



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

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EDITORIAL

Dancing with the Devil: On the Proposed Marcosian Cha-Cha

Last March 6th, the Philippine House of Representatives hastily approved a resolution enabling changes to the 1987 Constitution through a constitutional convention (con-con). Should the companion legislation in the Senate push through, delegates of the Con-Con will be elected on 30 October this year and will start rewriting the Constitution as soon as November.

Proponents of charter change (cha-cha) claim that the revisions will be focused on economic provisions, but introducing constitutional amendments with a Marcos and a Duterte in power is like dancing with the devil: a deceptive and dangerous move.

For one, it is no secret that all efforts thus far to change the constitution has been aimed at allowing foreign ownership of key industries to as high as 100%, leaving the Philippine economy further subsumed under imperialist interests. Such amendments will open the floodgates to more foreign direct investments (FDI) which has often led to the displacement of peasant and Indigenous communities via land-grabbing as well as relentless environmental destruction in the case of extractive mining and logging operations.

And despite claims that the changes will be limited to economic provisions, the Con-Con, once elected and convened is empowered to propose changes to any part of the document. And with a Marcos-controlled Congress and Senate, this runs the risk of introducing changes to term restrictions for elected officials including the president. Worst case scenario is that we see Marcos Jr. unceremoniously extending his term while corruption and fascist rule are institutionalized. If anything, Marcos Jr.'s objective in this Cha-Cha is to prolong his family's claim to power and provide the necessary tools for the next representative of the ruling class to reinstate another fascist dictatorship.

This dastardly attempt to revise the constitution is a mockery to thousands of Filipinos who gave their lives to oust the fascist dictator Marcos Sr. from power. It aims to rid the 1987 Constitution of its nationalist and anti-fascist provisions to pave the way for unbridled imperialist plunder and tyrannical rule. If push comes to shove, the Filipino people must fight with all their might to resist the erosion of Philippine sovereignty and defend their democratic rights. **UP**

AFP mercenaries hit Governor Degamo, massacred eight others, Manila gov't confirms



Image: philippineevolution.nu

The Manila government confirmed that mercenary soldiers killed Negros Oriental Governor Degamo and eight provincial staff and constituents and wounded 16 others, in an assault on the governor's residence in Pamplona town on 5 March.

Philippine Army chief Lt. Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. said that they will monitor the post-military service activities of all of Army personnel with "special skills."

Admitting basic flaws in the reactionary military orientation, he said that they would intensify its "values formation," to discourage its personnel, regardless whether they are in active service, retired or discharged, from using their "military skills to harm innocent civilians."

The proliferation of private armies ran by former military and police operatives engendered intense armed clashes among the country's political dynasties.

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Many local officials – both incumbent and former – were killed since Marcos Jr. took office in June 2022, continuing the trend under former president Rodrigo Duterte where at least 10 mayors and 18 vice mayors were killed between 2016 and 2022.

As of 4 March, one vice mayor and one governor were killed under the current administration. Five former officials have been killed, too – four former mayors and one former vice mayor.

In February, there were at least two attempts on the lives of Lanao del Sur Governor Mamintal Adiong Jr. and Mayor Montawal of Datu Montawal, Maguindanao.

House Deputy Minority leader and ACT Teachers party-list Rep. France Castro condemned the assassination of Negros Oriental Gov. Roel Degamo, pointing out that the recent string of attacks was like the events prior to the declaration of Martial Law in 1972.

“All these must be taken into consideration as there is again a concerted effort to change the Constitution, and these attacks may again be used to justify such a move to make a more totalitarian charter like that of the 1973 Constitution,” Castro said.

“We must be very vigilant and see the patterns that are emerging; these attacks may be a scheme to again justify a more draconian government and Constitution, with those in power remaining indefinitely at the top,” she added. **UP**

International Women’s Day: Thousands march for higher wages, decent jobs in PH



Image: philippinerevolution.nu

On International Working Women’s Day, 8 March 2023, thousands of women across different cities in the Philippines marched the streets to call for wage increase, decent jobs, and lower prices of goods among other issues affecting women, including land reform.

GABRIELA, the biggest women’s alliance in the Philippines, led the protest march and program in Metro Manila, joined by several trade unions including Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU).

Striking jeepney drivers also joined the demonstrations calling for an end to government plans to phaseout the Philippine jeepney.

The organizations demanded wage increase for women workers, dignified work, and freedom of association. The said groups also condemned the continuing attacks against women rights activists.

“We are here to call out the Philippine government, to uphold the rights of women workers, to form organizations, to form unions, so they can collectively bargain their rights inside their workplaces and inside the country,” said Clarice Palce, GABRIELA Secretary-General.

In Davao City, GABRIELA – Southern Mindanao Region, together with the youth and trade unionists marched for decent jobs, living wages and for democratic rights.

In Bacolod City, Women Workers United Negros marched calling for wage increase, equal opportunities for work and respect for the right to unionize.

In Calumpit, Bulacan, women danced to protest the abuses on women and children.

In Baguio City, progressive youth and women marched to honor the victories that women have won and vowed to continue the struggle of women.

Makibaka, the revolutionary women’s organization and allied organization of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), issued statements calling on women to fight the US-Marcos regime.

In different cities in Asia-Pacific, Canada, the US and Europe, Filipino women and men joined marches to celebrate International Working Women’s Day.

Makibaka saluted women red fighters of the New People’s Army and called on women to advance the revolutionary struggle by joining the armed revolution in the countryside.

“We challenge women to lead the struggle for national democracy. Go to the countryside, immerse with the toiling masses, and advance the people’s war until victory,” Makibaka said. **UP**

Drivers hold transport strike vs Jeepney phaseout plan



Image: philippineevolution.nu

Filipino jeepney drivers launched a two-day transport strike on 6-7 March 2023, in response to the government's plans to phaseout the Philippine jeepney.

Jeepneys, in the vernacular "jeep", were originally adopted from military GP (General Purpose) vehicles left by the US soldiers after World War II. They have evolved to present-day larger vehicles carrying up to 25 passengers and attained an iconic status with their colorful decorations. Dubbed "the king of the road," they dominate both the urban and rural transport system in the Philippines, offering fares cheaper than trains, taxis or tricycles.

Transport unions Piston, Manibela and other jeepney operators' and drivers' organizations led about 100,000 jeepney drivers in major cities to stop their operations to protest the Marcos government's Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP). First presented in 2017, the program would replace jeepneys that are older than 15 years with minibuses and consolidate operators and drivers into cooperatives.

Modesto Floranda, chairperson of Piston, said the drivers cannot afford the cost of this modernization. They will have to shoulder up to 2.8 million pesos (50,800 USD) to replace their vehicles and will need at least 15 vehicles to form a cooperative. "Who would not want a more efficient and comfortable vehicle? We earn barely enough to survive. We'd like a modernization that caters to the needs of the transport sector. But this is modernization favors big business and is a bane to the commuting public as well."

Under the PUVMP, jeepney drivers may end up buried in P2.8 million of debt just to acquire a new jeepney. The move forces drivers to increase fares just so they can pay off debts and other operational expenses.

A recent study by the University of the Philippines estimated minimum jeepney fares could rise by 300 percent as a result of the PUVMP.

The strike compelled the Marcos government to postpone the execution of the consolidation deadline to the end of the year.

"An execution is still an execution if you just move the date...the government is massacring our livelihood," Floranda responded. **UP**

Revolutionary youth groups drum up support for NPA 54th anniversary



Image: philippinerevolution.nu

In San Francisco, Agusan del Sur, Mindanao, members of the youth organization, Kabataan Makabayan (KM) painted several walls of the town red with the calls: "NPA 54", "Viva CPP-NPA-NDF" and "Sampa sa NPA!" (Join the NPA). They called this action Operation "Dikit-Pinta" (Post and Paint).

Their efforts form part of their build-up campaign to celebrate the 54th anniversary of the New People's Army (NPA) on 29 March 2023. **UP**

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