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Philippines

The Shadow of Martial Law

- News from around the world -

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On February 24, the 20th anniversary of people power and the ouster of the brutal Marcos dictatorship, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo issued the dictatorial Presidential Proclamation 1017, putting the Philippines under a state of national emergency, and General Order No. 5 consigning the whole country once again to the direct rule of a police state.

In the light of preceding events, these dictatorial moves against the people by Arroyo and her generals did not come as a surprise. But it brought back painful memories to make such authoritarian moves just at the time of the commemoration of the EDSA Uprising of 1986 that toppled the savagely DICTATORIAL AND MILITARISTIC regime of Marcos and the triumphant celebration of the masses of people for exercising their democratic rights. This was surely the act of a desperate leader desperately clinging to her claim to the presidency.

[<https://www.npa31.org/IMG/jpg/pe1.jpg>]

Military checkpoint in Manila

Presidential Proclamation 1017 and General Order No. 5 are part of calibrated pre-emptive measures, which really emerged when Arroyo continued to claim to be the legitimate president of the Philippines despite the scandalous electoral fraud she had committed, which was uncovered by the media in recent months. It was a defensive response of Pres. Arroyo, an outrightly repressive attack on the growing sentiments and resistance of the people to the political and economic crises that have affected her government.

While Arroyo's legitimacy and accountability as President have been questioned by a vast number of people in the country, she has fully implemented neo-liberal policies and religiously followed the dictates of US imperialism against the interest of her own people, under the guise of the war against terrorism.

Almost half of the 84 million Filipinos are living below the poverty line, surviving on less than a dollar (US) a day. There has been no sustainable program for employment by the government, which has resulted in massive migration of the workforce. According to migration statistics, more than three thousand workers are leaving the country every day to find work abroad, which means that around 10% of the country's workforce is scattered all over the world, looking for greener pastures. However, the Arroyo government continues to implement the policies of the IMF/WB and WTO to collect more taxes (the recent implementation of the Expanded Value Added Tax or EVAT from 10% to 12%) from its suffering people. Worse, her government has opened up the country's remaining natural resources to be exploited by the multinational corporations, such as the big mining and logging concessionaires who continue to devastate the environment, causing disaster and deadly floods and displacement of the rural population and indigenous people from their main source of living.

The people have continued to resist the neo-liberal policies implemented by the Arroyo government, through open and democratic mobilizations and through armed resistance to achieve revolutionary change in the country.

Indeed, with the intensification of the widespread campaign of the masses of people in the country against Arroyo's electoral fraud and her legitimacy, and the worsening impact of neo-liberal policies on the country's economy, the Arroyo government can only resort to militaristic and dictatorial methods of rule in order to stay in power. Arroyo had to invent her own version of a weapon of mass destruction, in the form of the alliance of the extreme left (the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines) and the right wing apparatus represented by the Reformed Armed Forces of the Philippines or RAM, in order to justify her declaration of national emergency. With this proclamation, Arroyo's plan to arrest political personalities who campaigned against her administration and questioned her legitimacy in power was smoothly carried through. Media censorship and taking direct control over broadcasting are effective means of

blocking news, which may however to another EDSA People's Uprising, as in 1986.

President Arroyo has lifted the state of emergency after a week. But no one should be fooled. The state of emergency was not the beginning of a move to a more authoritarian and repressive form of rule, and its lifting is not the end of the story. There is every reason to believe that repression of political opposition and muzzling of the media will continue.

There is a clear and present danger in the country today and it is the continued stay in power of Mrs. Arroyo. She will shamelessly hang on to power by any and all means. Politically bankrupt as she is, she will continue misusing the resources of the country to protect her position, while remaining a faithful puppet of the US by rigorously implementing the neo-liberal policies of the IMF/WB and the WTO.

- The RWP - Mindanao calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all detained political leaders and demonstrators!

- End the crackdown on all the democratic forces and the censorship of the media!

- Free the peoples of the Philippines from poverty, misery, fear, insecurity and denial of their democratic rights!

- The RWP-Mindanao indefinitely suspends the ongoing peace talks with the Arroyo government until a favourable atmosphere for building peace and development is ensured!

- The RWP - Mindanao calls for all democratic and revolutionary forces to unite and build a people's democratic and sovereign government!