

Philippines: A Declaration of the Mindanao-wide Conference against Martial Law

Reclaim, Defend and Promote Human Rights for All at All Times

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A Declaration of the Mindanao-wide Conference against Martial Law

We, the 103 Bangsamoro, Mindanao Migrants and Indigenous People delegates of the Mindanao Conference Against Martial Law representing 44 organizations coming from different provinces of Mindanao, have gathered together to discuss our situation and come-up with collective actions to address the challenges that we and our communities are currently facing. We are farmers, fisherfolks, urban poor, workers, youth, women, OFW, LGBT, PWD, church, religious and spiritual leaders, elderly, who are human rights defenders, peace builders and humanitarian workers working to contribute in building an inclusive, just and dignified society.

President Rodrigo Duterte's one and a half years in office is characterized with impunity borne out of his "war on illegal drugs and anti-terrorism policy". In fact, such state policy on illegal drugs has left more than 13,000 people dead, including significant number of youth and children, most of whom were coming from the poor and unemployed sectors of the society leaving behind thousands of widows and orphans. This administration has remained consistent in instilling fear, culture of silence and passivity. Human rights defenders are threatened and persecuted - a step paving towards the establishment of an authoritarian regime.

Further, his administration has distorted the very essence and concept of human rights which led to the confusion, division and further exposure of the people to more vulnerabilities and insecurities. This disregard to human rights can be seen in his proposals to lower the maximum age of criminal responsibility from fifteen (15) to nine (9) years old and the re-imposition of death penalty. This is compounded with his sexist and derogatory remarks towards women.

In Mindanao, the failed arrest operation of the leader of Abu Sayyaf and ISIS-inspired Maute group has led to a 5-month war between extremists and the government security sector in Marawi City. This has emanated from the total failure of the military intelligence which paved the way to the declaration of Martial Law in the whole islands of Mindanao.

This encounter displaced more than 500,000 individuals from Marawi City and the neighboring towns, practically turning the Islamic City into a battlefield resulting to the deaths of civilians and fighting parties and destruction of properties. The fighting in Maranao land is an attack to the very core of the Maranao people as they were forcibly uprooted from their homes; their cultural heritage destroyed leaving them not only physically and economically displaced but also emotionally, psychologically, and socio-culturally in deep pain.

The Martial law declaration resulted to incidences of warrantless arrests, torture, illegal searches of the houses of internally displaced persons, and disappearances. Aside from inadequate response of

the government to the needs of the IDPs, the depressing situation of the displaced persons in the evacuation centers and host communities have exposed the women and children to higher risk of gender-based violence such as sexual abuse compounding their multiple burden in addition to their domestic responsibilities.

In other areas in Mindanao, warrantless searches and arrests, planting of evidence, militarization and crackdown on suspected members of the communist rebels in Indigenous Peoples' communities are also taking place aside from singling out of Moros at checkpoints.

His one-sided and oftentimes confusing position on the peace processes has put uncertainty on the hopes and aspirations for peace of the people of Mindanao and the whole country, in general. This uncertainty has fueled more frustrations and desperation from the peace-loving peoples of Mindanao especially that many pinned their hopes on him, being the first Mindanaon president. His militarist approach in solving the problem in Marawi and other places in Mindanao can surely encourage the rise of new groups with more extreme and fundamentalist tendencies that usually recruit child soldiers. This militarist approach extends even on the way he plans and executes the rebuilding and rehabilitation of Marawi. Unless there is genuine and active participation of the peoples especially the affected population in addressing the problems, these problems cannot be meaningfully and sustainably be resolved.

Above all, President Duterte has fallen short to substantially institute reforms that would effectively address poverty and marginalization- situations that beset many parts of the country for decades providing fertile ground for illegal drugs and terrorism to flourish especially in Mindanao. He, instead, sided with the ruling class and oligarchs abandoning his promises to end contractualization, providing free tuition fees, end to extractive and exploitative industries, distributing land to farmers, and returning coco levy funds to the coconut farmers for the development of coconut industry. All these proved his allegiance to neo-liberal economy- a clear betrayal of the peoples who trusted him.

As part of the social movements, we believe that development can be realized without jeopardizing the right of peoples and individuals. Rather, we believe that development must lead to the fulfillment of human rights and realization of the full human potential which is a state obligation.

Given all these issues and challenges, we, human rights defenders, peace builders and humanitarian workers call for:

- Respect and uphold Human Rights at all times;
- Resist and oppose all threats to human rights by strongly and collectively calling for an end to Martial Law and threat of Authoritarianism;
- Justice to the victims of all extra judicial killings, whether in the war against illegal drugs and/or political killings:
- For government to shift from its policy of killing drug addicts, instead, address the root cause of the problem in a more comprehensive approach by looking at the drug trading business, economic deprivation and public health issues among the poor, security of everyone; and safeguard the future of the young generation both addicts and non-addicts by eliminating drug addiction.

We reiterate our call for a peaceful resolution to conflicts. Thus, we add our voice to the support of all peace processes. In all these processes, we demand for the genuine participation of communities and peoples

We express our solidarity with the Maranaw people as they rebuild their lives with dignity. genuine

democratic participation of the Maranaws in the process of rebuilding their torn physical, social, cultural and psychological well being;

As we envision a society that is human rights-centered, democratic, gender sensitive and responsive, sustainable, inclusive and just, empowered & resilient and sustainable communities, and life with dignity, we resolutely commit to reclaim, defend and promote human rights for all at all times. Linked to this is our commitment to defend the environment and all resources vital to the survival and sustenance of human life and of the right to healthy, safe and sustainable ecology. To this end, we strongly encourage and support to strengthen people's-led and centered initiatives as our alternatives to the prevailing dominant neoliberal economic development paradigm.

Signed this 11th day of November 2017 in Cotabato City.

Signatories:

- Alliance of the Tri-People for the Advancement of Human Rights (ALTAHR)
- Alyansa ng Kabataang Mindanao para sa Kapayapaan (AKMK)
- Alyansa nga mga Mamamayan para sa Karapatang Pantao (AMKP)
- ALAMADA OFW Association
- Bukidnon Organic Farmers Association (BOFA)
- Coalition of Lanao Utility Transport for Change (CLUTCH)
- Convergence of NGOs and POs in Zamboanga del Sur for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (CONZARRD)
- Demokratikong Magbubukid ng Pilipinas - Lanao (DKMP - Lanao)
- Electoral Reforms and Development Assistance Center, Inc. (ERDAC)
- Gempa Te Kelindaan Ne Kamal
- Inged Fintailan
- Initiatives and Movement for Gender Liberation Against Discrimination (IMGLAD)
- Kaagapay OFW Resource and Service Center, Inc. (Kaagapay OFW Center)
- Kagkalimwa OFW Federation
- Kahugpungan sa mga Mag-uuma ug Mamumuong Kababayenhan sa Kabanikanhan (KASAMAKA)
- Kahugpungan sa mga Mangingisda sa Kolambugan (KASAMAKO)
- Kahugpungan sa mga Mag-uuma ug Mangingisda sa Zamboanga del Sur (KAMAGMASUR)
- Kilusang Maralita sa Kanayunan (KILOS KA)
- Lambangian People's Organization (LPO)

- Lanao Alliance of Human Rights Advocates, Inc. (LAHRA)
 - Lanao Aquatic and Marine Fisheries Center for Community Development, Inc. (LAFCCOD)
 - Liga ng Makabagong Kabataan (LMK)
 - Lig-ong Hiniusang Kusog sa Kabus (LIHUK)
 - Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement (MPPM)
 - Mindanao Tri-People Women Resource Center, Inc. (MTWRC)
 - Mindanao Tri-People Youth Center, Inc. (MTPYC)
 - Multi-stakeholder's Initiatives for Humanitarian Action against Disasters (MIHANDS)
 - Mindanao Indigenous People Initiative for Research and Assistance Center (MIPIRAC)
 - Nagkahiusang Mangingisda Alang sa Kalambuan sa Sultan Naga Dimaporo (NAMANGKA)
 - Nagkahiusang Mangingisda sa Illana Bay (NAMAIBAY)
 - Nagkahiusang Mag-uumang Organiko (NMAO)
 - Nagkahiusang Organisasyong sa mga Mangingisda sa Tubod ug Baroy (NOMATUB)
 - Pagilidan Farmers and Fisherfolks Organizations for Unity and Development (PFOUD)
 - Poloy-poloy Farmers Association (POFA)
 - Ranaw Disaster Response and Rehabilitation Assistance Center, Inc. (RDRRAC)
 - Ranao Women and Children Resource Center, Inc. (RWCRC)
 - Sumpay Mindanao, Inc. (SMI)
 - Teduray and Lambangian Youth and Students Association (TLYSA)
 - Tri-People Organization Against Disasters Foundation, Inc. (TRIPOD)
 - Tri-people Youth for Change (TRYChange)
 - Timuay Justice and Governance (TJG)
 - Task Force Tigil Mina (TFTM)
 - Umpungan nu mga Babay sa Bagua 2 (UBB2)
 - Ummah Development Foundation, Inc. (UDFI)
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