



Stop the Duterte administration's crackdown on rights defenders and people's organisations!

IBON International Statement

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IBON International joins various organisations in the Philippines and abroad in denouncing the Duterte administration's tagging of Filipino rights advocates and members of people's organisations and civil society as "terrorists".

The Philippines' Department of Justice (DOJ) filed a petition in a Manila court to maliciously classify more than 600 individuals as "terrorists," as part of attempts to tag the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People's Army (NPA) as "terrorist organisations". This came months after the government unilaterally blocked the peace process with the National Democratic Front (NDF).

Among the falsely accused is Beverly Longid, member of the IBON International Board of Trustees, a co-chair of the global platform CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness, and Global Coordinator of the International Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self-Determination and Liberation (IPMSDL). Also included in what a human rights lawyer called a "shotgun witch hunt" are an "odd concoction" of names, ranging from rights defenders, Filipino UN officials and hundreds of aliases.

A staunch advocate of IP rights, Beverly is part of SANDUGO, a Philippine movement of national minorities for self-determination, and is the Coordinator of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Network on Extractive Industries and Energy (AIPNEE). She has participated in sessions of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) and in various UN processes such as the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. Beverly's presence in the IBON International Board is a reminder for our work to hold the right to self-determination in equal regard as all other social, cultural and economic rights.

The accusations against her and other advocates are attempts to discredit their crucial work in the interest of people's rights and genuine development. They are the latest targets in the administration's barrage of attacks against rights defenders, and generally all real and perceived critics of its increasingly iron-fisted rule.

The list justifies suppressing these advocates' and development workers' voices by the government's notorious security apparatus. This includes a police force heavily involved in the deadly "war on drugs," and military and paramilitary forces involved in extrajudicial killings of indigenous peoples' leaders, and even recent cases of torture.ⁱ Both, in a few words, propagate state terror in the country.

The allegations invoke the Philippines' Human Security Act, which international rights organisations and Philippine social movements have deemed dangerous since its passage. Even Harry Roque, now the loyal spokesperson for the administration, warned of its threats in 2007 given the unclear definition of "terrorism".ⁱⁱ

The false "terrorist" list comes at a time of other alarming repercussions for civil and political rights in the country, with Duterte signing a recent law (RA 10973) that gives power to the police chief to summon individuals for testimonies and documents.

The current administration is already notorious in the international community due to its anti-poor "war on drugs." Is the Duterte government terrified that rights defenders would further expose the disregard for the rights of the poor and marginalised in both the cities and the countryside? Is the administration wary that development workers and civil society voices would reveal the rising poverty caused by the state's dogged obedience to the discredited policy track of neoliberalism?

IBON International expresses solidarity with the rights defenders and advocates falsely accused of being "terrorists". We call on the Filipino people and the international community to be ever more watchful of the administration's sleights of hand in crushing people's voices.

We call on our friends and allies to raise their voices against the unfounded and dangerous accusations and the perils of shrinking civil society space in the country.

We strongly demand that the Duterte administration and the DOJ stop this injustice against advocates on pretexts of the problematic Human Security Act. We demand that the government end its current "war on drugs," the killings of farmers and indigenous peoples, and its anti-development economic policy -- all of which devastate the poor and marginalised and are injustices to Filipino peoples' rights.

Activism is not terrorism! Stop the criminalisation of rights defenders! Fight tyranny!

IBON International (www.iboninternational.org) engages in capacity development for people's rights and democracy around the world. It strengthens links between local campaigns and advocacies to international initiatives and brings development issues from the international arena in a way that peoples' organizations and social movements can engage with at country level.

ⁱ IBON International. 2018. *Duterte Killings Continue: State Terror and Human Rights in the Philippines*. <http://www.iboninternational.org/resources/17/12/01/duterte-killings-continue-state-terror-and-human-rights-philippines>

ⁱⁱ JURIST. 2007. "The Philippines Human Security Act violates international law." <http://www.jurist.org/hotline/2007/10/philippines-human-security-act-violates.php>