

Philippines: Stop urban militarization

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March 3, 2007

Partido ng Manggagawa [Labor Party-Philippines]

Militarization of slums is nationwide and must stop

Member of Parliament Rep. Renato Magtubo of the Partido ng Manggagawa today alleged that “The militarization of urban poor communities is happening nationwide and is meant to harass militant party-list groups. We call on the government and the Commission on Elections to demilitarize the communities.”

Partido ng Manggagawa revealed that militarization is also prevalent in Metro Cebu [in Central Philippines]. Military units are roaming around too in Taguig aside from those already reported in depressed areas like Payatas and Commonwealth in Quezon City, Bagong Silang, Camarin and Tala in Caloocan City [all in the capital Metro Manila]. Various militant groups including Partido ng Manggagawa are active in those areas.

“It is one part of the plan to marginalize militant groups in the party-list elections. The killing of worker and peasant leaders and the swamping of the party-list system by fake groups complete the whole design,” demanded Magtubo.

Greg Janginon, chairperson of Partido ng Manggagawa in Metro Cebu, avers that militarization started November of last year as part of the preparations for the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit. However even after the summit, units of the 78 th Infantry Battalion and Task Force Alalay have remained in the village of Tangke and Maghaway of Talisay City [part of Metro Cebu]. In the village of Maghaway, a certain Sgt. Alan Fronda (Philippine Army) heads a team of eight fully-armed men.

“They say they are here because the communities are hotspots. By that they do not mean rivalries of politicians but influence of militants. The military personnel hold meetings with residents and go house-to-house to gather information on leaders and members of Partido ng Manggagawa, Sanlakas and other militant groups. But behind the information gathering is the chilling effect and subtle harassment created by armed men hanging around the communities,” explained Janginon.

Magtubo said that Partido ng Manggagawa members in Taguig [part of Metro Manila] confirmed that military personnel from the Civilian Military Operations unit of the Philippine Army are in the villages of Signal, Hagonoy, and Western, Upper and Lower Bicutan. There are nine men per team in each area. Every 20 days, a new shift of military men arrives to replace the old team. “The soldiers

confirmed they were assigned there since residents have been monitored joining rallies and the areas are known strongholds of Partido ng Manggagawa and the Guardians [a civilian organization associated with rebel soldiers],” asserted Magtubo.

In Metro Cebu, soldiers campaigns for the party-list ANAD [a government supported anti-communist group] and the group facilitates the meetings called up by the military. In the meetings, people are warned against joining and voting for groups like Partido ng Mangggawa, and also told not to participate in rallies.

At the height of the ASEAN summit and the day after a protest fluvial parade, some 100 military men, with reporter Julius Babao of ABS-CBN network, swooped down on the village of Tangke and badgered residents on their participation in the protest. In one instance, the military held a meeting in the Maghaway National High School and lectured the students since many of their parents are members of Sanlakas and Partido ng Manggagawa.

“The information gathering is done in the guise of a census. But after residents argued that is the work of the village officials, the military admitted their true intentions. The people also confronted the military why they roam round in full battle gear. After which they went on patrol in uniforms without long firearms,” averred Janginon.

Starting November of last year, units of the 602nd Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army were based in the villages of Ermita and Kalunasan of Cebu City where chapters of the Partido ng Manggagawa are established. During the summit, it was military personnel which stopped jeeploads of rallyists from leaving the areas. After the ASEAN summit, they were withdrawn. ###

March 4, 2007

Member of Parliament Rep. Renato Magtubo

Partido ng Manggagawa [Labor Party-Philippines]

Military is again in denial, this time of urban militarization

The Armed Force of the Philippines (AFP) is again in denial. They admit to the deployment of soldiers in the urban communities but deny its true intentions. Just like what UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston said then that the military admits to the reality of extra-judicial killings but denies soldiers and generals were involved.

Metro Manila Command chief Maj. Gen. Dolorfino’s declaration that the deployment is a “novel approach” and “being proactive” for “community-based peace and development” is so much doublespeak. Such are functions of the civilian government and at most the police. Armed rebellion and lawless violence are the only reasons for soldiers to be deployed in the depressed areas and none of these are happening.

Actions speak louder than words. The operations of the soldiers on the ground belie the declarations of their generals. The militarization of the urban communities is for the purpose of strategic information gathering and for tactical harassment of activists, all for the objective of marginalizing

militant groups including party-list organizations.

The militarization is happening not just in the three cities of Manila, Quezon and Caloocan but also in areas like Taguig [all in the capital Metro Manila]. It is also in Metro Cebu [in Central Philippines].

We reiterate our call to the government and especially the Commission on Elections—demilitarize the urban communities and stop the harassment of militant party-lists! ###