



# UPDATES PHILIPPINES

RELEASED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES

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VOL III NO 6

31 MARCH 2021

## EDITORIAL

### Giving the enemy a chance to surrender

In a brilliant display of a well-trained and disciplined army, the New People's Army was able to subdue a detachment of the elite Philippine National Police Mobile Force on 20 March in Camarines Norte province, south of Manila. The Red fighters were able to seize high-powered firearms and ammunition from the enemy forces, treat the wounded, before safely retreating from the battle scene.

Three police officers survived the firefight after surrendering to the NPA's superior forces.

Such is the hallmark of a revolutionary army fighting for national sovereignty, genuine democracy and social justice. Even as it maintains the fiercest will to fight the armed oppressors of the Filipino people, it also has an iron discipline in observing International Humanitarian Law. No harm befalls surrendered or hors de combat enemy troops.

At the opposite pole are the terrorists Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine National Police and their paramilitary gangs. They are trained to denigrate and hate people who stand up for their rights and resist repression. And they hate even more the people's army, the NPA! Torture, mutilation, murder and forced disappearance are standard tools of the trade against the NPA and all who are suspected of sympathizing with the armed revolution. Egged on by Duterte himself, the AFP-PNP mercenaries terrorize the people with utter impunity.

Thank goodness they're not all mindless murderers. Foot soldiers who find themselves in battle with a superior NPA force do choose to surrender, submit their firearms and avoid the further loss of lives.

Duterte and his cronies would do well to emulate their foot soldiers. Their failed 'war on drugs' has thus far murdered more than 20,000 Filipinos. Their failed 'whole-of-nation' anti-communist campaign has thus far murdered scores of indigenous peoples, peasant leaders, trade unionists, lawyers, journalists and human rights defenders, not to mention scores more incarcerated based on planted evidence. Their militarist measures against the COVID-19 pandemic have utterly failed and have thus far killed more than 13,000.

The Duterte regime has plunged the Filipino people into deeper unemployment, worse poverty, excessive foreign debt and intractable economic stagnation.

Avoid the further loss of lives, surrender! Unheeded, the Filipino people's swelling resistance will force the ouster of this murderous dictator. **UP**



### Investigate PH exposes Duterte regime's rights violations

Investigate PH published its Initial Report on 15 March, detailing the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by the government of President Rodrigo Duterte and other officials of his regime. The group presented its report to Ms. Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, during the 46th Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland.

*The report* exposed the numerous human rights violations by the Duterte regime and its generals, including the more than 30,000 murder victims of the 'war on drugs', torture, extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, unjust detention and arrests on trumped-up charges, political repression through threats and red-tagging, forced evacuations, violations of freedom of the press and assembly, violations of International Humanitarian Law, and government abuse during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The group called on the UNHRC to establish commissions of inquiry or fact-finding missions to "help improve the situation in the Philippines and deliver measurable as well as reliable justice to victims" of human rights abuses in the country. It also appealed to the UNHRC to ensure protection of witnesses, individuals and organizations "against all acts of intimidation and reprisal".

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Investigate PH also submitted its Initial Report to the International Criminal Court in the Hague, Netherlands, and urged the Court to expedite the process of opening an official investigation in the country's situation.

Launched in December 2020, Investigate PH, or the Independent International Commission of Investigation into Human Rights Violations in the Philippines, counts on eminent Commissioners, legal experts and human rights defenders from around the world to hold independent investigations to "further substantiate the landmark June 2020 report of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights" on the rights situation in the Philippines. Commissioners include Australia Senator Janet Rice, President of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers Atty. Jeanne Mirer, World Council of Churches' Central Committee Moderator Dr. Agnes Aboum and Education International General Secretary Dr. David Edwards.

The group plans to publish its Second Report in July 2021, which will include hearings from expert witnesses, as well as inquiries into further "emblematic cases" which were not included in the Initial Report. The Final Report is scheduled to be issued in September 2021. It will consolidate the first two reports, present the results of investigations into further violations occurring after the Second Report, a comprehensive human rights situation, submit inputs and analyses of resource persons and experts, and submit recommendations for action.

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines, in a statement on 19 March, warmly congratulated Investigate PH for its work of "effectively exposing the crimes of the Duterte government against the Filipino people." It commended the group for its courage, diligence and thoroughness.

"The NDFP is confident that the forthcoming endeavors of Investigate PH will bring further lasting benefits for the Filipino people." **UP**



Julian Felipe Reef (Whitsun Reef) off Palawan Island, Philippines.  
Image: voanews.com

## China occupation of Philippine reefs denounced

Filipinos and members of the international community are denouncing the occupation by some 220 Chinese maritime militia vessels of waters around the Julian Felipe Reef, 175 nautical miles west of Bataraza, Palawan island, within the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines.

Reporting on 20 March, the Armed Forces of the Philippines said that the AFP Western Command sighted 220 vessels on 7 March, believed to be manned by Chinese maritime militia personnel, moored at the Julian Felipe Reef (Whitsun Reef). Duterte's secretary of foreign affairs Teodoro Locsin, Jr. said he filed a diplomatic protest against Beijing on 21 March. However, National Security Adviser Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, Jr. said he was still studying whether to file a diplomatic protest.

Fishers national alliance Pamalakaya denounced the Chinese incursion as a "blatant show of force" that was bordering on military aggression. Fernando Hicap, Pamalakaya National Chairperson said, "Monitoring like sitting ducks will not drive away the Chinese vessels from our waters... This is frighteningly alarming and needs an unhesitating response and action from the government."

He said, "They have no business here as they violate our sovereign rights and cause environmental destruction of our marine resources."

Echoing various Philippine leaders, Congressman Carlos Zarate called on President Duterte "to strongly denounce China's continued aggressive actions in the West Philippine Sea." He asked, "Is this action of China in exchange for the vaccines they donated to the Philippines?"

Several countries have raised alarm over the presence of Chinese ships on Philippine territory. Foreign affairs officials of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and the US variously called out "destabilizing actions" that could undermine peace and stability in the volatile waterway. On 25 March, European Union ambassador to Manila Luc Vernon stressed that the EU "cannot allow countries to unilaterally undermine international law and maritime security in the South China Sea."

Meanwhile, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines condemned the Duterte government for its inaction in driving away Chinese vessels which are clearly trespassing on Philippine territory.

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Patnubay de Guia, NDFP spokesperson for Southern Tagalog Region said that China “has no other intention but to occupy and seize Philippine territories.” De Guia said that China employed the same strategy in illegally occupying Panganiban Reef (Mischief Reef) in the West Philippine Sea since 1995. Secretary of National Defense Gen. Delfin Lorenzana reported on 29 March that President Duterte has already met with Chinese ambassador to Manila Huang Xilian and had requested “if possible, remove the ships from the area.”

China continues to claim that the ships are mere fishing vessels sheltering from rough seas within its own territory. China refuses to recognize the July 2016 International Arbitral Tribunal ruling invalidating China’s claims over the South China Sea including the West Philippine Sea. **UP**



## NPA adheres to Geneva Conventions – CPP

The Communist Party of the Philippines on 23 March reiterated that the New People’s Army strictly adheres to International Humanitarian Law in its conduct of civil war in the Philippines, as shown in the 19 March NPA armed offensive against the Duterte regime’s security forces in a village in Labo, Camarines Norte province, about 300km. southeast of the capital Manila.

Marco Valbuena, CPP Chief Information Officer, said, “The NPA raid... was a legitimate military action consistent with international rules on the conduct of war. The target, a counterinsurgency outpost of highly-trained police special action forces, was a legitimate military target.” He said the police officers “were fully armed and defended themselves.”

Five Philippine National Police officers died and two were wounded in the encounter. The NPA seized 17 high-powered firearms and various ammunitions from the police detachment. Three others who survived chose to surrender, when they realized that the combat troops of the Armed Forces of the Philippines encamped in the same village did not send reinforcements.

Raymundo Buenfuerza, spokesperson of the NPA Bicol Regional Operational Command said the Red fighters extended humane treatment and first aid to the police who were wounded and surrendered. He said, “This is proof of their conscious adherence to the iron discipline of the Red Army in advancing the people’s just war for the oppressed and exploited masses.”

Valbuena added, “We urge the foot soldiers of the AFP and PNP who find themselves in battle with the NPA, especially a superior NPA force, to choose to surrender and submit their firearms in order to avoid the loss of lives...The NPA assures enemy troops who surrender that no harm will befall them and that their rights under the Geneva Conventions governing the conduct of war will be respected.”

Reacting to the setback, the Duterte regime’s security officials ordered their troops to step up suppressive operations in the country. PNP officer-in-charge Lt. Gen. Guillermo Eleazar ordered all police units based in areas “heavily infiltrated” by the CPP-NPA to intensify their military operations.

These operations are expected to result in more violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in rural communities, especially in the treatment of unarmed civilians. **UP**



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