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Editorial

Reply to Aquino's termination of the peace talks

The Communist Party of the Philippines and all the revolutionary mass organizations under the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) assail the US-Aquino regime's unilateral termination of the peace negotiations. At the end of April, Malacañang officials declared that the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GPH) under Aquino was no longer interested in talking with the representatives of the NDFP.

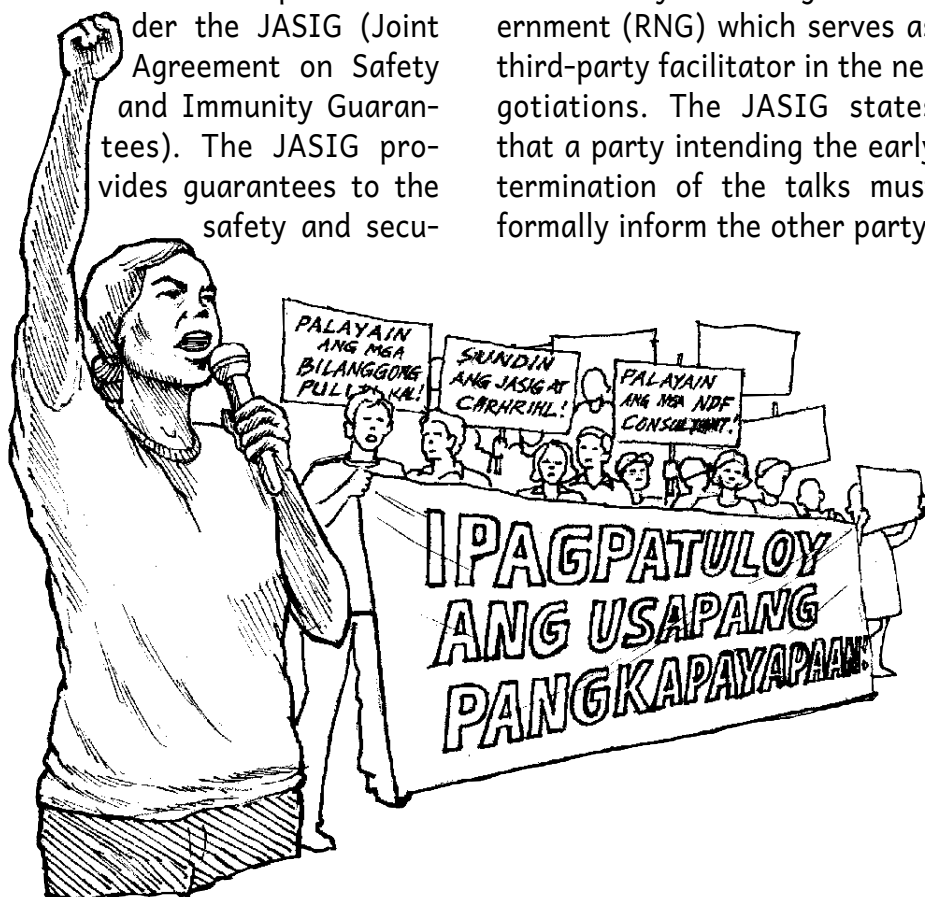
To justify their decision, they claimed that the NDFP's demand to release its 14 peace talks consultants is an unjust and impossible "precondition." The NDFP clarified that this was not a "precondition" because it is an obligation on the part of the GPH stipulated under the JASIG (Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees). The JASIG provides guarantees to the safety and secu-

urity of persons involved in the talks against arrest, detention, surveillance or prosecution by the other party.

The US-Aquino regime has terminated the peace talks without formality and without even giving notice to the NDFP and the Royal Norwegian Government (RNG) which serves as third-party facilitator in the negotiations. The JASIG states that a party intending the early termination of the talks must formally inform the other party,

with the termination taking effect 30 days from receipt of such notice. The GPH has not issued any such notice, whether to the NDFP or the RNG, and unilaterally terminated the talks only through irresponsible statements to the media.

In ending the talks, the US-Aquino regime wants to nullify important agreements painstakingly forged by the NDFP and previous governments of the Republic of the Philippines in the past 20 years or so. Among these critical agreements are The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992, the JASIG of 1995 and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law



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(CARHRIHL) of 1998.

Since Aquino came to power, he has relentlessly violated these agreements. Although there was formal recognition of The Hague Joint Declaration as the foundation for the talks, it was held in contempt by the GPH as a document of "perpetual division." The GPH has violated the JASIG in arresting and detaining NDFP consultants. Despite its "peace and human rights" rhetoric repeated ad nauseam, it has relentlessly been violating the provisions of the CARHRIHL.

The revolutionary forces must assert the continuing validity of these agreements. They must continue to demand that the Aquino regime release the detained NDFP consultants on the basis of the JASIG and all political detainees on the basis of the CARHRIHL. They must likewise assert the correctness of The Hague Joint Declaration as the foundation and framework for attaining a just and lasting peace founded on unity on the principles of national

sovereignty, social justice and democracy.

By unilaterally ending the peace negotiations with the NDFP, the US-Aquino regime has stymied the talks on socio-economic reforms. As early as 1998, upon the conclusion of the first agenda on human rights, the NDFP submitted its first draft on the Comprehensive Agreement on Socio-Economic Reforms. But the GPH, including the US-Aquino regime, has not submitted a reply since then.

Instead of subjecting the draft to negotiation and debate, the US-Aquino regime has mocked it in the media, claiming that its contents are passé. In fact, it is the regime's program of "foreign debt- and investment-driv-

en development" that is worn-out, having been implemented for more than half a century on the orders of the US and the IMF-World Bank.

In reality, the US-Aquino regime has chosen to unilaterally terminate its talks with the NDFP to eliminate all obstacles to its enforcement of economic programs and policies favorable to big foreign and local businessmen. Aquino wants to continue paving the way for the entry of foreign corporations to plunder the Philippines' mineral resources, continue pegging and pulling down workers' wages to entice foreign investors and go on giving foreign monopolies free rein to raise oil prices and control public infrastructure and services.

Since Aquino came to power, he has not shown an iota of interest in using the peace talks as an instrument to confront and resolve the issues that lie at the roots of the raging civil war in the Philippines. Even during the first discussions, it had become clear that all he wanted was to use the peace negotiations to convince the revolutionary forces to have their hands tied by agreeing to an indefinite ceasefire.

The US-Aquino regime's very shallow concept of the peace talks reared its ugly head when GPH negotiators said that the talks are useless if the war continues. Three years after the US-Aquino regime failed to entrap the NDFP into agreeing to a ceasefire of indefinite duration, the peace talks lost their usefulness to Aquino. In terminating the talks, Aquino is turning a deaf ear to the people's cry to address the issues that are at the roots of the intensifying civil war in the Philippines.



	
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As designed by the US government in the "Counter-insurgency Guide of 2009," for Aquino, the peace negotiations are merely an extension of the Oplan Bayanihan war of suppression being waged by his armed forces. Aquino has given his fascist troops free rein to intensify their attacks against the people.

Violations of human rights and of the rights of children, and soldiers' crimes against women can be expected to intensify. Intensifying militarization in the countryside will further lead to killings, illegal arrests, torture, violations of domicile, theft, and food and economic blockades, among others.

It is the CPP and the entire revolutionary movement's general policy to remain open to peace negotiations with any reactionary government that is ready to talk seriously, respect past agreements, comply with its obligations and address the roots of the armed conflict to attain a just and lasting peace.

The CPP calls on all sectors interested in resolving the roots of the civil war to unite and assail Aquino's unilateral termination of the peace talks with the NDFP. They must demand the resumption of formal talks, the release of imprisoned NDFP peace talks consultants and the continuation of talks on socio-economic reforms.

In this regard, the tasks of the NPA and people's militia to intensify the people's war, launch tactical offensives against the enemy armed forces and defend the people's interests are further underscored. **AB**

NDFP celebrates victories on 40th anniversary

Mariano Orosa, president of the National Council of the National Democratic Front, extended his greetings to the leadership and membership of the NDFP's 17 allied organizations on its 40th founding anniversary last April 24. He extended similar greetings to NDFP's allied organizations, compatriots and other international friends and supporters abroad.

The NDFP has achieved numerous victories since it was established. It successfully fought the brutal attacks of the Marcos dictatorship during the 1970s and 1980s. It succeeded in repudiating the erroneous line of insurrectionism, premature verticalization of the people's army and anti-infiltration hysterias during the 1980s. All of its allied organizations and the revolutionary masses accepted and supported the Second Great Rectification Movement.

The NDFP has established organs of political power in 70 provinces and more than 800 municipalities. It has carried out programs of genuine land reform, health, education, and culture, and waged armed struggle.

It has likewise achieved victories in the international field. In 1980, the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal (PPT) recognized the NDFP as the legitimate representative of the Filipino people. It recognized the belligerency status of the NDFP's revolutionary armed struggle against the Marcos dictatorship. As such, the NDFP gained widespread support from the international community. It also managed to establish links with many organizations. The NDFP was able to develop relations with several states and ruling parties, which at various times, gave official recognition and support to the revolution-

ary movement.

In 1991, the NDFP declared adherence to Common Article III of the Geneva Conventions, Protocol II and international humanitarian law. This was further developed in the NDFP Declaration of Adherence to the Geneva Conventions and Protocol I in July 1996. Several European Parliament Resolutions in 1997 and 1999 recognized the NDFP and endorsed its peace negotiations with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP, now GPH).

The Belgian government (1995), the Dutch government (1996) and the Royal Norwegian Government (since 2001 up to the present) served as sponsors and mediators of the peace talks between the NDFP and GPH.

In 2012, the International Legal Advisory Team (ILAT) was established to assist the NDFP in international legal issues. It is composed of more than a dozen international lawyers from Belgium, the UK, the USA, The Netherlands, India and the Philippines. They helped the NDFP National Council in formulating and issuing on 24 April 2012 the NDFP Declaration and Program of Action for the Rights, Protection and Welfare of Children.

Organizations such as the Philippine Solidarity Network of Aotearoa; Revolutionary Organization of Labor, USA; Communist Workers Party for Peace and Socialism (KTP, Finland);

and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) extended their greetings to the NDFP on its 40th anniversary.

Celebrations were held in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. In the Philippines, a lighting rally was held in Carriedo, Sta. Cruz, Manila on April 23. Members of the Makabayang Samahang Pangkalusugan donned surgical masks and gowns and burned effigies symbolic of the US-Aquino regime's fascism and its pro-imperialist policies. **AB**

The NDFP is made up of:

- Artista at Manunulat ng Sambayanan (AR-MAS)
- Christians for National Liberation (CNL)
- Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP)
- Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF)
- Katipunan ng mga Gurong Makabayan (KAGU-MA)
- Kabataang Makabayan (KM)
- Katipunan ng Samahan ng mga Manggagawa (KASAMA)
- Makabayang Kawaning Pilipino (MKP)
- Liga ng Agham Para sa Bayan (LAB)
- LUMAD
- Lupon ng Manananggol para sa Bayan (LUMABAN)
- Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan (MAKIBAKA)
- Makabayang Samahang Pangkalusugan (MASAPA)
- Moro Resistance and Liberation Organization (MRLO)
- Bagong Hukbong Bayan (BHB)
- Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid (PKM)
- Revolutionary Council of Trade Unions

Implementing the policies of the people's government

The revolutionary forces have successfully carried out the policies of the people's democratic government in relation to the conduct of the reactionary elections in its territories.

Last April 28, a convoy carrying Compostela Valley Gov. Arthur Uy was blocked at a checkpoint manned by an NPA unit under Larangang Gerilya 2 in Sityo Malumudaw, Maco. The governor's group had failed to coordinate with the NPA.

Campaign rules have been generally implemented since most politicians recognize and comply with them despite the Aquino regime and its armed forces' threats against those who do.

The governor's group properly stopped at the checkpoint and did not resist. The NPA arrested the governor's police escort and confiscated two M16s, four pistols and a handheld radio. The governor was permitted to return home an hour later.

In contrast with this was the unexpected and unwanted incident on Abril 20 in Gingoog City where armed escorts of Mayor Ruthie Guingona and a unit of the NPA exchanged fire in Upper Kapitulangan, Alatagan, Misamis Oriental. The fight broke out after the mayor's convoy plowed through the NPA checkpoint.

The incident left Mayor Guingona wounded, and her driver and a bodyguard dead. The NPA in North Central Mindanao offered its apologies for wounding Mayor Guingona.

The NPA-NCMR asserts that Mayor Guingona was properly informed. Nevertheless, it sees the need to conduct an investigation on the incident to come up with more effective ways of implementing the policies of the people's government and reserving the use of armed force only against the most incorrigible armed politicians.

The CPP and NPA reiterates its call to all candidates to comply with the revolutionary policy and coordinate with the NPA. The CPP asserts that the people's government disallows the entry of armed personnel to keep the peace in territories of revolutionary political power. This policy is carried out to protect the residents' interests, rights and welfare.

In the absence of a final peace accord between the GPH and the NDFP, Ka Luis Jalandoni, chair of the NDFP peace panel clarified that the revolutionary movement will continue to exercise its political power in the countryside.

This means that the NPA will continue to carry out the policies of the people's government on the conduct of the reactionary elections and related matters. The NPA strictly adheres to its own rules of discipline, the CARHRIHL and similar policies and regulations under international humanitarian law, especially with regards to the protection of civilians and hors de combat.

In line with this, the Mt. Apo Subregional Command of the NPA-SMR intensified its campaign against military operations and vote-buying by reactionary politicians to protect the people and defend its revolutionary base.

From April 13 to May 3, NPA units confiscated 93 sacks of rice from operators of local candidates who have been entering revolutionary areas without coordinating with, and without permission from, the democratic people's government, in the towns of Magpet, Makilala and Arakan, both in North Cotabato.

The NPA turned over the sacks of rice initially intended to buy votes, to the proper organs of political power for accounting and distribution, according Ka Isabel Fermiza, spokesperson to the NPA Mt. Apo Subregional Command. **AB**

Team PNoy coalition unravelling

Benigno Aquino III is desperate to pull off the 12-0 target in favor of Team PNoy (a coalition made up of the Liberal Party, Nationalist People's Coalition, Nacionalista Party and other allied parties). If he succeeds, he can expect Congress and the local governments to kowtow to his and his imperialist master's wishes.

Team PNoy is way ahead of the United Nationalist Alliance (UNA) in terms of machinery, funding and influence over the military and police. To further ensure victory, Aquino himself has been leading Team PNoy sorties in the provinces.

Aquino, however, isn't taking chances especially since some Team PNoy leaders, like Gov. Joey Salceda are also supporting UNA candidates such as Nancy Binay, JV Ejercito and Jackie Enrique. Salceda was a known Gloria Arroyo leader who sided with Aquino during the 2010 elections.

Aquino is likewise uncertain of LP leaders in Pangasinan since Gov. Amado Espino, an Arroyo partymate, still holds great influence over the province.

Meanwhile, Sen. Vicente Sotto III, one of NPC's leaders, revealed that his party would no longer be campaigning for Team PNoy's 12-0 after the Liberal Party began a smear campaign against Sen. Loren Legarda (NPC).

On top of this, the Iglesia ni Cristo announced that it will only support seven bets from Team PNoy, and five from UNA.

The Catholic Church, a staunch critic of Aquino, is actively criticizing the failure of the regime's anti-corruption campaign and the worsening

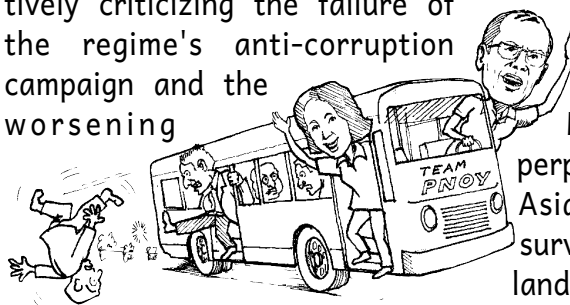
poverty in the country.

The Aquino regime is now flagrantly harassing its rival candidates. Last May 2, a team under the PNP intelligence Unit in Camp Crame arrested Rommel Ynion, UNA's candidate for Iloilo City mayor. Ynion is being charged with 16 criminal cases, including failure to pay taxes. His rival, Mayor Patrick Mabilog, is one of the lackeys of Sen. Franklin Drilon, Team PNoy's campaign manager.

On the same day, elements from the PNP Special Action Force barged into the house of Mayor Magdaleno Peña of Manapla, Negros Occidental. Peña is an ally of Vice Gov. Genaro Alvarez who is a rival of reelectionist Gov. Alfredo Marañon Jr. of Team PNoy. Peña's son is running for mayor to replace his father.

In addition to the COMELEC's harassment campaign, the AFP, PNP and their assets carry out blatant anticommunist campaigns against progressive parties. They intensified their campaign after the Social Weather Stations (SWS) came up with a survey where Bayan Muna, Gabriela's Women's Party, Anakpawis, Kabataan and other allied organizations under the Makabayan Coalition topped the partylist elections' list.

On the other hand, Makabayan's Teddy Casiño is perpetually ranked low in Pulse Asia and SWS' commissioned surveys despite almost always landing in the top three in popular surveys. **AB**



The 2013 election results will be questionable

Members of the Automated Elections System (AES) Watch and electronic experts stand by their belief that the results of the 2013 elections will be questionable.

This is despite the announcement made by Commission on Elections' Chair Sixto Brillantes that the 78,000 automated counting machines passed the final testing and sealing that was done in Pasay City last May 2. But problems with the machines surfaced in Muntinlupa and Parañaque on May 6. The automated counting machines will count the votes in the upcoming elections.

Fears that widespread fraud similar to that in the 2010 elections will occur continue to spread due to the COMELEC's refusal to provide the public with the source program used to control the automated counting machines. The COMELEC encountered problems with the program as Smartmatic, the foreign company that it has hired, does not actually own the source code. It is owned by Dominion Voting Systems, a company based in Del-

aware, USA. Dominion terminated its licensing agreement with Smartmatic in May 2012.

The COMELEC is already in possession of the source code but Dominion refuses to allow it to make it public. The company assented to allowing parties to analyze the program only after the elections. No system is in place to verify that the machines are loaded with the official program. Three months ago, the Kontra-Daya coalition called on the COMELEC to outline contingency plans for manual counting and prepare for the worst possible scenario. This call was echoed by the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), Association of Major Religions Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP) and other election watchdogs.

The Center for People Empowerment and Governance (CENPEG) likewise urged voters and poll watchers to prepare for any eventuality because the electronic system that will be used on May 13 is sure to produce worse problems than those encountered in May 2010. AB

NPA offensives in ICR, ST, SMR and FSMR

The NPA in Benguet carried out punitive measures against the Lepanto Mining Company due to its unabated seizure of ancestral lands and destruction of the environment and people's livelihoods. Meanwhile, seven soldiers were killed and an undetermined number wounded in a series of tactical offensives launched by the NPA in Southern Tagalog, Southern Mindanao and Far South Mindanao from March to May 3.

In Cordillera. A unit from the Jennifer "Maria" Cariño Command (NPA-Benguet) burned a drilling machine owned by Lepanto Consolidated Mining Company in Colalo. This served as punishment for the company's longstanding land grabbing, deception and violence against the people of Mankayan, Benguet.

In Far South Mindanao. Three soldiers from the 27th IB's Charlie Coy were killed and an undetermined number were wounded after guerrillas from

the NPA-Front 73's Junito Banda Command ambushed them in Sitio Pulanglupa, Barangay Takonel, Lake Sebu, South Cotabato on April 16. The guerrillas were able to withdraw safely after a 15-minute firefight.

Prior to this, the 57th IB suffered casualties after being hit by a command-detonated explosive (CDX) while they were on their way to their command post at 7:50 p.m. of April 14 in Barangay Malasila, Makilala, North Cotabato.

On April 13, two Red fighters who mingled with civilians and soldiers were able to seize an M16 from a sleeping soldier of the 73rd IB in Sitio Sulkili, Upper Suyan, Malapatan, Sarangani.

In Barangay Luayon, Makilala, a number of soldiers were wounded, including a 2Lieutenant Alejo from the 39th IB, in a series of sniping operations carried out by guerrillas from the NPA's Mt. Alip Command on April 10-11.

The 1002nd Bde retaliated by bombing the area, using rocket launchers and two combat helicopters. Because of this, almost a hectare of rubber trees was destroyed and farmwork was derailed in the villages of Luayon, Sta. Filomena, New Baguio and Bato, all in Makilala.

On March 27, the NPA ambushed soldiers from the 73rd IB at around 2:30 p.m. in Sitio Camogna, Barangay Tamban, Malungon, Sarangani. A soldier was

wounded and two killed, including a Lieutenant Jagar. Two days prior, a squad of the NPA seized a .45 pistol and a .357 revolver from a despotic landlord and councilor of Barangay Kinangan, Malita, Davao del Sur.

Meanwhile, a soldier was killed and several wounded in five successive harassment and sniping operations carried out by the NPA's Andre Ilicot Command against the 39th IB in Sitio Blasan, Barangay Malawanit, Magsaysay, Davao del Sur. The 39th IB had been carrying out clearing operations for five days in preparation for the entry of Kannemer Foods International, a multinational corporation which plans to build a 1,000-hectare plantation in Sitio Blasan.

In Southern Tagalog. Three soldiers from the 76th IB who were patrolling Sitio Naibuan in Barangay Batasan, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro were wounded in a harassment operation carried out by a team from the NPA's Lucio de Guzman Command on April 24. The 76th IB had just been transferred from Quezon province where it had a long record of human rights abuses.

In Southern Mindanao. NPA Red fighters ambushed a platoon from the 57th IB in Barangay Binay, Magpet, North Cotabato at noon of May 3. Two soldiers were killed and two wounded after the NPA used a command-detonated explosive. According to Ka Isabel Fermina of the NPA's Mt. Apo Subregional Command, the soldiers were in the area to provide security to candidates who were forcibly buying votes.

Prior to this, Red fighters carried out a series of armed actions against troops of the 71st IB and members of the Mabini-PNP in April 23-24. The 71st IB is responsible for killing eight-year old Roque Antivo last April 3.

The 71st IB's Charlie Coy suffered several casualties when the NPA exploded a CDX along their path. The ambush was carried out at around 6 a.m. of April 24.

At the same time, Red fighters arrested Pfc. Jesus Tomas Jr in Barangay Elizalde, Maco, Compostela Valley. Tomas belongs to the 71st IB's three-man supply team.

A day before, guerrillas from Larangang Gerilya 2 fired upon the Mabili Police Station using a grenade launcher. **AB**

Military victimizes civilians in Catanduanes

Troops from the 83rd IB killed civilian Jerico Lucero at around 3 a.m. of April 13 in Barangay San Vicente, San Andres, Catanduanes.

Fascist soldiers killed Lucera, a farmer and abaca stripper, after the NPA carried out punitive operations against CAFGU element Zaldy Muebla. Muebla was a willing guide for the 83rd IB's military operations. The NPA was able to seize a .38 pistol from him.

The soldiers retaliated by killing Lucero, after accusing him of being an NPA supporter.

After killing Lucero, the soldiers sowed terror and disinformation in the area by spreading rumors that the NPA planned to kill one informer each week. Several families evacuated to the neighboring barangay because of this.

To cover up their crime and abuses against civilians, the 83rd IB is claiming that the NPA drove away the people of Barangay San Vicente. This is a big lie, said the NPA-Catanduanes. **AB**

Military harasses FFM in Davao Oriental

Fascist troops from the 67th IB harassed 69 members of a fact-finding mission (FFM) in Sitio Cabuyao, Barangay Binondo, Banganga, Davao Oriental last April 19. The 67th IB is led by Lt. Col. Krisnamuri Mortela.

The FFM included church members and human rights activists. The group likewise included reporter Macky Macaspac of *Pinoy Weekly*. They started their investigation on cases of human rights violations last April 18.

According to Macaspac, the military threatened the FFM's driver so they were forced to sleep in Sitio Cabuyao on the night of April 19. The soldiers also put up checkpoints and barricades on the road to hinder the group's passage.

When they were stranded in the area, Sr. Nina Achaoso, a member of the FFM, called for help from the Promotion of Church People's Response-Manila and members of the media in Davao City.

They were able to leave the area on April 20 after progressive groups and members of the media from Davao City fetched them. One of the cases the FFM is investigating is that of the murder of Cristina Jose, a local leader of Barug Katawhan from Barangay Binondo.

The group is also investigating the human rights situation in Baganga, one of the towns severely affected by Typhoon Pablo in December 2012. They also visited the nearby towns of Boston and Cateel in Davao Oriental. **AB**

May 1: Day of protest for the working class

Several thousands of workers and their supporters launched a protest action to commemorate the 123rd Labor Day last May 1. According to Action Against Contractualization towards Significant Wage Increase Now! (ACT2WIN!), rallyists in Liwasang Bonifacio, Manila swelled to 30,000 while 10,000 marched in the cities of Baguio, Santiago, Batangas, Cavite, Calamba, Lucena, Legazpi, Sorsogon, Tacloban, Cebu, Bacolod, Iloilo, Roxas, Davao and Cagayan de Oro and in the town of Kalibo, Aklan.

They strongly condemned the US-Aquino regime's antiworker programs and policies, while asserting the need for a ₱125 across-the-board wage increase. ACT2WIN! counts several workers' centers and federations among its allies, including Kilusang Mayo Uno, the Federation of Free Workers and the National Labor Union.

Like the previous regimes, the Aquino regime merely offered a ₱30-increase in the cost of living allowance and other non-wage benefits like educational and health assistance. According to the workers, these are highly insulting, especially since it has been more than a decade since real wages were last increased. They also know that the benefits the Aquino regime is boasting of do not need to be "granted," as these are social services that are funded by the

taxes paid by ordinary people.

According to Aquino and his propagandists, any wage increase will result in massive unemployment. Companies will go "bankrupt" by as much as ₱1.3 trillion if the ₱125 wage increase is implemented. Thus, the workers should just celebrate May 1 as a "good jobs day," as it is already the regime's priority to generate additional employment in the coming years.

These claims are insulting in the face of the massive profits local and foreign companies siphon from the workers and the growing number of unemployed.

Accelerating accumulation of profits by the biggest capitalists. During the Aquino regime's first two years, profits of the biggest companies in the Philippines increased to ₱780 billion from the ₱421 billion annual average under the Arroyo

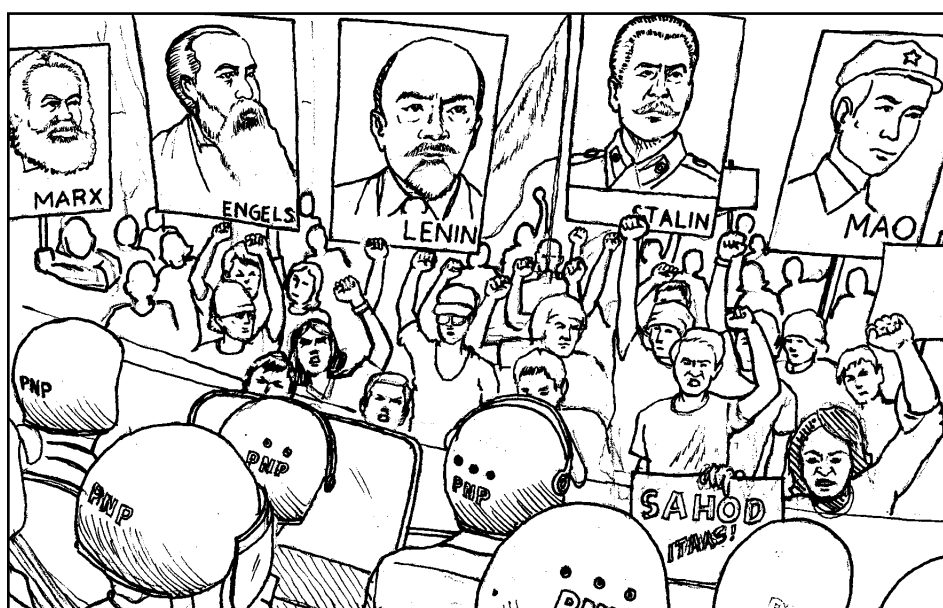
regime. Likewise, the profits of these companies rose by 11%. In 2012, profits of companies listed in the stock market increased by 18%—from ₱320 billion in 2011 to ₱377 billion in 2012. Some companies registered profits of up to 36%.

On the other hand, workers' wages remain low. Despite the Aquino regime's boastful claim that the GDP grew last year, there has been no change in workers' earnings in sectors which showed the biggest growth in the last two years. Wage increases in the agricultural and mining sector are insignificant (4% only), despite the 821% growth in profits of agricultural companies and 134% growth in the profits of mining companies.

Since the abolition of the national minimum wage and establishment of the regional wage boards in 1989, there has been no substantive increase in daily wages despite the yearly increase in the prices of basic necessities. The highest minimum wage of ₱456 (National Capital Region) is 56% short of the daily requirements of a family of six. Compared to the prices of commodities and services in 2006, the real value of the ₱456 minimum wage is now pegged at ₱363.

A family requires up to ₱1,034 to meet its food, housing, clothing, transportation and communication requirements daily. The amount does not cover educational and medical services.

There has also been no change in unemployment statistics. Despite Aquino's claims, sectors it has deemed as "growth sectors" such as the call center, construction, transportation and communication sectors, have failed to generate any significant contribution to general employment numbers. For example, the



construction sector only generated a 6.5% increase in new jobs, despite growing by more than 14% last year. New jobs in the service sector rose by only 1.8%, even as it grew by 5% during the same period.

Unemployment continues to rise. This is in spite of various statistical manipulations the government has employed since 1997. In the last six years, government agencies have reported unemployment at 10.5-11.1%. Millions of youth and educated workers are added to the ranks of the unemployed every year. Many of them are forced to seek employment outside the country or take jobs which are inappropriate to their skill set or pay very low wages.

It is undeniable that the Aquino regime's antiworker policies have widened the gap between classes. The working class' exploited status that is a direct result of capitalist exploitation is further aggravated by the neoliberal policies of the regime. Using armed force, courts and the bureaucracy, state violence is intensified in the face of the workers' heightened struggles.

Intensified attacks against the working class. The struggle for a living wage, decent jobs and other economic benefits is the key to the working class' survival and dignity. It unites the tens of thousands of workers in the class struggle and raises their awareness of their class' key role in transforming society towards a higher stage.

Thus, the working class must lead the struggle against the foreign monopolies and their local counterparts' control of local industries and public utilities. It must fight for the rights and welfare of their unions and associations, and for all classes exploited under the rule of big landlords and the comprador bourgeoisie.

The workers must struggle for a society oriented towards developing the economy for the betterment of the majority—marked by the distribution of land to the tiller, the use of capital for nationalist industrialization and the increasing allocation of public funds to agriculture, education, health services and other social benefits. **AB**

Widespread technical smuggling under the US-Aquino regime

The Philippines figured once again as a "smuggling capital" when smuggled rice worth ₱1.2 billion was seized in Cebu last week. Rice is not the only product to be smuggled into the Philippines, skirting the right tariffs. Oil, various food products, chemicals, vehicles, steel, electronics and more are included in the list of products technically smuggled into the country.

According to the latest data of the International Monetary Fund, government losses due to smuggling grew sixfold since Aquino came to power. From the ₱6 billion annual average under the Estrada and Arroyo regimes, revenue loss due to nonpayment of proper tariffs through technical smuggling now comes to \$19 billion.

Technical smuggling involves the misclassification of the nature, quality, weight or value of products exported into the country. This is done to avoid paying the correct tariffs or taxes for these products. It is carried out in collusion with corrupt officials from the Bureau of Customs, Philippine Ports Authority and Land Transportation Office, with the direct supervision and consent of the regime's highest officials.

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Condolences to Bangladeshi workers

On May 1, Filipino workers extended their condolences to the families and colleagues of hundreds of Bangladeshi workers who died in one of the country's worst industrial accidents. More than 600 workers were killed when their nine-floor building collapsed. The building served as a sweatshop for big US clothing companies such as Walmart, GAP, H&M and more.

They also expressed solidarity with the people of Bangladesh in condemning the reactionary Bangladeshi government and big capitalists in their country. As it is in the Philippines, big capitalists are in the habit of sacrificing the health and safety of their workers in exchange for larger profits. The Bangladeshi government allowed the workers to labor under inhuman working conditions, despite repeated accidents in their country.

The accident illustrates the slavlike conditions of workers in Bangladesh. Those killed were paid \$50 or P2,000/month only while working nonstop under subhuman conditions. **AB**

Technical smuggling has grown and worsened under Aquino. In the main, it is his sisters and other family members both from the side of the Aquinos and the Cojuangcos, who benefit from the crime. To cover up smuggling, Aquino manipulates statistics in the agricultural sector. Aquino then ensures that the biggest contracts are given to his family and relatives by putting pressure on his competitors while launching bogus investigations into reports of widespread smuggling.

An example of this charade is the regime's scramble to investigate Petron Philippines' allegations that Pilipinas Shell misdeclared its oil exports. Petron is Shell's closest rival and is owned by Aquino's uncle Eduardo Cojuangco. Petron alleged that Shell failed to remit up to P30-40 billion yearly in taxes by misclassifying its oil products, such as declaring tetrapropylene as unleaded gasoline. Tetrapropylene is exempted from excise taxes. Unleaded premium gasoline is declared as catalytic cracked gasoline and light catalytic gasoline, which require lower tariffs.

Despite Aquino's posturing, it had come to light that Eduardo Oban Jr, previously AFP Chief of Staff and now an under-secretary at the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) is involved in oil smuggling. Most of the exports are smuggled through Subic Bay Freeport in Olongapo and in ports in Cebu, Cagayan de Oro, Manila and Cagayan.

Last year, Aquino also made

a show of personally reporting to the Bureau of Customs a shipload of smuggled rice worth P600 million in Subic Bay Freeport. It would now appear that several of his allies are involved in rice smuggling. Last February, rice smuggling charges were brought against Lito Banayo, former National Food Authority (NFA) administrator under Aquino, and seven of his co-workers at the NFA.

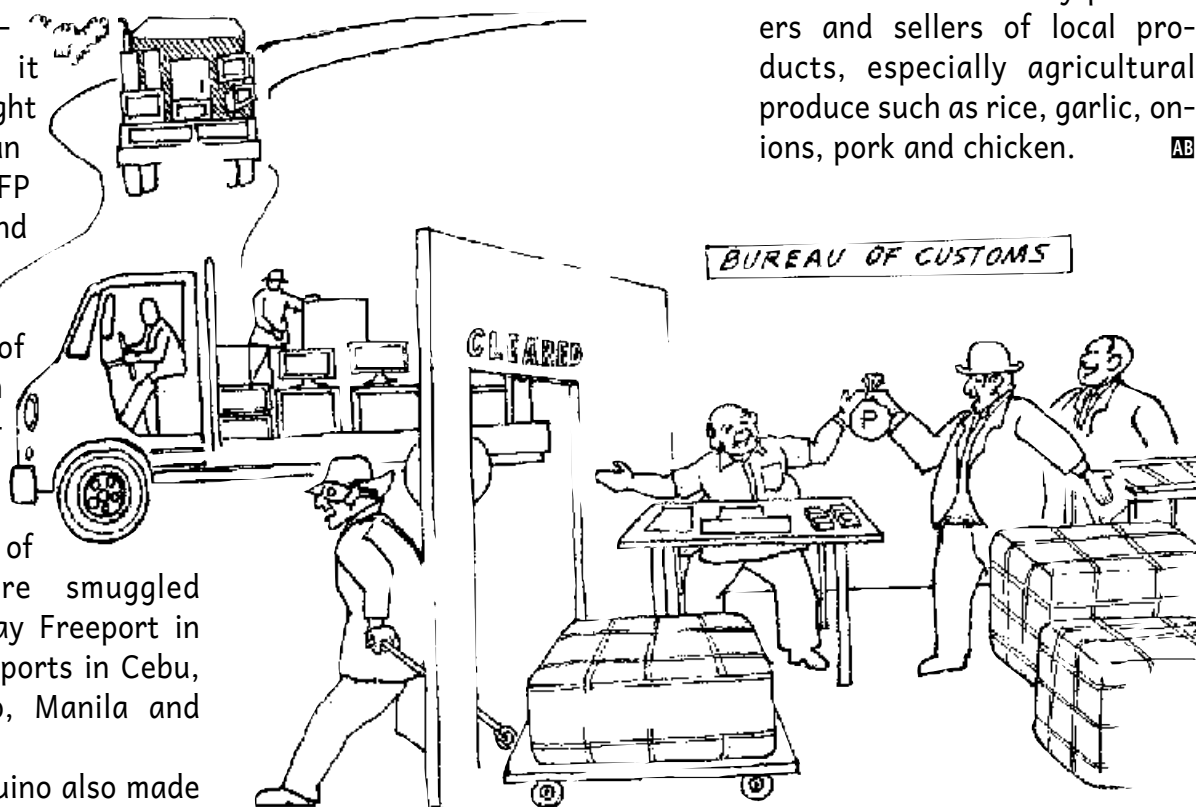
According to the IMF agency Direction of Trade Statistics, the value of rice smuggled into the ports of Cebu and various ecozones in the country rose to P16.6 billion during Aquino's first two years. Due to the volume of smuggled rice in Cebu, the Aquino regime made it appear that rice production in the island is very high, rivaling that of Central Luzon. Combined revenue loss from rice smuggling from Vietnam and China, and palm oil smuggling from Malaysia and Indonesia, run up to P80 billion.

The biggest technical smugglers include the Jalosjos family of Zamboanga, the Dimaporos of Mindanao and the Enriles of

Cagayan. Technical smuggling that was under the control of the Arroyo family and their cohorts (especially of sugar) is now controlled by the Cojuangco-Aquinos, in particular by Aquino's uncle Peping Cojuangco.

Technical smuggling worsened due to the trade liberalization policy. Under the Transaction Value Method of the Bureau of Customs, tariffs are determined by the documented quality, value and volume of the shipment as presented by the importer. The Bureau of Customs accepts their documentation without verifying the true value and volume of the shipment.

This policy was imposed by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which was formed in 1994. Big businesses manage to circumvent the laws to smuggle goods, dump them in the local market and sell them at low prices in collusion with the ruling regime and dirty officials at the Bureau of Customs. This results in the massive flooding of the local market with foreign products and losses incurred by producers and sellers of local products, especially agricultural produce such as rice, garlic, onions, pork and chicken. AB



Aquino neglects OFWs in Saudi

The number of stranded migrant Filipinos in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has come to 4,397 and is still rising, according to Migrante-Middle East. Due to the Philippine consulate's slow response, the migrants have put up tents beside the Philippine consulate in the area to make their demands known to the US-Aquino regime.

The migrants have been staying in the area for months. Most of them are growing weaker due to extreme hunger, heat and tension. One of them, Danilo Grefadilyo died of ulcers inside the Resource Center on April 23. On September 18, Mateo Amaro, 71 years old, died of tuberculosis.

Most migrants are only asking the Aquino regime for their immediate and free repatriation. But the regime continues to refuse to use its diplomatic relations with the Saudi kingdom to help the migrants and ensure the protection of their rights and welfare. It instead continues to send workers to

KSA and other countries.

The migrants' abominable situation worsened after the Saudi government tightened its rules on workers as part of what it calls "Saudization." The KSA implemented Saudization, a policy enacted in 2011, to give priority to the employment of local workers as against migrants. Recently, the law was amended to give the Interior and Labor Ministries the authority to conduct inspections and investigations, and punish undocumented migrants. Violent crackdowns have since been carried out in houses, schools and hospitals mainly in cities like Riyadh, Jeddah, Al Khobar and Damman since March 28. It has affected eight million migrants, including 1.2 million Filipinos.

The crackdown saw the rise of various violations of the migrants' human rights. There have been plenty of documented cases of illegal arrests

and destruction of property, and other cases of abuses by KSA authorities. Since September, the number of stranded migrants waiting to be sent home has risen to 7,000. Instead of helping, the consulate temporarily suspended its repatriation program. If they fail to leave the country, all undocumented migrants and those with incomplete papers will be obliged to pay a KSA-imposed fine of ₱11,000 to ₱550,105.

The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) estimates that there are more than 30,000 undocumented workers in the KSA. They belong to the sector most vulnerable to abuse. Cases of employees running away for various reasons abound—reasons such as illegal recruitment, contract violations, exorbitant placement fees, collection of dues without receipts, usurious rates of lending, inhuman working conditions, illegal wage cutdowns, failure to procure a permit to work and nonpayment of wages, nonpayment of overtime wages and other forms of abuses.

An additional form of suppression of migrant rights is the Kafala system. Under this system, a migrant worker is beholden to the employer who issued his visa. This employer then controls his job and his life in general while he is inside the country. If he leaves his job and looks for another using the same visa, he will be treated as an illegal and undocumented migrant worker.

The KSA is also using "Saudization" to violate the rights of its migrant workers and throw them out of the country. Illegal arrests, deportations and the criminalization of migrant workers are all being done in the name of this law. **AB**



Families of Saudi OFWs launch protests

Families of stranded migrants in Saudi Arabia and members of Migrante launched a three-day solidarity camp in front of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) from April 29 to May 1. They continued their protest in Mendiola when nothing came out of their dialogue with the DFA. They called for the immediate and free repatriation of their loved ones and for the rejection of the government's labor export policy.

Other migrants' families launched similar protest actions in front of the OWWA branch in Lucena City and DFA in Davao City. On April 30, some families held a rally in front of the DFA office in General Santos City and on May 2, another group held a rally in Pampanga.

The solidarity camp is a symbolic protest to reiterate their demands through collective action and struggle, said Gary Martinez, Migrante Internation-

al chairperson. By camping out, they compel the DFA to listen to the migrants and their families' demands.

The DFA promised to ask the KSA to extend the deadline it has given to undocumented workers for another three more months, work on their request for a general amnesty, and call for the nullification of the fines and the rejection of the "no objection certificate" that the KSA used against the arrested migrants. It also promised to investigate reports on the illegal collection of fees by the Philippine consulate in Jeddah.

But these steps are not enough, according to the migrants' families. The DFA added nothing new to what it has promised before. The DFA also did not make any commitments regarding the migrants' demand for their immediate and free repatriation. **AB**

Hacienda Luisita farmworkers launch Lakbayan

Farmworkers from Hacienda Luisita launched a four-day Lakbayan from April 24-27 to call for the free distribution of the hacienda lands and condemn the continuing collusion between the Cojuangco-Aquino family and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) to sabotage the implementation of the Supreme Court decision ordering the subjection of the vast estate to land reform.

It has been a year since the Supreme Court issued the order. Up to the present, distribution has not started due to the various machinations of the DAR and the Cojuangco-Aquinos to delay the process.

Their latest maneuvers include reclassifying land within the hacienda to reduce the distributable land area. According to the report the DAR submitted to the Supreme Court after it

conducted an ocular inspection and segregation survey in the hacienda last March, there are 30 lots already occupied by residential houses, roads, fishponds and the like.

According to the DAR, these lots are non-agricultural, and thus, should not be included in the 4,355 hectares that should be distributed. The DAR carried out the survey with F.F. Cruz, which has the final word on the land area that is to be distributed to the farm workers. F.F. Cruz is a construction company which enjoys a longstanding relationship with the Aquino family. In the meantime, Jose "Peping" Cojuangco presided over the meeting held before the ocular inspection. Beneficiary groups were not invited, even if they are the interested party.

The farmworkers condemn these manipulations. The Su-

preme Court did not mention that land deemed inappropriate for agricultural production should be excluded from distribution. The survey not only reduced the land area to be distributed, it also subdivided the land that could be collectively owned by the farmworkers.

Another maneuver of the DAR and the Cojuangco-Aquino family is demanding exacting standards for the company tasked to audit HLI's land sales prior to the Supreme Court decision. The court had ordered the HLI to compensate the farmworkers in the amount of ₱1.33 billion for the 580 hectares it sold to the Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation and Luisita Industrial Park and the 80.5 hectares now occupied by the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SC-TEX). No audit has been conducted to date. **AB**