

EDSA PEOPLE POWER REVOLUTION

# Philippines: Groups demand justice in first People Power commemoration under Marcos

Saturday 25 February 2023, by [SPENCER YU Lance](#) (Date first published: 25 February 2023).

**The groups put the spotlight on continued oppression and economic woes as the nation commemorates its first People Power Revolution anniversary under another Marcos.**

MANILA, Philippines - Various groups vowed to keep the spirit of the people's revolution alive as the Philippines commemorated its first People Power Revolution anniversary under another Ferdinand Marcos.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the son of the deposed dictator, said in a message on the People Power anniversary that he offers a "hand of reconciliation to those with different political persuasions." But groups instead called for justice - putting the spotlight on continued oppression, human rights violations, and the country's economic woes.

"Reconciliation can only happen when there is justice. Without any meaningful recognition of the abuses of past, how can there be genuine reconciliation? It is not a mere difference of opinion that divides us. The fundamental contradiction is between oppressor and oppressed," said Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) secretary general Renato Reyes Jr.

"How can there be reconciliation when there are continuing human rights violations, silencing, and criminalization of dissent, on top of the continuing economic suffering of the people?"

The return of another Marcos to power came after a landslide win by Marcos Jr. in the May 2022 elections, which suffered from extensive disinformation campaigns. Even after becoming the first majority-elected president since the People Power Revolution, groups said that this fact can't paint over old scars.

"More than three decades later, and this very same democracy is under a second Marcos presidency. Fake news, relentless attacks on the press and on history itself abound," Akbayan said on Saturday.

"Deep within our collective psyche, the Filipinos know the truth: No amount of propaganda will erase the fact that the Marcoses amassed billions in ill-gotten wealth. No troll army can silence the stories of the victims forever, and no apologist can keep the truth from finding its day," the statement added.

## 'Golden years?'

In invoking the memory of the People Power Revolution, several groups drew parallels between the ousted Marcos Sr. regime and the current administration.

“In truth, one need not look back to the fraudulent ‘golden years’ under Marcos Sr. – the worst economic crisis is right in our midst under the dictator’s son. In less than a year, Marcos Jr. displayed his government’s inutility in controlling prices, fulfilling promises of alleviating the sufferings of farmers and the poor even when he himself is the agriculture secretary,” said Karapatan, an alliance of human rights organizations and programs.

Under the Marcos Jr. administration, farmers and consumers alike have languished as prices of agricultural products like onions and sugar have soared. The government has also struggled to keep inflation in check, as the inflation rate spiked to a 14-year high. (READ: An onion farmer’s dreams and woes: Laban lang, bangon!)

“Defiant under a Marcos, Jr. regime that was catapulted through historical distortion and disinformation, the Filipino youth and many other sectors march today to uphold historical truth – that rampant human rights violations and extreme poverty urged many sectors to foment a popular uprising in EDSA and other urban centers in the Philippines to oust the dictator Marcos,” said Kej Andres, national spokesperson for the Student Christian Movement of the Philippines.

### **‘Culture of impunity’**

Groups commemorating the revolution also rallied for the freedom of former senator Leila de Lima, who marked her sixth year in detention on Friday, February 24.

“As we honor the legacy of EDSA, we also take this celebration as most appropriate to express solidarity with Senator Leila de Lima, who has spent her sixth year in prison yesterday, February 24,” said labor group coalition Nagkaisa. “We call on this administration to respect the rule of law and to put an end to the culture of impunity that has plagued our country for far too long.”

De Lima has been charged by the administration of then-president Rodrigo Duterte for allegedly running the drug trade in the New Bilibid Prison.

“Gaya po ng mga nakipaglaban noon sa EDSA at ng lahat ng nandito ngayon, itutuloy natin ang laban! Dahil alam po nating hindi mababalewala at hindi masasayang ang lahat ng ito sa muli nating pagtatagumpay para manaig ang tama at makatarungan,” De Lima wrote in a message commemorating the revolution.

(Just like those who fought at EDSA and everyone else here now, we will continue the fight! We know that everything we do will not be fruitless as we come out victorious, and truth and justice prevails.)

“Hangga’t may mga Pilipinong nagmamahal sa Pilipinas, nagmamalasakit sa kapwa Pilipino, mulat sa katotohanan, at tumitindig para sa hustisya, laging mabubuhay ang diwa ng EDSA. Hinding-hindi nila ito mabubura!” the former senator said.

(As long as there are Filipinos who love the Philippines, who care for fellow Filipinos, who see the truth and stand for justice, the spirit of EDSA will always remain alive. They can never erase this!)

### **‘Dared to dream’**

The groups also emphasized the importance of keeping the “people power spirit” alive while guarding against renewed threats of tyranny.

“To truly remember this people power spirit is to keep the aspirations of the Filipino people alive. Thirty-seven years ago today, the people dared to dream and fight for truth, justice, genuine

freedom, and the betterment of their lives. It is important to keep these dreams and the will to fight alive, especially now that the Marcoses are consolidating their power and wealth once more and are quickly unleashing their iron fist against protest and dissent,” Karapatan said.

The People Power Revolution saw Filipinos from across the archipelago coming together on the streets to demand a peaceful end to the rule of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Millions of Filipinos rallied along EDSA, braving threats of military retribution.

Days after Ferdinand Marcos Sr. and his family fled the country, Corazon Aquino was sworn in as president. The widow of slain opposition leader Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino Jr., she had urged Filipinos to rally against the dictatorship, protests that culminated in the peaceful People Power Revolution.

“Today, we remember the heroism of the Filipino people who fought to end the Marcos dictatorship, thus restoring democracy in our country,” the Aquino family said in a statement on Saturday.

“The EDSA People Power Revolution showed the world that it was possible for a courageous and truly unified people to reclaim the freedom that a dictatorship had denied them. We believe that the indomitable spirit exemplified by one Filipino nation 37 years ago remains alive to this very day,” the Aquino family added.

This sentiment was also shared by Angat Buhay, the nongovernmental organization established by former Philippine vice president Leni Robredo.

“Dala ng #AngatBuhay ang pag-asa ng EDSA. Magba-#bayanihan at patuloy tayong tutulong sa ating mga kababayan, ano man ang kulay nila. Kasabay nito ang pag-asang darating ang araw na wala nang Pilipinong maiiwan sa laylayan at sama-sama tayong haharap sa maliwanag na bukas.”

(Angat Buhay shares in the hope of EDSA. We will strive together and help our fellow countrymen, whatever political color they stand by. This comes with the hope that the day will come when no Filipino is left on the margins, and we will all face a brighter future.)

As the country grappled with its painful past and confounding present, labor group Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa (Sentro) called for Filipinos to commemorate the revolution by deploying the power of collective action.

“Today, as we are confronted with multiple crises such as soaring inflation, precarious living and working conditions, as well as the further consolidation of political dynasties among others, remembering the historic days of EDSA 1986 helps sustain the memory of collective action,” Sentro said.

“If there is anything to pick up and carry forward from 1986, it is the fact that the people, if united, can act in ways that can drastically shape, even transform, society. This is a reality that can never be taken from us, regardless of who is in Malacañang or who sits in Congress and government.”

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