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'Fear under Duterte worse than during Marcos dictatorship'

By JANVIC MATEO

The fear felt by the public under the Duterte administration is worse than what was felt at the height of the dictatorship of deposed strongman Ferdinand Marcos, former Civil Service Commission chair and activist Karina Constantino-David claimed.

Speaking at a forum on women in resistance at the University of the Philippines yesterday, David said the current situation in the country is comparable to the martial law era.

"There is fear among the people… the feeling is similar. Before, it had a name: martial law. Now, there is no name, but it is martial law nonetheless. The fear today, I would say, is more than what it was during that time," she said in Filipino.

David, a convenor of opposition-leaning group Tindig Pilipinas, shared her experiences in organizing people in the communities, noting that women are often afraid of what those in power can do to them.

She claimed that more people suffer under the present administration unlike in the past when those who question the government or are suspected of being part of underground movements disappear.

"Today there is an addition. It does not need for you to be active in any opposition. What is needed is only for you to look like an addict," she said, referring to those killed in connection with the government's war against illegal drugs.

In the same forum, Sen. Leila de Lima, who is detained on drug-related charges, criticized Duterte, through a message read by a representative, over various attacks against women.

"There is a pattern here, a modus operandi. They invalidate our place by attacking us, our womanhood and our humanity, and vilified us. And if it is happening now to prominent figures, it happens likely even more prevalently to ordinary women, and especially to vulnerable and at risk women," De Lima wrote.

She added that, "For men who claim so tough, they have the propensity to run – or should I say, withdraw from the issues that confront them. But that is the way of a tyrant: vilification, oppression, silencing, dissent."

De Lima called on the public to continue fighting for women's rights in the country.

"At the very core of our reasons for fighting, of why we resist, is not simply because of our desire to be treated equal. But we are really fighting for our inherent right to be able to contribute to nation building, to be heard and to act with independence on matters that concern our family, our community, our society, our nation and the world," the senator added.

* DUTERTE, RODRIGO - ADMINISTRATION