

**EDITORIAL:**

## **Marcos Jr.'s amnesty program smacks of bad faith**

Read on page 2

Groups laud UN Rapporteur's recommendation to abolish NTF-ELCAC (p. 2)

Duterte's staunch critic released from unjust imprisonment (p. 3)

Amid AFP claims of dismantling the NPA, armed struggle perseveres (p. 4)

## EDITORIAL:

## Marcos Jr.'s amnesty program smacks of bad faith


Last 24 November, Marcos Jr. issued Proclamation 404 supposedly to grant amnesty to armed groups including the CPP-NPA-NDF (Communist Party of the Philippines – New People’s Army – National Democratic Front). According to his stooges in Malacañang, the said amnesty program is purportedly meant to “attain lasting peace through comprehensive peace initiatives.” Marcos Jr’s amnesty program however smacks of bad faith. Instead of creating an environment conducive for peace, it reeks of deception intended to force the revolutionary movement to surrender.

By setting as a precondition for freedom the admission of guilt for trumped up charges, Marcos Jr’s amnesty program is exposed as a tool of coercion designed to strongarm the revolutionary movement into submission.

Such an offer of amnesty is also questionable considering more than 800 political prisoners remain in prison many of which are charged with cases not even covered by the proclamation, while the Duterte-issued Executive Order #70 and Memorandum Order #42 remain in effect and while the NTF-ELCAC continues to unleash a brutal campaign of suppression using the Anti-Terror Law as a weapon.

Consistent with the framework of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DRR), the amnesty program miserably fails to address the roots of armed conflict and is blinded by its ultimate objective of hollow pacification. Without addressing the root causes of armed conflict – foreign domination, landlessness and massive poverty, bureaucratic corruption, and fascist repression – just and lasting peace is impossible.

By attaching stringent conditions to the amnesty program, Marcos Jr. reveals a disturbing (and yet unsurprising) lack of understanding of the socio-economic and political crises that are at the root of civil war in the Philippines. By neglecting the socio-economic and political factors that drive individuals to rebel, his amnesty program impedes the opportunity to enact meaningful political and socioeconomic reforms that will pave the way for a just and lasting peace.

Furthermore, the timing of the amnesty program raises suspicions about its true intent. As Marcos Jr. and his family eyes the 2028 presidential elections thus intensifying the in-fighting within the ruling clique, his amnesty offer seems more like a carefully orchestrated media spin rather than a genuine commitment to resolving the country’s long-standing conflicts. This opportunistic maneuvering not only undermines the credibility of the amnesty program but also risks exacerbating tensions by framing peace as a political tool of coercion rather than a societal necessity. 

## Groups laud UN rapporteur’s recommendation to abolish NTF-ELCAC

Various groups have called on the Marcos Jr. administration to implement the recent recommendations of the United Nations (UN) rapporteur Ian Fry to abolish the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC).

Fry, UN special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, recommended the abolishment of NTF-ELCAC on November 15, citing that it “operates with impunity.” Fry also met with various stakeholders including government officials and noted that authorities have been using the NTF-ELCAC mandate with impunity “to protect key economic interests in the country.” He also mentioned that “various clergy and humanitarian workers have been falsely accused” under the ATL.

Aside from the abolishment of NTF-ELCAC, groups are also appealing for the protection of environmental defenders and the continuation of the peace agreement between the government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) which was scrapped in 2017, and the abolition of the controversial anti-terrorism law.


“We deem these recommendations reasonable and crucial as a step forward to remove the institutionalized hurdles that prevent us from attaining a just peace in our country,” said the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP) in a statement.



image: philippinerevolution.nu

Karapatan Secretary General Crisitina Palabay likewise lauded Fry's unequivocal recommendation to abolish the NTF-ELCAC saying "Fry's visit to the country comes at a crucial time. It puts on center stage the sinister role played by the NTF-ELCAC and the dangerous impact of the terror law on the lives and safety of environmental human rights defenders in the country."

The Philippines has been one of the world's deadliest countries and Asia's worst for environmental defenders in the past 10 years. Killings of environmental defenders peaked during the Duterte regime, which accounted for 205 (or 73%) of the 281 defenders slain extrajudicially from 2012 to 2022.

"But the problem persists under the Marcos Jr. regime, as evidenced by the abduction by state forces last September of environmental activists Jhed Tamano and Jonila Castro, who have been campaigning against ecologically destructive reclamation projects along Manila Bay," added Palabay. 

## Former Sen. De Lima, Duterte's staunch critic released from unjust imprisonment

Former senator and chair of the Senate Committee on Justice and Human Rights Leila de Lima, who led investigations into former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte's criminal past and the thousands of killings in his so-called war on drugs, was released last November 13 after unjustly spending almost seven years in prison.

De Lima's release was prompted by the retractions of several witnesses who admitted to have falsely testified against her of accepting drug money.

De Lima has since called for the investigation into former Justice chiefs Vitaliano Aguirre II and Menardo Guevarra after the Court of Appeals ordered the Office of the Ombudsman to act on her complaints against the two.

Human rights group Karapatan lauded the acquittal of De Lima noting how the former senator has been "detained and pilloried by the Duterte administration" but "remained firm and steadfast in speaking out against Duterte's crimes," said Cristina Palabay.


De Lima's unjust detention was considered by many as a political vendetta of Duterte in response to fears of being made accountable for the killings undertaken by his death squad – the Davao Death Squad, and for the slaughter of more than 30,000 poor drug



image: philippinerevolution.nu

suspects (small time users and couriers) during Duterte's tenure as president.

Palabay adds that De Lima's release has once again called attention to the plight of more than 778 political prisoners who are also victims of political persecution and languishing in prison because of false and nonbailable charges. Human rights groups and activists have amplified the call for their immediate release.

Among the hundreds of political prisoners are poor farmers, workers, elderly, women, human rights defenders and revolutionaries such as several NDFP peace consultants Vicente Ladlad Jr., Rey Casambre, Adel Silva and Frank Fernandez to name a few. 

## Amid AFP claims of dismantling NPA, armed struggle perseveres



image: philippinerevolution.nu

At least 18 soldiers under the 8th ID were killed and five were wounded in a series of tactical offensives by the New People's Army (NPA) in Northern and Western Samar last June to August. Among those killed were five troopers of the 4th Scout Ranger Battalion (SRB), one of the "elite" forces most recently deployed in the region to "completely defeat" the people's army.

According to Ka Karlos Manuel, spokesperson of NPA-Eastern Visayas (Efren Martires Command), "... these tactical offensives clearly negate the lies of 8th Infantry Division (ID) commander Maj. Gen. Camilo Ligayo that they have 'smashed' the 'remnants' of the NPA fighting fronts in the region."

"Their claim that there is no tactical offensive launched by the NPA this year is more ridiculous.", added Manuel.

According to the regional command, these tactical offensives are proof that the NPA in Eastern Visayas perseveres in fighting and frustrating the intensified attacks of the 8th ID against the revolutionary movement and the masses.

In Northern Samar, five consecutive harassment operations were conducted by the people's army in Silvino Lobos and Las Navas. Five armed offensives were also launched by Red fighters in Matuguinao, Western Samar. Meanwhile, in Southern Leyte, the NPA-Leyte Island recently reported thwarting a raid by the 14th IB that took place in April and fascist retaliatory measures by the military unit in civilian communities. The NPA armed offensive killed two military agents and confiscated two .45 caliber pistols, and three cell phones. These operations were launched amid focused military operations of the 8th ID with hundreds of fascist troopers using advanced weaponry such as helicopters, drones and other high-tech military equipment.

In a related development in Mindanao, red fighters of the New People's Army (NPA)-Sultan Kudarat disarmed Junior Martinez, a local despot and 57th IB agent, in Sityo Badiangan, on November 13. An M16 rifle, a shotgun, two pistols, a hand grenade, and a VHF radio were confiscated from him.

Martinez uses these weapons to terrorize the peasant masses in their area and grab their land. Martinez is supported by the 57th IB and actively colludes with soldiers.

On November 10, the NPA-Sultan Kudarat harassed the 37th IB detachment in Sityo Pangyen, Barangay Hinalaan, Kalamansig. The 37th IB soldiers are behind gambling, drinking, and causing trouble in the village. They harass and coerce residents repeatedly to "surrender." Residents welcomed the NPA offensive against soldiers causing troubles in the area.

In Luzon island, the NPA-Quezon destroyed and burned to two dump trucks used by the quarry company in Unisan town on November 8. This was done to warn companies involved in environmentally destructive projects. 