

IN THIS ISSUE

Philippines and Asia-Pacific

- **Canada's Shameful Engagement in Gunboat Diplomacy**
- *Steve Rutchinski* -

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

- **Torontonians Stand Firm with the Palestinian People**

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Canada's Shameful Engagement in Gunboat Diplomacy

- *Steve Rutchinski* -



In October this year the Canadian warship the HMCS *Winnipeg* docked at the Port of Manila for a “goodwill visit” to the Philippines. While anchored, the battleship received the Canadian Ambassador to the Philippines Peter MacArthur on October 11.

In his speech on the battleship, Ambassador MacArthur stated, “[...] As a maritime nation, the Philippines has always been a very good host to our fleet and I know this visit will further strengthen a relationship that bridges the Pacific Ocean. Operations conducted by the HMCS *Winnipeg* together

with our allies and partners in the region, demonstrate Canada's ongoing commitment to supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific."

"We are proud to count 11 sailors of Philippine descent on board. Did you know that Canada is home to one of the largest Filipino communities in the world? The ship's namesake is the City of Winnipeg; home to the third largest Filipino community in Canada," MacArthur added.

This kind of talk is aimed at covering up Canada's aggressive role in the Asia-Pacific under the command of the U.S. while militarizing the relations between the Canadian people and the people of the Philippines. This does not bode well for peace or the fraternal ties between our two peoples.

HMCS *Winnipeg* is engaged in large-scale military exercises involving other U.S. dominated "allies" including Australia, the Republic of Korea and Japan to project U.S. imperialist power in the Asia-Pacific under the pretext of checking aggression from China and Russia. Projecting U.S. power means active involvement in subjugation of the peoples in the region. The Philippines, despite its nominal independence, is dominated by U.S. imperialism. Participation by Canada in these U.S.-led war preparations in the Asia-Pacific region shows how deeply Canada is integrated into the U.S. war machine and also a participant in the subjugation of the peoples of the region, including of the Philippines.

In 2018 for example, Canada was about to sell \$233 million worth of Bell helicopters to the Philippines to be used by the Duterte administration's "counterinsurgency programs" targeting the political movement of the people for national liberation. It was only due to the efforts of patriotic Filipino organizations, such as the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines (ICHRP-Canada) mobilizing Canadians including people of Filipino national origin, that this potential sale was exposed and blocked.

In a recent presentation delivered to the No Harbour for War webinar on November 19, Rhea Gamana, Secretary General of Bayan Canada, a national patriotic alliance of progressive Canadians and residents of Philippine national origin, outlined the longstanding resistance of the Filipino people to U.S. imperialism and Spanish colonizers before them. She elaborated on the relationship between U.S. imperialist war preparations in the Asia-Pacific region and the brutal Duterte "counter-insurgency" war against the communist and patriotic forces in the Philippines today.

In her presentation entitled: "The U.S. Pivot to Asia and U.S. COIN strategy – Propping up State Terror and Tyranny in the Philippines," Ms. Gamana highlighted how the U.S. stepped in and usurped power after the Filipino patriotic resistance had defeated the Spanish colonizers at the end of the Spanish American War. She said more than 1.5 million Filipino patriots were killed between 1899 and 1914 resisting the U.S. invaders. She noted that despite being granted nominal independence by the U.S. in 1946 following the Second World War, in which the people of the Philippines played a role second to none in defeating Japanese militarism, the U.S. today continues to dominate the island nation through a series of unequal treaties imposed through one puppet administration after another, bleeding the people dry and plundering their natural resources.

Some of the key agreements she cited were the *Bell Trade Act*, the Economic and Technical Assistance Agreement of 1951, the Laurel-Langley Agreement on Parity Rights, the *Investment Incentives Act* — all designed to grant the U.S. government and corporate interests unbridled access to Philippine land and natural resources.

In addition, the Bayan Canada Secretary General highlighted that since 1946, the U.S. has imposed various defence treaties such as the 1952 Mutual Defense Treaty; the Visiting Forces Agreement signed under the Fidel Ramos administration in 1998; and the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) of 2014, all of which put the Philippines under U.S. military control.

U.S. President Trump and Philippine President Duterte in 2017 re-affirmed their commitment to the EDCA as well as the 1952 Mutual Defense Treaty. It was precisely at this time that Duterte unilaterally cancelled the peace talks with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). The NDFP had been involved in decades-long negotiations with successive Philippine governments to bring an end to the civil war that has been taking place for more than 50 years on the island nation. The counter-insurgency Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines (OPE-P) was then strategized, organized and set in motion under U.S. direction, despite the Rodrigo Duterte government's declarations of the Philippines having an independent foreign policy.

After indefinitely cancelling peace talks with the NDFP in November 2017, President Duterte also led the classification of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing the New People's Army as "terrorist organizations" in his Proclamation No. 374 — akin to their U.S. designation as "foreign terrorist organizations" in 2002 during the U.S. "War on Terror." Indeed, Duterte claimed that he "will follow America" as he unilaterally classified CPP and NPA as "terrorists."

NDFP Chief Political Consultant José Maria Sison notes: "Operation Pacific Eagle is definitely an interventionist scheme of the U.S. to crush the Philippine revolution through a much closer coordination between the U.S. Armed Forces and Armed Forces of the Philippines, similar to the U.S. State Department's Plan Colombia."

In December 2018, President Rodrigo Duterte signed Executive Order 70, institutionalizing the "whole-of-nation approach" to supposedly address the internal armed conflict in the Philippines. It goes by the name Oplan Kapatagan (Tranquility).

Ms. Gamana said Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines and Oplan Kapatagan are both patterned on the U.S. Counterinsurgency (COIN) Program. The U.S. COIN strategy involves stabilization i.e., making a country less susceptible to conflict through dealing with conditions that drive insurgency. As such, USAID assistance under OPE-P is reported and evaluated as "stabilization activities where the goals of disaster relief and long-term rehabilitation are done to mitigate drivers of "extremism" while at the same time "help[ing] create markets" through promotion of U.S. models of economic growth.

The whole-of-nation approach uses not only police and military counter-insurgency operations, but government agencies and civil society organizations to suppress the communist rebellion, and with it, the democratic movement of the Filipino people.



Ms. Gamana's presentation also provided deeper insight into what underlies Canada's "goodwill" visit by HMSC *Winnipeg* and other supports Canada provides as part of the U.S. imperialist agenda in the Asia Pacific region. This includes Canada's training of Filipino police and army personnel. For example, two Filipino youth were graduated from the Royal Military College in Kingston this past summer, including the first female Filipino cadet from the Philippine Military Academy to be trained in Canada, Carrie Banglag

Magannon. It is an irony that while Ms. Banglag Magannon, a member of the Igorot Indigenous nation in the Philippines is being trained to suppress the Filipino people's political movement for independence and self-determination, Canadian mining corporations are displacing and plundering the Cordillera, the lands of the Igorot people, for natural resources, and funding paramilitary forces

which are attacking and displacing Indigenous peoples who resist the theft and exploitation of their lands.

The role of the Filipino patriotic forces in the Philippines and in Canada is decisive in the fight for peace, justice, democracy and national liberation in the Philippines, and an integral part of the important struggle of the Canadian people for an anti-war government in Canada which stands for relations with other nations and people based on peace, trade for mutual benefit and non-interference in each other's affairs.



Protest against the entry of energy projects and large-scale mining applications in the Cordillera, led by Indigenous women in Baguio City on the occasion of International Working Women's Month, March 9, 2020.

(Photos: RU, Bulatlat, Cordillera Peoples Alliance)

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

Torontonians Stand Firm with the Palestinian People

The rally was organized by Action4Palestine, Palestinian Youth Movement, Independent Jewish Voices, Students for Justice in Palestine, the Association of Palestinian Students UTM, Samidoun and others. The main theme of the action was to militantly affirm the Palestinian people's Right of Return and to join with people in Canada and all over the world to demand that Israel be held to account for its crimes.

Speakers outlined the decades-long campaign of terror of the Israeli Zionist state against the Palestinian people including the ongoing theft of their lands and farms, the demolition of Palestinian homes, decimation of Palestinian livelihoods, and the imprisonment of more than 4,500 Palestinians.

Another more than 520 are under illegal detention orders. Additionally, under the fraudulent claim of "self-defence" tens of thousands of Palestinian men, women and children have been killed or



wounded by the Israel Defence Forces acting with impunity with the tacit support of the U.S., Canada, Britain and other states.

Many drivers honked their horns and people walking by raised their fists, reflecting the widespread support in Canada for the just cause of the Palestinian people despite the disinformation by the Canadian state and the mass media to present the Palestinians as “terrorists” and other blatant lies to justify the criminal efforts to extinguish the historical struggle of the Palestinians for their birthright.

The youth organizers of the event also highlighted that local police are beginning to intimidate and threaten protesters who take to the streets and public spaces in defence of the Palestinian people in Canada, and that this tactic of criminalizing those standing with the Palestinians will not be tolerated.

The action ended on a high note with everyone energized and a commitment by all present to speak to their neighbours and friends, write to their government representatives and continue actions to support the heroic Palestinian people.

(Photos: @africa4palestine)

**Send your articles, photographs, reports, views and comments to
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