



EDITORIAL:

The New People's Army will outlast the US-Marcos regime

Read on page 2

Groups call for resumption of peace talks, push for genuine agrarian reform (p. 2)

Chacha to worsen land dispossession and poverty, rights groups say (p. 3)

UN experts seek Marcos Jr. explanation over 'unchecked antiterror powers' (p. 4)

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The New People's Army will outlast the US-Marcos regime

A few days ago, Col. Francel Margareth Padilla started her work as new spokesperson of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) by repeating the annual AFP announcement that the fascist military “will eliminate the New People's Army by the end of the year.” She issued her statement just days after Marcos, their commander-in-chief, declared that “there are no more NPA fronts.”

The NPA will make sure that it will outlast Marcos, just like it outlasted his father and all the US-supported governments of the past 35 years who all bragged of crushing the NPA.


If Marcos's declarations were true, why is it then that around 60-70,000 military and police combat troops (or around 150 battalions of AFP and PNP counterinsurgency units) remain deployed against the NPA across the country? With his claims, Marcos should answer why is it that the AFP continues to be focused and deployed mainly against the NPA, instead of gearing up to defend the country against US-China armed conflicts?

Why is it that the AFP continues to eat up a large portion of the national budget only to squander hundreds of millions of pesos to fly their jet fighters and drones, drop 250lb bombs and fire their howitzers? Why is it that they continue to spend hundreds of millions of pesos to maintain a 50,000 strong paramilitary force and set up camps in hundreds of villages across the country?

Marcos Jr is daydreaming when he claims there are no more active NPA guerrilla fronts. The NPA remains active in 14 regional commands across the country each with several guerrilla fronts. The CPP's rectification movement has filled the NPA's Red fighters and commanders with renewed revolutionary energy to serve the people. Marcos wants to project the Philippines as “insurgency-free” in his desperate desire to entice foreign capitalists at a time of global crisis, with promises of full access to land and resources.

There is creeping demoralization within the AFP, especially among their rank-and-file, who are well too aware of their failure to defeat the NPA and the continuing deep and wide support that the NPA enjoys among the peasant masses and people. They are further dispirited by the corruption of their higher officers who mulct and pocket millions of pesos of public funds, and by the in-fighting among the generals who are deeply loyal to rival politicians and bureaucrat capitalists.

They are utterly dejected by the fact that they are used as cannon fodder to defend a rotten system while their commander-in-chief enjoys a high-style living using public money to have helicopters ferry him from concerts and late-night parties.

The CPP anticipates steady growth of the NPA during the rest of the year and succeeding period. Amid Marcos' corruption, policies that favor foreign capitalist interests and a few big bourgeois compradors and big landlords, the Filipino people have no other recourse but to intensify their armed resistance. 

Groups call for resumption of peace talks, push for genuine agrarian reform

The Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) and other groups voiced out its support for the resumption of peace negotiations in a gathering in Manila on 22 January 2024, to commemorate the 37th anniversary of the Mendiola Massacre. The first peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) started immediately after Corazon Aquino was installed as president after the deposed dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986. The talks however collapsed after Aquino's security forces opened fire on farmers and allied groups who were demonstrating near the presidential palace to demand for genuine land reform.

GRP-NDFP peace negotiations went on and off under different regimes until Rodrigo Duterte terminated the talks in November 2017.

However, in a joint statement signed 23 November 2023 in Oslo, the two parties, “cognizant of the serious socioeconomic and environmental issues, and the foreign security threats facing the country,” agreed to explore the possible resumption of the formal peace negotiations to address the roots of the armed conflict.


Various activist groups welcomed the bilateral discussions to resume the peace negotiations. Bayan Chair Emeritus Carol Araullo said, for the martyrs of Mendiola, together with the KMP, they continue to assert peace talks and acknowledge the recent breakthroughs in the Oslo Joint Statement. Araullo said the



image: philippinerevolution.nu

peasant sector's participation is crucial in the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER).

Julieta de Lima, chairperson of the NDFP Peace Negotiating Panel, said that agrarian reform and rural development are critical components of CASER. It has seven major parts discussing the principles, scope or applicability, development of the national economy, respect for human rights, macroeconomic policies, and the overall mechanism of its implementation.

Detained NDFP peace consultants Rey Casambre, Renante Gamara, Vicente Ladlad and Adelberto Silva sent a letter that said that the possibility of peace talks resumption is an acknowledgment that the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People's Army (NPA) remain relevant forces to advance the interest of the people. 

Chacha to worsen land dispossession and poverty, rights groups say

Amid the circulating advertisements to change the constitution, several groups argue that it would worsen poverty in the country. On 15 January 2024, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) said that the Charter Change (Chacha) initiative would expose the country's alienable and disposable lands to 100% foreign ownership.

Alienable and disposable lands refer to land within public domain and are subject to land distribution to qualified beneficiaries. According to the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA), there are around 14.2 million hectares of land that can be subject to free distribution to farmers.

Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri filed Resolution of Both Houses (RBH) No. 6, seeking to amend the "economic provisions" of the 1987 Constitution. The RBH No. 6 aims to change the limitation on foreign ownership of industries, which currently imposed 60% Filipino – 40% foreign as a general rule.

On Section 11 of Article XII, the RBH No. 6 particularly added the clause "unless provided by law," which would ease the restriction on public utility ownership.

This move, KMP asserted, will prompt "plunder of remaining land and natural resources."

"Instead of devoting our land and resources to the genuine development of the domestic agriculture, economy, and industries, ChaCha will allow more foreign-owned extractive industries, logging, ecotourism, real estate projects, expansion of agro-corporation plantations, and other business operations intended for profit-making," KMP said in a statement.

They also asserted that the foreign ownership of land will likely result in further landlessness of farmers, prompting massive hunger, famine, loss of livelihood, and even more worsened poverty.

Beyond its impact on rural landscapes, Carmelita Collado of Quezon




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City Urban Poor Coordinating Council (QC UPCC) said that the ChaCha petition only wasted the people's money to advance anti-people agenda and policies.

The Constitutional Convention for ChaCha is said to cost Php 9.5 billion, according to economic think-tank IBON Foundation.

Collado also said that communities are being deceived into signing Chacha petitions in exchange for socio-economic relief.

She also mentioned that one of the manifestations of the government's eagerness to submit to foreign investors is the Public Utility Vehicle Modernization Program, which is largely denounced by the transport sector and commuters around the country.

"The Chacha is not the solution to revive the economy. The government should focus on people's job security, decent and enough wage for workers, and providing adequate housing for the urban poor," Collado said in a Filipino statement. 

UN experts seek Marcos Jr. explanation over 'unchecked antiterror powers'



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Days before the full implementation of the antiterrorism law, six United Nations experts made public a letter they wrote in October last year asking the Marcos Jr. administration to explain cases of "judicial harassment, office raids and targeted financial sanctions" on rights watchdogs and its "seemingly unchecked powers."

In the 19-page letter dated 10 October 2023, the UN special rapporteurs sought an explanation for alleged human rights violations carried out by the Marcos administration in pursuit of so-called 'antiterrorism' policies, including Republic Act (RA) No. 11479, which is to be fully enforced starting 15 January under guidelines recently approved by the Supreme Court.

They expressed "serious concern about the seemingly broad and unchecked executive

powers... particularly the discretion of the Anti-Terrorism Council to designate individuals and organizations as 'terrorist' and the Anti-Money Laundering Council to adopt targeted financial sanctions thereafter."

They also cautioned the Marcos Jr. government against using its 'counterterrorism' financing oversight powers "in a broad and arbitrary manner," especially against legal democratic organizations and individuals in complete disregard of the country's human rights obligations under international law.

The October 10 letter was signed by Fionnuala Ni Aolain, special rapporteur on human rights while countering terrorism; Irene Khan, special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Clement Nyaletsossi Voule, special rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; Mary Lawlor, special rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; José Francisco Cali Tzay, special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples; and Nazila Ghanea, special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief. The rapporteurs made the letter public this month apparently after failing to get a response from the government.

The UN rapporteurs earlier warned to publish it in their communications reporting website and include it in their regular report to the UN Human Rights Council if Marcos failed to respond to their concerns within 60 days. 