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Palace rejects 'authoritarian regime' claim

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MANILA. President Rodrigo R. Duterte presides over the 23rd Cabinet Meeting at the Malacañan Palace on March 5, 2018. Also in the photo is Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea. (Presidential Photo)

EXECUTIVE Secretary Salvador Medialdea rejected claims by a United Nations special rapporteur on indigenous peoples that the Duterte government has turned into an authoritarian regime.

dea said in a statement

rule of law thrives. The independence of the
 chief of equal branches and doesn't meddle with their affairs," he added.

Medialdea's remark was in response to the statement of Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN special rapporteur on indigenous peoples, that the executive department is going against the two other branches of government.

Tauli-Corpuz, who is one of over 600 people whose name is included in the Philippine government's roster of alleged terrorists, alleged on March 25 that the Duterte administration has transformed into a tyrannical regime.

She also cited instances of the current administration's supposed attempts to keep the legislative and judiciary under its control, specifically the impending impeachment of Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno and detention of Senator Leila de Lima.

Both Sereno and De Lima have voiced their strong opposition to Duterte's policies and programs, including the war he brutally waged on illegal drugs.

"The new government has become very 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," Tauli-Corpuz said at the Human Rights Festival held in Milan, Italy on March 25.

"So it's going against the different institutions, government branches that should balance the executive," she added.

The Department of Justice had filed a petition before the Manila Regional Trial Court, urging the latter to declare Tauli-Corpuz and more than 600 individuals as terrorists for their supposed affiliation with the communist guerillas.

Tauli-Corpuz had downplayed her inclusion in the Philippine government's terror list, merely branding it as "baseless, malicious, and irresponsible."

Malacañang had said she was listed as alleged terrorist based on intelligence information and not because of a "witch hunt" on UN special rapporteurs. **(SunStar Philippines)**