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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

Remembering the horrors of Martial Law

We join the Filipino people and the rest of the world in commemorating the 49th anniversary of the declaration of Martial Law in the Philippines on 21 September 1972. We must never forget this horrific period in Philippine history when Ferdinand Marcos, with the full backing of the US, grabbed absolute power, abolished Congress, banned political parties, shuttered the mass media, prohibited mass activities and suspended civil and political rights.

In the period from 1972 until Marcos' ouster in 1986, tens of thousands of Filipinos were murdered, tortured, disappeared and illegally detained. Marcos and his cronies bankrupted the government, led the country to unprecedented ruin and buried the people under mountains of debt.

It is extremely important and urgent that we do not forget the horrors of Martial Law as the country is now ruled by the tyrant Rodrigo Duterte, a confessed Marcos lover and poised to impose his dynastic fascist rule.

In a short span of five years, Duterte has already surpassed Marcos in brutality, corruption and treachery. Since 2016, Duterte's security forces have murdered more than 30,000 Filipinos in his 'war on drugs' and 'anti-communist war'. In collaboration with Chinese monopoly capitalists and criminal gangs, Duterte and his cronies are pocketing fat commissions on anomalous government contracts and cornering illegal drugs and smuggling operations in the country. The diversion of billions of pesos of public funds to favored companies during the pandemic is among his worst and unforgivable acts of plunder. He and his cronies are set to surpass the Marcos family in terms of corruption and plunder. Duterte has surrendered vast parts of the West Philippine Sea to China in exchange for promises of Chinese kickbacks on government contracts, vaccines and protection. At the same time, he continues to extend extraterritorial rights to the US military through the Visiting Forces Agreement and other unequal agreements, in exchange for new military equipment as well as US-hoarded vaccines.

In the eyes of the Filipino people and the peace-loving peoples of the world, Duterte has become infamous for his fascism, misogyny, aversion against human rights and contempt for the poor. His tyranny has drowned the country in darkness. This has however made the light of the people's democratic resistance shine more brightly, illuminating the path of revolutionary armed struggle for the national and social liberation of the Filipino people. **UP**

*Excerpted from "Tyrant Duterte has surpassed Marcos in terms of terrorism and plunder".
Communist Party of the Philippines, 21 September 2021.*



Investigate PH: Hold government officials accountable for rights violations

The Independent International Commission of Investigation into Human Rights Violations in the Philippines INVESTIGATE PH released its [Final Report on 13 September](#), calling on the international community to hold the officials of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines accountable "for the thousands of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law carried out as official state policies."

The 18-member commission of experts in human rights and international law reaffirmed their findings in their First and Second [Reports of March](#) and [June 2021](#), respectively, exposing the gross human rights violations
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of the Duterte regime against Philippine workers, farmers, indigenous people, women, youth, children and church workers. In its Final Report, INVESTIGATE PH focused on the violations against the right to development and peace of the Filipino people.

It exposed the violations of the rights of the peasants and indigenous people to their land and livelihood. INVESTIGATE PH provided compelling evidence of the landgrabbing done mostly by foreign multinational companies with the complicity of the Duterte regime and its armed security forces. They explained that this violates the UN Agreement on Social, Economic and Cultural Reforms, to which the Philippines is a signatory. It is likewise a gross violation of the peasants' and indigenous peoples' basic right to development, affecting especially the indigenous Lumads in Mindanao and indigenous peoples in the Cordilleras in Northern Luzon.

The report likewise stressed the violations of the Filipino people's right to peace, when President Duterte terminated the peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines in November 2017. He did this soon after meeting with US President Trump during the ASEAN Summit on 10 – 11 November 2017, the report said.

The NDFP, representing the Philippine revolutionary forces, and the GRP, had achieved significant progress in peace negotiations through the signing of The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992, an agreement of parity and non-capitulation. In 1998, the NDFP and GRP signed the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. Before Duterte's November 2017 termination, both sides were able to sign the Agreements on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ARRD) and National Industrialization and Economic Development (NIED). Both are substantial parts of the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms.

INVESTIGATE PH declared that the ARRD and NIED draft agreements can be revived, if the peace negotiations are restored. The NDFP had earlier declared willingness to resume peace negotiations with a new administration "that seriously desires to engage in peace talks".

INVESTIGATE PH called for international support for the Filipino people "in their courageous struggle for human rights, for development and peace." **UP**



CENSORED. Military and police officials display books confiscated from the Isabela State University. Photo: manilatimes.net.

Security forces ban 'subversive' books from university libraries

Duterte government officials under the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) this month confiscated "subversive textbooks and reading materials" from libraries of three state universities. The books are being replaced by materials provided by the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

On 1 September, elements of the AFP and Philippine National Police 'inspected' the library of the Kalinga State University in northern Luzon and confiscated publications of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines from the shelves. The following day, University officials said

they pulled out all the NDFP-donated books from their library.

On 23 September, Ricmar Aquino, President of the Isabela State University, ordered the main campus and 10 other campuses of the University to pull out of their libraries all books of the NDFP and of Prof. Jose Maria Sison, "in order to protect the youth and students from insurgent ideology."

On 25 September, a third university, Aklan State University in the Visayas, followed suit. The books removed from the three universities' libraries were "turned over" to the AFP and the PNP. Among those confiscated were materials about the peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the NDFP. Justifying the censorship, government prosecutor Flosemer Chris Gonzales of Aklan said the books are "are not mentally healthy for students... Academic freedom is always subject to control and supervision by the state."

Human rights alliance Karapatan protested the acts of the universities calling it a "dangerous precedent" and said the banning of the books restricts free speech, academic freedom and information on the peace negotiations and the armed conflict.

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The Communist Party of the Philippines on 26 September denounced the AFP and PNP for “pressuring and compelling school officials to remove and ban from their libraries books and other literature authored or published by the NDFP and Prof. Jose Ma. Sison.”

It said, “We are certain that the banning of books from public school libraries will not stop students and teachers from studying what the CPP, the NDFP and the NPA really stand for... These censorship schemes will not prevent more and more people, including the intellectuals, to join the revolutionary cause that represents the broad democratic ideals of the oppressed and exploited masses.”

Meanwhile, the University of the Philippines in Visayas announced that they will not remove reading materials and books considered as ‘subversive’ by the NTF-ELCAC. University Chancellor Clement Camposano said, “Not a single Marxist book, or any similar or so-called subversive material, will be removed from UPV’s library collection. We might even add more”.

He added that a university is a “free marketplace of ideas. Our business is to train and sharpen the minds of our students by challenging and exposing them to the widest latitude of ideas to produce intellectuals and reformers”. **UP**



Aid NGOs decry ‘Red-tagging’ of Leyte Center for Development

Various Philippine non-government organizations decried “despicable acts” by elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines aimed at maligning and harassing humanitarian organization Leyte Center for Development. On 21 September, 15 people staged a ‘protest action’ in front of the LCDe’s office in Palo, Leyte, claiming that the NGO is a terrorist organization and a supporter of the ‘CPP-NPA-NDF’.

Jazmin Aguisanda-Jerusalem, LCDe Executive Director, said the placards of the ‘protesters’ bore no name of their group and “they did not ask for a dialogue like rallyists usually do.” She said some of them disclosed that they were just forced to come, under threat.

“We know who is behind this,” said Ms. Aguisanda-Jerusalem. “The AFP is spreading all these fake news, red-tagging. Clearly this is an act to tarnish our image and a defamation against the LCDe... This is offensive, threatening, malicious and brazen lies!”

The handful of ‘protesters’ were transported by three military trucks from Carigara town, some 50 kilometers away. This follows the red-tagging campaign on social media and webinars being orchestrated by the 802nd Infantry Brigade of the AFP against the LCDe.

The Assert Socio-Economic Initiatives Network, a national network of more than 30 NGOs, came out and condemned “these despicable acts of the military which put the lives of LCDe personnel in danger. In the past, such red-tagging and related incidents result to extra-judicial killings.” ASSENT likened the AFP to the military of the Marcos years, as being “key instruments of state repression and human rights violations.”

They said the military is “showing its true colors”, by mounting a fake protest “to malign and put in dire straits a humanitarian and development organization with a solid track record of implementing disaster response and health programs.”

The Disaster Risk Reduction Net Philippines also decried the defamation of LCDe, saying, “... The administration of President Rodrigo Duterte is not only attacking the Philippine Red Cross. Its demolition job also involved a smaller humanitarian group that the military has been harassing for the past years.” The DRRNetPhils is a network of some 50 CSOs, academe and disaster risk reduction experts in the country.

LCDe has been providing humanitarian assistance to poor and marginalized communities in Eastern Visayas for 33 years. It was awarded the Gawad Kalasag Award in 2008 by the Office of Civil Defense under the Department of National Defense. In 2018, Ms. Aguisanda-Jerusalem was recognized as a Climate Heroine during the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bonn, Germany.

Local municipal and village officials, including local community residents likewise express support for the LCDe, guaranteeing no untoward incidents would be allowed to happen. **UP**