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Pagkakaisa ng Manggagawa sa Timog Katagalugan • Kilusang Mayo Uno
(Solidarity of Workers in Southern Tagalog • May First Movement)

PRESS STATEMENT

18 January 2008

Statement of Support to the Peasant Caravan, 14-22 January **CARP extension and the intensifying oppression of the US-Arroyo regime against the peasants and the toiling masses**

We, the workers under the militant regional labor center Pagkakaisa ng Manggagawa sa Timog Katagalugan-Kilusang Mayo Uno (PAMANTIK-KMU) express our warmest support to the peasants, our comrades-in-arms, who are holding their protest caravan which took off from the different countrysides and regions in the country and will culminate in the gates of Malacañang. The workers chant in unison with the peasants' against the plans of the US-Arroyo regime to extend the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) and enforce other oppressive, anti-peasant and anti-people policies.

With the coming of the New Year, the US-Arroyo regime welcomes the peasants and the Filipino people with intensifying oppression and poverty.

After the two-decade implementation of the empty and anti-peasant Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo seeks to extend and intensify the program beyond 2008. Considered "certified urgent bill", Arroyo wishes to railroad the immediate ratification of CARP extension in the re-opening session of the 14th Congress this January. Arroyo's intention for CARP is attuned to her plans for the "Super Regions".

The peasantry and the people are left with no option but to band their own strength. Together with the workers, the people are launching this first month of the year immediate and massive protest actions to thwart the US-Arroyo regime and all its plans to pin to dire poverty, oppress, harass, and kill the legitimate interests of the people.

20-year CARP implementation, 20-year agony for peasants

Then Philippine President Corazon Aquino, truly obvious to the interests of her landlord class, implemented CARP in 1987 despite massive protests from the peasants. Aside from the first 13 farmers massacred in Mendiola by the US-Aquino regime on January 19, 1987, CARP and the landlords exploited tens of million lives in the countrysides.

In the Southern Tagalog region, CARP characterized the massive land-use conversions. Millions of peasants were tragically displaced as their lands were converted into executive townhouses, subdivisions, golf courses, dams, circumferential roads, international ports, industrial parks, and others.

CARP even expanded land monopoly by landlords and comprador big bourgeoisie. In the latest events, Fil-Estate and Henry Sy are still in control of Hacienda Looc. Peasants in Hacienda Roxas are still harassed and intimidated. More than 13,000 hectares of land were mercilessly taken from peasants in Calatagan, Batangas by the Zobel family, while the Yulo family wrecks havoc anew with 7,100 hectares in Laguna.

Meanwhile, Arroyo declared as Special Tourist Zone the whole town of Nasugbu in Batangas on August 2, 2007. While this declaration opened wide the town for the exploits of foreign investments, it also nullified all legal documents – such as emancipation patents (EP), certificates of land transfer (CLT), and certificates of land ownership award (CLOA) – proving peasant ownership of lands in the said town.

In its 20 years of implementation, not a single moment has CARP served the interests of the peasants and the people.

Intensifying harassment and repression

Not satisfied with the eviction and displacement of peasants, the US-Arroyo regime implemented the Human Security Act on July 2007 and intensified militarization thru Oplan Bantay Laya II (OBL II).

The presence of the revolutionary NPA is used as a statement by the government to conceal the real intentions of military operations conducted in Hacienda Reyes in San Narciso, San Andres, and Buenavista in Quezon province involving 10,000 hectares of peasant land. Moreover, government troops are deployed in the 81,000 hectare Umiray-Nakar stretch to commence the Pacific Coast Project.

OBL II concentrated military operations to the urban areas since last year. After sowing terror and harassment in urban poor communities along the railways in San Pablo City, Laguna, military operations are now taking place in Phase II-Lakeside of Southville Relocation Site in Cabuyao, Laguna to silence the throng of discontent on the government's housing and relocation program.

As of the start of this year, elements of the 202nd Army Infantry Battalion are deployed in industrial centers in Laguna such as in Santa Rosa, Cabuyao, and Calamba. The militarization's main intent is to conduct surveillances, suppress, and harass workers' activities.

Further advance the struggle

The Arroyo administration has long turned its back against the people. Her cliché "ina ng bayan" dictum has turned passé. The people expect not a tiny speck of anxious concern from her while she broadens the expanse of her power and plunder beyond 2010.

This 2008, the US-Arroyo regime welcomes the already worse conditions of the people with continued exploitation thru the passage of unjust laws, military deployments, and more anti-people policies.

We cannot allow to be displaced from the land where our forebears toiled so our generation and the next generations may live with pride. We will not wait for our children to die with open eyes of hunger. We will not allow the rape of our rights and dignity as human beings and as a people. All the more, we cannot allow a regime which does not serve our interests to deceive and exploit us again. Not without a fight.

We are left with no other option but to unite our strength as a people. Let us further consolidate and expand our ranks. Let us struggle against and thwart the US-Arroyo regime.

CARP extension, fake and anti-peasant!
Struggle for genuine land reform!
Thwart Oplan Bantay Laya II and Human Security Act!
No to militarization in the countryside and urban areas!
OUST US-Arroyo regime, NOW!