

Int'l tribunal set to hear war crime charges vs. Marcos Jr. and Duterte

A war crimes tribunal presided by an international panel of jurors is set to hear war crime charges vs the US-backed Marcos Jr. and Duterte regimes in Brussels.

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, May 16, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In response to mounting concerns over violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) in the Philippines, an international people's tribunal is set to hear war crime charges against Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and former president Rodrigo Duterte from May 17 to 18 in Brussels, Belgium.



**INTERNATIONAL
PEOPLES TRIBUNAL**

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“We are convening the tribunal because the times call for it. The intensity of the armed conflict in the Philippines, the ruthlessness of atrocities committed by the State, and the severity of the violations of the laws of war have made it imperative to call out and make the perpetrators answerable for the outrages against the people and those who resist oppression and

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exploitation,” explained Edre Olalia, transitional president of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL) which is one of the convenors of the IPT.

“This tribunal will not only provide a deterrent for future abuses, preserve evidence for future legal action, but also present a parallel politico-legal platform as a credible alternative to tedious, protracted, inadequate and status quo-friendly existing legal remedies and judicial arenas that do not bring true justice to the people,” Olalia added.

In addition to investigating Marcos Jr. and Duterte, the IPT will also scrutinize the direct role and supervision of the United States government in supporting

and enabling 'counterinsurgency' operations in the Philippines. Former Filipino congressman Teodoro "Teddy" Casiño reiterates: "Crucial to this inquiry is the examination of the role played by the U.S. government, which has historically directed, designed and supported so-called 'counterinsurgency' operations."

"Through military aid, political backing, and diplomatic relations, successive U.S. administrations, including the current one led by President Biden, have contributed to the perpetuation of violence and impunity in the Philippines," added Casino.

"Because of U.S.-backing, war criminals not just in Israel, but also in the Philippines think they can get away with murder. Marcos Jr. and Duterte have both massacred civilians and recklessly bombed entire communities with impunity in the name of their 'counterinsurgency' operations designed and financed by the U.S. government," said Robert Reid, chairperson of the Friends of the Filipino People in Struggle (FFPS) and co-convenor of the tribunal.

"My abduction by state agents was not an isolated incident but a part of a larger pattern of human rights violations perpetrated by the U.S.-backed Marcos Jr. regime," recalled Jonila Castro, environmental activist who was kidnapped by elements of the Philippine military on September 2, 2023 together with another activist Jhed Tamano. After two weeks in detention, Castro and Tamano were later on presented to the media as 'communist rebels.' However, both activists revealed during the press conference that they were kidnapped, tortured and forced by the military in another case of forced and fake surrenders.

"By brandishing me as a so-called 'terrorist', they effectively robbed me of my freedom and put a target squarely on my back. With their terror-tagging spree, they intend to create a 'chilling effect' where anyone who dares to speak out against injustice risks becoming a target themselves," Castro added.

The tribunal will hear witnesses, examine testimonies, and pore over evidence on the war crimes charges against Marcos Jr., Duterte as well as U.S. President Joe Biden. Presided over by an international panel of jurors and with the assistance of a team of prosecutors, the tribunal will hear cases including extrajudicial and summary killings of civilians and hors de combat, desecration of remains of combatants, massacre of civilians, indiscriminate aerial bombing, and other forms of collective punishment including the forced closure of Lumad schools in Mindanao.

"For years, our schools have been the targets of military operations under the pretext of 'counterinsurgency' efforts. The AFP's (Armed Forces of the Philippines) indiscriminate bombing of our villages has forced entire communities to evacuate, leaving behind the classrooms where our students once learned and thrived," said Rose Hayahay of the Save Our Schools Network and former teacher of Lumad schools closed down by the Duterte regime.

"Let the IPT serve both as a warning and a reminder to Marcos Jr., Duterte and the U.S. that their

atrocities will not be forgotten, nor will they go unpunished," said Ariel "Ayik" Casilao, former parliamentarian who served the Philippine House of Representatives from 2016 to 2019.

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