

# Global protests erupt in response to Philippines 'terror law'

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Photo: Michelle Claire Lorentzen

On July 3, Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte signed into law what he calls the “Anti-Terrorism Act,” now the Anti-Terrorism Law. Despite international criticism from human-rights watchdogs, legal professionals and grassroots organizations, the Anti-Terrorism Law will go into effect on July 18.

The Anti-Terrorism Law creates a Duterte-appointed council that subsumes the powers of the Philippines courts to designate who or what can be considered a “terrorist” or “terrorism.” It also allows for people suspected of “terrorism” to be wiretapped and surveilled for 90 days, arrested without a warrant and imprisoned for 24 days. Punishments for those convicted include life imprisonment without parole.

Duterte and his government mouthpieces claim that the bill is necessary to stamp down “terrorism” influenced by the Islamic State. But the facts don’t lie: Duterte has utilized the full force of the Philippines National Police and Armed Forces of the Philippines, under the guise of his “War on Drugs,” to gun down anyone he deems a dissenter.

To date, extrajudicial killings have claimed over 30,000 lives, an overwhelming number of them farmworkers, Indigenous people, unionists, legal professionals — the list goes on. This Anti-Terrorism Law is simply Duterte’s way to make legal his fascist reign of terror.

But the broad masses of the Philippines and their allies around the world will not be cowed.

Wednesday, July 8 was declared a Global Day of Protest against the Anti-Terror Law. In the U.S., demonstrators hit the streets in New York; Baltimore; Washington, D.C.; Boston; Chicago; Portland, Ore.; Austin, Houston and Dallas, Texas; San Diego; Los

Angeles; and San Francisco.



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Baltimore's demonstration on July 8 was the very first street action called by Malaya Movement Baltimore. Speakers from Malaya Movement Baltimore, the Maryland Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines, the Baltimore Teachers Union, the Peoples Power Assembly, Youth Against War and Racism and the Socialist Unity Party broadly condemned Philippines President Duterte and his reign of terror and declared unwavering solidarity with the Filipino people.

On behalf of the Peoples Power Assembly, Andre Powell said, after reminding the crowd of martial law in the Philippines under Ferdinand Marcos, "History in the Philippines is repeating itself over and over again, and it could not do so without the money poured into it that the U.S. Congress passes and designates to go to the Philippines dictators."

Alec Summerfield, representing the Socialist Unity Party, made clear that no one is fooled by Duterte's latest move: "This is not an anti-terror law, as we all know. This

is an anti-worker law, anti-farmer law, anti-union law, anti-student law and anti-legal worker law. ... This is just another way for the U.S. to assert its agenda through its puppet fascist dictatorship in the Philippines.”

Even before the official passage of the law, the Duterte government in the Philippines has already cracked down on dissent. On June 26, the day the Anti-Terror bill passed through the Philippines House of Representatives, 20 activists of the LGBTQ organization Bahaghari were arrested for their protest in Metro Manila. They were released four days later.

Philippines solidarity organizations like the International Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines and the Malaya Movement have reached out to U.S. congressional representatives, asking them to condemn the passage of the Anti-Terrorism Law. Illinois Rep. Jan Schakowsky spearheaded a letter of condemnation alongside California Rep. Judy Chu, which was signed by over 50 other congressional representatives and sent to Jose Manuel Romualdez, the Philippines ambassador to the U.S.

In response, ironically, Duterte supporters have called on the U.S. to “stop meddling” in Philippines affairs.

