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Editorial

Alliance and struggle under the Duterte regime

The alliance between the national democratic movement and the incoming Duterte regime continues to be forged. It is expected to further take shape over the next few weeks until Rodrigo Duterte is formally inaugurated as the next chief of the reactionary regime.

At the same time, the Filipino masses' clamor for national democracy continues to grow, especially in the face of worsening socio-economic crisis. The people have a strong desire to advance their struggles to end oppressive and exploitative neoliberal policies, oppose worsening US military intervention and put a stop to the war of suppression of the reactionary military.

Duterte's show of readiness to continue cooperation and friendship with the national democratic movement is the basis of possibilities for a fruitful alliance with his government.

Duterte strengthened his alliance with the national democratic movement when he offered the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) some cabinet positions. This was welcomed by the CPP and National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) by submitting a list of recommended progressive officials. He recently announced their appointment as secretaries of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR)

and Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and as officials of other agencies of his government.

The progressives set to be appointed by Duterte are expected to show unblemished integrity, simple living and preference for the interests of workers, peasants and the oppressed and impoverished masses. They must serve as additional weapons for advancing the people's struggles to attain their immediate and long-term demands to improve their social conditions.

Part of forging an alliance with Duterte are efforts to advance peace negotiations between the

NDFP and the Government of the Philippines (GPH). Negotiation prospects are bright based on Duterte's open readiness to recognize all previous agreements and comply with GPH obligations. Fulfillment of Duterte's promise to release all NDFP peace talks consultants and political detainees is awaited.

Efforts to forge agreements to address the socio-economic and political roots of the civil war will be exerted through peace negotiations. The NDFP will strive to meet Duterte's declaration of being a Leftist or one who upholds the interests of the toiling masses with concrete mutually acceptable programs that serve the interests of the masses.

By building an alliance with the incoming Duterte regime, the re-



volutionary movement is afforded a great opportunity to propagate and assert the correctness of the national democratic line and analysis, principles and program. Let us take advantage of the favorable situation to reach out to the broad masses and further expand the organized forces and strengthen the mass struggles of workers, peasants, urban poor, student-youth and other sectors.

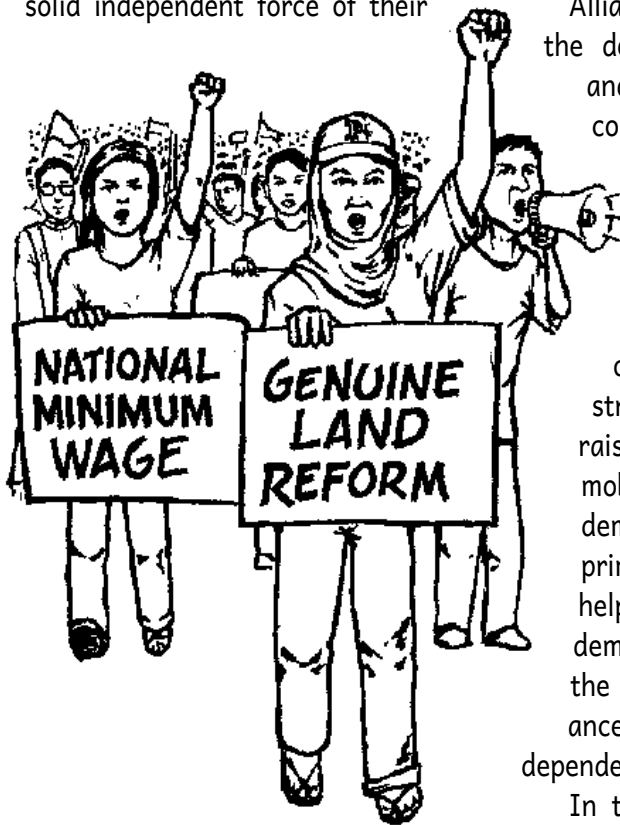
While in alliance with the Duterte regime, mass struggles should also be vigorously advanced by arousing, organizing and mobilizing the broad masses. We must use the advantage of the alliance with Duterte to further boost mass struggles, which in turn will strengthen the alliance.

Display the people's strength by bringing them together in large assemblies and other forms of congregation united by their democratic demands. Mobilize hundreds of thousands of people in the national capital and other cities nationwide to support the peace talks and highlight the demands of workers, pea-

sants and other sectors.

The revolutionary movement must guard against the dangers of reformism, particularly of aspiring for substantive changes merely through the work of representatives in the reactionary parliament and bureaucracy.

The people must maintain the solid independent force of their



mass movement—not tailing behind nor tied to the limitations of the reactionary parliament and bureaucracy.

This will ensure that the national democratic movement will advance and strengthen, regardless of the outcome of the alliance with the incoming regime.

Alliance work and advancing the democratic mass movement and armed struggle are two complementary sides of the revolutionary movement's tactics in engaging the new incoming Duterte regime.

Between the two, developing the independent strength of the masses or raising their capacity at mass mobilization to fight for their democratic demands is more primary. Alliance work will help in strengthening the democratic mass movement; on the other hand, gains in alliance work depends on the independent strength of the masses.

In the spirit of alliance work, waging mass struggles, raising criticism or condemnation must be carried out mainly as a positive assertion of demands in order to encourage the incoming Duterte regime to heed the people's clamor and fight the most rabid pro-imperialist and militarist forces.

The rise of someone like Duterte as head of the reactionary state who does not kowtow to the US imperialists opens great potential for achieving a significant change in the conditions of the Filipino people. The organized strength of the Filipino people must be raised in order to confront the intense struggles within and outside alliance work with the Duterte regime.

In the strategic view, strengthening the organized ranks of the people is the more important measure of the effectiveness of our tactics in engaging the new incoming regime.



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Peace negotiations gain wide support

Religious groups and progressive organizations are pushing for the resumption of peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines under the next regime.

Twenty eight leaders and officials of the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP) urged Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte to restart the stalled peace negotiations. PEPP likewise asked Duterte to pay close attention to the state of Lumads, keep the people abreast of developments in the peace talks, as well as hold consultations with all stakeholders.

In an open letter to the newly elected president, the alliance Pilgrims for Peace commended Duterte's promise to resolve the roots of the armed conflict. In line with this, Pilgrims encouraged him to place the GPH-NDFP peace negotiations on firm footing by respecting previously signed agreements and push forward with the substantive agenda outlined in The Hague Joint Declaration.

NDFP Chief Political Consultant

Jose Maria Sison said that the NDFP's proposals for socio-economic reforms are realistic. He said that the implementation of land reform as proposed by the NDFP will benefit 70% of the population, and will ensure food security for the whole country. Likewise, the proposal for national industrialization will provide employment for the people so that 20% of the country's labor force will no longer need to seek employment abroad.

On June 15, representatives of the next government and the NDFP will meet in Oslo, Norway for preliminary talks to prepare for the formal negotiations. Among the items to be discussed are the release of political prisoners based on the Joint Agreement on Security and Immunity Guarantees, the agenda on socio-economic reforms and political settlement, and the cessation of armed hostilities.

According to NDFP Negotiating Panel member Fidel Agcaoili, a ceasefire is doable immediately, depending on mutual understanding. He further said that both parties should each implement the disposition of their forces,

cessation of offensive operations in the duration of the ceasefire and other points. All these should be guided by a ceasefire mechanism.

Agcaoili added that the NDFP will have only one ceasefire committee, which will go around for monitoring and inspection on the implementation of the ceasefire. The support of the religious sector can also be harnessed to serve as third party observers.

The NDFP likewise condemned the US attempt to sabotage and upset the peace negotiations by the reinclusion of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army in its list of "foreign terrorist organizations."

The NDFP will also press the next government to abrogate the military agreements between the Philippines and the US as "non-negotiable" issues in the negotiations.

Meanwhile, coinciding with the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement's 17th year of violation of Philippine sovereignty, patriotic organizations asked the incoming Duterte government to revoke the unequal military agreements.

In the US, different organizations headed by Bagong Alyansang Makabayan-USA traveled to different parts of the country to protest US militarization of the Philippines, especially in Mindanao. In particular, they demanded that the US stop its military aid to the Philippines, which last year amounted to \$79M from the previous \$50M. AB



Three NDFP nominees appointed to Cabinet positions

Incoming President Rodrigo Duterte officially introduced members of his future cabinet last May 31. Among the appointees were Dr. Judy Taguiwalo, Rafael "Ka Paeng" Mariano and Joel "Ka Jomag" Maglunsod, three of the names recommended by the Communist Party of the Philippines through the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

Ka Paeng was appointed secretary of Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). He is currently the chairperson of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, the national democratic organization of peasants and a

three-term representative of Anakpawis Partylist in congress. Dr. Judy meanwhile was appointed secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). She is a retired professor at the University

of the Philippines-Diliman and former dean of the UP College of Social Work and Community Development. She has been a prominent activist since Martial Law, founder of All-UP Workers Alliance and spokesperson of Educators' Forum for Development.

Like Ka Paeng, Ka Jomag was a representative of Anakpawis in Congress. He was vice chairperson of Kilusang Mayo Uno for Mindanao. He was appointed undersecretary of the Department of Labor and Employment, after Duterte selected

Silvestre Bello as secretary.

After meeting with Duterte, the progressive secretaries expressed their priorities. For Mariano, first in his plan is to ensure the actual distribution of land in Hacienda Luisita to its rightful beneficiaries. According to the incoming secretary, land distribution in the hacienda was impeded due to maneuvers by the Cojuangco-Aquino family in collusion with DAR officials.

He also vowed to act on the petition for the revocation of the DAR conversion order in Hacienda Luisita issued in 1986. He would pursue the reacquisition and distribution of 358 hectares in the hacienda.

"The agency must take action on the violations on farmer-beneficiaries' right to own their lands. We must also review orders issued by DAR such as conversions, exemptions and exclusion orders, certifi-

cations of retention, cancellations of certificates of land ownership awards and certificates of land transfer," said Mariano.

He will also ensure that the 1.2 million agricultural leases under CARP are favorable to the farmers' interest. Trumped-up charges filed by landlords against farm workers will be reviewed and studied.

As a veteran union leader, Maglunsod promised to implement pro-labor reforms and policies in the government. He will push for the repeal of Department Order 18-A, which legalizes contractualization, and enact the Regular Employment Bill to protect workers' interests.

In the DSWD, Taguiwalo will ensure the creation of programs that will truly serve and reach the people.

"Public service must reach the people, respond to their needs and

not only benefit a few. This is what we want to do. It will also not be used for politicking and counter-insurgency," Taguiwalo added.

At the soonest, she would ensure that drought-stricken farmers receive rice subsidies from the government. The agency also will look into the present conditions of the victims of typhoon Yolanda.

Last June 1, the incoming DSWD secretary visited Lumad evacuees at the Haran compound in Davao City.

According to Taguiwalo, she will work closely with the education and health secretaries because these agencies are essential to the implementation of anti-poverty programs.

"In the longterm, DSWD alone cannot respond to the welfare of the people. This is an issue of jobs, land, health and education." AB

NPA seizes 29 firearms in raids

A total of 29 firearms were added to the New People's Army's armory from two successful raids in Davao Oriental and Negros Oriental. These blows are among the exclamation points to mark the end of the Aquino regime and its calamitous yet failed Oplan Bayanihan war of suppression waged by the military and police forces over the past six years.

Davao Oriental. Eleven firearms were confiscated from a raid staged by Red fighters of the Comval-Davao Gulf Sub-Regional Command on Gov. Generoso Municipal Police Station last May 29.

Six M-16 rifles, one M-14 rifle and five pistols were seized. The town's chief of police, Maj. Arnold Olgachen, was captured and declared as prisoner of war. The following day, reinforcing troops of the 28th IB suffered several casualties after Red fighters detonated explosives against them.

This offensive is in response to the people's demand to punish the protectors of rampant drug trafficking in the area. Reports have identified the municipality of Gov. Generoso as a gateway of illegal drug trade in the province. Furthermore, poor peasants and Lumads have complained that policemen have

long protected the landgrabbing activities of prominent families in the province.

According to Rigoberto Sanchez, NPA-Southern Mindanao Regional Operations Command spokesperson, Red fighters confiscated a sachet of *shabu* (methamphetamine) from Maj. Olgachen following the raid. Also, the NPA's planned raid of a *shabu* laboratory in Tibanban, Gov. Generoso was sabotaged by the 28th IB.

Investigation of POW Olgachen for possible violations of human rights and other war crimes is ongoing. Meanwhile, the Red army declared that he is in good health.

Negros Oriental. The Roselyn Pelle Command (RPC) of the NPA-Northern Negros successfully raided a Special Cofgu Active Auxiliary-Philippine Army detachment in Sitio Buntod Aliwanay, Barangay General

Luna, Sagay City last May 22. The NPA confiscated 18 weapons, including M-16 and M-14 rifles, one M-79 grenade launcher, one Ingram sub-machine gun, .45 and .357 caliber pistols, and several homemade firearms.

Ka Cecil Estrella of the RPC said that the raid is the Red army's response to numerous complaints from the people against the presence of the SCAA detachment, with the paramilitary being used by the Marañon family as their armed goons, and serving as guards of the landlord in the area. Also confiscated were rounds of ammunition and military uniforms.

The Communist Party of the Philippines said in a statement that the NPA can launch more tactical offensives over the next few weeks to carry out just and punitive actions against the most rabid units of the AFP and PNP which have committed grave crimes of massacres and killings, illegal arrests and torture, militarization, economic blockades and other violations of human rights under the Aquino regime's Oplan Bayanihan. AB

Neoliberal policies in the Philippines



In an extensive study on the programs of the International Monetary Fund published this May, economists criticized its neoliberal policies which have inflicted grave harm to the people.

In particular, they denounced the conditions imposed on “developing countries” in exchange for loans. A number of these conditionalities pertain to finance deregulation, taxation to increase state revenue, and trade liberalization. The economists also criticized the institution’s other conditionalities such as privatization of state assets, removal of subsidies, and wage and employment ceilings. The IMF only paid lip service to its anti-poverty programs to make their policies acceptable, they said. In June, an IMF publication featured an article which concluded that “some” neoliberal policies are “not working” due to their adverse effects on the people’s livelihood. The IMF’s “market-oriented reforms” are overrated, they say, as these worsen inequality and thus, unable to sustain growth. This is starkly demonstrated in the Greece case, where the IMF insists on implementing neoliberal reforms despite the damages these had inflicted on the people.

History of neoliberalism in the Philippines

In the Philippines, neoliberal policies have resulted in extensive and severe destruction since these were first implemented as Structural Adjustment Programs in the 1980s. The country’s permanent crisis worsened after the entire economy and politics was subsumed under its framework. It stunted growth of the already backward and foreign-dependent local economy.

Most visible among neoliberal attacks are those against state investments in infrastructure and

public services. Attacks on the labor sector and peasant livelihood are also severe. The policies being implemented in these areas must immediately be dismantled in order to unburden the sectors.

Privatization of public property and infrastructure

In accordance with the privatization doctrine, the Corazon Aquino regime started the sale of the biggest state enterprises and other state assets. In 1986, it implemented the Philippine Privatization Program to unload state capitalization in large enterprises which provide crucial economic services. The Philippine National Bank, Philippine National Oil Company, Construction and Development Company of the Philippines and Philippine Airlines were among the big companies privatized during this time. Aquino managed to raise \$2 billion from the sales which she then used to pay off debts incurred by the Marcos dictatorship. By 2000,

the succeeding Ramos regime managed to sell over 466 state assets for P194 billion. The biggest among these sales was the prime commercial land in Fort Bonifacio.

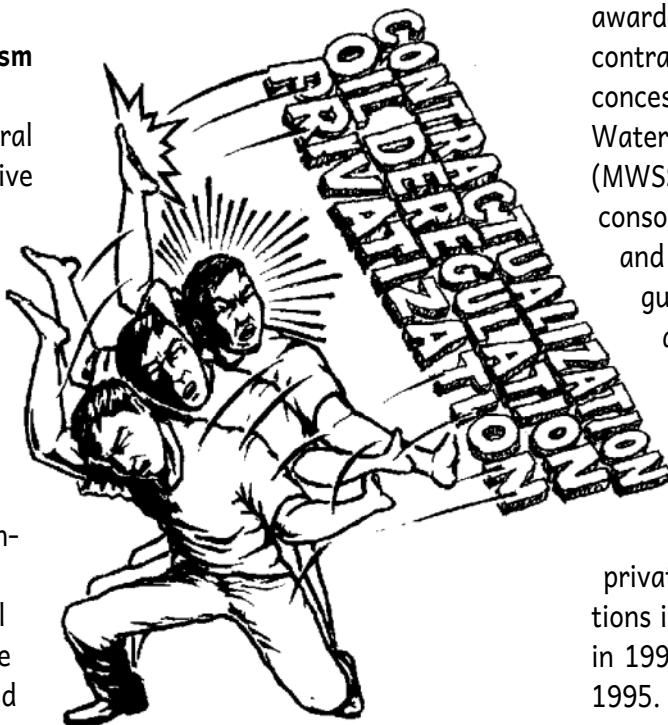
Concurrent with the widespread sale of state assets, the first Aquino regime opened public services to the private sector. In 1990, it passed the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) Law which allowed foreign and local capitalists to build infrastructure for public services, particularly in the energy and transportation sectors.

When the energy crisis hit in 1992-93, Ramos used the BOT Law to award contracts to build power plants to foreign companies and their big comprador partners in exchange for favorable and profitable incentives from the state. One of these incentives was the government’s assurance to pay for their stranded costs or loans incurred and to be incurred by these private companies for plant maintenance, as well as paying for the entire power produced, even those unconsumed by the public.

Privatization and deregulation of social services

In 1992, the Ramos regime awarded the biggest privatization contract when it gave a 25-year concession of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) water services to two consortiums made up of foreign and local capitalists. Sovereign guarantee or the state’s guarantee to ensure the companies’ profits was among the state incentives. IMF personnel supervised the deal.

This was succeeded by privatization of telecommunications in 1993, banking and shipping in 1994, and airlines and mining in 1995.



In 1998, the Ramos regime also deregulated the oil industry through the Downstream Oil Industry Deregulation Act (RA 8479). This was undertaken as an IMF conditionality in exchange for a \$1.6 billion loan. Under oil deregulation, then state-run Petron was sold and foreign companies were allowed to construct new gasoline stations. Subsidies on petroleum products were removed.

Corporatization (a form of privatization) of health services was first implemented under the Arroyo regime. Under this, various health services such as pharmaceutical and laboratory and other aspects were turned over to private capitalists. It was also during the Arroyo regime that extensive privatization of road networks took place.

In 2001, the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA) was passed which resulted in the privatization of electricity transmission and distribution. It founded the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM) purportedly to put independent power producers under one market, which then enabled them to raise charges arbitrarily. The National Power Corporation and National Grid Corporation were privatized.

Despite clear disadvantages of privatizing infrastructure and social services, Benigno Aquino III's regime continued and extended privatization through its Public-

Private Partnership (PPP) program. Under the PPP, the regime not only gave public funds to private capitalists to build public infrastructure, it also guaranteed their profits for the next 25 years.

Labor deregulation and other "market-oriented reforms"

In the labor front, the first US-Aquino regime passed three of the worst anti-worker laws at the end of the 1980s. In 1989, it passed the Wage Rationalization Act, the Herrera Law and National Labor Relations Act. These laws depressed wages, pushed widespread contractualization and busted unions and attacked workers' rights in the past three decades. (*Read Ang Bayan, April 21, 2016.*)

The neoliberal K-12 program, which started implementation under the second US-Aquino regime, is in line with these labor policies. Foreign companies have long campaigned for changes in the education program to supply the number and type of workers their companies need. Among the changes are the removal of remaining patriotic elements in the curriculum and the extension of high school to two more years to train skilled workers.

In issues pertaining to land, the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) was implemented starting 1988 under which land reform became a simple market transaction between the landlord

and tenant. Instead of free distribution of land to tillers in the spirit of social justice, the peasants were made to shoulder the costs of the land in the form of amortizations, or were otherwise offered the option of "corporatization." Because genuine land distribution was thwarted, land remained under the landlords' control, production continued to be disjointed and small-scale; and the agricultural sector continued to be backward. Instead of supporting production, the already meager subsidies for rice and other agricultural products were scrapped, and irrigation privatized.

Due to World Bank and IMF-instigated drive to increase state revenues, a 10% Value Added Tax was applied to consumer products in 1986 as a precondition for new loans. In 1997, the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program was implemented which exempted local and foreign companies from all sorts of taxes (corporate, income, VAT, sales and others) for 3-6 years. This resulted in large budget deficits which the state addressed by raising the VAT to 12% and extending its coverage to private services under the Expanded Value Added Tax (EVAT) Law in 2006. In 2011, the US-Aquino regime imposed additional taxes on cigarettes and alcohol through the Sin Tax Law. AB

This is the second on a series of articles on neoliberalism.

KMU-SMR condemns Davao City Vice Mayor

THE KILUSANG MAYO UNO-Southern Mindanao Region (KMU-SMR) condemned the recent actions of Davao City Vice Mayor Paolo "Pulong" Duterte in front of the workers' picketline last May 30 in Nakashin Davao International, Inc. in Malagamot, Panacan, Davao City.

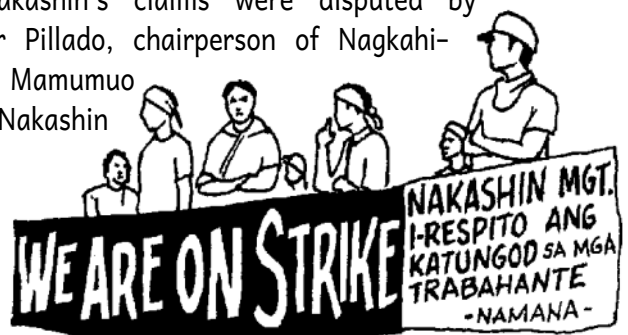
Duterte insulted the KMU, accusing the organization of manipulating Nakashin workers. He said that the workers' strike is an embarrassment for the city.

"According to the company, they will still retrench 280 of their workers because the company is losing and were asked to pay P60 million to their international clients due to a breach of contract, they might opt to close the company; what do we have to agree on then?" the

vice mayor lashed.

Workers barricaded in front of the company premises last Wednesday, May 25, after the latter illegally dismissed 75 of its employees last April 9.

Nakashin's claims were disputed by Lester Pillado, chairperson of Nagkahi-usang Mamumuo sa Nakashin



(NAMANA). According to Pillado, it is impossible that the company will be forced to shut down just because of their barricade.

NAMANA also said it does not believe Nakashin is losing money, asserting that the company earns millions in a week making three shipments to Japan and Europe since setting up operations in the country.

For 34 days since the start of the barricade, there have been no negotiations between the company and workers. Prior to the incident, Duterte even agreed to help resolve the labor dispute and prepared a memorandum of agreement between the association and the company, added Carlo Olalo, KMU-SMR spokesperson.

Olalo added that the employees, Nakashin and its lawyer and Vice Mayor Duterte have already an initial agreement to reinstate 75 illegally terminated workers, regularize 10 workers every month, and pay back wages in full.

But on May 31, before formalizing the agreement, Duterte and the company withdrew their support. "Duterte retracted because his family are friends with Nakashin and its new legal consultant, Mans Carpio, is the husband of Sara Duterte, incoming Mayor of Davao City," KMU said.

Incoming labor undersecretary Joel Maglunsod insisted that negotiations between KMU and Vice Mayor Duterte should continue.

"It is the mandate of KMU to assist them, because the workers asked for our help last April 9. Their demand is also legitimate because they have been contractuals for a long time," said Maglunsod.

He also asked Duterte to talk with the workers and representatives of KMU and not to prolong the issue.

"The ball is now in the hands of the company, if they agree to bring back illegally dismissed workers and regularize them, then we can sign the agreement immediately," he added. AB

PBCom employees hold protest anew

HUNDREDS OF EMPLOYEES of Philippine Bank of Communications (PBCom) lit candles in front of the PBCom Tower Building along Ayala Avenue, Makati City last May 19 to protest the continuing delay of their CBA (collective bargaining agreement).

The union's three-year CBA lapsed last December. Talks for its fourth and fifth year have been hampered for five months in union-management negotiations.

Employees also picketed outside the bank premises in Ayala before starting work for the day to coincide with the bank's executive meeting.

"This is our continued protest against the "near moratorium" increases offered by the management to its employees in the next two years. Meaning, we have no choice but to accept a meager wage increase. While the company reports earnings of more than P203 million this year, P1.6 billion last 2013 and P111 million in 2014, the management only offered P500 every month or P17 everyday," said Dennis Fernandez, vice president of PBCom Employees Association (PBCEA).

Moreover, the offered hike is unacceptable given that the bank has intensified their work load to pave way for its restructuring and reorganization.

PBCom is one of the largest commercial banks in the country. Lucio Co, who ranked 9th in Forbes list of richest Filipinos, is one of the bank's major investors. The company has 400 rank and file employees.

The Banking and Financial Unions against BSP Circular 268 (BFU 268), a group of 21 bank unions opposed to outsourcing in the sector, supported the protest of PBCom employees.

"With the income of PBCom, it could easily address employees' demands. This should be shared among them, PBCEA members, who worked to create the company's billion profit," said Mark Oliver Gonzales of BFU 268.

Illegal dismissal of workers in RMN-Davao condemned

WORKERS AND JOURNALISTS of Radio Mindanao Network-Davao united to condemn the dismissal of eight union officials following a decision of the National Labor Relations Commission declaring the October 2014 strike as illegal.

According to Carlo Olalo, secretary general of Kilusang Mayo Uno-Southern Mindanao, the termination of workers is premature since there was "no entry of judgment" yet from NLRC and the union has appealed the decision before the Court of Appeals seeking a temporary restraining order against the illegal dismissal.

The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines expressed solidarity with the workers of RMN. NUJP also finds RMN's zealotry to terminate workers malicious.

"The decision of NLRC is anti-worker and pro-capitalist. It merely copied RMN's appeal," said Olalo.

Last October 2014, RMN-Davao Employees Union (RDEU) launched a strike when the management refused to negotiate their CBA (collective bargaining agreement) and replace vacant positions with regular workers. After 41 days, both sides reached an agreement but RMN retaliated by filing a case of "illegal strike" against the union.

KMU-Southern Mindanao also called on the incoming Duterte regime to look into the case and fulfill its promise to end contractualization.

"Contractualization is widespread in the media industry and the union has been a vigorous advocate against the talent system which RMN hopes to implement on a national scale. RMN aims to silence the voice of workers against contractualization in the media industry," Olalo added.

Journalists appalled at Duterte statement

Most journalists killed are corrupt...Just because you're a journalist doesn't mean you're exempted from assassination if you're an SOB. This statement of incoming president Rodrigo Duterte in his press conference in Davao on May 31 sparked widespread condemnation from journalists, lawyers, and relatives of slain journalists.

According to the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), Duterte's pronouncement "not only sullies the names and memories of all 176 of our colleagues who have been murdered since 1986, he has also, in effect, declared open season to silence the media, both individual journalists and the institution, on the mere perception of corruption."

The NUJP admitted that corruption is one of the most pressing problems that media personnel face but this is not a justification for killing. In the few cases that were able to reach the courts, the killers were either government officials or their security forces, who were all accused of corruption.

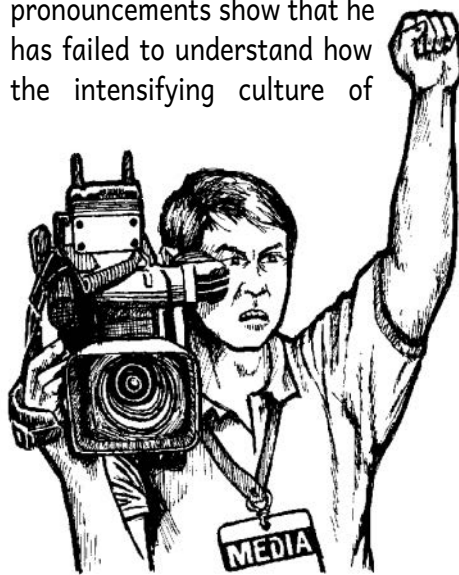
In an open letter, the NUJP declared that every Filipino deserves a government that cares enough to ensure that murder does not go unpunished.

The NUJP hopes that the new president will help address the onerous working conditions faced by journalists, long hours and meager pay, and deliberate orders to violate ethics at the risk of losing

their jobs, that can push the desperate and the weak towards corruption.

The International Federation of Journalists, with a membership of 600,000 in 139 countries, also expressed its objection on June 1. They challenged Duterte to take immediate steps to end the culture of violence and impunity against the media and uphold freedom of the press and freedom of expression in the world's second most dangerous country for journalists.

According to Marc Lino Abila, president of the College Editors Guild of the Philippines, Duterte's pronouncements show that he has failed to understand how the intensifying culture of



impunity perpetuates the killing of journalists and media workers in their line of duty. He added that Duterte should be reminded that it is within his responsibility to address the already-worsening culture of impunity in the country.

On the other hand, ALTERMIDYA challenged Duterte to end contractualization of media workers, and punish the killers of journalists who were slain to conceal corruption and criminality.

Among the many who slammed Duterte were the executive director of Center for International Law and the family of slain journalists Gerardo Ortega and Reynald Momay.

This is the most recent and serious among Duterte's frequent brushes with the media, which engendered boycott threats from both sides.

Earlier on May 20, the NUJP and relatives of slain journalists in the Maguindanao Massacre objected to Duterte's assignment of Atty. Salvador Panelo as his spokesperson. Panelo was the former lawyer of Andal Ampatuan Jr. who is accused of murdering 58, among them 32 journalists, on November 23, 2009 in Ampatuan, Maguindanao. The Maguindanao Massacre is known as the single deadliest attack on the press in history and one of the worst incidents of electoral violence in the country. The case is still pending in court. AB

Youth groups hold campout to junk K-12

A HUNDRED STUDENTS and parents camped out last May 26-27 in front of the Department of Education's head office in Pasig City to demand the scrapping of the pro-imperialist K-12 program. They challenged the incoming Duterte regime to stand for free education and carry out pro-people policies in their sector.

According to the rallyists, 700,000 to one million students will be forced to drop out in the implementation of K-12. More than P200,000 will also be needed to complete the additional two years of high school. On the other hand, K-12 guarantees profits of private schools with more than P12 billion worth of state-alloted vouchers for private schools to absorb students.

Charisse Bañez, chairperson of the League of Filipino Students, said the K-12 was designed to serve private interests.

"The K-12 program is part of a neoliberal policy to create millions of cheap workers to supply the needs of foreign and multinational corporations. It will also add to the existing burden of millions of students and parents and will surely result in the further destruction of our education system," said Bañez.

The government must review K-12 and promote a nationalist, scientific and mass-oriented system of education. Kabataan Partylist also called for the immediate moratorium of tuition and other fee increases in various universities and colleges.

US intensifies use of Philippine waters

In the face of rising tension and militarization of the South China Sea, the US is intensifying its use of Philippine waters in its escalating conflict with China. Since February, Subic Bay has hosted successive military exercises, sail-bys and port calls of warships.

Fresh from the Balikatan 2016 Exercises last April, various areas of the Philippines are again hosting the Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT)-Philippines on June 6 to 10. Among these are the waters of Subic Bay and Palawan. Not less than three warships, together with P-8 Poseidon aircraft and four units of US Marines, will join the exercises.

CARAT-Philippines is part of a broader series of military exercises the US Navy conducts with nine partner nations in South and Southeast Asia. The present CARAT is said to be the most complex to date.

Starting June 4, multilateral exercises involving the navies of the US, Philippines and Malaysia, were held in between the bilateral phases of CARAT.

Previously, five US warships be-

longing to the USS John C. Stennis Strike Group (JCSG), with 8,500 sailors on board, docked at the Alava Pier in Subic Freeport, Olongapo City, purportedly on a routine port call. They stayed from May 20 to 28, just three days after Chinese jetfighters intercepted a US spy plane "patrolling" the airspace of the West Philippine Sea, and a few weeks after the strike group itself "patrolled" the disputed reefs and shoals. China has refused this group from docking in Hongkong on April 29.

The JCSG, composed of ten warships and several squadrons of aircraft, is utilized by the US for support attacks in various global regions. This was deployed to the US 7th Fleet on February 4 to beef up its military presence in the West Pacific.

The Philippines is vital to the blatant US military build-up in the West Pacific and Indian Ocean to directly confront China. Hence, aside from its show of force in the region, the JCSG also conducts so-called community relations projects or COMRELS to condition people into accepting US military presence. The sailors of the recent docking visited elementary schools, cemeteries and the AFP Medical Center in Quezon City.

The US 7th Fleet, based in Japan, is part of the United States Pacific Fleet, and the largest of the forward-deployed fleets. Aside from the JSCCG now under its command, it has 60 to 70 ships, 300 various aircraft and 40,000 personnel of the US Navy and Marine Corps.

Its area of operations include seas of the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Japan, and Thailand based on the US' mutual defense treaties with these countries. AB