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Philippines

The CPP-NPA-NDF “Hit List” - a preliminary report

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It is essential to understand the real scope of the assassination policy of Left activists pursued, after the 1992 crisis, by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), its military arm, the New People's Army (NPA) and its politico-diplomatic arm, the National Democratic Front (NDF).

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I am presenting here data on people who have been killed since 1992; on people who are presently hunted down, who received death threats or have escaped murder attempts; and on people being accused to be “counter-revolutionaries”, “agents” and “criminals” (such accusations may lead to death sentences if the CPP leadership so decides). A list of organisations threatened is also given at the end.

[https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/lagman_funewral1-2.jpg]

Funeral of Popoy Lagman

These data are far from being complete. This is only a preliminary report. A later version of this CPP-NPA-NDF “hit list” will be prepared when more information will be available to me. To get a full picture is not easy. All the more because, out of fear, relatives of victims may not volunteer information: A peasant family will be at risk if, in a zone where the NPA operates, they denounce a murder.

The global picture

Some figures. This preliminary report presents the case of 27 people killed by the NPA plus 9 who escaped assassination attempts (36 in all). The First Quarter Storm Foundation learnt of some 30 killings in the past four years only (while some of my records are from an earlier period). Obviously, many of the cases recorded by the FQS are not listed here. It confirms that the real figures of victims of the CPP-NPA-NDF assassination policy are well above those I know of.

I also present below a list of 16 other activists who are publicly labelled “counterrevolutionaries” by the CPP. There are of course many more of them, but it shows, together with the corresponding list of organisations threatened, the scope of the CPP-NPA-NDF “revolutionary versus counterrevolutionary” policy.

Even with its limitations, this preliminary report represents a factual answer to many of the arguments of those who chose to cover-up and defend the CPP policy.

1. We are not faced with a very limited number (two or three as often suggested) of so-called “criminal cases”. Cadres and members of mass organisations have been killed and are threatened, as well as members of most political groups from the Left not led by the CPP. This is notably the case for the five major independent Left parties: Akbayan! (Citizen Action Party), the Marxist-Leninist Party of the Philippines (MLPP), the Revolutionary Workers Party-Mindanao (RPM-M) and the Revolutionary Workers Party of the Philippines (RPM-P); the CPP denies having killed in 2001 a leader of the Workers Party of the Philippines (PMP), but today it openly threatens this organisation too.

2. Killings would in no way be justified if the “context” were, as some like to say, a confrontation between “reformists” and “revolutionaries”. But the “context” is in fact totally different. For many years, the organisations targeted by the CPP-NPA-NDF were underground revolutionary parties. The broad left legal party, Akbayan!, began to be very severely attacked only in 2003-2004, and even then those targeted often belonged to a revolutionary tradition.

The CPP-NPA-NDF policy of assassination is turned against the whole independent Left and popular movements, whether reformist or revolutionary. The real “context” which helps us understand the assassinations is the will of the CPP-NPA-NDF to impose its monopoly of power above the people’s movement. The real issue raised is the right of a pluralist progressive and revolutionary Left to exist in the Philippines.

3. The intricacies of the Filipino Left are for sure difficult to understand from abroad. But the question here is not to discuss the merits and demerits of each party (or each individual). One can be very critical of the political line or the political evolution of a given organisation or individual. We are not asked to involve ourselves in the debates over politics, strategy and programme in the Philippines.

If our responsibility is engaged, and if we have to express solidarity, it is because we are faced with an overall policy of threats, death sentences and killings deployed by the CPP-NPA-NDF on a national scale, something that no other group is doing.

4. The CPP-NDF officials adamantly deny that there is an NPA “hit list”. The overall picture shows that such a “list” actually does exist. Individuals and leaders of organisations are listed in the Order of Battle of the NPA as “legitimate” targets.

One concrete example shows the reality of the matter. April 8, 2001, NPA operatives tried to assassinate the RPM-M Front Secretary in Lanao (Mindanao). His wife felt the danger and he escaped (but was killed later). Unfortunately, the Regional Commander of the Revolutionary People’s Army (RPM-M/RPA) happened to visit his comrade precisely at that time. He was immediately killed, while trying to speak to the NPAs (who he knew personally). The NPA operatives did not have to ask for new instructions: he was listed in the Order of Battle, so he could be murdered without further formalities.

Those who are branded “counter-revolutionaries” are, let’s say, part of the CPP “hate list”, not necessarily of the NPA “hit list”. But the difference between the “hate” and the “hit” lists is blurred, because the “hate list” is used as a threat. Charges are the same and one never knows if and when she or he will be transferred by the CPP leadership into the NPA “hit list”. Thus, the Ang Bayan “diagram of counterrevolutionaries” names together activists who are in both: no difference is made.

5. We are confronted with cold-blooded murders, often planned during months. People are killed while trying to speak and reason out with their former comrades. They are shot right in front of their families, including in front of their young children. Their daughter, son-in-law or driver may be gunned down together with them: they are viewed as simple “collateral damages” by the CPP-NPA-NDF. Is it a crime deserving capital punishment for a 19 year-old student to have fallen in love with the wrong daughter? Or to be the daughter of the wrong father?

A whole community can be affected by continuous harassments and threats as is the case in the Bondoc Peninsula (Quezon Province), where peasant leaders have been assassinated both by the landlords’ goons and the NPA. Families had to leave their homes and seek security elsewhere. Nelia Bitong, wife of farmer leader Alberto Bitong, died of heart attack due to successive threats of the NPA to her husband. Children of affected families are suffering from trauma and some were forced to stop schooling in the process (from a report by the Task Force Bondoc Peninsula).

6. As explained in my previous papers, charges against “opponents” are fabricated by the CPP-NDF with often no concern for credibility. It is again the case today, Walden Bello being presented as a “ring-leader”, as a staunch supporter of the WTO and imperialism, as a “highly paid” “special anti-communist agent” of the US and Filipino governments, engaged hand-in-hand with the military in “psy-war operations” and whose ambition is nothing less than the total destruction of the people and revolutionary movement in the Philippines.

Today's charges against Walden Bello are good examples of how the NDF “justice system” operates. Many other activists have been slandered in similar ways by the CPP-NPA-NDF. The day the CPP leadership chooses to do so, political charges become a “criminal” case, which can lead to capital punishment. People condemned have no possibility to defend themselves. There is no independent due process whatsoever. Once sentenced, activists can be summarily killed anytime. Death sentences are politically motivated, even if the charges are on “criminal” grounds.

7. The data provided here show that the CPP-NPA-NDF policy of death threats and assassinations began twelve years ago, and that things are getting worse. It is unacceptable to see how victims are turned into culprits by pro-CPP networks. Threatened activists and relatives of victims are not playing in the hand of imperialism because they defend themselves! It is the CPP-NPA-NDF which is playing in the hand of reaction: Its policy of assassination creates a favourable situation for any kind of provocation from agents of the military and police. It divides and paralyses the popular forces. It discredits the revolutionary project and socialist alternative.

Sources of information

For those who want more data and elements of analysis, I'll refer to the main three papers I have previously written on this matter: “After Kintanar, the killings continue. The post-1992 CPP assassination policy in the Philippines”, 4 July 2003. “The post-1992 Communist Party of the Philippines and its policy of ‘death condemnations’. A response to the July 26, 2003 document of the National Democratic Front (based on CPP-NDF's own statements and documents”, 6 October 2003. “In solidarity with the Filipino progressive and revolutionary movements threatened by the CPP. A new Letter of Concern”, January 18, 2005.

I have used here two main sources of information.

1. The first and most important one are various documents and statements of the CPP-NPA-NDF itself, of its spokespersons (Gregorio “Roger” Rosal...) and leaders as its chair, Jose Maria Sison, or Fidel Agcaoili and Louis Jalandoni.

I shall refer to the “diagram” of “counter-revolutionary groups” prepared by the CPP International Department and published in the February 7, 2004 issue of Ang Bayan. In particular, I shall often note the link between individuals and organisations indicated into this diagram because it brings to light the overall policy of threat of the CPP-NPA-NDF. But I want to stress that such links are not necessarily true: some are in fact fabricated by the CPP. Individuals named are not necessarily members (or not any more members) of the parties they are associated with in Ang Bayan's diagram.

Legal organisations belonging to the “Reaffirm” bloc can be used as “fronts” by the CPP-NPA-NDF to convey threats. This has recently and most notably been the case with Ibon.

Ibon issued on January 18, 2005 a letter signed by Rosario Bella Guzman and circulated by Antonio “Tony” Tujan which contains such threats against Walden Bello and Focus on the one hand, and against Manjette Lopez on the other. To quote it: “For his security, we urge Walden Bello and Focus to desist from being used by the Tabara and Lopez factions”. Ibon tells Walden that there is indeed a security risk for him to pursue his political fight. And Manjette

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Lopez is denounced as a "faction" leader, singled out and associated with Arturo Tabara who has already been assassinated by the NPA (while she does not belong to the same organisation or political current as Tabara). The threat is very grave and it is intolerable to see an organisation like Ibon conveying it.

2. The other Left organisations in the Philippines and progressive individuals who can testify to the reality of the CPP-NPA-NDF policy of threats are my second main source of information.

3. I sometimes used as a complementary source of information articles published in the press. I have NOT used governmental or other similar sources.

I/ PEOPLE KILLED

The following data are presented from the most recent to the oldest ones. Names are not always given for security reasons.

* Arturo Tabara, chairman of the RPM-P/RPA-ABB (named AB "diagram"). Killed September 26, 2004 in Metro-Manila. Stephen Ong, student, 19 years-old boyfriend of Tabara's daughter, was gunned down too.

* Daniel Batoy, senior RPA-ABB Commander, shot in August 22, 2004 in Makato, Aklan. His daughter was also assassinated, together with him.

* Lito Bayudang, local farmer-leader and district officer of Akbayan, killed May 6, 2004 in Nueva Ecija.

* Donie Valencia, 22 years old, unarmed organizer of the MLPP/RHB. Killed in Bataan few days after being abducted June 11, 2003.

* Florente "Boy" Ocmen, section chairperson of Akbayan at the municipal level in Jabonga, Agusan del Norte. Killed May 28, 2003.

* Reymundo "Teteng" Tejeno, peasant leader from Unorka. Killed February 4, 2003 in the Bondoc Peninsula, Quezon Province.

* Romulo "Rolly" Kintanar, former member of the CPP Politburo and head of the NPA. Killed January 23, 2003 in a Quezon City (Manila) restaurant.

* Felimon "Popoy" Lagman (identified in AB "diagram" as PMP-BMP-Sanlakas). Killed in Metro-Manila, February 6, 2001. Some suspect the NPA of this murder but the CPP denies any responsibility.

* RPM-M Party's Front Secretary: he was the one targeted by the NPA, April 8, 2001. He was later killed, May 9, 2001, in an encounter with the Philippine Military because the NPA set him up (contacting the Military and informing them of the RPA unit's position).

* Regional Commander of the Revolutionary People's Army (RPM-M/RPA) killed April 8, 2001 in Lanao (Mindanao). The NPA operatives were targeting the RPM-M Front Secretary who escaped. The NPA instead murdered the Regional Commander who happened to visit his comrade.

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* MLPP members in Central Luzon. MLPP members began to be ambushed in February 2000. In December 2000, this organisation has suffered eleven casualties (four wounded and seven dead). Bartolome Quizon, member of the Executive Committee who had been a leading cadre of the CPP for 30 years, was killed in front of his family on December 2, 2000. At that point in time, the MLPP eventually decided to launch "defensive counter-operations". End of August 2002, a dozen of MLPP members had been killed, about fifteen wounded and some eight NPAs were probably also killed during the 2002 encounters.

* Conrado Balweg, former CPP-NPA in the Cordillera, head of the CPLA. Killed December 31, 1999.

* Eduardo Borromeo, close friend of Leopoldo Mabilangan. Killed in 1997.

* Leopoldo "ka Hector" Mabilangan, former head of the Quezon-based Banahaw Command. Killed April 3, 1994.

II/ PEOPLE HUNTED DOWN

Continuous attempts of assassination on:

Tito dela Cruz, identified as MLPP in AB "diagram".

Ric Reyes, chair of Akbayan (sentenced to death in 1993, named in AB "diagram").

Caridad Pascual, identified as MLPP in AB "diagram".

Ike de los Reyes, identified as RPM-M in AB "diagram" as RPM-M.

Series of attempts of assassination on:

Regional Military Cadre of the Revolutionary People's Army (RPM-M) in the City of Iligan.

Dioscoro Tejeno, peasant leader from the Bondoc Peninsula.

Attempt murder of a Front Cadre of the RPM-M, end of November 2004. He was only wounded.

Alberto Bitong, farmer leader, survived a failed ambush March 29, 2004 in Bondoc Peninsula.

Felizardo Benitez, farmer-leader, escaped with his family an attack in January 2004 in Bondoc Peninsula. His two month-old baby died from exposure to elements in the evacuation. After escaping the NPA, Felizardo Benitez was assassinated by the local landlords March 20, 2004 (two other peasant-leaders belonging to the same movements have been murdered by the landlords and one by the NPA).

Because of the way they have been associated with Arturo Tabara, one can fear for:

Nilo dela Cruz, associated to Tabara and identified as RPM-P in AB "diagram".

Manjette Lopez, associated to Tabara in Ibon's letter, identified as PPD and PMP-merger in AB “diagram”.

III/ ORGANISATIONS AND PEOPLE THREATENED

Persons who have been labelled “counter-revolutionaries”, “agents” or “criminals”, which is to be considered a credible threat in the framework of the CPP overall policy. There are many others threatened without being mentioned in the CPP publications or statements, or who are mentioned only in regional and local publications I had no access to.

Names are given here by alphabetic order. Full names of organisations are given below those of individuals.

A. INDIVIDUALS

The CPP leadership began to denounce as “criminals” and “counter-revolutionaries” many of former members of its party after the 1992 crisis. In 1993, a first set of death sentences were publicly announced. The leaders of all the main oppositions were then condemned: Ricardo Reyes (today hunted down), Romulo Kintanar (killed in 2003) and Benjie de Vera from Mindanao; Arturo Tabara (killed in 2003) from the Visayas; Popoy Lagman (killed in 2001) from Manila-Rizal (the Capital Region). Some others were similarly sentenced, secretly or publicly as Joel Rocamora (then a fellow of the Amsterdam based Transnational Institute).

In addition to those already mentioned, here are some of the persons who have been recently labelled “counterrevolutionaries” by the CPP. Anyone familiar with the Philippines knows that most of them are dedicated activists.

Walden Bello, chair Emeritus of Akbayan! (named both in AB “diagram” and Ibon's letter).

Efren Binalla, farmer-leader, Bondoc Peninsula.

Sixto Carlos, Akbayan's officer.

Argee Esquejo, farmer-leader, Nueva Ecija.

Robert “Bobby” Garcia, who wrote an in depth testimony of the 1980s' paranoid purges in the CPP.

Edwin Igay and Dindo Diaz, unarmed young organizers of the MLPP-RBH in Bataan, were abducted June 11, 2003 and received death threats before being released (Donie Valencia, who was abducted with them, was actually assassinated).

Miel Laurenaria, identified as MLPP/RHB by the CPP.

Sonny Melencio, named in AB “diagram”.

Boy Morales, named in AB “diagram”.

Lidy Nacpil, Jubilee South, named in AB “diagram”.

Nathan Quimpo, Akbayan.

Manuel Quiambao Pena, Akbayan.

Loretta Ann P. “Etta” Rosales, first Akbayan representative in the Congress (named in AB “diagram”).

Joel Rocamora, Transnational Institute, IPD (sentenced to death in 1993).

Gani Serrano, PRRM, named in AB “diagram”.

Ben Sumog-Oy, Akbayan (General Santos City, Mindanao)

B. ORGANISATIONS

Most of the organisations mentioned here are named in the December 7, 2004 Ang Bayan “diagram”. Some do not exist anymore, having merged with others. Focus is named in Ibon's letter and various individual statements.

Akbayan! (Citizen Action Party)

AK: Alab Katipunan

ABB “bloc”: Alex Boncayao Brigade “bloc”

Bisig (component of Akbayan)

BMP: Solidarity of Filipino Workers (trade-union center)

CPLA: Cordillera People's Liberation Army

Empowerment (peasant NGO, Nueva Ecija)

Focus on the Global South

IPD: Institute for Popular Democracy

KMPB: Peasant Movement of the Bondoc Peninsula.

Makamasa: Federation of small farmers (Bondoc Peninsula).

MLPP/RHB: Marxist-Leninist Party of the Philippines/Revolutionary People's Army.

Padayon (component of Akbayan)

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Pandayan (component of Akbayan)

Peace Foundation (Bondoc Peninsula)

PKP: the “old” Communist Party of the Philippines

PopDems: Popular Democrats

PPD: Proletarian Democratic Party (joined PMP-merger)

RGK: Revolutionary Communist Group

PMP: Workers Party of the Philippines (later PMP “merger”).

RPM-M/RPA: Revolutionary Workers Party-Mindanao / Revolutionary People's Army

RPM-P/RPA-ABB: Revolutionary Workers Party of the Philippines / Revolutionary Proletarian Army / Alex Boncayao Brigade

Sanlakas (coalition of mass organizations)

Siglaya

SMB (peasant association, Nueva Ecija)

SocDems

SPP: Socialist Party of Labour (joined PMP-merger)

Task Force Bondoc Peninsula

Unorka