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Updated March 31, 2018, 2:05 PM

By Argyll Cyrus Geducos

Malacañang said Filipino United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples Victoria Tauli-Corpuz does not know what is really happening in the country.



Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (Photo via UN/ MANILA BULLETIN)

The Office of the Executive Secretary (OES) made the statement in response to the remarks of the Filipino rapporteur in Milan, Italy where she said the Philippine government has become authoritarian.

“The remarks of UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples Victoria Tauli-Corpuz show how detached she is with the realities happening in the Philippines,” the OES said in a statement yesterday afternoon.

The OES also enumerated reasons which aimed to debunk the claims of Tauli-Corpuz.

“Democracy in the Philippines is vibrant and strong. All the branches of the government are functioning and the rule of law thrives. The executive branch respects the separation of powers and the independence of the other coequal branches and doesn’t meddle with their affairs,” the OES listed down.

Speaking at the Human Rights Festival held in Milan on March 25, Tauli-Corpuz said the Philippine government has become authoritarian.

“It’s trying to... it controls the parliament. It filed an impeachment case against the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. It has imprisoned another woman who is a senator. So it’s going against the different institutions, government branches that should balance the executive,” she reportedly said.

She also noted the reported killings in the Philippines because of the strong resistance from indigenous peoples against the supposedly increasing fascism that is taking place in the government.

She also appealed before Italian human rights activists for help.

“I would like to appeal to the Italians to help in this campaign that we are doing to stop the fascism that is happening in our country and for you to also speak to your state authorities so that they will also speak out against what’s happening in my country,” she said.

Tauli-Corpuz is one of the over 600 people that the Department of Justice (DOJ) wants to be declared as terrorists after being linked to the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF).

After this, UN experts called for the DOJ to drop her name from a list of 600 alleged members of the CPP-NPA-NDF, saying the accusations were unfounded.

Malacañang earlier said the petition seeking to tag Tauli-Corpuz as a terrorists was not a witch hunt against UN rapporteurs, especially after President Duterte’s tirades against UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Killings Agnes Callamard.

The Palace also said Tauli-Corpuz is not automatically tagged as a terrorist and will be given the chance to prove before the court that she is not affiliated to the CPP-NPA-NDF.

In December last year, Tauli-Corpuz and another UN special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples and internally displaced people Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, claimed of supposed human rights abuses against indigenous and internally displaced peoples in Mindanao.

Their claim against the Philippine government came days after Duterte moved to declare the CPP-NPA as a terrorist group after officially terminating the peace talks between the government and the communist rebels.