



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

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Amsterdamsestraatweg 50, 3513AG Utrecht, The Netherlands
T: : +31 30 2310431 | E: updates.philippines@ndfp.org | W: updates.ndfp.org

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EDITORIAL Duterte's dead cats

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's campaign manager Lynton Crosby described the propaganda tactic called the 'dead cat'. It's the introduction of a sensationalist topic in order to divert the public's attention from more damaging topics. It's a ploy that is all too familiar in the Philippines.

Have yourself injected with a China-made vaccine which is not yet approved by the Food & Drug Administration. Challenge Justice Antonio Carpio to a debate on Philippine sovereignty over the West Philippine Sea. And then withdraw from the challenge apparently because you forgot that you're a president. Accuse alleged Communist Party of the Philippines officials of being terrorists. Ad nauseam. President Rodrigo Duterte and his minions are orchestrating this macabre routine of expletive-laden presidential ramblings and even sillier press briefings. He relentlessly assaults the Filipino people and the international community with sensationalist but nonetheless malodorous stunts in order to detract from the more reprehensible and deadlier realities. Indeed, Duterte is throwing 'dead cats' to create public distractions.

His imperialist masters must be delighted. But no, peace-loving nations and the peoples of the world are not distracted. The Duterte regime murders in the tens of thousands the very citizens it has sworn to protect and serve! It is culpable for the murderous terror of the 'war on drugs' and 'war against communism' perpetrated against oppressed and impoverished Filipinos. The regime's corruption and incompetence are aggravating the number of deaths, disease and impoverishment caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Corruption, incompetence and treasonous deals are driving the country's economy further into debt and bankruptcy. And most clearly, Duterte's treachery and spinelessness are surrendering the Filipino nation's patrimony in the West Philippine Sea.

No matter how many dead cats they drop onto the mounting pile, Duterte and his ruling clique are going to be held into account. The peoples of the world see through the distractions and deceptions: the Duterte regime does not represent the sovereign Filipino nation. The broadest patriotic front of the Filipino people vehemently condemn the regime's crimes and are demanding Duterte's ouster and punishment as a cold-blooded murderer and traitor. **UP**



Canadian Parliament holds briefing on Philippines rights situation

Acting on increasing concerns of Canadians and the international community on the deteriorating human rights situation in the Philippines, the International Human Rights Subcommittee of the House of Commons of Canada conducted a briefing on 4 May 2021 with experts and human rights advocates from the Philippines and Canada.

The [parliamentary briefing](#), presided by IHR Subcommittee chair MP Peter Fonseca, heard testimonies from Cristina Palabay, Secretary General of Philippines human rights alliance Karapatan and Maria Ressa, Executive Editor of online news site Rappler. Ressa, named one of Time Magazine's Persons of the Year in 2018, is facing multiple charges of cyber libel levelled by the Duterte government. Other speakers were [Catherine Coumans, Phd, of Mining Watch Canada](#), Guy-Lin Beaudoin, of the International Coalition on Human Rights in the Philippines - Canada and Emily Dwyer of the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability.

In her testimony, Ms. Palabay cited the killings of 15 Karapatan members in the last five years.

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“These deaths define the climate of fear and impunity in the country. Perjured testimonies, fabricated evidence, questionable search warrants are used for arbitrary arrests and detention. We eat death, rape and sexual violence threats online and offline,” Palabay said.

“Community pantries, journalists, lawyers, the opposition, the Commission on Human Rights are consistent targets of ‘red-tagging’... a part of counterinsurgency and murderous campaign which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants. We implore the Canadian government to take action on these concerns with urgency as our country further descends to an authoritarian state,” she said.

Maria Ressa spoke of her experience of arrests and bail under the Duterte regime. She also testified about the numerous political killings in the Philippines.

Couman, for her part, said that Canadian mining companies operating in the Philippines should be made accountable over the negative impacts of their operations, including the alleged use of paramilitary forces to force communities to give their consent to mining activities. She said, “Canada should not be selling military equipment and providing defence support and cooperation to the Philippines.”

She also recommended that Canadian consular staff in the Philippines be mandated to protect human rights. Procedures need to be fast tracked so that, she said, “rights defenders whose lives are threatened can receive visas for temporary relocation to Canada and other safe countries.”

Beaudoin on his part said that Canadian aid should not be used for committing violence. “Aid should be used to defend human rights and sustainable peace, not violate them,” he said.

The Canadian Government is expected to reply to the IHR Subcommittee’s report and recommendations within 45-60 days.

Shortly after the briefing, Director-General Alex Monteagudo of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency posted a picture of Ms. Palabay on his Facebook page, accusing her of advocating for the rights of the Communist Party of the Philippines and New People’s Army to recruit minors to the NPA, to kill innocent civilians and to destroy livelihoods.

Members of the Canadian Parliament expressed their concern to this false statement, seeing it as a threat against Ms. Palabay. **UP**



Emergency responders attend to John Heredia (L). CCTV footage of the suspected gunmen (R). Photo: Roxas City PNP | dailyguardian.com.ph

State terror intensifies: Town administrator killed, political detainee succumbs to Covid-19

John Heredia, Municipal administrator of Pilar town in Capiz province and former broadcast journalist, was gunned down in broad daylight and in front of several eyewitnesses on 2 May 2021 in the provincial capital Roxas City. He was pronounced dead on arrival in a nearby hospital.

Witnesses said the gunmen were riding a motorcycle and wore gray hoodie jackets. Recovered from the crime scene were seven ammunition cartridges, two deformed bullets, and one metal fragment. Despite the witnesses and video cameras in the area, however, security officials have thus far failed to identify the criminals.

John Heredia, 54, was formerly the host and producer of a public affairs program of Alto Cable TV in Capiz province. He was the first and longest-sitting Chairman of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines’ Capiz Chapter (NUJP). His wife, lawyer Criselda Heredia, is a member of the National Union of Peoples’ Lawyers (NUPL). She and their daughter survived an assassination attempt in September 2019.

NUPL-Panay condemned the killing of Heredia. “This is a monstrous crime that must be investigated promptly and properly so that the perpetrators can be brought to justice,” the group said. “Under this administration, lives have, indeed, become so cheap as innocent people – activists, farmers, labor leaders, environmental defenders, and lawyers – are being murdered by the score.”

While the number of political killings continue to rise, this week, the untimely death of a political prisoner brings to the fore the injustice they suffer.

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Joseph Canlas, peasant leader of the Alyansa ng Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon (AMGL) and Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), and Vice President of opposition Anakpawis Party died of Covid-19 complications while a political prisoner of the Duterte government. He was arrested and detained on 30 March 2021 by the Philippine National Police based on fabricated evidence and trumped-up charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives.

“We could only blame the Duterte government for Canlas’ untimely death,” the KMP said. “The state’s brutal fascism killed Canlas who was exposed to COVID while in detention and under the custody of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology.”

Canlas was rushed to the hospital in the evening of 8 May due to a possible stroke and low oxygen levels. He had earlier complained of not feeling well, but the prison warden dismissed his ailment and did not provide any medical attention. On 10 May, he was already in a coma and died later in the day.

“We will turn our grief into strong indignation and protest this government that kills its people,” the KMP said. **UP**



National Security Adviser Gen. Hermogenes C. Esperon, Jr. Photo: pna.gov.ph

Duterte ‘terrorist list’ condemned

The 12 May publication by the Duterte government’s Anti-Terrorism Council of a resolution designating 19 alleged Central Committee members of the Communist Party of the Philippines as terrorists was met by fierce condemnation. CPP Founding Chairman Prof. Jose Maria Sison described it as “a violation of international legal standards and the Manila government’s own Hernandez political offense doctrine.”

The ‘terrorist list’, signed by National Security Adviser Gen. Hermogenes C. Esperon, Jr. on 21 April but released only on 12 May, included members and consultants of the negotiating panel of the National Democratic Front of the

Philippines engaged in peace talks with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines.

“It is utterly wrong to misrepresent acts of a revolutionary movement as a case of common crime,” Prof. Sison said. International legal standards and the Hernandez doctrine “recognize the social roots of rebellion, the nobility of its motives and purpose, and keep open the possibility of the peaceful resolution of the armed conflict,” he added.

CPP spokesperson Marco Valbuena said, “The arbitrary naming of known peace consultants and revolutionaries... is an act of treachery against the NDFP and the peace process.” He stressed that those in the list are “all honorable revolutionaries who have courageously stood side by side with the people and struggled against dictators and tyrants.”

The Public Interest Law Center (PILC), which has been providing legal assistance to the NDFP, also condemned the Duterte government for flagrant violation of the rights of its clients, those in unjust detention and those being unjustly hunted by the regime. Atty. Rachel Pastores, PILC Managing Counsel, said that most of those listed are covered by the 1995 NDFP-GRP Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees.

The JASIG provides immunity from surveillance, harassment, search, arrest, detention, prosecution, interrogation or any similar punitive actions to those involved in the peace negotiations. Atty. Pastores affirmed that the arrest and illegal detention of NDFP consultants Vicente Ladlad, Rey Claro Casambre and Adelberto Silva violate the JASIG. She asserted that others on the list, including Prof. Sison, Julieta de Lima, Rafael Baylosis, Benito Tiamzon and Wilma Austria Tiamzon, are also covered by the JASIG guarantees.

In 2018, a Manila trial court had already dropped the names of Baylosis, Casambre, Ladlad and Silva from a proscription petition submitted by the Duterte government, because the court found no evidence linking them to terrorist organizations or activities.

Prof. Sison added that they are “not at all bothered” by the ‘terrorist listing’. “Our main concern is for those who are in the Philippines and are designated by the aforesaid resolution and many more who are red-tagged and vulnerable to the criminal violence of the regime.” **UP**



Filipinos demand the Duterte government to realign military intelligence budget to health services. Photo: Rein Tarinay | bulatlat.com

Philippines COVID-19 cases and variants spread uncontrolled

The number of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths in the Philippines continue to rise, the World Health Organization describing “large scale community transmission” in Metro Manila, Southern Tagalog and Central Luzon regions and “localized community transmission” at the national level. The number of cases in the country continues to be the biggest in Southeast Asia and one of the biggest in the world.

As of this writing, the WHO reported a total of 1,124,724 COVID-19 cases and 18,821 deaths in the Philippines. COVID-19 variants first detected in the UK, South Africa, Brazil and India have now been detected in the country,

while a new ‘variant of interest’ dubbed B.1.1.28.3 alias P.3, was first detected in the Philippines in January 2021.

The Duterte government is widely accused of bungling the fight against the pandemic. It has enforced a long and strict lockdown, largely employing military and police forces, instead of health experts to contain the spread the disease. And critics accuse the regime of corruption and incompetence in the acquisition and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.

For its 2021 budget, the regime allocated Php221 billion for health services, a little more than the Php207 billion allocated for the military. It allocated Php1.1 trillion for its ‘Build, Build, Build’ infrastructure program. Its COVID-19 fiscal response vis-à-vis GDP is among the smallest in Southeast Asia.

The regime continues to miss its targets for COVID-19 testing and contact tracing. While it announced a target of 30 contacts traced per case, it could only report 6 contacts traced per case as of April 2021.

Critics point out that the Duterte government’s biggest blunder is its mass vaccination campaign. It declared in early 2021 a target of 70 million Filipinos to be vaccinated by the end of the year. As of 14 May however, only two million doses have been administered since vaccination began in March. At this rate, it will take more than a decade to achieve its target.

According to think tank IBON Foundation, “the regime’s neoliberal approach to vaccination and its reliance on the global market, debt and foreign capital, characterize its incompetent and bungled attempts to arrest the spread of the disease.” **UP**

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