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## Philippines (New Peoples Army) (1972- )

The Philippines has faced civil war on two fronts since the early 1970s - a communist rebellion led by the New People's Army (NPA) and a Muslim separatist rebellion in the southern island of Mindanao (see Philippines-Moros conflict profile). The NPA began attacks on the Philippine army in the early 1970s. During the 1970s and early 1980s, the NPA won substantial popular support in its struggle against the dictatorship of Philippine president Ferdinand Marcos. In February 1986, the overthrow of Marcos in the "People's Power" revolution undercut the NPA's popular appeal and created divisions within the organization. Sporadic violence has continued, as remnants of the NPA attack political opponents and clash with government forces. Peace talks have not yet succeeded in bringing a formal end to the conflict.

José Maria Sison founded NPA in 1969, as the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The NPA recruited largely among peasants, drawing on the discontent that dates from earlier unsuccessful peasant struggles against large landowners during and after World War II. The NPA also drew supporters from the urban poor and labor unions. The NPA gained territory rapidly, as much of the Philippine army was tied down in fighting the Moro separatists in Mindanao. By 1986, the NPA reportedly controlled roughly one-fifth of the villages in the Philippines, and its guerrilla force numbered 24,000. In 1986, Marcos was overthrown peacefully by civilian protestors who received backing from the military. Opposition leader Corazon Aquino became the country's new president.

The fall of the Marcos regime led to turmoil within the NPA. Some leaders sought to enter mainstream politics, while others wanted to continue the armed struggle. Most importantly, popular support for the armed conflict waned. After inconclusive peace talks with the Aquino government, hardline elements of the NPA resumed fighting in 1987.

Since that time, fighting between the NPA and the army has persisted at a low level. Army-sponsored paramilitary units have engaged the NPA and attacked civilians suspected of aiding them. Both sides have targeted civilians, and the army in particular has come under criticism from human rights groups for extrajudicial killings.

Since the late 1990s, the government and the NPA engaged in sporadic peace talks. In 2002, the NPA was labeled a "terrorist organization" by the United States government. The government of the Philippines nevertheless has continued intermittent peace talks with the NPA.

### *Print Resources*

Jones, Gregg R. (1989) *Red Revolution: Inside the Philippine Guerilla Movement*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Amnesty International (1992) *The Killing Goes On*. London: Amnesty International Publications.

Chapman, William (1987) *Inside the Philippine Revolution*. New York: Norton.

Rivera, Temario C. (2005) "The Philippines in 2004: New Mandate, Daunting Problems," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 45, No. 1.

### *Online Resources*

Amnesty International. *Philippines*.

International Displacement Monitoring Center. *GRP-CPP/NPA/NDF Peace Process*.

United States Library of Congress. *Country Study: Philippines*.

BBC News. *Country Profile: The Philippines*.

### *Timeline*

1968 - CCP established

1969 - NPA created as armed wing of CPP; first clashes with Philippine army

1971 - NPA and army clashes escalate

1972 - Philippine President Marcos declares state of emergency, diverts troops to the Moro conflict in Mindanao

1973 - National Democratic Front established as legitimate NPA political wing

1976 - China and Philippines normalize relations; China ends aid to CPP and NPA

1986 - NPA controls 20% of villages; Marcos ousted, Aquino becomes president

1987 - NPA renews anti-government fighting

1992 - Ramos elected president

1995 - fighting between NPA and army/paramilitaries decline, but human rights abuses by both sides increase

2004 - renewed peace talks begin but are then terminated by NPA