



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

RELEASED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES

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

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EDITORIAL Who is the real terrorist?

The desperate Duterte regime through its Anti-Terrorism Council designated the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) as a 'terrorist' organization. This is contrary to the basic principles of international humanitarian law on the legitimate status, rights and character of national liberation movements. Its earlier designation of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army as 'terrorists' is also such an abnormality.

Duterte and his cohorts are not content in murdering or detaining on false charges dozens of consultants of the NDFP in the peace negotiations. A much greater number of social activists are being labeled as 'communist sympathizers' and terrorists, becoming targets for assassination and illegal detentions. These are all vain attempts to quash the growing resistance to the regime's oppressive rule and to put the last nails in the coffin of the GRP-NDFP Peace Negotiations.

By designating the NDFP as a 'terrorist' organization, the regime vainly aims to justify the intensifying harassment and murder by its armed contingents even against the non-communist allied members of the NDFP, and by extension the legal progressive organizations.

The working masses of the Filipino people are suffering under unprecedented poverty and are ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic. Duterte is unable and unwilling to address these problems, but instead greedily enriches himself together with his cohorts through unbridled corruption. He hopes to instill fear in all citizens and quash their resistance by successively imposing draconian measures like his 'war on drugs' that has killed more than 30,000 alleged drug dealers and suppressive campaigns against millions of unarmed peasants, indigenous peoples and activists in both the rural and urban areas.

The Duterte regime is the true terrorist in all meanings of the word and not the NDFP and its allied organizations.

Duterte hopes his designation of the NDFP as a 'terrorist' organization will help prolong his power after the 2022 elections. But Duterte himself is in mortal fear of his reign's ignoble end. He is mortally afraid of the legal prosecution to be initiated by an opposition successor and even more afraid of the International Criminal Court accusing him and his cohorts of crimes against humanity.

But eventually it is the people, in the midst of the growing revolutionary movement, that will oust him before or after the 2022 elections. This will be a significant step in the process of attaining national sovereignty and true democracy towards a just and lasting peace. **UP**



*Terror Law is the new Martial Law.
Photo: Save Our Schools.*

'Terrorist' tag to escalate state terrorism – NDFP

The National Council of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines denounced on 21 July the Duterte government for its designation of the NDFP as a 'terrorist organization', saying this signals the escalation of state terrorism against the NDFP and its 18 allied organizations. It said the 'terrorist' tag will also see an "escalation of attacks against legal social activists, human rights defenders, critics and oppositionists" who will be arbitrarily labeled as NDFP members and associates.

The NDFP asserted, "We are a co-belligerent force in the civil war with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, and we have the status of belligerency in accordance with international law... It is completely mendacious and malicious to malign the NDFP as a 'terrorist' organization."

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NDFP Chief Political Consultant Prof. Jose Maria Sison added, “the designation is at war with basic principles of international humanitarian law on the legitimate status, rights and character of national liberation movements.” He said the ‘terrorist’ tagging is clearly intended “to harass, silence, arrest or even kill NDFP consultants and resource persons involved in the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations, and target even the peace advocates, critics and oppositionists.”

Prof. Sison warned that Duterte intends to rig the 2022 elections in order to stay in power and prevent his arrest by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity.

The Duterte government’s Anti-Terrorism Council signed a resolution on 23 June 2021 declaring the NDFP as a ‘terrorist organization’. The ATC made the resolution public on 19 July. The resolution stated that “the NDF is the core and most consolidated group that provides support to the armed and organizational expansion of the Communist Party of the Philippines / New People’s Army.”

The Anti-Money Laundering Council announced shortly after that it would begin freezing financial accounts related to the NDFP.

Ms. Julieta de Lima, Interim Chairperson of the NDFP Negotiating Panel, called the designation a “needless nail on the coffin of the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations”. She called the designation an anti-peace act and said “it is a big waste for Duterte to throw away all that has been achieved in the prolonged and arduous peace negotiations.” She noted the achievements of both sides on the most important parts of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms.

The NDFP version of CASER, she stressed, “is a clear and shining proof against the allegations of the real terrorists, Duterte and his ilk.”

Despite the ‘terrorist’ tag, the NDFP National Council said that it will keep in place its peace panel, “with the hope that the Duterte regime would eventually be ousted from power and that a post-Duterte administration is willing to resume the peace negotiations for a just and lasting peace.” **UP**



Photo: Carlo Manalansan | bulatlat.com

Jeers, protests greet Duterte's final SONA

Thousands of Filipinos marched on the streets of Metro Manila and other parts of the country on 26 July, calling out the Rodrigo Duterte government as an “epic failure” and demanding an end to his “incompetent, corrupt, treasonous and murderous regime.” The protests marked Duterte’s State of the Nation Address before the joint Houses of Congress, his last before the presidential elections of May 2022.

Uniting under the calls “Duterte Wakasan” and

“WakaSONA” (End Duterte, Final SONA), protesters converged towards the Congress compound in Quezon City in Metro Manila, in Cebu City, Iloilo City, Bacolod City and Aklan in central Philippines and in Duterte’s hometown Davao City in the south. Protests were also mounted in California, Oregon, Washington DC and New York in the US, in Canada and Hong Kong. In front of the Philippine Consulate in San Francisco, California, protesters condemned “the anti-people dictatorship” of the Duterte regime.

They were united in blaming Duterte for the murder of tens of thousands of Filipinos in his ‘war on drugs’ and ‘anti-terrorist’ hysteria. They also condemned his failed, militaristic response against the Covid-19 pandemic. Various groups of workers, peasants, indigenous peoples, students, teachers, health workers, lawyers, religious leaders, artists, journalists and other sectors took turns in exposing the real ‘state of the nation’, disputing Duterte’s speech in Congress.

In his SONA, Duterte inflated his regime’s achievements in the last five years, claiming victories against ‘communist insurgency’, illegal drugs, criminality and corruption. He also touted his regime’s “independent foreign policy” and claimed to have “taken away the misery of public commuting”.

Defiant against the impending investigation of the International Criminal Court on his regime, Duterte said, “Those who destroy my country, I will kill you! And those who destroy the young people of our country, I will kill you! I will destroy you because I love my country.”

Netizens mocked Duterte for claiming ‘victories’ where he has failed. “An epic failure,” they said, posting under hashtags #DutertePalpak (Failure), #DuterteInutil (Incompetent) and #DuterteWakasan (End Duterte).

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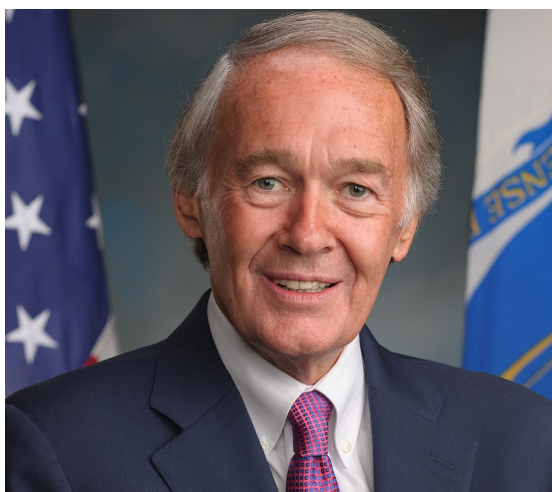
On the streets, the protesters decried the fictions and the deadly threats. Ms. Cristina Palabay, Secretary General of human rights alliance Karapatan, said Duterte once again confirmed “his deranged desire to continue his kill, kill, kill policy, even going as brazen as giving the order to ‘shoot them dead’ in the halls of Congress.”

Renato Reyes, Secretary General of BAYAN patriotic alliance, added that Duterte has “signaled that the massacre policy will remain in place for the remaining months of his term.”

Ms. Palabay said, “All these, and more, make the calls to end Duterte’s murderous regime and to prosecute him for his atrocities ever more urgent. One more year of Duterte is too long... We cannot allow this tyrannical and incompetent governance continue to claim lives and freedoms.” **UP**



The real State of the Nation. Photo: Carlo Manalansan | bulatlat.com



*US Senator Edward J. Markey.
Photo: US Congress.*

US Senators press Biden on rights abuses in the Philippines

Members of the US Senate on 26 July called on the administration of President Joseph Biden to address what they called “the pattern of human rights violations” of the Duterte government. The senators urged the Biden administration “to stand with the people of the Philippines as they continue to fight for their universal human rights.”

In a [letter addressed to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken](#), members of the US Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific led by Subcommittee Chairman Sen. Edward J. Markey, demanded that the State Department condemn human rights violations in the Philippines at the highest diplomatic levels, as well as publicly.

In discussions with Philippine government officials, they asked, has the State Department raised the Duterte government’s systematic human rights abuses? They also wanted to know if the US government is considering any sanctions against Duterte officials involved in these abuses.

The senators also expressed concern about the practice of ‘red-tagging’ of opposition figures, journalists and activists who criticize the Duterte government, the continued unjust detention of Philippine Senator Leila De Lima and the political harassment of journalist Maria Ressa. They pointed out that, amid these systematic human rights violations under the Duterte government, US security assistance and arms sales to the Philippines should be reviewed.

Aside from Sen. Markey, the letter was also signed by Democratic Party Senators Patrick Leahy, Jeffrey A. Merkley, Sherrod Brown, Ben Cardin, Ron Wyden, Bob Casey, Cory Booker, Richard J Durbin, Elizabeth Warren, and Chris Van Hollen.

In 2020, the Duterte government banned Senators Markey, Leahy and Durbin from entering the Philippines following the senators’ support for the banning of Duterte officials involved in the detention of Sen. De Lima from travelling to the US. **UP**

Supreme Court: Duterte obliged to cooperate with ICC

In a unanimous resolution approved on 16 March but published only on 21 July, the Supreme Court of the Republic of the Philippines declared that President Rodrigo Duterte is obliged to cooperate with the International Criminal Court investigations. Duterte has been publicly insisting that he will never allow such an investigation, threatening then ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda to be “thrown to the crocodiles” if she comes to the Philippines.

On 14 June, Ms. Bensouda announced the closing of her preliminary examination and requested the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber to start a formal investigation of crimes against humanity in connection with the murder and torture of thousands of Filipinos, resulting from the Duterte government’s ‘war on drugs’. In March 2018, President Duterte announced the country’s withdrawal from the Rome Statute, the international treaty which established the ICC, just a month after Ms. Bensouda announced the start of her preliminary investigation.

Ms. Bensouda was succeeded by ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan in June 2021.

In the 16 March resolution, all 15 judges of the Supreme Court agreed that the ICC “retains jurisdiction over any and all acts committed by government actors until 17 March 2019. Withdrawal does not affect the liabilities of individuals charged before the ICC for acts committed up to this date.”

It added, “Consequently, liability for the alleged summary killings and other atrocities committed in the course of the war on drugs is not nullified or negated here.”

Atty. Edre Olalia, President of the Natinal Union of People’s Lawyers, said, “This is good! There is enough evidence to prosecute President Duterte!” NUPL is representing several families of the slain victims in the cases being examined by the ICC. **UP**



Justice for all victims of extrajudicial killings! Photo: bulatlat.com



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