

International Solidarity Mission
In Defense of a People Fighting Repression
Philippines * August 2005

Background

US President George W. Bush's "war on terror" has given free rein to state terrorism in imperialist controlled and influenced countries, making human rights violations viciously rampant. The citizens of Afghanistan and Iraq are the most recent victims of the US war of aggression and have suffered atrocious human rights violations under US repressive policies and measures.

The Philippines has been declared by the US as the second front in its "war on terror". At the same time, in recognition of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's unflinching support to US wars of aggression, she was recently named as head of the anti-terror task force in Asia, and the Philippines was declared as a major "Non-NATO ally".

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo leads a government in crisis. The mandate of her administration is fraught with doubt as the May 2004 elections is tainted with massive fraud and use of government resources for electioneering. The country is in deep economic crisis as she continues to pursue the implementation of globalization's liberalization, deregulation and privatization policies.

Under her government, a culture of open terror pervades as she continues her fascist attacks against the marginalized citizens and legitimate people's organizations under her so-called "strong republic" and local version of US President Bush's war of terror.

Like its predecessors, the Arroyo regime committed human rights violations in its attempts to defeat the CPP-NPA-NDF (Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front) and the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front), as part of its efforts to defend and promote the interests of foreign monopoly capitalists, the comprador bourgeoisie and big landlords, and while trying to suppress the ever growing legal democratic movement and the mounting opposition to Macapagal-Arroyo's rule .

In less than four years, the Arroyo regime has committed 3,560* cases of human rights violations victimizing 198,308* individuals, 18,977* families, 123* communities, and 1,016 households. There are 236 political detainees all over the country as of January 31, 2005. (*as of 5 December 2004)

The November 18, 2004 killing of seven striking workers of Hacienda Luisita (HLI) in Tarlac, Central Luzon, when government soldiers fired at their picketline, signaled a new spate of killings and disappearances which has spread nationwide. Subsequently, Marcelino Beltran, key witness to the HLI massacre was killed on December 8.

In Mindanao, Marrazana Padiwan, 10 years old, and her brother, Almujoyal, 7, witnessed the killing by government troops of their family members in their home in Kapuk Pungol, Sitio Banauice, Maimbong, Sulu last February 1, 2005.

A bloody month of March 2005 is testimony to the terror rampage being perpetrated by the Philippine military and its hired death squads:

- Mar 1 Four members of GABRIELA, a national alliance of women's organizations, were unlawfully arrested and detained in Quezon province.
- Mar 3 Abelardo Ladera, a city councilor and a provincial coordinator of the Bayan Muna Partylist was shot dead. Ladera had been supporting the HLI strikers.

Danny Macapagal, former provincial secretary general of BAYAN (New Patriotic Alliance) was abducted by armed men in Nueva Ecija, Central Luzon. He has not been seen since and has been listed among the disappeared.
- Mar 7 Atty Romeo Capulong, judge *ad litem* and prominent human rights lawyer, escaped an assassination attempt in his hometown in Nueva Ecija, Central Luzon. He likewise supports the HLI strikers.

Mer Dizon, illegally arrested and detained in the Zambales provincial jail.
- Mar 8 Angelina Besunia, a peasant organizer, was arrested in Ozamis City, Western Mindanao and was missing for a week before the military presented her to the media. She is being accused of being a member of the New People's Army.
- Mar 9 Romeo Sanchez, Bayan Muna Partylist Regional Coordinator and former Bayan Regional Secretary General and radio broadcaster in the Ilocos Region, was shot dead in Baguio City, Northern Luzon.
- Mar 10 Ernesto Bang, provincial information officer of the AnakPawis Partylist of workers, peasants and urban poor, was killed in front of his residence in Camarines Sur, Bikol.
- Mar 13 Father William Tadena, Philippine Independent Church priest, was shot dead on his way home from officiating a mass. He was another supporter of the HLI strikers.
- Mar 14 Atty Felidito Dacut, Board member of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, Bayan Muna Partylist Eastern Visayas Regional Coordinator and a human rights lawyer, was killed a few meters from his office in Tacloban City, Leyte.
- Mar 16 Joel Reyes, an organizer of the AnakPawis Partylist and a tricycle driver, was killed in Camarines Norte, Bikol.
- Mar 17 Victor "Ka Ben" Concepcion, Secretary General of AMC, a peasant organization, and municipal coordinator of the AnakPawis Partylist was killed in Angeles City, Central Luzon.
- Mar 22 Atty Charles Juloya, a human rights lawyer and Bayan Muna Partylist vice-mayoralty candidate in Aringay, La Union, Northern Philippines, was shot eight times while on his way to the wake of Romeo Sanchez who was killed on Mar 9. He is now in critical condition.

Rolly Cueva, an organizer of CLAA (Central Luzon Aeta Association) was killed in Zambales, Central Luzon.

No one is spared, whether leaders or volunteers of peasant, agricultural worker, indigenous peoples, women and other people's organizations, lawyers, priests, media people and local government officials. The threat is over the head of all dissenters.

In addition, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is pushing for the passage of an Anti-Terrorism Bill and the implementation of a National Identification System to further curtail civil liberties and tighten its control over the people.

Aside from being inutile in solving the various murders of journalists and broadcasters, Arroyo's government attempts to gag media by a regulation prohibiting, under threat of revocation of license and other sanctions, the interview of "terrorists," whereby the military defines who is a terrorist or not.

A mercy mission has just returned from Sulu, Mindanao to give assistance to the victims of massive displacement of Moro villagers, almost all of them Muslims, due to militarization by government troops and armed confrontation between them and Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) forces after the massacre of a Moro couple.

These characterize the worsening human rights situation in the country. Such is also the face of the "strong republic" and the Philippine version of US President Bush's war of terror.

The frequency and gravity of how these human rights violations were done are unprecedented and it is for this reason that we enjoin peoples' movement activists, civil libertarians, human rights defenders, concerned parliamentarians and everyone working for the defense and promotion of human rights from different parts of the country and the world to look into these human rights violations. You can bear witness to the gravity of the effects of Bush's war of terror in this part of Asia and help stem the tide of the worsening human rights situation in our country through the International Solidarity Mission: *In Defense of a People Fighting Repression* to be held in the Philippines this year.

Concept

An International Solidarity Mission (ISM) will be organized to visit the Philippines in August 2005. The ISM will be divided into five teams, each of which will focus on an area where the grossest HR violations have been perpetrated in the past couple of years: Mindoro Island, Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac, Samar in the Visayas, and Compostela Valley and Sulu in Mindanao.

Each team will present its findings in a media-public forum in the region visited. Then the teams will return to the National Capital Region (NCR) for a Peoples' Tribunal, after which a media briefing will be held. The ISM will end with a march to Mendiola to denounce the US-GMA regime for state terrorism.

Gross HRV cases in other areas in the region may be submitted to the ISM and victims/witnesses made available for interviews so they can also be included in the deliberations of the People's Tribunal.

Objectives

- To bring to the attention of the international community the gravity of the HR violations and extent of state terrorism occurring in the Philippines under the US supported GMA government;
- To muster international pressure on the GMA government to stop violating human rights and peoples' rights with impunity;
- To gather international support to the victims/survivors of state terrorism; and
- To contextualize the worsening HR situation in the Philippines within George Bush's war of terror.

Schedule

Aug 13	Arrival of delegates and National-level Briefing
14	Trip to the Regions/Areas and Regional-level Briefing
15-16	ISM
17	Team report and media statement drafting; submission of draft reports and materials to the Drafting Committee thru the Natl Sec't so the consolidation and drafting of the national report can already be started; team evaluation and solidarity night
18	Press conference in the region and trip to the NCR; drafting of the national report and preparations for the People's Tribunal
19	Peoples' Tribunal; Press Conference or Media Forum; Media Interviews; March to Mendiola; Solidarity Dinner
20	Departure of foreign-based participants; evaluation by the ISM 2005 National Organizing Committee

ISM Convenors

International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS), Philippine Chapter
 Karapatan (Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights)
 PCPR (Promotion of Church People's Response)
 Bayan (New Patriotic Alliance)
 International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL)
 Bayan Muna (BM) PartyList

Details

- 1) Foreign-based participants to be invited

Trade union, peasant/farmer, women, indigenous, fisher, youth and other peoples' movement leaders; civil libertarians, human rights activists; lawyers, jurists, judges, justices and law students; academicians; artists, writers, journalists and broadcasters;

scientists; medical and other professionals; religious leaders; members of Parliament and other national government officials who are known to be critical of anti-people policies in their countries; members and supporters of solidarity organizations; and other human rights defenders.

Since we would like our fact-finding mission to generate pressure, there should be at least 2-3 international or foreign personalities in each team, who wield extraordinary influence in their countries or field of expertise. Certainly, the judgment of these people will lend additional credence to the ISM and influence public opinion in their and other countries. This will help generate public pressure against the GMA regime and call on her to put a stop to the HRVs committed.

The opportunity lent by the presence of the foreign-based participants in the Philippines should be maximized in terms of having them share the situation in their countries and what they or their organizations/movements are doing to change it.

Members of Philippine mass organizations abroad and solidarity groups are enjoined to join the ISM and help attend to the foreign participants from their countries of residence. It is likewise suggested that they hold a forum when they get back to their countries of residence to share and project the results of the ISM.

Participating organizations at the national level will invite their international contacts to participate in the ISM. A list of names, contact addresses as well as email addresses of the international friends will be submitted to the Secretariat so invitations and other ISM materials can be sent them. The organization will sound out their international contacts and inform them in advance re the ISM and the invitation to follow.

2) Local Participants

National mass leaders and allies; Bayan Muna (BM), AnakPawis (AP) and Gabriela Women's Party (GWP) representatives and other legislators; and local government officials. The bigger number will come from regional and provincial mass leaders and allies.

The regional organizations joining the ISM, with assistance from the ISM National Secretariat, will provide the people to take care of such tasks as: documentation, affidavit-making, interviewing, interpreting, team report drafting; prop writing and media liaison; providing security and driving; medical assistance; clerical/logistical support.

3) Methodology

Structured and /or on-site interviews (as much as possible should be put into sworn statements or any form of writing) of:

- Selected illustrative victims of torture, arbitrary detention, forcible evacuation and other HRVs
- Selected material witnesses and families of those summarily executed, missing or disappeared, etc.
- Selected labor, peasant, Moro, women and indigenous leaders in the affected areas
- Selected HR defenders directly involved/knowledgeable in the area
- Cooperative governmental bodies: Commission on Human Rights (CHR), Department of National Defense (DND), Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Philippine National Police (PNP), local government units (LGUs), Senate, House of Representatives, etc.
- Non-governmental bodies: HR and people's organizations, Joint Secretariat of the GRP-NDFP Joint Monitoring Committee

Ocular inspection and visit of selected areas covered by the ISM
Others that the ISM team members will deem necessary

Presentation of ISM Results

Results of the international solidarity mission will be presented to the public in media-public fora in the areas visited.

Then the ISM Teams will consolidate their reports and hold a Peoples' Tribunal in the NCR. The ISM and tribunal conclusions will be presented to the national and international media in a press conference or media forum right after the tribunal. Media interviews of foreign and national/regional personalities will also be arranged.

Press statements will be circulated to the wires, indy media network and various e-groups. Hopefully, there will be feature human interest articles that can be written based on the findings of the ISM.

A final report, in book and VCD form, will be published and distributed to the participating Philippine and foreign organizations, solidarity groups, relevant government agencies, international human rights organizations, embassies, the GRP-NDFP Joint Monitoring Committee, and submitted to the relevant United Nations agencies and special rapporteurs.

Organizational Matters

- 1) There will be 1-2 lead national organizations per ISM team. It will lead and coordinate conduct of the ISM with the other national organizations and the applicable regional and local organizations. The core of each ISM team will be composed of the lead national and regional organizations. Below is the initial list of lead organizations:

Mindoro Team	Karapatan National and its Southern Tagalog Chapter
Hacienda Lusita Team	KMU (May 1 Movement), KMP (Peasant Movement in the Philippines)
Samar Team	Bayan Muna

Compostela Valley Team	PCPR and InPeace
Moro Team	MCPA (Moro-Christian Peoples' Alliance) and InPeace
People's Tribunal & March	Bayan

- 2) A National Organizing Committee (NOC) will be composed of the ISM teams' lead organizations, regional lead organizations and heads of the secretariat and the committees. The NOC will do the general planning, overseeing and coordination of implementation and general evaluation of the ISM. It is the main decision-making body of the ISM. The Philippine Chapter of the International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS) will head the NOC and preside in its meetings.

A Team or Regional Organizing Committee will be formed by the team's core organizations. It may form its own Secretariat and relevant committees.