

PH slipping toward 'fascism,' – Filipina UN rapporteur

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THE Philippines under President Rodrigo Duterte is “slipping toward fascism,” the Filipina United Nations special rapporteur for indigenous peoples claimed, saying the government was “shooting messengers” or critics like her.

Writing in an opinion piece for the British paper Financial Times, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz decried her inclusion in a list of terrorists filed by the Justice department before a Manila court, allegedly in retaliation for her efforts to protect the rights of indigenous peoples from mining interests in Mindanao.

“In lumping its critics together with criminals, the government seeks to make us all guilty by association and, thus, the next targets of the vigilantes and rogue police officers who have led President Rodrigo Duterte’s bloody war against drugs. Now, he has started a new war— with new targets,” she said in her March 29 opinion piece.

“You can keep shooting the messenger, but you will run out of bullets before we run out of messengers and, at the end of the day, the message will be heard,” she said.

Malacañang on Saturday issued a statement countering Corpuz’ various statements.

Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea said Corpuz’s remarks “show how detached she is with the realities happening in the Philippines.”

“Democracy in the Philippines is vibrant and strong. All the branches of the government are functioning and the rule of law thrives,” Medialdea said in the statement.

“The executive branch respects the separation of powers and the independence of the other co-equal branches and doesn’t meddle with their affairs,” he added.

Corpuz was earlier quoted saying that the Duterte government “has become very authoritarian.”

“It (Duterte government) 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,” Corpuz said in a speech during the Human Rights Festival held in Milan, Italy on March 25.

Corpuz said there were many reported killings in the Philippines because of the strong resistance from indigenous peoples like farmers and workers against the increasing fascism that’s taking place in the government.

“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.

Corpuz, a leader of the Kankanaey Igorot people, was among some 600 individuals that the Department of Justice wanted to declare as “terrorists.”

Palace spokesman Harry Roque Jr. had said that Corpuz’s inclusion in the government’s “terrorist” list was based on intelligence information and not part of a “witch hunt.”

“Victoria Tauli-Corpuz was also included because of intelligence information that she is somehow connected with the CPP-NPA (Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army),” Roque said in an earlier press briefing.

“I assure everyone including the international community, that this is not a witch hunt on UN special rapporteurs,” he added.

Roque then assured Corpuz that the Philippines adheres to the rule of law and that she can dispute the “terrorist” tag.

“In any case, we are a civilized country in the Philippines; we will accord Miss Victoria Tauli-Corpuz the right to be heard, inherent due-process rights,” he said.

“In our legal system, we adhere to the rule of law and hence, Miss Victoria Tauli-Corpuz can submit controverting evidence to what I am sure the DoJ already has linking her with the terrorist group – the CPP-NPA.”