorship.

In Negros, Bayani Obrero, spokesperson of the NDFP-Negros Island, said, "The collective strength of the Filipino people will make Duterte accountable for his criminal negligence in the face of the pandemic and calamities, and for his numerous crimes against the people." He pointed out that the people "will intensify their armed resistance and advance the people's war to victory!"

In the southern island of Mindanao, NDFP-Northeast Mindanao spokesperson Maria Malaya said, "As the democratic space is furthered narrowed by the fascist Duterte and his minions, join us in waging the revolution. Join the New People's Army and let us struggle for human rights!"

Citing the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "...it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law." The people of the Philippines are taking up this last resort. **UP**