

## Red-tagging in the Philippines Has Gone to a Terrifyingly Alarming Level

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*Red-tagging in the Philippines is getting to be quite fearfully alarming. The new wave all started some couple of months ago when certain showbiz celebrities were warned by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff himself to refrain from being too critical of the government. Along with this warning was the insinuation that they were in one way or another more or less closely associated with the local communist movement and could even therefore be supportive of the activities and operations of the local communist armed group called the New People's Army (NPA).*

These are all blatant surmises coming from a paranoid government whose massive mismanagement of national affairs is epic due to its unparalleled corruption. People have become extremely dissatisfied and the more courageous ones of the thinking segment have been openly voicing out their legitimate concerns. The government doesn't like it and the simplest tactical alternative at the most immediate time is to hastily accuse them without any solid evidence of being communists: simply put, red-tagging. And red-tagging Philippine version follows a unique equation that goes like this:

"If one is critical of the government, s/he is against the government. If s/he is against the government, s/he must be a communist. If s/he is a communist, s/he must be a supporter of the communist armed rebellion. If s/he is a supporter of the communist armed rebellion, s/he must be a terrorist."

Using "hypothetical syllogism" in formal logic, the shortened equation is:

"If one is critical of the government, s/he must be a terrorist."

At this very point in time, the Philippine government has stepped up the red-tagging operation by arresting protesting activists while staging street demonstrations and rallies. There are also those falsely tagged as "communist-terrorists" and were already arrested. Within a group of trade union organizers, a journalist was arrested during the International Human Rights Day in the Philippines. She is a former student of mine, ROMINA ASTUDILLO.

After a police raid during the wee hours of the morning in her home in Quezon City, she and two of her colleagues are now in the custody of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and have been slapped with trumped-up cases in line with the Philippine government's "Intensified Campaign Against Loose Firearms and Criminal Gangs." No evidence, no nothing. Just out of the blue. And if the court demands the presentation of evidence, it has

been a disgusting practice of both the police and the military to present PLANTED pieces of evidence.

Red-tagging is an old hat. In the US, it was in the '50s when it was viciously implemented through the diabolical initiative of US **Senator Joseph McCarthy** and it was the reason why that period in modern US history became known as the Era of McCarthyism. Unabashed accusations sans evidence were issued here and there and those considered to be the most dangerous among the accused were indiscriminately arrested. It was a time of no-holds-barred desecration of human rights in a nation known to be "the land of the free and the home of the brave."

What is happening now in the Philippines is the same brand of human rights desecration as the government desperately tries to muffle the voices of thinking Filipinos in their fearless initiative to express their most critical views against a government that has not been doing its mandated responsibilities for the interest, benefit and welfare of its constituents, the Filipino people.

The Philippines is now suffering from an excruciating experience as it continues to struggle amidst the economically debilitating scourge of the so-called "Covid-19 pandemic" and the punitive control of a fascist government out to crush with its diabolical power all fearless efforts of its critically thinking people to create a better social, political and economic milieu for a more sustainable future of the next generations.

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