

Philippines: Gabriela Southern Mindanao on Duterte: “We were wrong”

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A Davao-based women’s group that campaigned for Mayor Rodrigo Duterte when he ran for President, helped craft the Women Agenda for his platform of governance and continued to support him as President “despite his expletives, cussing and misogynistic remarks” in the last 19 months is now saying “we were wrong.”

“Despite his expletives, cussing and misogynistic remarks, we supported him, hoping that he, indeed, would bring genuine change for the marginalized communities. WE WERE WRONG,” Gabriela Southern Mindanao Region (SMR) said in a statement reacting to the President’s remarks that soldiers should not kill female members of the New Peoples’ Army (NPA) but shoot their vagina to render them useless.

In its statement titled “No to Sexualization of Women,” Gabriela-SMR wrote “We were wrong” in all caps and in boldface, apparently for emphasis.

The February 13 statement was signed by Gabriela-SMR chair Dr. Jean Lindo, Chair Emeritus Lyda Canson and Secretary-General May Ann Sapar,

Speaking in Cebuano in Malacanang on February 7, Duterte otold an audience of 217 alleged NPA surrenderers flown in from Eastern Mindanao, that soldiers should get even with the NPA and if there are women fighters, “pusila sa bisong” (shoot their vagina).

He said soldiers should be informed of the “order bag-o ni Mayor” (the mayor’s new order), referring to himself, in dealing with female NPA guerrillas: “Di lang daw mo patyon. Pusilon lang mo sa bisong arong —og wa na ma’y bisong, wa na ma’y silbi (You will not be killed. They will shoot your vagina because without that, you are useless).

Violence Against Women

Gabriela-SMR recalled that Duterte the Mayor, signed City Ordinance 5004 and Executive Order No. 24, otherwise known as the Women Development Code of Davao City 21 years ago when he was ending his third term as city mayor. Duterte served four more terms as mayor before he was elected President in 2016.

The statement cited two sections of the Code: Section 1 which defines Violence Against Women (VAW) as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such act, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life;” and Section 2 which enumerates all the acts or phenomena that are included as VAW, including “physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated against women and condoned by the State, wherever it occurs” and “violation of human rights of women in situations of armed-conflict, in particular murder, physical and psychological torture, systematic rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy.”

It also added that the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 is about achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

Gabriela-SMR was a member of Forum of Women For Action With Rody Duterte (ForwaRD) which campaigned for a Duterte Presidency and helped craft his women agenda.

Gabriela-SMR also quoted the President in his second State of the Nation Address (SONA) on July 24, 2017 where he reiterated "my personal and this administration's commitment to fully implement the Magna Carta of Women to the barangay level."

"And yet in his latest call to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Rodrigo Roa Duterte, President of the Philippines and Commander in Chief of the AFP, ordered his troops to shoot the genitals of the female revolutionaries. His sexualization of women in counter-insurgency campaign is not only directed to the female revolutionaries but to all women," Gabriela-SMR said.

It defined "sexualization" in the "context that the President suggested for the NPA amazons to be subject to genital mutilation rather than to killing so that when their genitals are gone they are inutile or of no more use."

The group said the President's statements "reflect a very disturbing deep-seated misogyny and sexism" and "contradict the Women Development Code he signed in 1997."

Outrage and disappointment

"We express our outrage and disappointment over President Duterte's anti-women remarks and his utter disrespect for women. We call on the President not to imitate Ampatuan and his private army when they did genital mutilation aside from killing the women on November 23, 2009," Gabriela-SMR said.

"How much more terrorism do you want women to be subjected to?" the group asked as it called on all women to "make this their call in all their campaigns for equality and against discrimination and gender-related violence."

Gabriela-SMR also said "No" to sexism and misogyny, sexualization of women in counter-insurgency campaign and in all debate arena;" counter-insurgency and urged a return to the peace negotiating table.

In a statement last Sunday, Gabriela Natonal described the President as "macho fascist" and the "epitome of misogyny and fascism terribly rolled into one" for "encouraging violence against women."

Gabriela Rep. Emmi de Jesus said Duterte's statement "openly encourages violence against women, contributes to the impunity on such, and further confirms himself as the most dangerous macho-fascist in the government right now."

The President is "dangerously pushing" the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to "commit more bloody human rights violations and grave abuses of international humanitarian law, and takes state terrorism against women and the people to a whole new level," she added.

Rape jokes

Duterte has been criticized for his sexist remarks and rape jokes, among them on the Australian missionary held hostage and killed in August 1989 who was allegedly raped by the hostage-takers.

"Put ng ina, sayang ito. Ang nagpasok sa isip ko, nirape nila, pinagpilihan nila doon. Nagalit ako kasi nirape, oo isa rin 'yun. Pero napakaganda, dapat ang mayor muna ang mauna. Sayang"
(Son_b_ch, what a pity. What came to my mind was, they raped her, lined up for her. I was angry because she was raped. But she was so beautiful, the mayor should have been first. What a pity), Duterte said in Quezon City on April 12, 2016.

Duterte said he was "not joking" and acknowledged he used "gutter language."

"I am the master of my fate and the captain of my soul. If it brings me down, let it bring me down. If it brings me up to the Presidency, well and good I will serve you but I will not as a matter of honor, apologize," Duterte told reporters outside his residence on April 17, 2016.

Two days later, however, his campaign headquarters released a statement of apology purportedly coming from Duterte. "I apologize to the Filipino people for my recent remarks in a rally. There was no intention of disrespecting our women and those who have been victims of this horrible crime," he said. "Sometimes my mouth can get the better of me."

On May 26 last year, three days after he declared martial law, Duterte got the flak for joking about rape during his visit to soldiers of the 2nd Mechanized Infantry Brigade in Iligan City.

"Huwag kayo mag ala-ala. Sasamahan ko kayo. (Do not worry. I will be with you). If you go down, I go down. But for this martial law and the consequences of martial law and the ramifications of martial law, I and I alone would be responsible. Trabaho lang kayo. Ako nang bahala. Ako na ang magpakulong (para) sa inyo. Pag naka-rape ka ng tatlo, aminin ko na akin 'yun" (Just do your work. I'll take care of you. I will go to prison for you. If you rape three, I will own up the crime), the President said.

Duterte's joke was heavily criticized, especially as it revived bitter memories of a martial law era in the Moro areas where incidents of rape were reported.

The joke and the aerial bombardment of Marawi despite the residents' appeal, prompted Samira Ali Gutoc, a member of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission from Marawi City, to resign.

In July, Duterte joked about raping a Miss Universe. "What I don't like are kids (being raped). You can mess with, maybe a Miss Universe. Maybe I will even congratulate you for having the balls to rape somebody when you know you are going to die."

'Not literally but seriously'

At the Philippines-India Business Forum in India on January 26, Duterte said the ISIS, which has become a problem worldwide has an "ideology that is totally bankrupt, totally empty and the only objectives there are to kill and destroy for nothing, for no reason at all."

"And the come-on is that if you die a martyr, you go to heaven with 42 virgins waiting for you," Duterte said. The crowd laughed. "Well, if I could just make it a come-on also for those who would like to go to my country," Duterte added.

"That was clearly said in jest," Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said two days later in Iloilo. "There's no need to clarify what was really a joke made by the President. If you don't mind."

Responding to a query on the criticisms on the President's "shoot their vagina" remarks, Roque said in a press briefing in Kalinga on Tuesday that after a year and half in office, "dapat kakilala na natin ang Presidente" (we should already know the President).

Roque said he has repeatedly said “do not take the President literally but take him seriously.”

“Ang mensahe po ng Presidente, dahil wala na nga pong pagkakataon na magkaroon ng peace talks dahil puro katrayduran naman ang ipinakita ng CPP-NPA, asahan ninyo na tayo po ay papasok sa digmaang sa NPA at tayo po ay magwawagi. Iyan lang po ang mensahe ng ating Presidente (The message of the President, since there is no more chance for peace talks because the CPP-NPA are traitors, expect that we are at war with the NPA and we will win. That is the message of the President), Roque said.

“Huwag ninyo pong kunin literally iyong kaniyang sinasabi dahil kung ang Presidente po ay labag sa kapakanan ng mga kababaihan ay hindi po niya dapat ipinag-utos iyong pagtigil ng deployment ng ating mga kababayan sa Kuwait dahil ang mga nabibiktima po sa Kuwait karamihan po mga kababaihan natin. Iyong kaniyang order po na itigil na iyan maski tayo mawawalan ng kita, iyan po ay isang paghihiwatig at pruwera na inuuna ng ating Presidente ang interes hindi lang ng mga Filipino kung hindi ng ating mga kababaihan. Hindi dapat binabastos, hindi dapat inaapi, dapat po ginagalang” (Do not take literally what he said because if the President is against the welfare of the women, he would not have ordered the ban on the deployment of our fellow Filipinos in Kuwait because most of the victims in Kuwait are women. His order to ban, even if we lose earnings, that is one proof that the President considers not only the interest of the Filipinos but also our women. They should not be violated, abused, oppressed but respected), Roque added.

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