



EDITORIAL:

Peace talks must focus on addressing the real roots of civil war

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Gibo Teodoro's head-scratching insinuation that the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) was willing to surrender is simply untrue. To say that this is the basis for the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) agreeing to explore the resumption of peace negotiations is also incorrect. First of all, it was the GRP that first approached the NDFP and not the other way around. Secondly, the fact that the GRP seeks for the resumption of peace negotiations with the NDFP is a clear indication, albeit openly denied by the GRP, of the strength of the revolutionary movement. It also belies the GRP's repeated claims that the New People's Army is a "spent force." If the GRP's claims were true, what need was there for peace talks to begin with? Lastly, the Oslo Joint Statement also comes at a time of intensifying economic and political crises which fuel the flames of civil war.

Let there be no mistake, that the resumption of the peace negotiations is also an implicit recognition of the utter failure of the US-Marcos regime, and all regimes that preceded it, to crush the revolutionary resistance of the movement of the Filipino people for national liberation and democracy.

It is also a failure of thinking on the part of GRP stooges such as House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez to demand the revolutionary movement to "abandon the path of violence" and essentially give up arms.

We reiterate that the point of entering peace negotiations is not to arrive at capitulation, but to discuss mutually acceptable and principled ways of achieving just and lasting peace.

The GRP operates under the wrong assumption that the root of armed conflict is the CPP-NPA-NDF. This however is an utterly false claim meant to obscure the GRP's accountability for persisting landlessness of the peasant class, widespread poverty, depressed wages of workers and the lack of local industrial development – which are the real roots of civil war. These are the same substantive agenda items the NDFP seeks to discuss on the negotiating table.

As such, we ask the GRP to focus their efforts instead on the "meat" of the negotiations. Before proceeding to any conversation about the cessation of hostilities, we urge the GRP to go back to the negotiating table and discuss first the remaining substantive agenda items under the Hague Joint Declaration. This means discussing the draft Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) which primarily addresses the root causes of civil war. 

UN experts recommend creation of anti-torture body to PH

On 14 December, the United Nations torture prevention experts concluded their second visit to the Philippines by calling for the urgent designation of a national torture prevention body.

"The State Party should fast-track the adoption of the bills currently in the House of Representatives and the Senate, which will create the national monitoring body officially called National Preventive Mechanism," said Victor Zaharia, head of the UN Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture (SPT) delegation.

"The magnitude of issues observed by the delegation reaffirms the urgency of establishing an independent torture prevention mechanism with unrestricted access to all places of deprivation of liberty.", he added.

At the end of the visit, the delegation presented its confidential preliminary observations to the Government of the Philippines, which will be followed by a confidential report containing detailed observations and recommendations to further prevent torture and ill-treatment of people deprived of their liberty. According to the National Union of People's Lawyers (NUPL), the GRP has neglected its responsibilities to address and prevent torture since acceding to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, and Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1986 and its Optional Protocol in 2012.

"The suffering of pre-trial



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detainees in severely congested and inhumane conditions, as seen in the tragic deaths of baby River and cancer patient Antonio Molina, underscores the government's callous and deliberate indifference to vulnerable populations in prison," the NUPL said.

Human rights alliance Karapatan welcomed the statement of the SPT on the urgent need for a national torture prevention body in the Philippines that would have the power to access all places of detention to prevent torture and other forms of ill treatment.

In an earlier statement, Karapatan urged that the report be made public in the interest of transparency, accountability, and the continued monitoring of the Philippine government's compliance with the UN Convention Against Torture, to which it is a signatory. [△](#)

Drivers, operators file SC petition vs PUV phaseout

A petition to the GRP (Government of the Republic of the Philippines) Supreme Court was filed by jeepney drivers and operators meant to stop the implementation of the PUV (public utility vehicle) phaseout set to happen on January next year. The group demands to scrap plans to phaseout jeepneys under the veil of the deceptive modernization program and mandatory franchise consolidation. The Marcos regime's pronouncement last December 12 that the December 31 phaseout deadline will push through vindicated the objective of the transport strike, according to Piston.

The government's Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program (PUVMP) once implemented, will force operators to consolidate or give up their individual franchise to become a single franchise under a cooperative or corporation. They also stated in the petition that no one has the right to force them to form or join any association against their will.

In their petition to the SC, Piston argued that the PUV phaseout program is contrary to their right to free association. "Revocation of the franchise for not joining the cooperative is against the rights of drivers and operators," said Mody Floranda, Piston's national president. "They will be deprived of their livelihood on the basis of not joining the cooperatives," he added.


If the mandatory consolidation deadline of December 31 continues, it is estimated that 30,862 jeepney units and 4,852 UV Express units will be unable to operate in the National Capital



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Region (NCR) because of their refusal to consolidate their franchise operations. Nearly 64,000 drivers and 25,000 operators in NCR alone will lose their livelihood. The decision will also affect 28.5 million passengers nationwide.

“Marcos Jr is heartless because of the mass unemployment and serious public transport nightmare he will unleash in the new year,” said Floranda. Piston said it is requesting immediate action from the Supreme Court to save not only the livelihood of drivers and operators, but also the welfare of commuters.

The Piston and Manibela group launched a strike again starting December 21 to demand the scrapping of the forced consolidation of the franchise and the PUVMP. 

First anniversary of Ka Joma Sison's martyrdom commemorated



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Last 16 December, the first anniversary of the martyrdom of Comrade Jose Maria Sison, great Filipino leader, teacher and communist, was commemorated through conferences and cultural performances.

Hundreds of individuals, both veteran activists and youth, gathered at the University of the Philippines (UP)-Diliman for a discussion and reflection on the writings of Ka Joma.

Entitled “Reflections on Palestine, the Philippines, and the Struggle for a Just and Lasting Peace,” participants gave reflections and personal descriptions on Ka Joma’s writings including “Our Urgent Tasks,” an article on Israel’s aggression and massacre of the Palestinian people, writings on peace talks between the NDFP and GRP, “On Revolutionary Violence,” and his final statement “The Filipino People’s Democratic Revolution is Invincible.”

In Utrecht, The Netherlands, comrades, allies, and friends of the revolutionary movement in the Philippines gathered at the NDFP International Information Office where they featured tributes, songs, poetry readings and other cultural performances to commemorate the colorful and meaningful life of Ka Joma. They also gave tribute to and commemorated several other comrades who were martyred during the course of the revolutionary struggle when it started until the present.

Units of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People’s Army nationwide also launched various activities to commemorate and honor Ka Joma. Some fronts held pledge renewals to the Party on the same day to affirm wholehearted service to the Filipino people and to offer their lives for the victory of the people’s democratic revolution. 