

# Philippine CPP rebels announce seven-day truce - Peace talks to begin in Norway

Sunday 30 October 2016, by [Press Agencies](#) (Date first published: 20 August 2008).

## **President Rodrigo Duterte frees Communist party's top leaders before talks take place in Norway.**

Philippine communist guerrillas will observe a seven-day truce from Sunday to bolster upcoming peace talks hosted by Norway, the rebels said, urging the Manila government to also order a ceasefire.

The Communist party of the Philippines made the move following president Rodrigo Duterte's decision to free its top leaders on Friday. They are set to fly to Oslo for negotiations aimed at ending one of Asia's longest insurgencies.

"We hope that this ceasefire declaration will be reciprocated by the [government] as a show of all-out determination to move forward with peace negotiations," the party said in a statement.

The talks begin on Monday with both sides expressing optimism for reaching a political settlement after 30 years of failed negotiations.

The government estimates the 47-year-old rebellion has claimed 30,000 lives and impoverished vast swathes of the south-east Asian nation.

Norway has acted as an intermediary in the talks. Duterte's predecessor Benigno Aquino had ended negotiations in 2013 after rejecting the communists' demand that he free all imprisoned guerrillas.

After winning a landslide election victory in May, Duterte declared a unilateral ceasefire last month, but ended it just five days later when a rebel ambush killed a government militia member and wounded four others.

"To further bolster peace negotiations, the [party] and [its armed wing the New People's Army] are also open to discuss the possibility of a longer ceasefire," the rebel statement said.

However, this would only be possible after the government freed "all political prisoners", it said, referring to 550 guerrillas detained by the government.

The rebel army is believed to have fewer than 4,000 gunmen left, down from a peak of 26,000 in the 1980s, when a bloodless "People Power" revolt ended the 20-year dictatorship of the late president Ferdinand Marcos.

But the movement retains support among the poor in rural areas, and its forces regularly kill police or troops while extorting money from local businesses.

Hours after the release of guerrilla chief Benito Tiamzon and his wife in Manila on Friday, police

said they had arrested another senior rebel leader, Amelia Pond, in the central city of Cebu.

Pond is to stand trial for two murders as well as attempted murder, a police statement said.

### **Agence France-Presse**

\* "Philippine communist rebels announce seven-day truce for peace talks". The Guardian. Saturday 20 August 2016 06.02 BST:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/20/philippine-communist-rebels-announce-seven-day-truce-for-peace-talks>

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## **Philippines and communist rebels agree on ceasefire**

**The truce paves the way for resumption of peace talks, which will take place in Norway between August 22 and 27.**

The Philippine government and communist rebels have reached a truce, ahead of the resumption of peace talks in Norway, and just a week after President Rodrigo Duterte abruptly called off a unilateral ceasefire.

The restoration of the government's ceasefire would take effect on Sunday and last "for as long as necessary to bring peace in the land," Jess Dureza, a top government negotiator, said on Saturday.

"The enabling environment brought about by this silencing of the guns will hopefully go a long way in bringing about an expeditious and early resolution to our differences and aspirations that have long divided us as a people," he said.

Duterte first declared a unilateral ceasefire with the communist rebels on July 25 but withdrew it six days later, after the rebels killed a member of a government militia.

Meanwhile, the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, the political arm of the communist rebels New People's Army, declared that their ceasefire would begin on Sunday and last for the duration of the Oslo talks between August 22 and 27.

The communist rebels said the government's reciprocation of their declaration was "a show of all-out determination to move forward with peace negotiations."

Dureza assured the rebels that the Duterte administration was willing to "walk the extra mile for peace."

"Our citizens deserve no less. They wish to live peaceful lives bereft of the costs and tragic consequences of conflict and violence," he said before leaving for Oslo.

On Friday, two senior communist leaders were released on bail so they could travel to Oslo for the talks.

The peace negotiations had been suspended in 2012 after former president Benigno Aquino rejected rebel demands to free political prisoners.

The rebels have been waging an armed rebellion to seize power since 1969 and tens of thousands of people have died in the conflict

The military estimates the current strength of the rebel fighters at about 4,000, significantly down from more than 26,000 at its peak in the late 1980s.

**Source: Agencies**

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<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/philippines-communist-rebels-agree-ceasefire-160820132516863.html>

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