

PRESS COMMUNIQUÉ
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INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO FREE JOSE MARIA SISON LAUNCHED

(Utrecht, The Netherlands) -- Friends, comrades and colleagues of detained Philippine revolutionary leader Professor Jose Maria Sison gathered Wednesday in this city, at the international information office of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), to launch the "Free Jose Ma. Sison Campaign".

They packed the office of the NDFP to draw up plans to campaign for the immediate release of Prof. Sison or Joma, who was arrested last 28 August on trumped up and politically-motivated charges of ordering the deaths of two security agents in the Philippines in 2003 and 2004.

Prof. Sison remains in detention at the National Penitentiary in Scheveningen in The Hague. His wife is not allowed to visit him, only his lawyer, Michiel Pestman of the Böhler, Franken, Koppe and Wijngaarden law office. On 7 September, three judges heard arguments on whether he would be released or remain in detention for 90 more days. According to court officials at The Hague, the judges' decision will be released on 13 September, at the latest.

Luis G. Jalandoni, Chairperson of the Negotiating Panel of the NDFP, shared with the campaign's initiators a brief account of the case. He called the arrest of Sison "treacherous" and the forcible searches conducted by the Dutch police on his house and that of several other Filipino progressives in Utrecht as a "fishing expedition". Jalandoni said it was a big police operation involving about 100 police agents.

Jalandoni explained that Joma is being unjustly accused of ordering from Dutch soil the deaths of Romulo Kintanar in 2003 and Arturo Tabara in 2004. These two, he said, were former leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines who became renegades in 1993 after they refused accountability for grave errors they committed within the revolutionary movement. They had since become armed security agents of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, he said, and had engaged in kidnap-for-ransom activities, extortion and other criminal activities.

Jalandoni added that similar charges had been filed against Prof. Sison in the Philippines but that these were dismissed by the Philippine Supreme Court last 2 July 2007 as being without merit and politically motivated.

Quoting Pestman, Jalandoni said "there is absolutely no evidence against Joma". The lawyer also clarified that if the three judges decide to keep Joma for 90 more days, he can appeal that decision before the Court of Appeals.

"Joma is in high spirits," Jalandoni said, quoting the lawyer. "Despite the continuous interrogations and pressure on him, Joma has not said anything that will incriminate himself", Jalandoni added.

During the short exchange among the campaign initiators, a question was asked why the Dutch government continues to persecute Joma and other Filipino patriots in the Netherlands. The answers came pouring in from the initiators themselves: the Dutch government has big economic interests in the Philippines, namely oil exploration and trade, and is now the third largest foreign investor in the Philippines; the Dutch government has been taken in by the Manila government; the Dutch government follows closely what the US government tells it to do regarding the so-called war on terror.

The initiators agreed that the 7 September court appearance of Joma would be the immediate focus of concern, and they agreed to mobilize for a protest picket in front of the Palace of Justice in The Hague.

The Free Jose Ma. Sison Campaign vowed to form "Free Jose Ma. Sison Committees" in major European countries, in North America, Canada, Asia-Pacific, Australia, Africa and even the Middle East, that will conduct militant protest actions calling for the freedom of the imprisoned revolutionary.

Initiators said they will conduct a broad-based solidarity campaign and vigorous information drive on the case of Joma, on the crimes against humanity being committed by the US-backed Arroyo regime, and the patriotic and democratic struggle of the Filipino people to bring to justice the Arroyo regime, and to achieve genuine freedom, democracy, justice and peace; on the accountability of the Dutch government in the violations of the civil liberties of Joma and other Filipino patriots; and on the collaboration of the US, Dutch and Philippine authorities to suppress the Filipino people's resistance.

It was decided that Prof. Sison's wife, Julie de Lima and Theo Droog of the Netherlands-Philippines Solidarity Movement will be the spokespersons of the international campaign.

The Free Joma Sison Campaign is being initiated by the International Committee Defend, International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS), and the Dutch Friends of the Filipino People. ###

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