

# Martial law a coup for vested interests

HONG KONG (SE) : In Philippine culture where it is difficult to be totally against a presidential decision, religious leaders and politicians, including the vice president, Leni Robredo, have contented themselves with saying that martial law is okay so long as there are no violations of human rights.

But in his own indirect way, Orlando Cardinal Quevedo has published some guidelines to its morality. He asks questions like, "Were other means... impractical and ineffective? Will the positive effects of martial law outweigh the negative? Will there be a probability of success? Will it increase human rights violations? Will it be abused for evil purposes?"

While the archbishop of Cotabato City has asked the questions, commentators, who are not bound by the same cultural shackles, have already answered his queries, saying no to all, except the last two, as they describe martial law as a recipe for human rights abuse.

However, the bishops had long seen the writing on the wall and at the end of their plenary meeting on January 31 this year warned that the president, Rodrigo Duterte, was spoiling for marital law.

They also noted that he is looking to change the constitutional conditions for martial law so that it can be declared without reference to the congress or be reviewed by the Supreme Court.

At a rally at the Philippine Consulate General to Hong Kong



Filipinos rallied on May 28 at their consulate in Admiralty in protest against the declaration of martial law in Mindanao.

**'Mindanao is a hotbed of unrest, as struggles everywhere are intensifying; from opposition to mining operations to encroachment on Lumad lands...'**

in Admiralty on May 28, Eman Villanueva, from BAYAN Hong Kong an Macau, placed international interests behind the declaration, claiming that the United States of America (US) military is orchestrating hysteria in Mindanao in order to scuttle the peace

talks, which stalled in the Netherlands on May 27, to perpetuate Philippine reliance on the US military.

"Mindanao is a hotbed of unrest, as struggles everywhere are intensifying; from opposition to mining operations to encroachment on Lumad lands; from struggles of farmers and farm workers, to workers' strikes; from the strong presence of the Communist Party, the New People's Army and the National Democratic Front in many areas to the struggles for autonomy," he said.

"Martial law will only be used to quell these struggles for the benefit of foreign corporations and interests of local elite groups," Villanueva added.

"Martial law will not solve the crisis in Marawi and will just compound the problem in Mindanao as civilian rights are made subject to military rule. It also poses a serious threat to ongoing peace negotiations, as all signs indicate that militarists will use any means, including martial law, to intensify attacks against revolutionary groups and progressive organisations," he commented.

Villanueva said that martial law is not the wish of Filipinos in Hong Kong, as their dream is to return home to a stable and peaceful society, where they can earn a decent living. "Martial law only denies us this aspiration," he concluded.

The constitution requires that the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus only apply to persons charged with rebellion or treason, or involved in a foreign invasion of the country.

In also states that any person detained must be judicially charged within three days or allowed to go free, something which Duterte has promised to ignore in this current martial law situation, replicating the Marcos era.

## Forest destroyed after Lopez fired

PUERTO PRINCESA (SE): The sacking of Gina Lopez as the secretary of the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources has reaped immediate results, wrecking the plans of the president, Rodrigo Duterte, for a clean and healthy environment in The Philippines.

Radyo Veritas reported on May 19 that the Iplan Nickel Corporation has now cut down a whole forest of 100-year-old trees in the last ecological frontier of Palawan.

"This is a tragedy, because Palawan is the last frontier, so we hope that our environment will be protected, especially the century-old trees," Bishop Socrates Misona, from Puerto Princesa, was reported as saying.

CBCP News reported that thousands of trees in Brooke's Point town were cut just days after Lopez' appointment was rejected by the Commission on Appointments.

She took to Facebook in exposing what she called the massacre, saying that Iplan Nickel did not have a permit to touch the trees in what is an area protected against clearance.

Over 3,000 hectares of agricultural land and 30,000 people in at least five barangays are affected.

Unlike Duterte's bill on family planning which brought censures for members of the congress who did not vote in favour of it, he has not dared make a move against the powerful mining interests that scotched Lopez' appointment to the environment department.

The provincial government in Puerto Princesa is planning to sue the mining company and demand the cancellation of its environmental plan permit and mineral sharing agreement with the government.