

Towards a “Democratic Dictatorship” in The Philippines?

By [BAYAN](#)

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BAYAN Canada

Press Statement

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ARROGANCE OF POWER: PASSAGE OF HOUSE RESOLUTION 1109

In the dead of the night of June 2, 2009, Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and her cohorts in the House of Representatives rammed through a resolution that could change the country's Constitution and may enable the President, under fire for serious human rights violations and cheating, to stay in power well beyond 2010.

The swift passage of HR 1109 in the House of Representatives only reflects what the majority bloc, whose members belong to Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's party, plans for the upcoming elections in 2010. According to the supporters of the Resolution, the approval of HR 1109 paves the way for Congress to change the Constitution through a Constituent Assembly.

The passage of HR 1109 is but a show of force by the majority in the House of Representatives. The House cannot convene itself as a Constituent Assembly without the Senate's approval of the same resolution. As noted by Fr. Joaquin Bernas, an expert on Constitutional matters, the House of Representatives “cannot exclude the Senate” in voting for such a measure to change the Constitution simply because “Congress is [composed of both] the House and the Senate.”

Indeed, the passage of HR 1109, done in haste and stealth, betrays the arrogance of power on the part of the House of Representatives. Past surveys, including the one recently conducted by IBON Foundation, revealed that the majority of the people did not favour Chacha (or charter change) at this time or before the 2010 elections.

“This is unbelievable. They hurriedly passed the resolution in the dead of the night with the intent to change the Constitution and to ensure that Gloria Macapagal Arroyo can stay in power beyond her second term which is prohibited by the 1987 constitution that came out

precisely to prevent another dictatorship after Marcos's Martial Law," says Diwa Marcelino, Bayan Canada spokesperson for Toronto.

Bayan Canada Secretary-General Joey Calugay adds that the Arroyo regime is becoming more desperate as the elections approach. "As Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Arroyo is well aware that the military and state agents are widely known to have committed numerous crimes against the people; surely she must also know that her family's involvement in one of the worst cases of graft and corruption since the Marcos dictatorship will land her in hot water when she steps down from office. Arroyo will do everything she can to stay in power, including bribing members of Congress to pass HR 1109 and making sure her cronies toe the line," explains Calugay.

"This type of cronyism shows that a Constituent Assembly will not vote in favour of the people's interest when making changes to the Philippine Constitution," he further comments.

Through this Constituent Assembly, the current administration aims to strip the Constitution of its provisions that uphold national sovereignty and protect national patrimony, further laying bare the economy to continued exploitation and plunder by foreign corporate greed, thereby intensifying the present economic crisis. These will set the stage for the unbridled entry of US troops (now numbering some 40,000 US soldiers scattered in 25 provinces since the Visiting Forces Agreement took effect in 1999) into the country and the establishment of permanent US military bases on Philippine soil.

"This is the right time for people to march again in the streets and protest this kind of oppression of the Filipino people by GMA cronies in the House," says Jonathan Canchela, Chairperson of Filipino Migrant Workers' Movement, a member organization of Migrante-Ontario.

"Let the people's voice be heard in the halls of Congress and in the parliament of the streets. We will not tolerate this arrogance of power and the political self-interest of the Arroyo regime."

Bayan Canada calls on all its allied organizations to continue to monitor the developments on charter change and to organize protest actions in the coming days.

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BAYAN Organizing Committee Ontario, Migrante Ontario, Filipino Migrant Worker's Movement (FMWM), Philippine Advocacy Through the Arts and Culture (PATAC), Pilipinong Migrante sa Barrie (PMB), Philippine Migrant Society of Canada – Ottawa (PMSC), Damayan Migrant Education and Resource Centre, Migrante Youth, AWARE, Migrant Family and

Resource Centre

BAYAN Organizing Committee Manitoba, Damayan Manitoba
BAYAN Organizing Committee Alberta

BAYAN Organizing Committee British Columbia, Migrante British Columbia

Supporting organizations:

Centre d'appui aux Philippines – Centre for Philippine Concerns – Montreal (CAP-CPC), Ontario Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines – Ottawa (OCHRP), Philippine Network for Justice and Peace – Toronto (PNJP), Canada-Philippines Solidarity for Human Rights – Vancouver (CPSHR), Victoria Philippine Solidarity Group (VPSG)

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