



WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN - PILIPINAS

WOMEN'S GROUPS DECRY VIOLENCE AS WOMEN'S MONTH OPENS

On the second day of women's month, women leaders expressed their opposition to the policies of President Rodrigo Duterte, including Charter Change, which they say aggravate violence against women.

"The killings on account of President Rodrigo Duterte's anti-drug campaign continue and will likely increase if his term is extended when the Charter is changed," stated Jean Enriquez, Executive Director of the Coalition Against Trafficking In Women – Asia Pacific (CATW-AP) and Philippine Coordinator of the World March of Women (WMW). Enriquez expressed the group's vehement opposition to Charter Change or ChaCha as the administration party's proposals reflect the erosion of the Bill of Rights and Social Justice provisions of the 1987 Constitution. "We are currently helping 118 widows, mothers and orphans left defenseless by the government's war on the poor, but they will rise," said Enriquez.

Jelen Paclarin, Executive Director of Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau - WLB, stated that: "the Duterte administration has repeatedly disrespected the 1987 Constitution and Magna Carta of Women with his anti-women remarks which are always passed off as "jokes". These actions only show his deep-seated misogyny that further contributes to the normalization of sexual violence against women and girls. Access to justice has become even more problematic and challenging for women victims of sexual violence especially now that the judicial institutions that are supposed to protect the people and ensure legal remedies for women are also being threatened by this administration. This government has continued to disregard the rule of law and allows blatant discrimination against women without any State sanction."

Paclarin further added that "no one deserves to be violated and discriminated. We deserve no less!"

The statement is then followed by Lisa Garcia, Executive Director of Foundation for Media Alternatives (FMA), "misogyny is also about controlling and punishing women who challenge male dominance. This anti-women culture is very evident in our society wherein women who dare to be vocal are made fun of and insulted by people, and their opinions are disregarded by the President himself as he reduces them to mere body parts. Women are attacked with gender slurs, hateful and vitriolic comments, and even threats of rape as a tactic to intimidate and force them into silence. This culture of misogyny creates a chilling effect on every woman's freedom of expression."

Judy Afan Pasimio, National Coordinator of Lilak (Purple Action for Indigenous Women's Rights), stated that the stature of Senator Leila de Lima as senator did not spare her from the vicious and malicious attacks by the President and his men, and has been imprisoned for standing up for the truth and human rights. "Imagine how vulnerable the indigenous women feel right now as they fight for their lands and their rights?" She added that, "out there in their communities, they face armed groups and big corporations forcing them off their ancestral domains for the minerals and natural resources in there." She lamented that as indigenous women resist, they are branded as "militants or communist-sympathizers – labels which seek to justify harassments, threats and killings of their leaders."



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"With Duterte saying he himself will pick out mining and plantation companies to enter the ancestral domains, this runs parallel to the effort to remove protection of our environment in the Charter Change and we are afraid that violence will intensify among indigenous communities, who continue to resist land-grabbing by corporations, and wholesale theft of their resources," added Pasimio.

According to Nicey Coronacion, Deputy Secretary General of the labor group Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa - Sentro, "for years, workers have been demanding a shift from taxing consumption (a regressive tax system) to one that is based on income (progressive taxation)." She said that "unfortunately, Duterte's TRAIN, as it is currently crafted, is taking the wrong way." Coronacion stated that they welcome the lower tax on personal income but rejects regressive impact of excise taxes.

"The workers' gain in Personal Income Tax (PIT) will be offset in a regressive manner by the imposition of excise taxes on fuel products and the lifting of VAT exemptions in the sale of specific goods and services," said Coronacion.

"Meanwhile, feminization of labor is increasing and women are in the vulnerable situation in the world of work, particularly contractualization," added Judy Ann Chan-Miranda, Secretary General of Partido Manggagawa. "It should be highlighted that since most of them experienced the 5-5-5 scheme or ENDO, most of them are already tax-exempted but will bear the cost of increasing prices of basic goods and services." The labor groups asked, "Is having TRAIN worth it if you are part of the working poor? Even if part of the law is giving subsidies to the poor. Now, we have a more delicate issue: What happens with the poor once the subsidies are stopped 2-3 years from now? And even today, it's not yet implemented."

"So the key issues of the working women and of the working people have not been addressed. Yet, we are having an on-going debate to amend the constitution to give way for a new form of government that does not even guarantee inclusive development. Studies have shown that there is no correlation between a federal form of government and inclusive development," said Coronacion.

To this day, proponents of federalism continue to argue that transitioning to a federal structure guarantees more economic activity. With research done by academics and policy advocates in the Philippines and abroad—and for that matter, even our own in-house researchers in the Labor Education and Research Network (LEARN) and SENTRO—we have found no clear correlation or guarantee whatsoever. The form of government has never guaranteed an automatic shift into equitable economic development. If any, they have only affirmed that government form shifts only normally tend to strengthen already-existing institutional features. "If the nature of Philippine institutions already foster anti-development, are we really planning on strengthening those inequalities at the expense of selling us a promise of change," said the women leaders.

The group invited the public to their action on March 8, International Women's Day, which will begin at 8AM in front of the University of Sto. Tomas in España. They will march to Plaza Miranda and hand flowers to survivors of EJKs, and will hold a program. Their main themes are "Kabuhayan, Katarungan, Kapangyarihan sa Kababaihan," and "Rise, Resist, and Reclaim (our rights, our bodies and territories).">#



WETOO



KAMIRIN