



EDITORIAL:

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The NDFP stresses need to address root causes of armed conflict

After six long years since the Duterte administration unilaterally terminated the peace negotiations in 2017, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) agreed to enter anew a process of resuming formal peace talks with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP). The NDFP enters the talks with a clear intention of building on past achievements of the negotiations including honoring and respecting previous bilateral agreements. Any notion or suggestion of a “restart” or a “do over” of the negotiations practically disregards previous milestone agreements between the GRP and the NDFP namely the Hague Joint Declaration, the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) all of which remain binding between the two Parties. The real litmus test of the GRP’s sincerity toward just and lasting peace relies on them honoring the substantive agenda items set in the Hague Joint Declaration including addressing widespread poverty, landlessness, and lack of national industrialization all of which are already being addressed in the draft Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER).

In effect, the GRP’s attempts to frame this possible continuation of the peace talks as a “restart” rather than a resumption raises suspicion on whether there is genuine intent to address the root causes of the armed conflict, or are they primarily just interested to strongarm the revolutionary forces into submission?

Only time will tell. But on the part of the NDFP, we reiterate that the peace negotiations are NOT negotiations for capitulation but rather a unique opportunity to find mutually acceptable and principled ways of addressing the root causes of the civil war. The NDFP engages in the negotiations on the basis of good faith guided by our genuine desire to address the root causes of the armed conflict. There should therefore be absolutely no talk or insinuation, much less demand, for the NDFP to surrender or for the revolutionary forces of the CPP and NPA to lay down their arms.

Let us not forget that the peace talks exist because there is an ongoing civil war, that this is also an implicit recognition, albeit openly denied by the GRP of the strength of the revolutionary movement, and that there exist two governments in the Philippines. As the authorized representative of the oppressed and toiling Filipino masses, the NDFP remains ever committed to enter into peace negotiations with the GRP in a determined quest for a just and lasting peace that will be of lasting benefit to the Filipino people. 

Groups support possible resumption of GRP-NDFP peace negotiations

Various groups expressed support for the possible resumption of formal peace talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), following the joint communique signed last November 23 where the two parties agreed to resolve the armed conflict.

“National unity and an end to armed hostilities are possible if there are thoroughgoing socio-economic and political reforms that benefit the people,” said Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) in a statement.

The possible resumptions of talks also received a nod from the House of Representatives. In a joint statement of political party leaders in the House of Representatives (HOR), they described the signing as a “historic move” that is a “pivotal moment in our nation’s journey towards lasting peace and sustainable development.”

Two weeks into the signing, Vice President Sara Duterte criticized the joint communique. She said that the Marcos Jr. administration should reconsider the decision to resume the peace talks, describing it as “an agreement with the devil.” Duterte is also vice chairperson of the notorious National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) which was formed under the administration of her father after the GRP’s unilateral termination of the peace negotiations in 2017.


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House Deputy Minority Leader and ACT Teachers Representative France Castro said that such statements “reflect a lack of understanding of the complexities of the peace process and a disregard for the aspirations of the Filipino people for just and lastice peace.”

“Instead of promoting war, we call on the Vice President and those she represents to support efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the armed conflict in the country,” she added. Karapatan meanwhile was not surprised by Duterte’s statement saying “Perhaps the peace the Vice President aspires for is the peace of the graveyard — an end to dissent, to vigorous democratic discourse and debate and the quest for better alternatives for our people.” 

Deportation of Filipino-Swiss youth activist, denounced by rights groups

Karapatan and Anakbayan denounced the recent deportation of Filipino-Swiss youth activist Edna Becher by the Marcos Jr. regime. Becher was held up by the Bureau of Immigration (BI) upon arriving at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport last 8 December. The BI cited a supposed government intelligence report as basis for deporting the activist. She was briefly detained at the airport and was forced to board the next flight back to her country of origin.

Authorities have accused Becher of participating in protest actions against the US-Marcos regime, specifically for attending protests in Switzerland during the Universal Periodic Review of the Philippines and during the visit of President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. for the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Becher went to the Philippines to reunite with her family and friends and to see for herself the poverty and repression suffered by her compatriots.

Karapatan and Anakbayan stressed that Becher’s deportation, the first under the Marcos Jr. regime, is political repression and violates her freedom of association and movement. It is appalling, the human rights group said, that her deportation happened days before the commemoration of International Human Rights Day.

Anakbayan, a militant youth group in the Philippines which has several active chapters abroad, said criminalizing participation in protests against the US-Marcos regime, in the Philippines and abroad, is political repression.

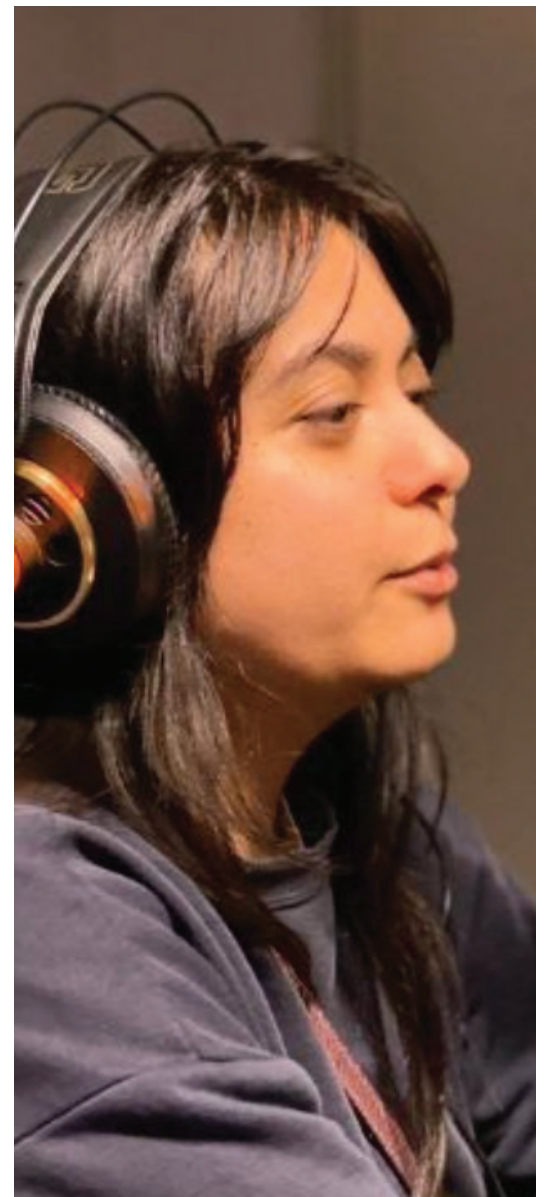



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“Edna Becher is a known youth leader in Europe and has been at the forefront of the fight against human rights violations and political repression,” Anakbayan said.

“The Marcos regime is actively barring individuals from abroad to see the dire social realities of Philippine society. It is desperately silencing youth in the Philippines and abroad by any means possible. However, the fact remains - Filipinos continue to migrate abroad due to the lack of decent jobs, social services, and livable wages in the country,” the group emphasized. 

Kabataang Makabayan reinvigorated in key Philippine universities



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Kabataang Makabayan (Patriotic Youth), the revolutionary youth organization and an allied organization of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), has strengthened its chapters in several key private and public universities in Metro Manila.

On November 30, KM chapters launched various activities to celebrate the 59th anniversary of their organization. The KM-Armando Mendoza announced on November 20 the reestablishment of their chapter. They held a discussion on the orientation and constitution of the KM, paid honor and tribute to the martyrs, planned activities and elected a new executive committee. The chapter was named after Armando Mendoza, a University of Santo Tomas student martyred in the 1970s.

At the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) in Sta. Mesa, Manila, KM-Chapter Kira Mindoro members held a lightning rally on November 29. Before the rally, chapter members carried out operation graffiti and posterizing inside the campus and painted the calls “Advance the people’s war!” “KM@59” and others.

Chapters of KM in the University of the Philippines (UP)-Diliman and UP-Los Baños also conducted graffiti campaigns in their respective campuses. The KM Eduardo Aquino chapter posted announcements around the campus of UP-Manila about its establishment last November.

On December 8 members of KM staged a lightning rally at Rizal Street, Manila, days after its founding anniversary.

KM revitalization in another private university and a state university in Metro Manila for the last half of the year was also reported. Issues of the youth KM’s role within the universities and colleges is key to encourage the youth to take the path of the people’s democratic revolution and advance mass struggles.

In *Ang Bayan’s* interview with Rose, a KM member at a university in Cavite, she said oppressive conditions in their school persist. These problems and issues encouraged Ka Andrea to leave the university and join the New People’s Army (NPA). She said she witnessed the inaction to such issues under the current rotten system and government and the limitations of struggling within the prevailing system. She knows armed resistance will achieve a society that will truly respond to the needs of the youth. Before she took up arms, Ka Andrea participated in organizing KM among young farmers.

Historically, KM assumed the role of serving as the training school for young revolutionaries and of assisting the working class in fulfilling its revolutionary tasks.

The KM was the key factor in bringing about the upsurge of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal mass movement in the 1960s. It provided active support to the trade union movement and peasant movement in political education, strikes and mass protests. 