

The Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas or Peasant Movement of the Philippines (KMP) would like to focus its submission to the UPR on the intensifying landlessness and land grabbing in the country. The agrarian reform program of the previous Aquino government totally failed to address the centuries-old problem of land monopoly. Landlessness remain as among the root causes of the farmers' woes with 9 out of 10 farmers not owning the land they till.

The Aquino government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) with Reforms (CARPER) ended last June 30, 2014 is the longest, most expensive and most violent land reform program in history. Vast haciendas and plantations remain intact while lands allegedly distributed to so-called beneficiaries are reversed, re-concentrated to the hands of big landlords and foreign agro-corporations. Land-grabbing in the form of land-use conversions intensified under CARP.

With the failure of CARP/CARPER, farmers together with the fisherfolk, were perennially listed as the poorest sectors in the country, according to the Philippine Statistical Authority. The rate of poverty among farmers in 2012 was recorded at 38.3%, while fisherfolks were at 39.2%, an increase from 37% or 1.77 million farmers and 35% or 355,000 fisher folk in 2003.

In tune with the neoliberal policies of globalization, the CARP provided non-land transfer schemes, like the Stock Distribution Option (SDO) scheme in Hacienda Luisita, Tarlac, corporative scheme in Negros Occidental, leasehold operations, contract growing, leaseback arrangements, and other schemes of corporate agribusiness venture arrangements, which exempted vast tracts of landholdings of big landlords and agro-corporations from actual and physical distribution to farmer-beneficiaries. The establishment of so-called agrarian reform communities (ARCs) paved the way for the intervention and control of local and foreign agribusinesses over vast tracts of lands.

The country's more than two decades of membership to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and subservience to its policies of trade liberalization only aggravated the fundamental problems of backwardness and maldevelopment of Philippine agriculture. Under the WTO regime, the country increased dependence on food importation and other agricultural products, abandoned state subsidies for food production, and devoted vast tracts of lands for export-crop production, intensified land-use conversion, and land speculation. Another threat to worsening land grabbing is the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a China-led mega-Free Trade Agreement. RCEP leaked documents stated that governments of RCEP countries should allow more foreign investors and foreign land ownership should be permitted.

Millions of farmers in more than 1.2 million hectares are under onerous agribusiness contracts with plantation owners and agribusiness companies. Agricultural production in haciendas and plantations controlled by agro-corporation were devoted mainly to the production of crops for export. In Misamis Oriental, a province in the CARAGA region, the biggest expansion area for palm oil production is located. With the collaboration of Philippine government agencies like the Philippine Palm Oil Development Council (PPDCI) and the Department of Environment and Resources (DENR), big local and foreign palm oil corporations were able to legally land grab big portions of land from farmers and indigenous peoples thus displacing thousands of farming families.

Among the most controversial land-grabbing cases and threats of farmers displacement in the country are the 8,650 hectares of land in Hacienda Looc, Nasugbu, Batangas, the more than 11,000 hectares of land to be devoted for bio-ethanol production in San Mariano town, province of Isabela, and the 35,000, hectares of lands in South Cotabato remains under the control of Dole Philippines. The whole island of Mindanao has become the bastion of contract growing and leaseback arrangements depriving millions of farmers of their rights to own the lands.

In Araneta Estate in San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan covering 3,100 hectares. The area has been inhabited and tilled by farmers since after World War and they plant a variety of crops. They are threatened by displacement by the building of MRT (Metro Rail Transit)-7, a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) project, in the area. To be wiped out by the project is the bio-diverse ecological farms, the seed bank, and the Farmers' Learning Center.

For more than 40 years, the government's agrarian reform is coupled with human rights violations. Farmers asserting their rights to the land are subjected to human rights abuses, agrarian struggles and peasant leaders are being criminalized, incarcerated, and worse, were massacred like the Escalante massacre in Negros, Lumil massacre in Silang, Cavite; Palo Massacre in Leyte; Mendiola Massacre, Hacienda Luisita massacre, Kidapawan massacre on April 1, 2016, and very recently, the Fort Magsaysay massacre.

The absence of a land reform program by the government has been capitalized by big landlords to further strengthen control over the lands and employs private armed goons and even state security forces in attacking farmers asserting their rights like the Fort Magsaysay massacre and the killing of a peasant leader in Isabela province.

At the end of the previous administration, human rights group Karapatan has recorded 249 extra-judicial killings of peasants and 81 indigenous peoples and

more than 720 cases of incarceration on fabricated charges. Under the current presidency of Rodrigo Duterte, there is a rising trend of violence against farmers and indigenous peoples.

The absence of a genuine land reform program also perpetuates and worsens the feudal and semi-feudal exploitation and denial of social justice to millions of farmers in the countryside. This denial of lands wastes away and ignores the biggest social force in the country and does not serve genuine development.

- In light of the above, with respect to the upcoming UPR on the Philippines on May 2017, the KMP requests the UN Human Rights Council to call on the Philippine government to:
 - Ensure the implementation of a new and genuinely redistributive land reform program that is based on social justice. This will put an end to landlord monopoly of lands and will stop land grabbing.
 - Make sure the implementation of genuine rural development, and national industrialization.
 - Assure that all peasant political prisoners will be released and all trumped-up charges against them be dropped.
 - Render justice to the victims of human rights violations committed by State security forces through proper investigation, prosecution of alleged perpetrators and indemnification of human rights victims.
 - Continue the peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines and with rebel groups in Mindanao (Southern Philippines) struggling for self-determination. It has been pointed out that the government's counter-insurgency program is the cause of many human rights violations against human rights defenders and principled negotiations to address the roots of the armed conflict can help mitigate these violations.