

## THE QUESTION OF RED-BAITING IN THE PHILIPPINES: MORE THAN OBSTRUCTION OF NGO WORK

Red-baiting in the Philippines is a political strategy of state institutions such as the AFP and the Philippine National Police to accuse, denounce and persecute individuals and NGOs as members of outlawed communist organisations like the NDF-CPP-NPA in order to obstruct their work (Claude 1996: 42). The term 'red-baiting' is historically linked to the McCarthy era in the USA in the 1950s when anticommunist political repression resulted in the identification of supposedly communist adherents by state authorities and their suspension from jobs combined with serious violations of due process if such cases were adjudicated upon (Schrecker 2004: 1043-1045). In a larger context the state deeply entrenches a state of fear in society - be it the fear of communism or of radical Islamist fundamentalism in the "global war on terrorism". This threat to national security or rather to the existence of the state legitimises the confinement of civil liberties and human rights by law. A state of national emergency - regardless whether the threat is real or partly constructed by state discourse - guarantees the further existence of the state. Under the administration of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo the Anti Terrorism Act of 2005 and the Human Security Act of 2007 are legal instruments that were used to "fight legitimate political opposition and dissent" (PhilRights 2006: 28). They violate the freedom of speech and expression (ibid: 29-30; Balderama 2007-2008: 40), the guarantee that protects citizens from unreasonable invasion of their privacy (ibid: 34) and allow indefinite detention beyond three days (ibid: 29; Pereire 2007: 3) among other violations of Philippine constitutional and human rights. From

a formalistic point of view, besides these "legal" measures of the state to control and obstruct the work of committed NGO members, enforced disappearances and extralegal killings are the most forceful and extreme examples of violations of human rights not covered by applicable law, either tolerated by the state or even secretly commissioned by state authorities (Oude Breuil and Rozema 2009: 416).

Due to the AFP's protracted armed struggle against the NPA since the 1970s in the context of national security and the "global war on terrorism" considerations, the general fear of terrorism in the Philippine population legitimises nearly any means of the state to bring an end to this threat. Anyone identified with sympathy for or ties to the NDF-CPP-NPA, irrespective whether they are fabricated or real accusations, will have to fear harsh consequences ranging from surveillance by state authorities to violence administered by non-state actors such as death squads or hired killers (ibid: 407-408). Once socially established as "unwanted [...] human waste" (Douglas 1931: 353 in Oude Breuil and Rozema 2009: 409), anyone in alleged connection with communist organisations will have to anticipate the denial of mercy from the state as well as from the vast majority of society.

A recent example illustrates the question of red-baiting and its consequences for political activists in the Philippines. Melissa Roxas, a political activist, claims that she has been abducted by the AFP, detained on a military base, interrogated, tortured, forced to admit that she was a member of the NPA and ordered to swear allegiance

to the Philippine government (Philippine Daily Inquirer 2011: A5). The Philippine Commission on Human Rights, however, does not find any evidence of her accusation of having been abducted by the AFP, but rather points to the NPA to be the alleged perpetrator of the crime (ibid). Regardless of the actual perpetrator, the example clearly shows which hardships political activists and NGO workers have to endure because of their commitment. Task Force USIG claims in a recent report that since 2001, 123 activists and 39 media practitioners have been killed due to their political commitment (TF USIG 2011: 1). By failing to prevent these crimes connected to red-baiting, the state violates basic civil and political human rights and consequently must be held accountable for its behaviour. ■

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### SOURCES

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1) Armed Forces of the Philippines.

2) National Democratic Front - Communist Party of the Philippines - New People's Army.

3) Republic Act No. 4839.

4) Republic Act No. 9372.