

EDITORIAL:

Will the AFP, PNP, and NTF-ELCAC obey the SC ruling on red-tagging?

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EDITORIAL:

Will the AFP, PNP, and NTF-ELCAC obey the SC ruling on red-tagging?

The recent ruling of the reactionary government's Supreme Court (SC) on red-tagging or red-baiting may be considered a welcome development and a victory of the people's democratic movement. Coupled with growing international pressure to denounce this draconian tactic of the Marcos Jr. administration, it can also be said that the strong public clamor to stop red-tagging is a driving force for the SC to make this decision.

The SC has granted the petition of writ of amparo for former Bayan Muna Partylist Representative Siegfred Deduro, after state forces associated him with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The reactionary high court declared that linking red-tagging and guilt by association jeopardizes a person's fundamental rights to life, liberty, or security.


In his concurring opinion, SC Senior Associate Justice Marvic Lionen correctly pointed out:

"To make it easy for military and paramilitary units to silence or cause untold human rights abuses on vocal dissenters, government agents usually resort to stereotyping or caricaturing individuals. This is accomplished by providing witnesses who, under coercive and intimidating conditions, identify the leaders of organizations critical of the administration as masterminds of ordinary criminal acts. Not only does this make these leaders' lives and liberties vulnerable, a chilling effect on dissent is also generated among similar-minded individuals."

While the issuance of such a decision by the SC can be considered a welcome development especially for activists and citizens who simply wish to peacefully express their dissent, the biggest question is: will the executive branch of the GRP (Government of the Republic of the Philippines) comply with the SC ruling?

The main Red-taggers are the battalions and other military units of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippine National Police (PNP), and officials of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Struggle (NTF-ELCAC) and the Anti-Terrorism Council. Red-tagging has long been a tactic in the GRP's 'anti-insurgency' campaign that intensified during the former Duterte regime until the current Marcos Jr. regime.

There are also plenty of Red-taggers from the barangay up to the municipal level. Among them are Rico Maca, Indigenous People Mandatory Representative of Surigao del Sur, local government officials, barangay captains and members of barangay councils who blatantly collaborate with the military in suppressing local community leaders and deny the crimes of the AFP in their respective areas of responsibility.

Red-tagging is basically a state policy included in the current regime's National Security Policy (NSP). In this light, the initiatives of progressive lawmakers and activists of asserting their rights against red-tagging is in the right direction. A number of pending petitions for the writ of amparo of victims of red-tagging may likewise benefit from the SC decision on red-tagging. International solidarity and support can help in consolidating this gain against red-tagging. 

Makabayan bloc prepares lawsuits against red taggers

On 9 May, 2024, the Makabayan block in the Philippines' House of Representatives announced that it was ready to prosecute those behind Red-tagging that violated the rights of many leaders and activists in recent years, as reported Ang Bayan on 12, May, 2024. The block acknowledged the Supreme Court decision that declared Red-tagging as a threat to life, liberty and security to the victims. The block deemed Red-tagging victims should be awarded writs of amparo, as was done to former Bayan Muna representative Siegfried Deduro.

The Kabataan Partylist is also prepared to file charges against Red-taggers who target the youth. The systematic and rampant Red-tagging was mostly done in the university and high school forums organized by the military and NTF-Elcac. Kabataan Partylist representative Raoul Manuel recalled the cases of Red-tagged activists subsequently slain by the military, like Chad Booc and Jurain Ngujo.

A health worker and human rights activist, Zara Alvares, who earlier filed a petition for the writ of amparo, was nonetheless murdered. Many were also abducted by the military, including Jhed Tamano, Jonila Castro, Dyan Gumanao, Armand Dayoha, Eco Dangla and Jak Tiong. Activists Bazoo de Jesus and Dexter Capuyan have up to now not been surfaced.

Even development workers and organizations working with government institutions are not spared from first Red-tagging and then harassed by methods including freezing of bank accounts.

In 2021, the military put up Red-tagging posters and organized a fake rally against the Leyte Center for



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Development Inc (LCDe) and its director Jazmin Aguisanda Jerusalem falsely accusing them for financing the armed movement. Jerusalem also repeatedly received death threats by telephone. In May this year, the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) ordered two banks in Leyte to freeze three joint bank accounts administered by the staff of the NGO and two private accounts, that of Jerusalem and her son Carlo. Banks also froze the accounts of at least three commercial establishment who sold relief goods for distribution by the LCDe. The LCDe, a 36-year old Eastern Visayas-based development organization, and director Jerusalem, have won international and national awards for alleviating poverty and responding to the needs of communities hit by natural calamities. It has also been working with various levels of the Local Government Units and national agencies like the Council for People's Development and Governance. The AFP and PNP as the main instruments of state terror have a long habit of Red-tagging but the tactics have progressed from the former Duterte regime to the present Marcos regime. ▲

Workers call for substantial wage increase on May 1

Thousands of workers from major Philippine cities took to the streets on May 1, International Labor Day, to call for substantial wage increases and job security. They denounced Ferdinand Marcos Jr for his hypocritical gestures and failure to respond to workers' grievances. In Metro Manila, 10,000 workers under the All Philippine Trade Unions (APTU) marched from España to Mendiola Bridge in Manila. The APTU consists of the Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (BMP), Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU), Nagkaisa! Labor Coalition, Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), and other workers' groups. Farmers, professionals, youth and other democratic sectors participated in the march.

After the Mendiola rally, the KMU and the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan marched to the US Embassy to condemn continuing human rights violations intensified by US military assistance. They condemned Marcos' subservience to the US and called for the abrogation of unequal military treaties.

In Laguna, up to 3,000 workers, youth, church people and others gathered at Calamba Crossing. A program was also held inside the University of the Philippines-Los Banos.

In Cebu City, workers commemorated labor day with a march along Osmeña Boulevard. In Davao City, 400 members of the KMU-Southern Mindanao Region and other patriotic organizations gathered for the May One commemoration. They said the Php428 to Php443 minimum



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wage in the region is grossly deficient to meet a family's basic needs.


In Albay, workers in Legazpi City gathered under the leadership of the May One Committee Bicol. Drivers belonging to the No to Jeepney Phaseout Alliance joined the rally with a caravan from Busay, Daraga.

In Baguio City, members of KMU-Baguio and others gathered at Igorot Park despite the cold and pouring rain. According to the rallyists, the Cordillera worker's Php400 daily wage could not catch up with rising commodity prices.

In Bacolod City, the United Labor Alliance Negros (ULAN) led mass actions for rights and a Php750 national minimum wage. On their way to rally, the delegation from Kabankalan City and South Negros were blocked by police near Lorenzo Zayco District Hospital.

In Cagayan de Oro, police also blocked 70 motorcycle-riding members of the KMU in Barangay Bugo headed for the city center to participate in the rally. According to the police, orders to "monitor" the mass actions of militant workers' organizations across the country came from the national leadership.

Meanwhile, APTU condemned Marcos' arbitrary formation of a committee for coordination and management of resolving labor cases in the country through the Executive Order (EO) 23.

The current minimum wage is grossly insufficient as it is way below even by the poverty threshold set by the reactionary state, according to a study by the Ibon Foundation. 

Balikatan war games met with strong condemnation



image: philippinerevolution.nu

From its start on April 22 and its end on May 10, the Balikatan 39-24 (war exercises) was met with protests and strong condemnation from the people.

In a statement last May 10, the CPP said: "In collusion with the Marcos regime and its armed forces, the US government and military showed utter contempt for Philippine sovereignty and security when it used the country as a launching pad for its inordinate display of firepower to serve its obsession with provoking a war with its imperialist rival China."

On April 22, the start of Balikatan, progressive organizations led by the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN, New Patriotic Alliance) protested before Camp Aguinaldo, headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, to denounce the war games which they said was "shameful proof of the subservient foreign policy of the government of Ferdinand Marcos Jr."

This war exercise is the 39th since it was first launched

in the 1990s and is considered the largest in history with 11,000 American soldiers and 5,000 Filipino troops participating. Military officials representing 14 other foreign countries also reportedly entered the country to participate and observe.

On May 6, fisherfolk and residents of Laoag City greeted the first day of the Balikatan Exercises at the La Paz sand dunes in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte with protests.

Fisherfolk in the coastal areas of Metro La Paz, Metro Gabu and Caawacan in Laoag City complained about the No Sail Zone imposed on their fishing grounds in favor of the live fire exercises. The Fisherfolk association of the village said fishermen would lose their even their meager earnings because of the prohibition for them to fish for five to eight days while the war exercises were going on.

In Melbourne, Australia, last week, members of the Kabataang Makabayan (KM, Patriotic Youth), a member organization of the NDFP, daringly staged a protest by painting the words 'US out of PH' and 'US troops out of PH now' on the wall and glass of the US consulate in the city. KM members wore face coverings to protect their identities while they carried out the protest during the night.

Meanwhile, several international groups have launched the Cancel the RIMPAC 2024 campaign last April 10, to condemn and oppose the scheduled war exercises to be launched by the US in different parts of Asia and the US from June 29 to August 4. 