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Fascist violence and counterrevolutionary war in the countryside

VILLA BELLO, JONES, ISABELA. JULY 1998. Two youths and a group of peasants were hit with rifle butts on the chest and head and were ordered to carry the corpses of soldiers from the 21st IB who died in an encounter with the New People's Army (NPA). The next morning, the same troops led by a certain Lieutenant Bernardo burned down the houses of Satur Lorenzo, Pedring Lorenzo and Eddie Maltezo, all poor farmers from Villa Bello. The soldiers turned the barangay school, barangay hall and a number of houses into barracks. The fascists imposed a curfew, forced the residents to clean the streets, threatening to slap a P60 fine against those who refused, and coerced the barriofolk into constructing additional barracks.

Despite all these, or because of these, the 21st IB, which has been involved in crimes such as holdups and robberies and in promote vices, was named "Best Battalion" by the AFP last December 1998.

This is but an example of the widespread and intensifying fascist violence and counterrevolutionary war being waged by the US Estrada regime nationwide. The counterrevolutionary war that victimizes people in the countryside is being intensified by the reactionary state to give way to policies that favor the interests of the foreign and local ruling class and further impoverish the majority of the people.

All-out militarization and fascist violence signify the regime's desperate attempts to repress the ever-widening and heightening people's resistance to the worsening economic and social crisis.

Counterrevolutionary violence against the people

In the fascist state's frantic attempts to quell the revolutionary movement, it inflicts violence upon unarmed civilians systematically, brutally and without letup. It has perpetrated so many massacres, salvagings (summary executions), strafing, hamletting, beatings, illegal arrests, illegal searches, arson and others.



In the first week of February, six persons were massacred in Kapakuan, Palapag, Northern Samar by a commando team from the 19th IB PA led by Cpl. Priscillo Recilo and 1st Lt. Marlon Bellarmino of the 801st Bde. Killed were Ermito Nuguit, his wife, their three children including a 10-month-old infant, and their houseguest Raul Trapallo. The military covered up its

responsibility for the massacre, claiming it was an "encounter" with the NPA. Assailed by human rights groups, they later claimed that Nuguit was a fugitive.

In Landing, Tagkawayan, Quezon, troops under the 16th IB of the 2nd ID continuously fired upon a house where Red fighters were resting last November 13 despite the presence of civilians. Killed along with four Red fighters were the house's owners Vicente and Elsa Capistrano, their father Loreto and Gemmalyn Velasco who was four months pregnant. The military threw all the corpses into a single grave and threatened relatives of the deceased to prevent them from claiming the bodies.

These are only the latest in a series of killings by AFP troops of suspected supporters of the revolutionary movement. From August to September 1998, seven civilians were reported killed by soldiers engaged in "counter-insurgency" operations in separate incidents in the provinces of Quezon, Palawan, Agusan del Sur and Misamis Oriental. Before Lagonglong, Misamis Oriental was declared "no man's land" last September 1998, the 31st Special Forces Coy, 4th ID PA murdered Richard Balangiao, a farmer. His two companions were arrested, detained and tortured. Six families were harassed. Their homes were also illegally searched by the soldiers.

Various forms of abuse against civilians persist. In December 3, 1998, 12th IB troopers led by Lieutenant Calibo forcibly entered and illegally searched a house in Sitio Viejo, Sebaste, Antique. The troopers supposedly discovered a "list" of members of an alleged underground organization. One night, drunken soldiers returned to the house and ordered the women whose names were on the "list" to assemble for interrogation. The women hid themselves and fled, fearing that they would be harmed by the fascists.

There is widespread intimidation, illegal searches and burning of homes, violent and forced evacuations, theft of property and destruction of farmers' livelihood. In August 1998, the 37th IB PA ejected 29 families from Batasan, Makilala, North Cotabato. In September 1998, the 31st IB PA strafed Rogelio Ortega's house in Lopez, Quezon and robbed him of half a sack of rice, shoes, a wallet and his residence certificate. In October 1998, a crippled 40-year-old farmer, was arrested by soldiers in Compostela Valley at midnight and interrogated until 5 o'clock the next morning.

In Pulot, San Antonio, Kalayaan, Laguna last November 6, troopers of the 9th Scout Ranger Company raided the house of Priscilla and Jose Federico. The latter, along with three other civilians and Ka Jonas, staff of the CPP Information Bureau, were illegally arrested and charged with criminal offenses. The soldiers robbed and later demolished the Federicos' house and sari-sari store. Ka Jonas was hidden for days and deprived of the right to see his family and lawyer.

There are also growing cases wherein barriofolk accused as NPA members or supporters are forced to declare themselves as surrenderees. They are compelled to act as guides in military operations and are forcibly conscripted into paramilitary groups such as the CAFGU in Isabela, Rizal, Capiz, Agusan del Sur and other provinces. Seven farmers were made to appear as surrenderees by the 21st IB PA in Minuri, Jones, Isabela in August. Two Manobos were shot by troops of the 401st Bde in Prosperidad, Agusan del Sur in September, after they refused to join the "Bagani Warriors", a paramilitary group.

In November 12, 1998, Cresencio Cruz of Bgy. Puray, Rodriguez, Rizal, was arrested and detained for two days by the 6th and 9th Army Scout Rangers. While forcing him to join them in a military operation, the soldiers ruthlessly beat him with a rifle butt until he defecated and was crippled. Three of his companions were also abused by the troopers.

In the name of pro-foreign and anti-people policies

Where there are giant foreign capitalist and local bourgeois comprador-landlord businesses, there, too, are widespread military operations and abuses. These are part and parcel of the Estrada regime's brazen-faced imposition of policies such as the Mining Act and the Land Lease Act that cater to the economic interests of imperialists and local reactionaries despite—and in an attempt to quash— the people's growing resistance.

In Pampanga, Bulacan, Batangas, Cebu, Bohol and Compostela Valley, police and military forces attack entire peasant communities, leaving hacenderos and developers free to grab the farmers' lands.

To quell resistance to landgrabbing by the Dalahican Agro-marine Corporation and the First Noveleta Realty and Development Corporation, Roberto Kinney, a peasant leader in Noveleta, Cavite, was ordered killed in December 1998. Four peasant leaders like Kinney were also killed in Leyte, Bohol and Cebu, in separate incidents.

In Kayrilaw, Nasugbu, Batangas, Danilo Caisip and Jayson Nieva were seized, tied and brutally mauled on December 8, 1998 by Barangay Captain Jorge Gerpacio, Gregorio Dimapilis, Eric Gerpacio, Serafin Alegre, Domingo de Padua, Rudy Vidal and other unknown culprits. Caisip and Nieva are among the farmers firmly protesting the rampant land-use conversion of agricultural lands in Nasugbu to construct tourist facilities. After the mauling, they were turned over to the 401st PNP Mobile Force of Palico, Nasugbu headed by Maj. Israel Ephraim. Up to now, Caisip and Nieva have not yet been surfaced.

The Estrada regime will surely magnify its use of counterrevolutionary violence against the people and the revolutionary movement.

Also in November 1998, residents of Bgy. San Antonio in Cuartero and Bgy. Ginbialan in Maayon, Capiz were subjected to intense browbeating and physical abuse by troopers of the 6th IB led by 1Lt. Harold Argamoza and 2Lt. Federico Amboy. One resident whose hair was pulled during interrogation was threatened that his eight-year-old child would be shot. Since July 1998, soldiers have incessantly terrorized residents resisting the exploration activities of Mt. Isa Manera, an Australian mining company based in Lemery, Iloilo.

In Bohol, alleged "counterinsurgency" operations were launched to quell peasant organizations' protests against the Cebu-Inabanga Water Deal. Military might dominates Tuburan, Cebu—operations to repress the farmers' struggle against landgrabbing under the pro-imperialist Socialized Integrated Forestry Management Areas program were likewise referred to as "counter-insurgency" measures.

Violations of international humanitarian law

Even the Estrada regime's arbitrary refusal to implement the Comprehensive Agreement for the Respect of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) and its arrogant and unilateral suspension of the peace talks are proof that the regime will not hesitate to crush any impediment to its faithful service to its ruling class masters, compadres, kin and confreres.

From the PNP, the reactionary state has in fact scrambled to return to the AFP the primary responsibility for "counterinsurgency" operations to suppress the invigoration of the armed struggle and of mass protests and struggles. Intensifying fascism and military offensives are now aimed at the militant and revolutionary masses.

In the field of battle, the fascist AFP's treatment of prisoners of war has become even crueller and inhuman. There are growing numbers of cases of fighters who had been rendered *hors de combat* but were nonetheless tortured, summarily executed or involuntarily disappeared by AFP and PNP troops.

In Dituray, Tigbao, Zamboanga del Sur, combined forces of the CAFGU and the 51st IB PA treacherously murdered Myra Algarme (Ka Noah), staff of the NDFP, while she was bathing in a river last January 17. Another Red fighter, Alejandro Alcareza (Ka Oca), was wounded when captured by soldiers. Instead of applying first aid, the troopers interrogated him, causing him to bleed to death. The soldiers tied up and carried the bodies of Ka Noah and Ka Oca like pigs and brought these to the town of Tigbao. Their remains were buried only upon the request of civilian authorities.

In December 7, 1998, Domingo Baluncio (Ka Mel), a Red fighter, was also deprived of medical attention by elements of the 1st IB PA. Baluncio was wounded in the thigh in an encounter in Bato, Camarines Sur. Despite his clearly being *hors de combat* and the request and offer of villagers to bring him to the hospital, Baluncio was captured, thrown inside a military truck and tortured by the soldiers. He was later found dead with numerous hematomas all over his body—one kilometer away from where he was arrested.

The AFP deprives wounded Red fighters of medical attention as well as ordinary people. In September 1998, the PNP Regional Mobile Group of Bohol harassed a medical team and prevented its members from rendering service to Bgy. Ilaya, Inabanga allegedly because only NPA supporters would be benefited by the group. Likewise, in October 1998, elements of the 29th and 36th IB threatened residents of Rosario, Agusan del Sur, declaring that anyone who joins the Basic Christian Communities and volunteers as a barangay health worker would be considered an NPA supporter.

Psychological warfare, which always complements the fascist state's violent suppression of the people, is now actively engaged in by opportunists and revisionist renegades. Psywar, however, has become a worn-out mask that is being torn to shreds by the reactionary regime's ceaseless counterrevolutionary violence.

Violations of human rights and international humanitarian laws by the reactionary state are persistent, relentless and intensifying. As the economic and political crisis of the reactionary system worsens, the Estrada regime will surely magnify its use of counterrevolutionary violence against the people and the revolutionary movement.

Heightening fascism will only hasten the isolation of the reactionary US-Estrada regime and will push ever broader sections of the people to stand up and fight, persevere further in expanding revolutionary and progressive organizations, and further develop expertise in advancing various forms of armed and unarmed resistance.

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