



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

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EDITORIAL

History repeats itself, in spirals

Gen. Delfin Lorenzana, National Defense Secretary of outgoing President Rodrigo Duterte, advised last month president-elect Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to continue focusing on the Duterte government's counterinsurgency plan and defeat the revolutionary forces.

This is a superfluous advise. Marcos Jr has already began setting up a regime more suppressive and abusive of the Filipino people's rights than both his predecessor Duterte's and even his father Marcos Sr's. His choice of top officials for his incoming administration is already an adequate indication.

He appointed Senator Juan Ponce Enrile, one of the main architects and administrator of Marcos Sr's martial law dictatorship, as presidential legal counsel. His National Security Adviser Clarita Carlos already slammed the door on peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, and professed to retain the notorious National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict.

But the more ominous appointment is that of Gen. Jose Faustino Jr. as the new Secretary of National Defense. Gen. Faustino is the worst of the fascist generals of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, responsible for the brutal campaign of aerial bombings, extrajudicial killings and gross abuses of human rights in Mindanao, especially after Duterte placed the entire island under Martial Law in 2017.

Indoctrinated and directed by the US, and serving under Duterte, he successively led the 10th Infantry Division, Eastern Mindanao Command and Joint Task Force Mindanao of the AFP – which are all notorious for the bloody war against the indigenous Lumad and other communities in Mindanao. These AFP units launched massive campaigns of suppression and pacification against the communities, hamletting villages and dismantling community organizations, in order to ease the entry of capitalists, notably US companies, to grab their land and plunder the natural environment.

Gen. Faustino as the Secretary of National Defense will intensify and expand the dirty war in Mindanao to the rest of the country, in the vain attempt to annihilate the people's defender the New People's Army.

But Gen. Faustino is waging a lost war. The Communist Party of the Philippines reveals that “the number of NPA fighters continue to multiply, its territories continue to expand to new and old areas, even as they enjoy a mass base of millions of people, which provide support for their army.”

In fact, the Gen. Lorenzana's advice for Marcos Jr. to focus on counterinsurgency is an unequivocal admission that the Duterte regime failed miserably in its boast of crushing the revolutionary army before the end of its term.

Marcos Jr. will also find the revolutionary forces would grow much greater at the end of his own term. Just as it did, at the ignominious end of his father, the dictator Marcos Sr. **UP**



ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan.
Photo: icc-cpi.int

ICC Prosecutor pushes resumption of probe on Duterte government

International Criminal Court Prosecutor Karim Khan requested the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber on 24 June to allow his office to resume its investigation on crimes against humanity and war crimes in the Philippines, despite a request for deferment from the Duterte government. In his [53-page request](#), [ICC Prosecutor Khan](#) declared that the Manila government has not shown that “it has investigated or is investigating” crimes within the ICC's jurisdiction.

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Khan requested the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I to authorize the resumption of the investigations on the Philippines, “notwithstanding the Deferral Request” of the Duterte government, and for the Court to receive further submissions from victims or their representatives “according to an expedited schedule.” The ICC Pre-Trial Chamber authorized the ICC Prosecutor to launch a formal investigation in September 2021, covering the period from 1 July 2016 when Duterte became President until 16 March 2019 when the Philippines withdrew from the Rome Statute. The investigation will also cover Duterte’s time as mayor and vice mayor of Davao City since the Republic of the Philippines became part of ICC on 1 November 2011.

The ICC Prosecutor, however, suspended its probe in November 2021 after the Manila government submitted a Deferral Request to the Court.

Khan declared, “Mere preparedness or willingness to investigate or prosecute is not enough” to justify a halt to the investigations. He rejected the list of 52 cases presented by Manila’s Department of Justice as mere “administrative” and “desk reviews” of a small number of cases, and does not constitute investigative activity. “This cannot justify deferral of the ICC’s investigation,” he said.

The ICC Prosecutor also cited the Philippine Commission on Human Rights report on drug-related killings committed from 2016 to 2021 that concluded that the Manila government “failed in its obligation to respect and protect the human rights of every citizen” and “has encouraged a culture of impunity the shields perpetrators from being held to account.”

He said groups representing the victims and human rights organizations support the resumption of the Court’s investigation. “Without such an investigation, the Prosecution submits that there is a real risk that Rome Statute crimes committed in the Philippines will go un-investigated and unpunished,” Khan said.

When the ICC investigation resumes, the process will pick up where it left off, which is to seek evidence to issue arrest warrants. **UP**



Duterte’s National Security Adviser Gen. Hermogenes Esperon. Photo: pna.gov.ph

Government ban on online media critics denounced

The Duterte government’s order to block Philippine online users from visiting 25 websites it deemed “to be affiliated to and are supporting terrorists and terrorist organizations” drew widespread condemnation. Included in the list of banned websites are those of the Communist Party of the Philippines, National Democratic Front of the Philippines and its allied organizations, CPP Founding Chairman Jose Maria Sison, local online news organizations and local community and activist organizations. Also included are websites of international organizations and news blogs.

The CPP denounced “the push to erect a Marcos Anti-Democracy Internet Firewall in a desperate bid to censor online criticism and dissent against the incoming illegitimate Marcos II regime, as well as suppress progressive, patriotic and revolutionary journalism and literature that exposes the ills of the ruling system.”

CPP Chief Information Officer Marco Valbuena clarified that from the 25 websites ordered banned, “only seven are actually affiliated with the CPP and NDFP... at least six websites in the haphazardly drawn list are inactive.” Valbuena also expressed surprise at finding [Counterpunch](#) and [Monthly Review](#) in the list, both US-based organizations “that promote progressive views.”

International media organizations criticized the ban, particularly against the independent news outlets [Bulatlat](#) and [Pinoy Weekly](#). The International Federation of Journalists said, “Blocking access to independent media organisations under the justification of alleged terrorist affiliations is a clear attempt at censorship and media control.”

The Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines concurred, “Actions taken by government agencies to censure independent media is lamentable. Attempts to control narratives and suppress criticism of government policies violate democratic principles.”

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Phil Robertson, Deputy Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, slammed the Duterte government for its harassment of journalists and activists, calling the ban a “brazen attempt” at censoring progressive groups and media. “What’s astonishing is how easily the government escalates its defamatory rhetoric, moving from red-tagging them to classifying them as terrorists, in effect terrorist-tagging them,” said Robertson.

Meanwhile, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines on 25 June said, “The National Telecommunications Commission has no power to restrict access to news websites and members of the press based on mere allegations” of the National Security Adviser Gen. Hermogenes Esperon. The IBP asserted that the ban is a threat not only to press freedom, but also to legitimate activities of human rights advocates and other progressive groups.

The Duterte government’s National Security Adviser Gen. Hermogenes Esperon directed the National Telecommunications Commission on 6 June to block access of Philippine internet users to the 25 ‘terrorist-affiliated’ and ‘terrorist supporters’ websites. The list included websites of local groups Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, Pamalakaya fishers alliance, AMIHAN peasant women alliance, UMA agricultural workers union, Rural Missionaries of the Philippines and Save Our Schools Network, as well as international groups International League of Peoples’ Struggle and International Action Center. **UP**



NPA defends Lumad and Moro communities in Sultan Kudarat

The Communist Party of the Philippines praised the New People’s Army in Sultan Kudarat province, in southern Mindanao Island, for defending the indigenous Lumad and Moro communities in Palimbang town against landgrabbers and armed attacks of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. From 15 – 20 June, units of the NPA mounted three successful armed offensives against the 28th Infantry Battalion of the AFP in the villages of Balwan and Molon.

Marco Valbuena, CPP Chief Information Officer, said, “The people’s army is determined to defend the masses of peasants and minority peoples against the aggression of mining and logging operations in Sultan Kudarat, which are being ushered in and defended by units of the AFP.”

He added, “The latest series of armed actions mounted by the NPA in Sultan Kudarat speaks volumes against the US-Duterte regime’s target of ‘defeating’— later downgraded to ‘weakening’ – the people’s army.”

AFP units act as private armed guards of the D.M. Consunji Inc, a company that is engaged in large-scale logging in the areas of the Lumad and peasant communities. The NPA unit in Sultan Kudarat also launched several actions to stop the logging operations of the DMCI in May 2022.

Meanwhile, the NPA Sultan Kudarat reported that the AFP dropped bombs and shelled the area several times where the NPA attacked. AFP helicopters also strafed the vicinity. **UP**



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