

State of Migrants

Prepared by Migrante International

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FROM THE DUMPSTER TO THE GRAVE (SUMA 2020): Duterte's garbage-like treatment of Filipino migrants and families

Not so long ago, many Filipinos were already surviving on a hand-to-mouth existence. In the last four months however, even the most industrious of our kababayans have been reduced into hapless beggars in the streets as the most corrupt of Duterte's cronies are living their grandest lives in paradise. The Duterte regime's over reliance on its Labour Export Program is finally taking a toll as more than 551,000¹ overseas Filipino workers get displaced by the worst global recession ever to hit the world economy since the Great Depression in the 1930s.

Battered by the world's longest and harshest lockdown², the Philippines' gross domestic product (GDP) likely contracted to a whopping 14.3% in the second quarter according to UK-based Oxford economics.

Exacerbating roots of forced migration and brewing unrest

Presiding over the death of Philippine agriculture through the Rice Liberalization Law and the absence of a national industry that would withstand external economic turmoils, the Duterte regime is finding itself overwhelmingly polarized further from the masses with 14 Million Filipinos unemployed and 6.4 to 7 Million underemployed as of April³. These numbers add up to 20 Million overall. The country's 22% unemployment rate is the highest in many decades. Even before the COVID-19 global crisis, the Philippines has been consistent as having the highest unemployment rate in the entire Southeast Asian region.

At least 5.2 million Filipinos experienced hunger in the last three months and the 20.9% hunger incidence rate is the highest since 2014. The increase in the prices of goods have gone unabated after Duterte signed the TRAIN Law in December 2017. Many Filipino households writhe with bill shock over the cost of electricity, water and other services. Meanwhile, Duterte's economic mismanagement team is pushing for a cut on corporate income tax rates from 30% to 25% in July.

In terms of social services, Duterte's reallocation and realignment of budget through the BAHO Act (Bayanihan Heal As One) brought about the reduction of the education budget by Php 21.9 Billion. Last year, the Duterte regime halved the budget for the health department's

¹ <https://www.dole.gov.ph/news/p2-5b-more-sought-for-ofw-cash-aid/>

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<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/science-and-disease/inside-worlds-longest-strictest-coronavirus-lockdown-philippines/>

³ <https://www.ibon.org/worst-jobs-crisis-in-ph-history/>

Epidemiology and Surveillance Program from P262.9 million in 2019 to only P115.5 million in 2020 while allocation for the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine was slashed by 57%. Before the COVID-19 lockdown, there have been 19 countries⁴ that have standing travel advisories against the Philippines with the reappearance of polio after 19 years, all thanks to a very poor public healthcare system. Healthcare workers in the Philippines are not only being overworked and underpaid but are also being forced to work in overcrowded, underfunded and understaffed hospitals. This is exacerbating brain drain in the Philippines. In a country with a privately-dominated healthcare system, the Duterte regime's much vaunted 'Universal Healthcare Law' which he signed last year is marred by corruption in Philhealth. Moreover, OFWs are strongly against the mandatory Philhealth and premium rate increase.

At about this period last year, President Duterte had no qualms of vetoing even the sanitized version of the anti-endo bill going with the argument that it 'destroys balance.' Hypocritically his minions cited contractualization as one of their reasonings in shutting down ABS-CBN, the Philippine government itself is the chief implementer of contractualization with 600,000 government employees⁵ deprived of secure tenureship and access to benefits.

Out of 195 countries in the world, the Philippines is among the world's top 10 worst countries for workers according to the 2020 global rights index of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). The country's labour force are oppressed through contractualization, regionalization of minimum wage rates and the violent repression of workers through union-busting, red-tagging and murder. NCR's minimum wage rate of Php 537 per day, the highest in the country, is way below the Php 1,400 / day or Php 42,000 / month family living wage revealed by former Socioeconomic Secretary Ernesto Pernia of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA)⁶.

In December 2019, self-rated poverty was already at 54% which translates to 13.1 million families⁷. Expect this number to be even higher now. The Duterte regime is using all manner of tricks to manipulate data and deceive the public just as how PSA pegged the poverty threshold to Php 10,727/month which is akin to the government telling us that any Filipino individual who earns 71 pesos a day is no longer considered poor. We find this ridiculous knowing that 71 pesos a day will never be enough to give a commuting worker a decent meal three times a day. How much more if we add the bills he has to pay plus other basic expenses?

⁴ <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/11/19/19/more-countries-require-ph-travelers-to-get-polio-vaccine-certificate>

⁵ <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1053837/govt-told-to-end-its-own-endo-scheme>

⁶ <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/06/08/1822735/neda-family-5-needs-p42000-month-survive>

⁷ <https://rappler.com/nation/filipino-families-consider-themselves-poor-sws-survey-december-2019>



PHOTO: Injured protester during the violent dispersal of striking NutriAsia workers.

VIP treatment of OFWs?

President Duterte's promise to Filipinos that working abroad will soon become an option is a hoax. The passage in the Lower House of the bill creating an OFW department only means that the government's Labour Export Programme (LEP) is set to last far longer. But the current global crisis has really shown that over-reliance on LEP does not spur tenable development in the Philippines.

Malacañang's so called 'VIP treatment' of OFWs is decoded as 'Very Important Palagatasan' in the manner by which the regime has forcefully extorted OFWs with all sorts of state exactions. The government did not even set a moratorium on monthly collections from OFWs at the height of the COVID-19 crisis. Through the compulsory SSS, OFWs are required to pay for the employer's share as well. Former SSS Chairman Amado Valdez has revealed SSS' intention to divert reserve funds as additional investments in Duterte's Build Build Build projects⁸ where

⁸ https://ppp.gov.ph/in_the_news/sss-investing-in-infra-ppp/

profits go directly to big private contractors while OFWs would have to meet life-threatening accidents or even death before they could even get the additional insurance benefits promised to them by the government agency. The most despised Overseas Employment Certificate (OEC) remains a money-making scheme that is being used by the government to forcibly collect other state exactions.

The Universal Healthcare Law signed by President Duterte himself in February 2019 indicated an annual premium rate increase from the current 3% to 5% in 2025. This year alone, OFWs are expected to pay between Php 10,835 to Php 21,600 which is a one-year worth of Philhealth contribution. On 3 May, about 191 Filipino migrant organizations signed a joint position statement against PhilHealth Circular No. 2020-0014 entitled “Premium Contribution and Collection of Payment of Overseas Filipino Member” which was made public on 22 April. Aside from this, there was an online petition opposing the mandatory Philhealth and premium rate hike which garnered 463,696 signatories. Scrambling to save face after a massive uproar from OFWs, Malacanang suspended the mandatory Philhealth and premium rate hike.



PHOTO: OFWs in Hong Kong protest against the mandatory Philhealth and premium rate hike.

Nevertheless, the Duterte regime is pushing hard once more with its implementation despite enormous opposition from more than 80 Filipino migrant organizations from different leanings during an online consultation hosted by Philhealth on 3 July. Filipino migrants have been arguing that they are already covered by existing health insurance in host countries and Philhealth is not valid in overseas hospitals. The government is unmoved by the objection of OFWs. The Makabayan bloc in Congress has filed House Bill No. 6698 to amend the Universal

Healthcare Law and remove the mandatory Philhealth, the penalty and the premium rate increase imposed on OFWs.

The corruption scandal involving Philhealth officials remains unresolved. The agency lost Php 154 Billion to ghost patients, overpayment and fake deliveries. After Duterte asked all Philhealth board members to resign, Philhealth board member Francisco Duque III is exempted from investigations despite his involvement in the Php 500 Million malversation scandal in 2004. Very recently, COA flagged Philhealth's overpriced IT project worth Php 2.1 Billion⁹. COA auditors found irregularities. The Duterte regime seeks to penalize wretched OFWs if they fail to remit their Philhealth contributions while Philhealth itself reeks of corruption.

Between the period 2019 to 2020, OWWA's cash assets totaled Php 19.5 Billion¹⁰. DFA has Php 1 Billion for its Assistance to Nationals¹¹ and Php 200 Million as a Legal Assistance Fund. To date, 3,782 overseas Filipinos continue to languish in jail since there has been no adequate legal support for migrants facing legal cases abroad. 1000 of these jailed OFWs are in Saudi Arabia where 15 are currently on death row¹². In the case of Mary Jane Veloso, it took 10 years before she was given a chance to finally speak against her traffickers but her deposition is yet to become a reality despite the conviction of Mary Jane's recruiters in January. Duterte is not doing anything for Mary Jane's clemency.

Over 400 OFWs have died in Kuwait¹³ alone in the past three years including Constancia Dayag and Jeanelyn Villavende. Duterte's appointment of Mocha Uson as OWWA Executive director despite her ala rescue mission publicity stunt in Kuwait which endangered OFW lives continues to appall Filipino migrant communities. OFW victims and their families are deprived of welfare justice. During the Taal volcano eruption in January, affected OFW families only received between Php 1,500 and Php 3,000 each from OWWA's Calamity Assistance Fund even for those OFWs who have been OWWA contributors for more than 20 years.

We have seen how the government has handled the case of Mary Jean Alberto where it took 11 days before the Philippine embassy provided a lawyer to process the death certificate and reclaim her belongings. By then, the employer's house had been cleared of possible pieces of evidence.

In the US, 70 Filipino teachers were among 300 victims of human trafficking. No concrete action from the Philippine embassy and consulates to address their pleas. In the Philippines, there has also been a proliferation of Japanese language schools victimizing students who pay up to US\$5000 for placement, only to end up as manual labourers in Japan.

⁹ <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1312035/coa-flags-overpriced-philhealth-it-project>

¹⁰ http://www.senate.gov.ph/press_release/2020/0523_drilon2.asp

¹¹ <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1238598/p-1-b-fund-for-distressed-pinoys-abroad-under-audit>

¹² <https://migranteinternational.org/2020/04/01/migrante-to-bello-where-cash-aid-for-saudi-ofws/>

¹³

<https://migranteinternational.org/2020/01/28/position-paper-for-the-house-committee-on-overseas-workers-affairs-meeting/>

The Duterte regime pretends to solve the modern-day slavery of Filipino migrants by simply pimping them out from Kafala-imposing countries into what it sees as newer 'labour markets' like Russia and China.

Middle East crisis

Failing to learn from the lessons of Iraq, Syria and Libya, the Duterte regime refused to take heed of repeated warnings and did not even bother to create a comprehensive evacuation plan. As early as the 2nd quarter last year, armed clashes between KSA and Yemeni forces have already reached deeper into Saudi territory especially in the border regions of Asir, Jizan, Najran where more than 40 thousand Filipinos live and work. While in Lebanon, stranded and distressed OFWs flocked to the Philippine Embassy in Beirut in December 2019 for mass repatriation. Many were dejected with the embassy's instruction for them to submit documents like passport, birth and marriage certificate to avail of the government's 'one-time' repatriation program. OFW victims of maltreatment argued that their documents are being withheld from them by their abusive employers.



PHOTO: US-Saudi drops neutron bomb on the impoverished outskirts of a city in Yemen.

During the US-conflict with Iran, President Duterte did not take a strong stance against US military aggression in the Middle East. The US threat of war against Iran endangered the Middle East where about 2.4 Million Filipino migrants reside and work and the risks they faced were furthered by Duterte's pro-US default position. Instead of sending a humanitarian mission composed of healthcare professionals, translators and social workers, Duterte tapped 800

soldiers¹⁴ for deployment. The militarization of the evacuation efforts from the Middle East jeopardized OFW safety. Duterte's enemy tag on Iran only made AFP a hostile force in the Middle East which was detrimental to its supposed task of evacuating Filipinos to safety. It showed how the Duterte regime was more than willing to turn Filipinos in Iraq and Iran into collateral pawns in favour of US aggression against the Iranian people.

The appointment of DENR Secretary Cimatú in January 2020 as Middle East envoy was likewise reprehensible. Lest we forget that in 2003, it was none other than OWWA which confirmed that no evacuation took place at all during the US-Iraq War despite the release of US\$293,500 to Pabaon General Cimatú¹⁵. Instead, the budget allocation was used to purchase military assets and the troops sent were actually ordered to aid the US military in its terrorist war of aggression in Iraq.

Economies of countries in the Gulf region are in the process of meltdown even before the global pandemic. 270 Filipinos were retrenched by Structurel and Qatar Airways in March. Over 23,000 Filipinos have lost jobs in Kuwait while 81,000 across the UAE were either terminated or under No-Work No-Pay status. Numbers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are believed to be even higher. Those who have retained employment are hit with 20% to 70% reductions in their salaries according to Migrant chapters in the Middle East. Contract substitution remains rampant. Many are being forced to work with unpaid salaries for months and subjected to physical and emotional abuse.

COVID-19 crisis

With 420,000 OFWs expected to be repatriated due to the crisis, remittances plunged to a 4-yr low¹⁶ in April at \$2.276 Billion, down 16.1% from \$2.715 billion year on year. For the first four months of 2020, cumulative remittances was down to \$10.494 Billion, a 2.9% decrease from \$10.811 billion of the same period last year. In 2019, OFW remittances totaled \$33.5 Billion¹⁷, 10% of the Philippines' GDP. Analysts expect remittances to plummet between \$6.7 Billion to \$10 Billion¹⁸ this year due to overseas mass retrenchments and displacements.

As of 25 July 2020, there are 9,239 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 653 deaths among Filipinos abroad¹⁹. 381 or 58% of recorded COVID-19 deaths are in the Middle East. The first reported case was in February when a seafarer was infected. Meanwhile, OFW families back in the Philippines are getting impoverished further by the world's longest and harshest lockdown. Just as how the Duterte regime is mishandling the impacts of the Middle East crisis on OFWs, it does

¹⁴ <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/philippine/Middle-East-tensions-01082020153948.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.bulatlat.com/news/6-24/6-24-sos.htm>

¹⁶ <https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/07/17/business/business-top/ofw-remittances-plunge-to-4-yr-low/742825/>

¹⁷ <https://rappler.com/business/overseas-filipino-workers-remittances-2019>

¹⁸ <https://www.onenews.ph/phl-may-lose-up-to-10-billion-in-ofw-remittances-amid-covid-19-pandemic>

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https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=ms.c.eJwzNLM0MDE2NDczNDQ0NDM11DOECpam5tbGBtalAQgKowAATAKFA~-.bps.a.1578521805635981&type=1&__tn__=HH-R

not have a comprehensive plan for Filipino migrants affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Migrant International and other sectoral groups even filed a Mandamus petition before the supreme court on 3 July to demand mass testing and release of accurate data.

Over 550,000 Filipino migrants are surfacing as either displaced, terminated or under no-work no pay status. Day by day, OFWs are running out of cash to pay for their house rent, food, and other basic necessities.

President Duterte created a COVID-19 interagency task force without a single epidemiologist as member. After overborrowing hundreds of billions in loans and exacting higher state exactions, the government posted a budget surplus of Php 1.8 Billion in June and at the beginning of the lockdown, Duterte still asked for emergency powers despite having Php13 Billion as Contingency Fund and Php 16 Billion Disaster Risk Reduction Management Fund. Migrant workers are always the government's preferred extortion victims but they are never compensated with adequate welfare assistance. OFW families were also barred from availing DSWD's Social Amelioration Package.

Many of those who were repatriated found themselves stuck for a month-long incarceration period instead of the promised 14-days because of delays in the release of test results. Contrary to government propaganda of promised hotel accommodations, OFWs were seen in a viral video clip in April languishing in an overcrowded OWWA shelter in Pasay City. They already underwent proper isolation in Kuwait but were packed like sardines at the OWWA shelter, sleeping on floors, and subjected to food and water scarcity.

Distressed OFWs fleeing detention-like quarantine facilities were treated like fugitive criminals while NCRPO Chief Debold Sinas, Mocha Uson, Koko Pimentel and Bong Go are enjoying full impunity. To date, nobody in the Philippine Coast Guard has been sanctioned for publishing on social media in May the google drive link containing a masterlist of OFW names who tested negative. The Google link was without online security to safeguard sensitive data and protect OFWs from identity theft.

The Duterte regime's imposed entry quota²⁰ in the early months of the lock down, from less than 1,000 then to 1,500 was only meant to buy time as the government scrambles to absorb the almost half a million Filipino migrants demanding repatriation and other assistance. DFA says that it will take until August before it is able to repatriate all 117,000 OFWs requesting for repatriation²¹. The number should still be higher as there are still tens of thousands unable to leave the premises of their abusive employers who refuse to provide them with exit visas. DFA's complacency with its figures show its lack of foresight which is disastrous for affected OFWs.

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<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/06/16/2021330/government-quota-keeps-14-ofws-stranded-amsterdam-airport-labor-group>

²¹ https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=208758540445323&ref=watch_permalink

DFA Usec. Sarah Arriola even went to the point of hurling cyberlibel and jail threats²² against starving OFWs in Saudi Arabia who posted online videos while they were scavenging for food from dumpsters after their pleas for urgent amelioration and repatriation remained unheard for months. DFA even lied claiming that an OFW has already been arrested for posting ‘staged’ videos on social media. The OFWs have denied this and none of them have been arrested. Jeffrey Yape, one of the fellow workers of scavenging OFWs died without receiving substantial help from the government. DFA Usec. Arriola would rather serve as damage controllers for abusive employers of exploited OFWs. Philippine Ambassador to KSA Adnan Alonto on the other hand insulted starving OFWs and tagged the viral video as mere theatrics²³.



PHOTO: (ABS-CBN News) Starving OFWs scavenging for food.

The string of suicide cases among stranded OFWs do not seem to alarm the Duterte regime. Without psychosocial support and substantial relief from the government, the militarized lockdown will surely take the hardest toll on the mental health of many OFWs displaced by the COVID-19 pandemic and recession. Experts say that its impact on mental health could outlast the virus itself. Prior to getting repatriated, these OFWs have already endured traumatic experiences while working overseas.

²² <https://globalnation.inquirer.net/188881/dfa-warns-ofws-in-saudi-arabia-be-careful-with-your-social-media-posts>

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<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/pinoyabroad/news/743537/envoy-slammed-for-accusing-dumpster-diving-ofws-of-theatrics/story/>

Believed to be caused by severe stress, anxiety and depression, an OFW in Pasay City committed suicide on 26 April. According to her fellow repatriates, she has already attempted suicide twice and they have been stuck at the quarantine facility since 3rd of April but were neither provided with substantial aid nor psychosocial support. Two seafarers also died of suicide in May and June aboard their cruise ships. On June 4, Melvin Cacho ended his life in Thailand after a prolonged period of depression. He recounted in the last words he penned that he was without work, without pay and has been unable to eat anything. Thailand is one of the many countries excluded from the Duterte regime's DOLE AKAP cash aid program²⁴. In Alberta, Canada, workers complain that they only received \$100 instead of \$200. Located in Alberta, Cargill meat processing plant already has 1,000 cases of COVID-19 among its workers, majority of whom are Filipinos under the Temporary Workers Program.

The DOLE AKAP's \$200 cash aid program excluded so many groups of Filipino migrants like OFWs in jail, trafficking victims, undocumented Halaw's in Sabah, Au Pairs in Europe and J1 visa holders in the US. In Australia alone, there are 8,000 Filipino international students who have not received assistance from the Philippine government. They are prohibited from applying for work even as they continue to pay for housing rent and other expenses. As of July 4, there have already been 551,000 applications for assistance from land-based and sea-based workers according to DOLE. This reflects the total number of OFWs displaced by the COVID-19 crisis but only 188,000 who have received cash aid so far. Cash aid distribution is very poor considering that in Europe, there are 130,000 undocumented Filipinos and there are 100,000 seafarers worldwide waiting to receive cash aid. Labour secretary Bello fears that as many as 1 Million Filipino migrants will lose their jobs²⁵. The \$200 cash aid won't even suffice for one month to sustain the needs of their families.

On March 29 and 30, there were 1,300 OFWs²⁶ who trooped to the Philippine Embassy in Riyadh to process the DOLE AKAP cash aid and the food assistance promised by Labor Attache Nasser S. Mustafa. It turned out that 5 to 9 OFWs were asked to divide among themselves the promised food assistance. The entire process was full of panic and stress. Philippine embassy officials harassed the OFWs and called the police to drive them out. Many OFWs were outraged since they feared being caught by the 3pm curfew and many of them travelled all the way from distant cities and locations in Saudi.

As for Filipino migrants repatriated back to the Philippines, the world's longest lockdown has left thousands of OFWs stranded in NCR. Many of these repatriates are now penniless after a month-long wait for medical services and financial aid that never came. OFWs complain that

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<https://www.dole.gov.ph/news/department-order-no-212-series-of-2020-prescribing-guidelines-on-the-provision-of-financial-assistance-for-displaced-landbased-and-seabased-filipino-workers-due-to-the-corona-virus-covid-2019-d/>

²⁵ <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1286124/1-million-ofws-may-lose-jobs-due-to-covid-19-pandemic-dole>

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<https://migranteinternational.org/2020/04/01/on-the-harassment-and-dispersal-of-distressed-ofws-by-polo-owwa-officials-in-riyadh/>

they are being dumped like garbage in Metro Manila's airport terminals²⁷. Starved and made to sit close to heaps of junk airport equipment. Hundreds were likewise seen sleeping along roads, pathways and under bridges leading to NAIA.



PHOTO: ABS-CBN News (4 June 2020) Stranded OFWs sleeping at NAIA's walkway.

It can be also remembered that in April, OFWs en route to their quarantine facility in Lian, Batangas were stranded for almost 24 hours after the LGUs opposed the arrival of busloads of repatriates. LGUs blasted OWWA for failing to coordinate with local officials. The OFWs arrived at their quarantine facility famished and worn out.

With the cessation of ship operations, 20,000 seafarers are already out of work. Tens of thousands of others remain stranded aboard their ships and are demanding repatriation. Seafarers Raul Calopez and Stanley Jungco died without receiving medical attention. Their cries for help directed to the Duterte government fell on deaf ears. House Bill 6588 or the

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<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/pinoyabroad/news/740073/ofws-restless-at-naia-para-kaming-basurang-itinapon-lang/story/>

Magna Carta of Seafarers filed by the Makabayan bloc which could have served better protection for Filipino seafarers remains out of the Duterte regime's priorities.

The militarized approach to address a public health emergency situation has made AFP very active in crafting Fascist methods to contain the movements of repatriates. In March, AFP Westmincom proposed to isolate 131 stranded ship passengers from Sabah in Sibakil Island²⁸ where they will be confined in scorching tents. These Filipinos have already experienced all sorts of sufferings in Sabah including abuse, caning and imprisonment. Instead of prioritizing their welfare, AFP Westmincom was very keen on setting up a concentration camp for them in an uninhabited island far from healthcare and social welfare facilities.

Duterte's far-reaching Fascist tyranny

Filipino migrant communities overseas have not been spared by the Duterte regime's Fascist assaults. The creation of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF ELCAC) also brought about the fielding of military attaches in Philippine embassies who conduct redtagging seminars to discredit right-based advocacies of migrants' groups.

At a time when the pandemic and humanitarian crisis was raging, NTF ELCAC funded military junkets like that of Maj. Gen. Antonio Parlade Jr.'s 'peace briefing' at the Philippine consulate in Melbourne, Australia where he red-tagged Migrante Australia and other progressive groups. NTF ELCAC likewise sponsored a redtagging fora conducted at the University of Negros Occidental - Recoletos and University of St. La Salle on 24 August by 303rd IBPA²⁹ in Bacolod City where Migrante International along with other rights-based groups were tagged as "NPA recruiters."

For expressing her criticisms against the Duterte regime's inutility, Elanel Ordidor was harassed by POLO officials in Taiwan which included Labor Attaché Fidel V. Macauyag. DOLE even raised a deportation order against Ordidor but their attempts were thwarted following denunciations from different rights groups in Taiwan and from Filipino organizations in other countries.

²⁸ <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1245819/military-eyes-basilans-sibakil-island-for-quarantine-of-filipinos-from-sabah>

²⁹

<https://migranteinternational.org/2019/08/25/hands-off-our-migrante-members-in-negros-migrante-international-to-duterte-and-afp/>



Even worse, the Duterte regime is systematically persecuting and having a killing rampage against migrants rights advocates and ordinary members of OFW families. Bryan Conje, the son of a Saudi-based OFW was a victim of extrajudicial killing after he was reportedly abducted by elements of PNP in Navotas in July 2019. Anne Kreuger who worked closely with Migrante during the justice campaign for slain OFW Henry Acorda was among the Bacolod57 illegally arrested in November based on trumped-up charges and fabricated evidence planted by Bacolod PNP. On April 30, Jory Porquia was assassinated right inside his place of residence in Iloilo City. Porquia was a founding organizer of Migrante Iloilo and whose profession as an architect brought him to Saudi Arabia, Singapore and China as an OFW and migrant rights' activist.

The recent passage of the Terror Law is the Duterte regime's nullification of democratic rights. Human rights groups know for certain that this will be used by the Duterte regime to persecute his critics and keep himself immune from liability for all atrocious crimes committed by state forces under his watch. 184 Filipino migrant organizations sent an open letter to the 18th Congress urging house representatives to prevent its enactment. Ignoring widespread opposition, President Duterte signed the Terror Bill.

For freedom-loving Filipino migrants and their families, they will no longer be deceived by flowery and colourful words from President Duterte when he delivers his 2020 State of the Nation Address. Even outside of the Philippines, Filipino migrants themselves are experiencing extortion, criminal negligence, harassment and terrorism from the Duterte regime. Filipino migrants and their families are more determined than ever to unite with the Filipino masses, to stand up and speak in the struggle to terminate the Duterte regime's puppetry, corruption and tyranny.



PHOTO: SONAgkaisa United People's Action at UP Diliman (27 July 2020)

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