

## **People's Movement for Change**

Our people are yearning for change. They want to end the illegitimate and thoroughly anti-people regime of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. They want justice for the plunder, the extrajudicial killings, surrender of national sovereignty and the unequalled abuse of power since the Marcos Dictatorship.

But the change our people yearn for is more than a change of leadership. They desire meaningful change: a decisive break from the poverty-ridden, unjust and corrupt social system that grew worse even after EDSA I and EDSA II.

### **"Oust GMA!"**

Our people have been fighting to oust the illegitimate Arroyo regime since 2004 when the "Hello Garci" electoral fraud involving Mrs. Arroyo herself and top COMELEC and AFP officials was exposed. In 2005, she almost fell when top government officials, former Pres. Corazon Aquino and leaders of big business called for her resignation and gigantic, broad mass mobilizations punctuated a vigorous protest movement.

In 2006, Mrs. Arroyo was forced to declare emergency rule out of fear that her regime would be toppled; she was forced to withdraw it in a week's time due to the people's resistance. Mrs. Arroyo's first attempt to perpetuate her rule by changing the Constitution through "people's initiative" was defeated by a broad array of forces including the Catholic Church hierarchy and a majority of Supreme Court justices.

In 2007, leaders and parties of the fractious traditional political opposition united under the banner of the Genuine Opposition and won the majority of Senate seats, clearly a result of widespread anti-government sentiment in the face of more corruption scandals traced to Malacañang. Last year, mass protest exploded once more with the Lozada exposé, fuelled by the rice and oil crisis and culminating in a huge anti-Charter change protest participated in by a wide cross-section of Philippine society.

The Arroyo regime is despised and the vast majority of our people, especially the youth, want Mrs. Arroyo out of power, the sooner the better. And yet the Arroyo clique has survived backed by formidable forces and groups that it coddles and whose interests it promotes: foreign powers and lobby groups; corrupt and ruthless generals; a rubber-stamp House of Representatives and unprincipled allies in the Senate; and servile local government officials.

The Arroyo gang's unmitigated greed, lust for power, overweening arrogance and lack of moral compunction, together with its fear of the people's just retribution, push it to try to stay in power beyond 2010. The Charter change schemes are alive; the temptation to resort to martial law or some other form of emergency rule remains; and the plan for the victory of a presidential candidate backed by the Arroyo clique in 2010 is already in the works.

## **“The fight goes on!” (“Tuloy ang laban!”)**

One reason why Mrs. Arroyo remains in power is the non-emergence of a widely-accepted opposition figure or figures capable of rallying the vast majority of the people to oust her and go on to fight for more substantial change. Nonetheless, the anti-Arroyo forces have clearly demonstrated their capacity to unite in order to oppose and thwart the regime’s most outrageous schemes. In the process, reform-oriented and progressive individuals and groups among them have emerged; they are gaining public recognition as a different breed of leaders with a new brand of politics distinguishable from the politics of old.

These individuals and groups are consolidating into a more cohesive movement for meaningful change; one that is not just issue-based but carrying a more comprehensive reform program; a movement that addresses the underlying problems of Philippine society and resonates with the people’s basic demands and most deeply-held aspirations.

It is a movement for substantial, not just superficial change. It validates our people’s aspirations for economic progress and social justice; democratic rights not just for the elite but more so for the powerless and downtrodden; and genuine national independence and dignity as a people not just empty, flag-waving patriotism.

This movement affirms the historic necessity and continuing relevance of “people power” as a democratic means of effecting changes in government, including a change in leadership, most especially one that is intolerably oppressive and resistant to change. In fact, the dissipation of the momentum for meaningful change after EDSA I and II is in part the result of post-EDSA regimes’ dismissing “people power” as no longer relevant and even condemning it as “destabilizing”.

### **Aims and tasks**

The severity of the global financial and economic crisis is already being felt, on top of the pre-existing economic and political crisis made worse by the Arroyo regime. It is causing greater public alarm and anxiety; it is breeding even more social discontent including armed conflicts. The conditions are rife for raising higher the public’s political awareness, galvanizing our people into action and strengthening and expanding their grassroots organizations.

In the coming 2010 national elections, it would be folly to allow the Arroyo cabal of evildoers and the traditional system of political parties and dynasties to dictate the election’s agenda, conduct and outcome. The parliamentary opposition is still deeply divided and the illegitimate Arroyo regime is bound to exploit said fissures to its favor. The people cannot be mere spectators, or worse be duped into becoming unwitting accomplices to what could well be just another political zarzuela.

The challenge is for the people to make their voices heard and their sovereign will prevail. Let us foster once more “new politics” meaning government from below; supervision of leadership by politically-aware and empowered people; development and support for leaders with a track record of being pro-people, pro-Filipino, honest and morally upright; a government that relies on the continuing consent and support of the governed rather than coercive means to maintain itself in power.

Let the People’s Movement for Change be unleashed to make its mark on the national elections in 2010 and long after.

The aims and tasks of the People’s Movement for Change are:

1. to act as a People’s Watchdog that will fight for genuine reforms in government and in society as a whole.
2. to develop, disseminate and popularize the People’s Agenda for Change; this can also be the basis for judging the platforms of the different opposition presidential aspirants and candidates for other offices in the 2010 elections;
3. to highlight and develop genuine People’s Leaders who will embody the kind of change in the political system and culture that the people are clamoring for; as a corollary, formulate and propagate the People’s Criteria for candidates to support in 2010;
4. to support particular democratic campaigns and struggles revolving around People’s Issues as defined by the People’s Agenda for Change;
5. to generate much broader and stronger opposition and resistance to moves to perpetuate Gloria Arroyo in power via Charter change, martial law or any other means;
6. to expose and combat systematic and wholesale election fraud and the use of state forces to terrorize voters and the general public; in general, work for honest, fair and free elections.

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25 March 09