

Political Killings, Enforced Disappearances, Trade Union Repression in the Philippines

By [Global Research](#)

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INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION

ON SEPTEMBER 21, 2007

AGAINST TRADE UNION AND POLITICAL PERSECUTION AND REPRESSION IN THE PHILIPPINES

(AN APPEAL TO JOIN THE FILIPINO WORKERS AND PEOPLE IN CALLING FOR A STOP TO TRADE UNION REPRESSION, POLITICAL KILLINGS, ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES AND POLITICAL PERSECUTION AND FOR THE REPEAL OF THE HUMAN SECURITY ACT)

On Sept 21, 1972, Martial Law was declared by the Marcos dictatorship to curb the rising tide of people's resistance against political suppression. Thousands of activists were arrested, put in jail and/or killed. The Marcos dictatorship also outlawed all legal progressive organizations and further suppressed the freedom of speech.

Thirty five (35) years after, the very same conditions continue to exist. While Martial Law was "lifted" in 1981, the country is experiencing an undeclared martial law under the US-backed Gloria Macapagal Arroyo regime. Under its war on terror campaign, progressive legal organizations of workers, peasants, women, youth, church, media, parliament and other opposition forces are branded as "communist fronts" and "enemies of the state", which effectively gives license to the military to attack and kill them.

Political Killings, Enforced Disappearances, Trade Union Repression

Under the US-Arroyo regime, political repression turned to worse. Since 2001 up to present, more than 870 political activists were killed, 184 were made to disappear, hundreds arrested and thousands continue to experience grave threats, intimidation, persecution and all kinds of mental and physical harassment.

To wit, Jonas Burgos, an agriculturist-activist who teaches peasants in Central Luzon about organic farming, was abducted on April 28 in broad daylight inside a shopping mall. Witnesses testified that Burgos was forced into a vehicle by six men and a woman. All evidences point to the military's hand in the abduction, such as a military vehicle and a license plate belonging to them. However, the military continue to deny their involvement. Two days ago, it surfaced three alleged "communist-witnesses" claiming Burgos was a member of the New People's Army (armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines) to bolster its accusation that it was his former comrades who seized Burgos as

part of the purge in the communist movement.

In the trade union sector, 77 have been killed and the workers' fundamental right to organize and to collectively bargain is continuously being violated. Among the prominent cases of political killings in the sector were that of Nestle union president Diosdado "Ka Fort" Fortuna, labor leader and teacher Vicky Samonte and Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union president Ric Ramos. Trade unions are considered "factory terrorists" and thus, efforts to organize workers into unions are being nipped in the bud. Workers picketlines are being attacked and military troops are deployed in workers' communities purportedly to maintain "peace and order".

KMU for itself is continuously being vilified and demonized. A black propaganda film against KMU contained in a CD is being distributed by unidentified elements in rally areas, factories and communities. In the film, KMU is claimed to be responsible for the retrenchment of 75,000 workers and closure of more than 400 factories since 1985. KMU is also being linked to the communist movement which makes its leaders and members more vulnerable to attacks such as abductions, harassments and assassinations.

Alarmed by the escalating human rights violations, the Supreme Court organized a National Consultative Summit on Extrajudicial Killings and Enforced Disappearances Searching for Solutions last July 16-17. The landmark Summit ended in a call to the Gloria Arroyo government to order a stop to political killings and for the adoption of new laws that would empower investigators to search state and private premises for victims of forced disappearances.

Yet, much is still to be seen.

Human Security Act

On July 15, 2007, the Arroyo government implemented the Human Security Act (HSA) or the Philippine anti-terrorism law, the country's version of the USA Patriot Act.

The HSA is directly against the principles of democracy, the Philippine Constitution and International Conventions as it virtually erases all provisions on civil liberties, human rights, due process and the judiciary system.

Under the HSA, any organization or individual proscribed to be a "terrorist" can be arrested and jailed for three days without any charges. A person can also be detained beyond three days during "actual or perceived terrorist attacks."

No less than Martin Scheinin, the UN Rapporteur on Human Rights, said "many provisions of the Human Security Act are not in accordance with international human rights standards."

Political repression and the climate of impunity in the country is seen to further intensify with the implementation of HSA.

Already, several leaders and members of progressive local organizations and foreign-based support groups and critics were subjected to interrogation and hold-departure orders as part of a supposed watch list and blacklist order of the Bureau of Immigration and Deportation (BID) or the Department of Justice (DOJ). Those subjected to interrogation were asked to secure clearance from the recently-created Anti-Terrorism Council that includes Justice

Secretary Raul Gonzalez, National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales, Cesar Garcia of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA), and Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr.

Bulk of those included in the watchlist, blacklist, exclusion order, hold order or whatever the BID and DOJ calls it were those who participated in international fact-findings and solidarity missions in the Philippines, signed petition letters to demand an end to extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations, wrote about the government's corrupt practices and lobbied their governments to end support to the Arroyo regime.

On Aug 28, exiled Filipino patriot Prof. Jose Maria Sison was arrested and detained in a Gestapo-like manner in the Hague, Netherlands on the basis of trumped-up charges. Prof. Sison is the Chairperson of the International League of People's Struggles (ILPS). He also serves as a political consultant to the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) in its peace talks with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines. Simultaneous with the arrest of Prof. Sison is the raid and ransack of houses of several Filipino patriots and confiscation of computers, CDs, documents, files and many others. While this may not be directly related to the Human Security Act, this shows how far the Arroyo government can go in violating human rights in the guise of anti-terrorism. The Arroyo government strongly lobbied the European Union to include Prof. Sison on its terrorist list. It also admitted that it has helped put a case against Prof. Sison in the Netherlands.

International Condemnation

Various international organizations, church institutions, trade union bodies, parliamentarians and various sectors all over the world have expressed alarm on the grave human rights violations in the country and have condemned Arroyo's draconian policies.

Results of various international fact-finding and solidarity missions conducted in the country all pointed out that the human rights violations is a result of a state policy and thus the Arroyo government is culpable in these atrocities.

Professor Philip Alston, UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, visited the country in February 2007 and conducted interviews with the military, government officials and victims alike. In his report to the UN Human Rights Council last March 27, Alston reiterated that "based on my fact-finding, there is no reasonable doubt that the military is responsible for a significant number of the killings." He goes further in saying that the military "remains in a state of almost total denial". Indeed, no one so far has been prosecuted, no military or police personnel has been investigated, or brought to trial up to now.

The Permanent Peoples Tribunal (PPT) in its Second Session on the Philippines "has found unequivocal evidences that the militaries have a central role in the greatest majority of the scenarios of human rights violations in the Philippines." It has found that the US-Arroyo regime grossly and systematically violated the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Filipino workers and the Filipino people.

The Amnesty International has released two reports about the on-going situation in the Philippines.

Recently, 49 US Congressmen signed a joint letter to the Arroyo government expressing its

alarm on the human rights violations in the Philippines and the lack of government's response to it.

International Day of Action

In the face of this grave situation, this International Day of Action on Sept. 21, 2007 aims to further amplify the call to the Arroyo government to respect the Filipino workers and people's civil and democratic rights, most especially their fundamental right to life and to live with dignity.

We call on you – our comrades, brothers and sisters, friends, compatriots and advocates – in the trade unions, informal workers organizations, migrant organizations, church organizations, women organizations, support groups and other associations in various sectors to participate in this International Day of Action on Sept 21, 2007.

Concretely, let us jointly call on the US-Arroyo government to stop political killings, enforced disappearances, intimidation and all forms of political persecution. Let us call for the respect of the democratic rights of Prof. Sison and all Filipino patriots abroad. Let us call for the repeal of the Human Security Act.

Suggested actions to take:

- a. Protest actions in front of Philippine Embassies and Consulates in your country
- b. Hold dialogues with the Philippine Ambassador and Consulate in your area and bring the issue of political repression and of the Human Security Act
- c. Send protest letters calling for a stop to extra-judicial killings, enforced disappearances, political persecution and other forms of human rights violations and for the repeal of the Human Security Act. Letters can be addressed to:

H.E. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo

President

Republic of the Philippines

Malacanang Palace

JP Laurel St., San Miguel

Manila, Philippines

Voice: (+632) 564 1451 to 80

Fax: (+632) 742-1641 / 929-3968

Cell#: (+ 63) 919 898 4622 / (+63) 917 839 8462

E-mail: corres@op.gov.ph / opnet@ops.gov.ph

Cc:

Hon. Chairperson Dr. Purificacion Quisumbing

The Commission on Human Rights

SAAC Building, Commonwealth Avenue

U.P. Complex, Diliman, Quezon City

Fax: +632 929-0102, Email: drpvq@chr.gov.ph

Hon. Arturo Brion

Secretary

Department of Labor and Employment

7th Floor, DOLE Building

Muralla Street, Intramuros, Manila, PHILIPPINES

Phone: (632) 527-300 loc. 701-704, 706-707

Fax: (632) 527-2121; (632) 527-2131; (632) 527-5523

Email: osec@dole.gov.ph

Sen. Manny Villar

Senate President

Rm. 602 GSIS Bldg., Financial Center, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City

Trunk Lines: (632) 552-6601 to 80 loc. 6507 – 09 / 6511

Direct Line: (632) 552-6715

Fax No.: (632) 552-6734

Email: mb_villar@yahoo.com

Website: www.mannyvillar.com.ph

Rep. Jose de Venecia Jr.

Speaker of the House

Rm. MB-2, House of Representatives, Quezon City

Phone: 931-5001 local 7446, 9315071 to 9315073

Please cc the KMU of your letters (kmu.intl@gmail.com)

d. Send solidarity messages to KMU at kmu.intl@gmail.com

e. Launch petition-signing or on-line petition campaign calling for a stop to trade union and political repression in the Philippines and for the repeal of the Human Security Act

f. sponsor fora, discussion groups, symposia and other speaking engagements about the political situation in the Philippines

g. Ask your government to withdraw support and stop giving financial aid to the Arroyo government because these aids are being used to attack the Filipino workers and people under the guise of anti-terrorism.

h. other forms of solidarity actions which you may deem necessary

Please confirm to us what actions you plan to take.

Once again, thank you for your support and solidarity to the Filipino workers and people's struggle for the upholding of civil and democratic rights and for national sovereignty.

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