

Philippines: A Joint Statement on the Reparation for Martial Law Victims from Marcos' Stolen Wealth

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A MEASURE OF JUSTICE: Victims of martial law crimes call for accountability and new directions.

On May 8, 2017, four thousand victims of human rights violations under the Marcos martial law regime received recognition and compensation from the Philippine government. They are the survivors of torture, sexual violence, and imprisonment, and the families of those summarily executed and/or forcibly disappeared. More are to be recognized in the coming months as there are 75,000 claims being processed by the Human Rights Victims' Claims Board (HRVCB).

The Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) and the Nameless Heroes and Martyrs Project group note that the compensation came from the recovered stolen wealth of Marcos, his family and cronies. The amount came from US\$684 million transferred to the Philippines via a ruling of the Swiss Federal Supreme Court on the Marcos deposits in the Credit Suisse Bank. In 1990, the Court ruled the Marcos deposits to be of "criminal origin."

The recovered amount, however, is just a fraction of the total estimate of US\$10 billion that Marcos plundered from the economy. Through the years the late dictator's family, wife Imelda, and children Imee and Ferdinand Jr (BongBong), have been able to delay and block other proceedings to reclaim the stolen billions.

More important than the recognition and compensation is the just demand for the culprits of crimes to be made accountable for their actions, not scot-free and continuing to intervene in political processes to this day.

We wish to stress the issue of economic plunder because it contributed to the suffering of millions of Filipinos. The billions stolen by the Marcoses meant depriving the people of essential education, health, housing and other social services.

The legacy of the Marcos thievery endures to this day. Directly or indirectly, we are still paying for debts accrued in the Marcos years, a large part of which went to projects that lined the pockets of the dictator and cronies. We still bear the scorching marks of Marcos' loot and loans.

The looting, coupled with gross mismanagement, bankrupted the economy, enabling lenders like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to impose neoliberal economic policies that prescribed drastic reductions in public expenditures for social and economic services to ensure that government would be able to service its debts. These austerity measures resulted in lesser accessibility and affordability of essential goods and services, and the export of labor.

We call on the Duterte government and the Filipino people to continue to stand behind and support the martial law victims and strengthen efforts to fully compensate and recognize all human rights victims including victims of Marcos' economic plunder and other socio-economic crimes.

We challenge Congress to craft a law that will usher in a compensatory and restorative justice regime for victims of human rights violations, then and now.

We call on the government to direct the Presidential Commission on Good Government to redouble its efforts to recover all ill-gotten wealth.

The plunder of the martial law period must be overturned. We owe it to ourselves and to future generations. Never again to dictatorship. Never again to economic plunder.

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Freedom from Debt Coalition, Nameless Heroes and Martyrs, Inc

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<http://www.nameless.org.ph/content/joint-statement-reparation-martial-law-victims-marcos-stolen-wealth>

* The Freedom from Debt Coalition is a nationwide multi-sectoral, non-sectarian and pluralist coalition conducting policy advocacy work and campaigns to realize a common framework and agenda for economic development. Launched in March 1988 it currently comprises more than 250 organizations and individual members in the National Capital Region and Luzon, and in seven (7) chapters in Visayas and Mindanao — www.fdc.ph

The Nameless Heroes and Martyrs, Inc is a voluntary organization that aims to honor and build memorials of countless Nameless Heroes and Martyrs who struggled for national freedom, democracy, peace and equality. Its main project is an online gallery of heroes — www.nameless.org.ph