

Philippines: Duterte threatens activists aiding communities

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The regime of President Rodrigo Duterte is ramping up threats and harassment amid the COVID-19 crisis in the Philippines. Soldiers have arrested protesters for demanding the government do more to help protect communities from the impact of COVID-19.

Left trade union confederation Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (BMP) responded to the arrests, telling Rappler magazine: "Fact is, these households already belonged to the poor and near-poor economic brackets even before the COVID-19 outbreak; the administration of President Duterte should have placed these communities on the top of their priorities and should [have] heavily considered their plight when they decided to implement the ECQ [enhanced community quarantine]," the BMP said.

"To arrest hungry and desperate people is a new low for this administration. Not only did they dilly-dally in addressing the crisis in late February, [but] the government treated the health crisis as a peace and order issue and deployed security forces instead of medical practitioners."

Duterte directly threatened to "shoot dead" left activists on television on April 2, for having "slammed" the government over its response.

"I am addressing the left ... slamming [us] about the distribution," said Duterte. "Remember, you are not the government ... and you cannot be a part of what we are planning to do for the nation."

"Because I will order you detained..."Do not try to test it.

"We are ready for you."I will not hesitate [to order] my soldiers to shoot you. I will not hesitate to order the police to arrest and detain you.

"I will not hesitate."

Activists from the left, including Partido Lakas Ng Masa (PLM) have been delivering direct aid to the poor and vulnerable, including face masks and food.

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P.S.

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