

# Philippines: Call for a National Conference against Dictatorship

Monday 10 July 2017, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 5 July 2017).

**The following call for a National Conference against Dictatorship was issued on July 5 by 14 left and progressive Filipino organisations.**

Since assuming office, President Rodrigo Duterte has failed to fulfil his promise to “provide for those who have little”.

Workers still continue to receive low wages and experience job insecurity because he has failed to fulfil his vow to end contractualisation.

Small farmers and peasants still suffer from landlessness and rural distress because he has refused to carry out land reform and prevent land grabs.

Even middle-class professionals suffer from the high cost of living, inadequate and poor public services and worsening pollution because he has refused to strengthen market regulations and pursue progressive taxation.

Women and the LGBT community, in particular, continue to suffer more as a result of his failure to significantly reduce poverty and improve people’s wellbeing.

Unable or unwilling to carry out the social reforms needed to keep the support of those who placed their hopes in him, Duterte has instead been laying the ground for a more repressive regime — for the restoration of dictatorship in the country.

After burying [former dictator] Ferdinand Marcos’ remains at the national heroes’ cemetery and helping [Ferdinand’s son] Bongbong Marcos in his bid to become vice president, Duterte has now placed all of Mindanao — and threatened to place the entire country — under martial law.

Today, we may now be just one “security crisis” away from outright military rule.

If that happens, ordinary people like us – those who have never fully enjoyed “democracy” despite the end of the Marcos dictatorship – will be the first to suffer. Not only will our already limited freedoms be further restricted, but our ability to defend our rights and to fight for more substantive social transformations will also be further curtailed.

We may find it harder to march on the streets, to carry out strikes — or even just to hold meetings or talk to each other. We may be further vilified as “enemies” of the people. And worse, we might even be arrested, imprisoned, tortured or “disappeared”.

And yet, opposition to dictatorship remains weak. Both of the dominant opposition forces in the country – the liberals and the national democrats – have so far refused or failed to provide the leadership needed to rally our people against the threat of dictatorship.

Faced with the threat of dictatorship and with the inability or refusal of the more powerful opposition forces to lead, we ordinary people — those of us who have suffered from neoliberalism and the elite democracy that paved the way for Duterte — need to come together.

We urgently need to create an open, safe, mutually supportive space to discuss how we can work together to prevent — or if need be, to resist — dictatorship. We need to build the broadest unity against despotism and we need to establish more effective ways of organising ourselves.

This is why we are calling for a National Conference against Dictatorship this July 20-21, at a venue to be announced, to gather all those groups and individuals who oppose both dictatorship and the elite democracy that gave birth to it.

We are committed to helping build a broad but principled united front not only to block authoritarian rule, but also to fight for meaningful social transformation.

We cannot “defend” an inauthentic — and therefore failed — democracy; we need to construct a real democracy on its ruins.

*CONVENORS* as of 5 July 2017:

BlockMarcos

Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (BMP)

DAMPI

Focus on the Global South

KAISA (Nagkakaisang Iskolar para sa Pamantasan at Sambayanan)

Mindanao People’s Peace Movement (MPPM)

PALAG

Partido Lakas ng Masa (PLM)

Samahan ng Progresibong Kabataan (SPARK)

SPEAK

Solidarity of Unions in the Philippines for Empowerment and Reforms (SUPER)

Union of Students for the Advancement of Democracy (USAD)

Young Centrists Union (YCU)

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**P.S.**

\* [https://www.facebook.com/BlockMarcosNow/?hc\\_ref=PAGES\\_TIMELINE](https://www.facebook.com/BlockMarcosNow/?hc_ref=PAGES_TIMELINE)