

Phil. govt urged to tell Burmese junta to back off

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AKBAYAN Chair Emeritus Etta Rosales urged the Philippine government today to officially communicate to the Burmese junta and appeal against the use of force to stop the growing pro-democracy protest in the country. "Before the junta resorts to a violent crackdown, the Philippine government, through the Department of Foreign Affairs, should immediately convey to the Burmese junta our concern over the possibility of violence and further human rights violations in the country," Rosales said.

"They should allow the protests to continue and seriously reflect on the demands of thousands of civilians and monks marching all over the country. The march has been peaceful and we warn the junta against using force to silence renewed demands for democracy in the country," Rosales added.

Meanwhile, deputy minority leader and AKBAYAN Rep. Risa Hontiveros, a member of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus (AIPMC), urged the UN Security Council to pass a resolution on Burma to pave the way for a UN-led intervention in the beleaguered country.

"We cannot trust the junta to exercise restraint forever. The growing protest rallies could lead to violence once the junta begins dispersing the rallies," Rep. Hontiveros said, adding that a repeat of the killing of 3,000 rallyists during the 1988 uprising is not remote.

"We fear that a crackdown would lead to a civil war, which would only worsen the suffering of Burmese civilians. What the Burmese junta should do instead is recognize the failure of its roadmap to democracy and cede political power to civilians," Rosales said.

Rep. Hontiveros also announced that fifteen members of the House of Representatives signed a letter urging the leaders of China, India, and ASEAN countries to pressure the Burmese junta to deliver genuine political and economic reforms.

"More than the West, ASEAN, China and India are in a position to exert diplomatic pressure on the Burmese junta. We call on their leaders to push the junta to stop military hostilities, the release of political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, and the commencement of genuine democratization in the country," Rep. Hontiveros said.

The letter was signed by Representatives Risa Hontiveros, Ronaldo Zamora, Roilo Golez, Salvador Escudero, Ferdinand Marcos Jr., Rufus Rodriguez, Teodulo Coquilla, Mer-len Abigail Binay, Benjamin Asilo, Cinchona Cruz-Gonzales, Satur Ocampo, Liza Maza, Luzviminda Ilagan, Lani Cayetano, Joel Villanueva, and Dan Fernandez.