



PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THE 51ST COMMEMORATION OF THE DECLARATION OF MARTIAL LAW IN THE PHILIPPINES

Attempts at erasing more than half a century of transitional justice, fought for with blood and tears by Martial Law activist heroes and their families, are already underway.

Former President Rodrigo Duterte helped pave a seamless road for the Marcos family to fulfill their lifelong mission of distorting history and shrouding the Filipino peoples' memory with doubts in their desire to reinstall their family's influence and clout in Philippine politics and business. Only a little over a year in the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., the horrors of his father's dictatorship marked by human rights violations, abuses, and atrocities have already been botched using subtle but significant load of propaganda and political nudges, ironically being maneuvered using taxpayers' money, creeping its way one institution after another.

The latest of which, through the executive arm that's supposed to safeguard our children and youth from disinformation and manipulative narratives, the Department of Education headed by Vice President Sara Duterte. The memorandum stating that DepEd has changed the curriculum on Marcos Dictatorship for Grade 6 Araling Panlipunan syllabus is a blatant disservice to the agency's mandate as an institution focused on formative learning and development. This act initiated by the Bureau of Curriculum benefits neither the students nor their teachers but the Marcos family and their cronies' interests alone. Yet another dangerous step following precedents allowed by past congresses over several administrations – from the time the Marcos family in exile was granted reprieve to return to the country up to the time of Marcos Sr.'s burial at the Libingan ng mga Bayani. This move from the DepEd is a crucial step guaranteeing the revision of our collective consciousness about Marcos' Dictatorship and erasing its harrowing effects to the Filipino people as a nation.

The trauma this situation brings to those who experienced cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, as if they haven't suffered enough physical and mental torture already, transcends generations and social class.

The clamor for an honest, people-powered government due to decades of impunity, corruption, and mockery of justice, is at an all-time high. Yet, people-powered movements are deliberately being silenced and gagged as reports of red-tagging cases increase, and attacks on press and academic freedom continuously perpetuate a climate of fear and insecurity. The Marcos Dictatorship still casts a long shadow over the country's already dire political and economic situation. It only reinforces NTF-ELCAC's use of red-tagging to attack, harass, and malign human rights defenders, journalists, youth and student leaders, and progressive human rights and development organizations in its weaponization of the Anti-Terror Law.

On the 51st commemoration of this dark time in Philippine history, the light towards true justice for victims and their families fought for by Martial Law heroes themselves is once again being extinguished. Amnesty International Philippines remain steadfast in ensuring that the past is not forgotten by providing safe spaces where activists, human rights defenders, journalists, and ordinary Filipinos seeking answers may carry on with the discourse and learnings on transitional justice, build healing paradigms and take action towards total societal transformation.

Amnesty International continues to call for truth, justice, and reparations to be afforded for all victims of martial law, including continued efforts from the government to go after all those responsible of the atrocities committed during martial law. And bring forth the much needed swift action to end red-tagging, repeal former President Rodrigo Duterte's EO 70 to finally abolish NTF-ELCAC. We call on the government to renew its efforts to pass the Human Rights Defenders Protection Act as a crucial step for the development of a comprehensive policy for the protection of human rights defenders at risk including students and youth leaders.

Never forget! Never again to martial law! #ProtecttheProtest!

Read more: <https://www.amnesty.org.ph/campaigns/protect-the-protest/mlbl/>

