



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

RELEASED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES

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EDITORIAL Of cornered beasts and paper tigers

Less than a month remains before the 9 May elections. Less than a month remains for the Duterte ruling clique to ensure that the successor regime will not hunt them down for their atrocious crimes against the Filipino people.

President Rodrigo Duterte and his camp followers must be quaking in their boots. Tens of thousands flock to the campaign sorties of chief rival Vice President Leni Robredo and Sen. Francis Pangilinan, while the anointed tandem of Marcos, Jr. and daughter Sara Duterte could gather such crowds only in their press releases. In desperation, Duterte's propagandists are resorting to red-tagging and muckraking, accusing Robredo of sleeping with communists and her daughter of sleeping around. Simultaneously, propagandists are ramping up the hosannas for the tyrants' son and daughter and drowning the public with 'survey results' favoring Duterte's anointed.

Meanwhile, human rights activists both in the Philippines and abroad are intensifying efforts to have Duterte and his top officials investigated and prosecuted for their culpability in crimes against humanity, including mass murders, extrajudicial killings, torture and forced disappearances. Duterte's propagandists routinely retaliate by labeling the activists as communists and terrorists, all the better for Duterte's armed minions to recognize their next targets.

As election day draws near, it has become clear that Duterte and his security forces will fail in their goal of crushing the armed revolutionary movement. Even so, their attacks against activists, community volunteers and the rural population are intensifying even further. Rural villages and community volunteers suspected of supporting the armed revolution suffer ever more aerial bombings, military encampment, arbitrary detention, forced disappearance, extrajudicial killing and mass murders.

The Duterte ruling clique has lost its haughty sense of invincibility. It is gnashing and thrashing like a cornered beast, becoming even more ferocious and aggressive against real and perceived enemies. The coming weeks will be ever perilous for Filipinos and friends of the Filipino people, as they continue to fight for human rights, democracy, national liberation and peace.

Despite all its ferocity and aggressiveness however, the Duterte regime is but a paper tiger. It will crumble against the Filipino people's resolute struggle and unity. **UP**



*Victims' families cry for justice.
File photo: kodao productions.*

International Magnitsky sanctions campaign launched vs. Philippines 'Dirty Dozen'

The International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines announced on 29 March the launching of an international campaign for Magnitsky Sanctions against 12 top human rights violators in the Philippines, dubbed the 'Dirty Dozen'. The ICHRP aims to work with the national governments of Australia, Canada, the European Union, United Kingdom and United States to hold these 12 Manila government officials accountable for grave human rights violations.

Heading the list of the 'Dirty Dozen' are President Rodrigo Duterte and former Philippine National Police Chief Gen. Ronald De La Rosa, as the "main architects of the war on drugs and campaign of state terror" in the Philippines. Included in the list as "part of the command-and-control structure of the PNP and the Armed Forces of the Philippines when rights violations by these state institutions allegedly took place" are PNP Chief Gen. Diebold Sinas, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Jose Faustino, Jr,

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National Security Adviser Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, Jr, AFP Southern Luzon Command Chief Lt. Gen. Antonio Parlade, Jr, Department of National Defense Secretary Gen. Delfin Lorenzana and Department of Interior and Local Government Secretary Gen. Eduardo Año.

Completing the ‘Dirty Dozen’ are Duterte aide Sen. Bong Go, former Duterte spokesman Harry Roque, anti-communist task force spokesperson Lorraine Badoy and Executive Judge Cecilyn Burgos-Villavert. ICHRP said they are “part of the infrastructure of terror in the Duterte administration and participated in the public orchestration of alleged state repression.”

ICHRP Chairperson Peter Murphy said the Magnitsky sanctions campaign is a direct follow up to their investigation work in 2021 “which identified patterns of gross and systematic human rights violations, including crimes against humanity, perpetrated by the Duterte regime.”

Magnitsky legislations call for sanctions against any foreign national responsible for violations of internationally recognized human rights in a foreign country when authorities in that country are unable or unwilling to conduct a thorough, independent and objective investigation of the violations. The law provides for the taking of restrictive measures, such as targeted financial sanctions and travel bans, in respect of foreign nationals responsible for gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.

In a related development, the Philippine human rights alliance KARAPATAN submitted on 31 March a report for the upcoming 41st Session of the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council. KARAPATAN renewed its calls for the UNHRC to conduct an “international independent investigation on the human rights crisis” in the Philippines.

KARAPATAN lamented that “majority, if not all, the recommendations” of the UNHRC and the UN Special Procedures made since the third cycle of the UPR in 2017 “remain unheeded” by the Manila government. **UP**



Image: cpp.ph

CPP denounces US-RP Balikatan war exercises

The Communist Party of the Philippines on 30 March condemned the ‘Balikatan’ war exercises between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and US military forces, denouncing these as part of the heightening US military intervention in the Philippines and an outright violation of the country’s sovereignty.

Marco Valbuena, CPP Chief Information Officer, declared that the Balikatan (shoulder-to-shoulder) war exercises “are causing the temperatures of military conflict in East Asia to rise.” He said the exercises “further increase the potential of inter-imperialist military conflict in East Asia between the US and China, in the face of China’s effort to build up its own military strength to push its unlawful claims on 90% of the South China Sea, and by the US effort to secure its geopolitical interests in the so-called ‘first island chain’ which includes the Philippines.”

Valbuena added, “The US show of force of thousands of American troops and their arsenal of warships, jet fighters, drones, bombs and tanks can be compared to the years of US provocations in Europe against Russia which ignited a proxy war in Ukraine. We must learn from the history of US and NATO provocations and demand a peaceful international settlement of the Philippine territorial claims as rewarded by the International Arbitral Tribunal under the UNCLOS.”

About 5,100 US and 3,800 AFP troops participated in the exercises, held from 28 March to 8 April in Northern Luzon, Central Luzon and Palawan Island. They included a landing of US troops on board amphibious assault vehicles as well as live fire exercises and the use of high mobility anti-rocket systems. Valbuena said the exercises “seek to showcase US firepower for the double purpose of feeding the AFP’s addiction to US-supplied weapons, especially attack aircraft and bombs, and a show-of-force against imperialist rival China.”

He continued, “The US is the principal driving force behind the escalation of the AFP’s war of suppression which involves the use of jet fighters, helicopters, drones, bombs, missiles, rockets, artillery rifles and bullets supplied by US defense companies and subsidiaries in Israel, Poland, Turkey

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and other countries.” He explained that the annual exercises are occasions to “reinforce US doctrinal and operational control of the AFP” and to make AFP generals “drool over the hi-tech weapons and the prospect of getting cuts in the billions of pesos-worth of government contracts.”

Meanwhile, the CPP called on the Filipino people on 1 April to push presidential candidates to uphold Philippine sovereignty, oppose US military intervention, oppose the use of the country as base for US superpower conflict with China and ensure that the Balikatan 2022 will be the last such US-RP war exercise. **UP**



Image: ccp.ph

NPA ambushes Duterte combat forces in Northern Samar

The New People’s Army-Northern Samar ambushed on 3 April a combined armed contingent of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police in San Miguel village, Las Navas town of Northern Samar. At least one police officer was killed, while five other police and military officers were wounded.

The ambushed combat forces belonged to the PNP 1st Mobile Force Company, based in Catubig town and the AFP 20th Infantry Battalion, based in Las Navas.

Amado Pesante, Spokesperson of the NPA-Northern Samar Rodante Urtal Comand, said the tactical offensive was in response to the complaints made by the villagers of San Miguel and Osang “against the harassment, midnight interrogations, encampment within public utilities including the school, chapel, and the multipurpose hall, among other rights violations, perpetrated by elements of the AFP and PNP in the area.”

Complaining of their defeat, PNP Eastern Visayas Director Brig. Gen. Bernard Banac said the NPA utilized command-detonated explosives during the ambush, which violated international humanitarian law.

Pesante responded, “the spirit of international humanitarian law is to prevent civilian casualties in the conduct of war. What the Ottawa Treaty prohibits are landmines that are contact-detonated or those that cannot distinguish unarmed civilians from their armed targets. The San Miguel offensive which used CDX shows that the attack was targeted only to operating soldiers and police who are legitimate targets in war.”

He continued, “Command-detonated explosives are way more controlled than the AFP-PNP’s terrorist bombings that blow out of proportions, killing and traumatizing a wide range of the population with no regard whatsoever if those hit are civilians or combatants.”

Duterte’s security forces, he said, “Pretends to be champions of international humanitarian law, even as they commit the worst forms of violations, including the killing of the two children Andrei Mercado, 12, and Leandro Alivio, 13, in Roxas village, in Catubig on 8 February... They are the real terrorists, hated and despised by the people for their abuses, lies, and fascist attacks against civilian communities.”

Marco Valbuena, Chief Information Officer of the Communist Party of the Philippines, also explained, “The NPA’s use of CDEx is in line with the Ottawa Treaty which bans only those land mines ‘designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person’.”

He added, “In contrast, the NPA’s CDEx are exploded only on command by an assigned personnel in battles and are precisely aimed at armed adversaries.” **UP**



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