



# UPDATES PHILIPPINES

RELEASED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES

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## EDITORIAL

### June 12 and July 4: Days of sham independence

On 12 June 1898, right after the Filipino people led by the revolutionary movement Katipunan defeated the Spanish colonialists through armed resistance, the traitor Emilio Aguinaldo declared Philippine freedom under the sovereign power of the United States. The US subsequently launched a brutal war to suppress the Filipino people's patriotic resistance where more than a million Filipinos died.

The US replaced Spain as the exploiting colonial power in the country, even making worse the feudal exploitation of the peasantry by the big landlords, plundered the country's human and natural wealth and resources, prevented industrialization and made the life of the vast majority of the people more miserable.

On 4 July 1946, at the end of WWII and after regaining control of the Philippines from Japan, the US granted nominal independence and established the client-state under its military protection. Since then, the US has retained its neocolonial rule in collaboration with the local ruling classes of big comprador-bourgeoisie and landlords.

Not as well known as the declarations of sham independence of 12 June and 4 July is the establishment of the Sovereign Tagalog Nation by the Katipunan in the last days of August 1896. It was a revolutionary republic with a charter, a set of officials led by President Andres Bonifacio and encompassed the whole archipelago. The Katipunan had asserted since its inception in 1892 that the word Tagalog denoted all the inhabitants in the islands with their ethnic and linguistic diversities.

In more than 500 years, peoples of the Philippines have risen up in arms to fight for freedom against foreign oppressors. Patriots like Bonifacio, Sakay, Dagohoy and countless others sacrificed for the nation, while traitors like Aguinaldo, Quezon, Marcos and others, betrayed the people and collaborated with their imperialist masters to serve their class and personal interests.

Rodrigo Duterte, the current chief administrator of the local ruling classes, falsely claims an "independent foreign policy" while blatantly sucking up to both Chinese and US imperialists. He allows China to violate the territorial and maritime sovereignty of the country in the West Philippine Sea. At the same time, he continues to allow the US to use Philippine military camps in exchange for bigger military aid to buy aircraft, bombs and other war materials to use against Filipinos desiring and fighting for national freedom.

To end this half-millennium of foreign domination, the revolutionary and the democratic forces of the Philippine society have no option but to continue and expand the scope of their present struggle for national liberation and wrest political power from the local ruling classes and establish a true people's democratic republic.

Only then can we celebrate a genuine independence day. **UP**



*Willy Rodriguez, Angel Rivas and Lenie Rivas  
killed by Duterte security forces.  
Photo: Karapatan-CARAGA.*

### Philippine Army kills three Lumad-Manobo

Elements of the 3rd Special Forces Battalion of the Philippine Army fired indiscriminately on 15 June at a group of six unarmed farmers heading towards the town center of Lianga, Surigao del Sur in southern Philippines, killing three, Willy Rodriguez, Lenie Rivas, and 12-year old girl Angel Rivas. The three others were able to flee the bloodbath.

Willy Rodriguez and Lenie Rivas were members of the Lumad indigenous organization MAPASU. Angel Rivas was a grade six student of the Tribal Filipino Program of Surigao del Sur (TRIFPSS).

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Family members who identified the bodies of the victims said that their faces and limbs were mutilated. The genitalia of the females, Lenie and Angel, were also reportedly mutilated, leading to fears that the Philippine Army soldiers raped them before they were killed. President Rodrigo Duterte had earlier told his security forces to “shoot female rebels in the vagina.”

Human rights alliance Karapatan strongly condemned the killings. “This is a testimony of the Duterte regime’s hideous legacy of killings that count up to the last year of this regime,” Karapatan Secretary General Cristina Palabay said. “The perpetrators are mad killers... they look at the Lumad people like hunted prey, lying to their teeth and falsely tagging the victims as members of the New People’s Army.” Gabriela women’s alliance demanded that the Armed Forces of the Philippines “be held to account for its countless crimes against the Filipino people, especially towards Lumad women, and the women of other indigenous peoples in the Philippines.”

The Philippine Army claimed that the three victims were members of the New People’s Army. Coni Ledesma, Head of the NDFP Special Office for the Protection of Children refuted the claim, “The truth is, Rodriguez and Lenie Rivas were farmers, and 12-year old Angel was too young to be a member of the New People’s Army... We reiterate the strict policy that no person under 18 years of age can become a member of the New People’s Army.”

Marco Valbuena, Chief Information Officer of the Communist Party of the Philippines, said on 25 June that at least seven civilians have been killed by Duterte’s security forces in just the past three weeks. These attacks, he said, “are being carried out systematically by the Philippine National Police and Armed Forces of the Philippines against civilians not taking part in armed hostilities, in violation of international laws governing armed conflicts.”

Valbuena said the attacks aim “to strike fear in the hearts of the people to silence and paralyze their resistance against the regime’s corruption, brutalities and betrayal of the nation’s sovereignty.”

Amid the killings, the AFP on 23 June announced that it had received PhP183 million (\$3.8 million) worth of weapons and defense equipment from the US government. The Philippines has been the largest recipient of US military assistance in the Indo-Pacific region, according to the US Embassy in Manila. **UP**



*Judges of the International Criminal Court.  
Photo: icc-cpi.int*

## ICC Prosecutor pushes for investigation of crimes against humanity in the Philippines

The Prosecutor of International Criminal Court Fatou Bensouda [announced on 14 June](#) that she was closing the preliminary examination of the Philippine case and requesting the ICC’s Pre-Trial Chamber for a judicial authorization to proceed to an investigation of crimes against humanity of murder against the Duterte government. Ms. Bensouda declared that there’s reasonable basis to believe that these crimes have been

committed between 1 July 2016 and 16 March 2019 in the context of the Duterte government’s ‘war on drugs’ campaign.

The ICC Prosecutor’s office analyzed large amounts of publicly available information which indicate that members of the Philippine National Police and others “acting in concert with them”, have unlawfully killed between several thousands and tens of thousands of civilians during that time. Ms. Bensouda added that her office also reviewed allegations of torture and other inhuman acts and related events as early as 1 November 2011, the beginning of the Court’s jurisdiction over the Philippines.

President Rodrigo Duterte ordered the withdrawal of the Philippines from the Rome Statute on 17 March 2019, after the ICC Prosecutor announced the initiation of preliminary examinations of the regime’s criminal activities. Ms. Bensouda clarifies however, that the Court retains jurisdiction during the time that the Philippines was still a State Party to the Rome Statute.

The ICC Pre-Trial Chamber’s approval of a formal investigation on the Philippines will allow victims to step forward to make their representations. The victims and their representatives can demand the issuance of warrants of arrest against those accused. They can also demand that those issued warrants of arrest be surrendered to the Court.

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Reacting furiously to the announcement, Duterte threatened Ms. Bensouda to be “thrown to the crocodiles” if she enters the Philippines. He ridiculed the ICC, saying it is a “white court” and that he will not respect its jurisdiction.

Ms. Bensouda’s nine-year term as ICC prosecutor ended on 15 June 2021. She is succeeded by Mr. Karim Khan. “Any authorised investigation in the Philippines will fall to my able successor, Mr. Karim Khan,” Bensouda said.

“I reiterate my call for a broader strategic and operational reflection on the needs of the institution, and what it is intended to achieve -- in short, an honest reflection on our collective responsibility under the Rome Statute to advance the fight against impunity for atrocity crimes. The victims of these egregious crimes deserve nothing less.” **UP**



*US Rep. Henry Calvin 'Hank' Johnson Jr, one of the co-sponsors of the Philippine Human Rights Act. Photo: US Congress.*

## Philippine Human Rights Act reintroduced in US Congress

US Representative Susan Wild [reintroduced the Philippine Human Rights Act to the US Congress](#) on 15 June, calling for a suspension of US security assistance to the Philippines until “violence against dissidents cease and accountability against the perpetrators commences.”

The bill, she said, is in response to the numerous human rights violations perpetrated by the Duterte regime against dissidents, labor organizers, members of the clergy and others. “By blocking assistance to Philippine security forces, this bill makes a commonsense proposition: Standing up for human rights requires more than rhetoric. It requires action.”

Co-sponsor US Rep. Hank Johnson said, “We need to show that we do not support tinpot dictators who engage in this kind of oppressive, flagrant form of human rights abuses. Simple reforms could go a long way in helping preserve and strengthen our long-time relationship with Manila.”

Several US organizations, including the Malaya Movement, Communications Workers of America, AFL-CIO, Service Employees International Union and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, endorsed the filing of the bill.

In a related development, the Communist Party of the Philippines denounced the delivery on 21 June of heavy machine guns, mortar tubes and other military equipment by the US government to the Duterte government. Marco Valbuena, CPP Chief Information Officer said, “this was carried out in complete disregard of the clamor for a suspension of US military aid to the Duterte government... The delivery of these weapons is a virtual pat on the head of Duterte and his armed thugs.”

The US government, Valbuena said, “is giving in to the demands of the Duterte, in exchange for securing the US-RP Visiting Forces Agreement.” Duterte has only “play-acted” the scrapping of the agreement, Valbuena said.

Meanwhile, the US State Department approved on 24 June the possible sale of F-16C fighter planes, AGM-84 Harpoon missiles and other military equipment to the Philippines, totaling around PhP118 billion (US\$2.43 billion). The potential sale will still need the approval of the US Congress. **UP**



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