

NDF: Sison's arrest may kill hopes for peace talks

Friday 7 September 2007, by [BURGONIO TJ](#), [ESGUERRA Christian V.](#), [MALLARI Delfin, Jr](#) (Date first published: 29 September 2007).

MANILA, Philippines — The communist-led National Democratic Front (NDF) warned on Wednesday the arrest of exiled rebel leader Jose Maria Sison could spell the end of peace talks with the Arroyo administration.

Hand in hand with the warning, the country's communist leadership ordered the guerrilla New People's Army (NPA) to strike more severe blows at government forces.

"All units of the New People's Army are tasked to continue carrying out tactical offensives nationwide in order to intensify the people's war [and bring it] to a new and higher level," the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) said in an email statement.

The reactions followed the arrest Tuesday in the Netherlands of Sison, CPP founder and NDF consultant, on charges of ordering the murder of two former allies in the Philippines.

The CPP and its military wing, the 7,000-strong NPA, have been waging a Maoist rebellion since 1969. The NDF is an umbrella group of various underground organizations.

"The arrest of Professor Sison and the raids conducted (on NDF offices in the Netherlands) are bound to terminate the ongoing peace negotiations between the (NDF) and the Arroyo government," NDF monitoring committee chair Fidel Agcaoili said in the statement.

"The NDFP negotiating panel will await instructions from the leadership of the revolutionary movement in the Philippines on the fate of the peace negotiations," the statement added.

Peace talks were suspended in 2004 after the rebels demanded they be stricken off from the terror lists of the European Union and the United States.

The Netherlands-based International DEFEND Committee gave details of what it said was the "Gestapo-style" arrest of Sison in the Dutch city of Utrecht.

The committee is an international solidarity group composed of Filipinos, Dutch, Belgians and other nationalities campaigning for the removal of Sison, the CPP and the NPA from the terror lists.

Citing information from Sison's wife, Julie, the committee said that "at around 9:30 am, the Dutch police in plainclothes ... broke down the front door" of the Sisons' residence without even bothering to knock, and ransacked the house.

"She (Julie) was reportedly asked to sit in one corner of their house while the police carted away their computers, documents, CDs, and other files. The search lasted until early evening," the committee said.

It claimed the police also tricked Sison in getting him into custody.

It said Sison was arrested when he reported to the Utrecht police after getting an invitation from them supposedly in connection with a new information on a complaint he filed in 2001.

Citing accounts from a lawyer who accompanied Sison to the police station, the committee said Sison was asked to go to a room supposedly to be asked questions.

"After he was alone in the room, he was whisked away, without the knowledge of his lawyer, to the National Penitentiary in Scheveningen in The Hague, where he is now under detention," it said.

It said the raiding team, in some cases, "did not show any search warrant and forced their entry into houses by breaking the doors even if people were inside. In some of the houses that were raided, only minors were present."

Sison's European lawyers are preparing to question Sison's arrest and save him from a long detention for a non-bailable crime.

"The European lawyers have described the incident as a politically biased persecution," Edre Olalia, legal consultant for the NDF joint monitoring committee, said in a press conference.

"Certainly, the European lawyers will question the legality of the arrest," Olalia said.

Sison, 68, is set to appear before a Hague court on Friday. His custody by the police is part of a pre-trial detention that could last from three days to 105 days, according to Olalia.

There's no bail for the charge Sison faces.

"After the 105th day, the judge can still extend the detention, until such time that he deems the investigation is sufficient enough to determine whether he can be detained further on," Olalia said.

Militant labor and overseas Filipino groups joined in condemning the arrest of Sison.

Leaders of the United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL) and HK DEFEND staged a protest action outside the Netherlands Consulate in Central Hong Kong, bearing banners that said "Justice for Joma."

Some wore shirts with Sison's words: "A hero serves the people to his very last breath." With reports from Jerome Aning, Blanche S. Rivera

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