

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS ESCALATE

FILIPINO PRESIDENT DUTERTE DECLARES WAR ON POPULAR ORGANIZATIONS

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PHOTOS: HANNAH REYES MORALES

On Feb. 23, several Ottawa Filipino Solidarity organizations conducted a spirited demonstration to oppose martial law in Mindanao, the Philippines' southernmost island. Speakers denounced the extra-judicial killings of Lumad (Indigenous) peasants and human rights defenders – and more generally the use of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippines National Police (PNP), paramilitary militias and private armies to militarize the land that corporations just so happen to want.

CANADA'S CALLOUT OF DUTERTE INCOMPLETE
Much was made in November about Prime Minister Justin Trudeau raising the issue of human rights with Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit in Manila. Trudeau questioned Duterte's endorsement of the extra-judicial killing of people involved in the drug trade. Duterte took offence to Western powers publicly criticizing his country when they are not aware of the situation on the ground. What is not well-known, and not mentioned at all in the mainstream Canadian media, is that the President has endorsed attacks by the AFP and PNP on popular organizations and peasant (Lumad) organizations in the country, particularly in Mindanao.

On Nov. 18, Duterte declared organizations such as Karapatan (which means "Rights" in Tagalog), the trade union central KNU (May 1 Movement), and PISTON (the organization of public transit 'jeepney' drivers) to be terrorist organizations. Fronts for the Communist Party and the guerilla New People's Army. Duterte said they are legitimate targets in the counter-insurgency war that has been policy of the last three Filipino presidents. He cancelled peace talks between the Filipino government and the National Democratic Front, a left-wing people's movement with close links to the Communist Party of the Philippines. Duterte has also extended martial law in the city of Marawi – initially declared last May to counter a seizure of the city by ISIS-related insurgents – to all of the island of Mindanao until the end of 2018. His last budget defunded the state-sponsored Philippines Human Rights Commission.

MARTIAL LAW FOR THE GOOD OF CORPORATIONS
What is at stake in Mindanao, the most southern of the 7,000 islands that make up the country, is the expropriation of Lumad lands by mining corporations, and the exploitation of minerals for export on the international market. International mining corporations, like all foreign corporations, had only been allowed to operate in the Philippines as long as they had a Filipino partner who had 50 per cent ownership. But with the passage of the 1995 Mining Act, mining companies could be 100 per cent owned by foreign corporations. The global mining industry thus developed



[Above] Soldiers from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) are seen during an operation ambushing suspected drug lords affiliated with a terrorist group. The soldiers are part of a battalion serving in Mindanao, South of the Philippines.



[Left] Hands of a man are seen tied up after his arrest. The man is part of a group suspected of dealing drugs.

a renewed interest in these remote and isolated barrios on the ancestral lands of the Lumad. Now every corner of the country has been surveyed, and the rights sold off to local and global mining conglomerates. The local people have resisted the arrival of these mining companies and have formed popular organizations to defend their lands. Since Nov. 18 many leaders of Karapatan, a leading human rights organization, and peasant leaders have been killed or arrested on trumped up charges. According to Karapatan, as of December 2017, there are already 126 documented cases of extrajudicial killings in the entire country, at least 930 cases of illegal arrests, 92 victims of torture, 426,590 victims of forcible evacuation, 56,456 victims of threat, harassment and intimidation, and 362,355 residents affected by indiscriminate firing. "Duterte's verbal threats have had chilling implications on the ground," said Karapatan secretary general Cristina Palabay in a statement released Nov. 27. "With a bloodthirsty and trigger-happy military and police to do his bidding, the Duterte regime has, without hesitation, used all ploys within its power to terrorize individuals and entire communities."

PUTTING PRESSURE ON THE DUTERTE REGIME
Representatives of the International Coalition on Human Rights in the Philippines (ICHRP) – Canada

met on Dec. 12 with officials from the Philippines Embassy, NDP MP Cheryl Hardcastle and officials from Global Affairs Canada. They informed these officials of the escalation in human rights violations in the Philippines. The delegation pressed the Canadian government to take immediate actions to demand the halt to this escalation. Those actions included having the Canadian Ambassador meet with the Filipino organizations under attack. The delegation also called on the Canadian government to immediately suspend all funding to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippines National Police (PNP), and to end all programs of cooperation with the AFP and the PNP through Global Affairs Canada, the Department of Defence, the RCMP and other agencies in Canada. Francisco Fernandez, Deputy Chief of the Philippines Embassy told the delegation, "You cannot take what Duterte says as government policy. You must only examine what are written government declarations." (Sound familiar?) He said he would forward the list of "alleged" human rights violations mentioned by the delegation to the Minister of Justice and the President's Office for investigation. Cheryl Hardcastle said she would try to get the Philippines on the agenda of the Human Rights Subcommittee of the House of Commons International Affairs Committee. Global Affairs

officials stated that they had briefed the Prime Minister before his trip to Manila and will continue to monitor the situation. On Feb. 7, 35 Canadian civil organizations, including unions (such as Unifor, United Steelworkers and the Canadian Union of Public Employees), as well as church organizations (such as Kairos, Development and Peace, and the Beaconsfield Initiative), joined Filipino solidarity organizations in expressing their concerns to the Canadian government about the proposed sale of 16 Bell helicopters made in December 2017 to the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The letter cited a statement made by Philippine Major-General Restituto Padilla that the helicopters would be used for military internal security operations. The Canadian government thought they would only be used for search and rescue efforts. Upon notification of General Padilla's statement, International Trade Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne ordered a review of the sale. President Duterte's response was to cancel the purchase of the helicopters, ordering the AFP to find other suppliers. ICHRP-Canada continues to build awareness of the escalation of human rights violations in the Philippines and to continue to mobilize pressure on the Canadian government to take effective action.

A SHORT TIMELINE OF ATROCITIES IN MINDANAO

NOVEMBER 25: The extrajudicial killing of a member of Anakpawis party, **Apolonio Maranan**, takes place in Davao City. Maranan was the 54th victim of political killings in the region alone. Meanwhile, the residence of peasant leader **Imelda Gagap** is indiscriminately fired at in the province of Caraga. **Sargie Macallan**, regional coordinator of a peasant organization in Northern Samar, is physically assaulted by the military commanding officer in the town of Opong, Northern Samar.

NOVEMBER 26: The mostly Indigenous residents of **12 communities**, in Surigao del Sur province, Mindanao, are forced to flee by the massive deployment of government troops in their villages. Among the evacuees were **51 teachers from 9 Lumad** alternative schools and their **706 students**.

NOVEMBER 28: An attack by unknown men on Karapatan's human rights fact-finding mission in the Negros Oriental province in the Visayas region kills Karapatan's regional coordinator **Eli-sa Badayos** and a member of a local peasant organization **Elioterio Moises**, critically injuring a third member of the team, youth leader **Car-men Matarlo**. Earlier in the day the mission was refused entry into the region by private goons of the local mayor.

DECEMBER 3: The wave of killings continued in December, claiming the lives of human rights defender **Pastor Lovelino Quiones**, from King's Glory Ministry; then **Victor Danyan**, **Victor Danyan Jr.**, **Artemio Danyan**, **Pato Celardo**, **Samuel Angkoy**, **To Diamante**, **Bobot Lagase** and **Mateng Bantal**, members of Indigenous um'Tboli and Sulangan Manobo tribes; and on the next day **Fr. Marcelito "Tito" Paez**, former parish priest and coordinator of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, Central Luzon.



[Left] Civilians are seen lining up in a military checkpoint in Mindanao, South of the Philippines. Mindanao is currently under martial law.

[Far left] Soldiers are seen inside the ruins of a building in Marawi, Philippines on November 15, 2017. Marawi City is in ruins after a battle between government forces and Islamic State (IS) inspired militants in a battle that lasted for five months, displacing hundreds of thousands of people.

[Left] 'Bobble Head' dolls of President Rodrigo Duterte are seen in the home of a supporter on Tuesday, April 11, 2017 in Metro Manila, Philippines.



DUTERTE'S BLOODY AND MISOGYNISTIC REGIME

WORDS: TIM KITZ

President Duterte previously served as the mayor of Davao City in Mindanao for 22 years. During this time death squads killed 1,400 alleged criminals, drug users, and street children – to Duterte's loud approval. He has bragged about executing criminals himself while mayor, and more recently questioned whether drug users are human. Duterte swept into the president's office in 2016, promising to kill tens of thousands of criminals, issue "1,000 pardons a day" to police and soldiers charged with abuses, and end his six-year term by pardoning himself for mass murder, according to the Australian Broadcasting Company. His profanity-laced speeches have delighted supporters, and he has publically joked about rape on at least three occasions. In one tirade reported by *The Independent* he stated as mayor he "should have been first" in line to rape Jacqueline Hamill, an Australian missionary who was killed during a 1989 hostage crisis in Davao. During the fallout from those comments, Duterte's daughter Sara said she was a rape victim herself, but would still vote for her father. Duterte responded by publically doubting her story, and according to the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* called her a "drama queen." Sara is the mayor of Davao. Duterte has also wolf-whistled a female reporter who asked him a question, and routinely belittles female political opponents with comments about their gender and sexual attractiveness. According to the *Philippine Daily Star*,



he called Agnes Callamard, a UN human rights Special Rapporteur, a "bitch" in a twitter-fuelled argument – threatening to slap her if they ever meet. On Feb. 7, in a speech to soldiers, Duterte joked about a "new order," suggesting they tell female rebels "We won't kill you. We will just shoot your vagina." On the economic front, Duterte has launched what he calls an "audacious" plan to catch up with the Philippines "more vibrant neighbours" by 2022, striving to become a high-income economy within a generation. 'DuterteNomics' have loosened restrictions on foreign corporations, invested in large infrastructure projects, and reformed the tax system. TRAIN, or the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion plan, has slashed taxes for businesses, corporations and the rich, while raising them for consumers and small producers. Duterte has supported a peaceful devolution of power to the Muslim Moro people of Mindanao, who have been fighting central government rule since the Spanish and American colonial era. However, when the ISIS-affiliated Maute Group, a splinter group of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, attacked the city of Marawi, Duterte's government responded with martial law and a declaration of "all-out war." After six months of bombing and urban warfare, Duterte declared the city "liberated," but said martial law needed to continue to speed recovery.

Duterte and his National Police Director General Ronald dela Rosa have since called for the "all-out war" to continue against the National People's Army (NPA). The NPA, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, has mounted an insurgency since the 1960s, and participated in intermittent truces and peace talks since the '90s. Earlier, in his first State of the Union address as President, Duterte had declared a unilateral ceasefire with leftist rebels (including the NPA) and initiated another round of peace talks. Yet Duterte's government has refused to release political prisoners and stalled on implementing the two sides' Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER). CASER aimed aims to get at the root causes of armed conflict through measures like land redistribution. After three Filipino Armed Forces soldiers were killed in Bukidnon, Duterte cancelled the ceasefire, called for the arrest of leftist negotiators, and declared NPA and its purely political leftist allies "terrorists." Duterte appears to be taking the same scorched earth approach with leftist and Indigenous groups that he used with the drug trade. Last July Duterte threatened to bomb Lumad schools for operating without government permits and "teaching the children to rebel against government," as quoted in *The Guardian*. Human rights organization Karapatan has since documented the bombings of dozens of communities,

usually with the ostensible goal of flushing out leftist militants. "These recent reports point to a mounting and intensifying systematic campaign to silence individuals and communities critical against the government's anti-people policies," Karapatan Secretary General Cristina Palabay wrote in an official statement. "The Duterte regime, like his predecessors, is making use of a blanket rhetoric to persecute anyone tagged as 'enemies of the State' – in essence, people who have raised legitimate concerns against the government and have provided viable alternatives to the people." Karapatan has also raised the alarm about Duterte's plan to shift the Philippines from a centralized to a federal government system. While this might ease regional and ethnic tension, during the transition Duterte would assume both executive and legislative powers, as well as other dictatorial powers. Resistance against Duterte's regime continues, however. A social media campaign restored the Commission on Human Rights budget, after Duterte slashed it 1,000 Philippine pesos (about \$30 CAN). At recent mass protests in Manila on Valentine's day, Filipino women cut off the poisonous tongues of a Duterte effigy, vowing to "uplift the status of women" in the face of their "macho-fascist" leader. And while the Occupy movement has fizzled out in North America, it is going strong among the urban homeless and rural poor of the Philippines. Various groups continue to disrupt mainstream politics and business-as-usual by collectively seizing public spaces, using them for housing and/or farming. "Duterte has only isolated himself further," concluded Palabay in her statement, "thereby justifying the defiance of the public against his rising dictatorship."

