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Editorial

## The Aquino regime is catastrophic to the Filipino people

A major disaster struck Metro Manila, Southern Tagalog, Central and Northern Luzon in early August. More than ten days of torrential monsoon rains precipitated massive floods that swept away and destroyed the homes and properties of up to two million people, causing loss of lives and the ruination of agricultural land, fishing grounds and other sources of livelihood.

This calamity brought back painful memories of typhoon Ondoy in 2009 that inundated wide swaths of Metro Manila, typhoon Sendong in 2011 that flooded vast areas of Northern Mindanao and the Visayas and other storms and floods that struck the country in the past. Typhoons have been causing ever worsening loss of lives and property due to severe environmental destruction and the deterioration

of the necessary infrastructure to control flooding and ensure the people's protection.

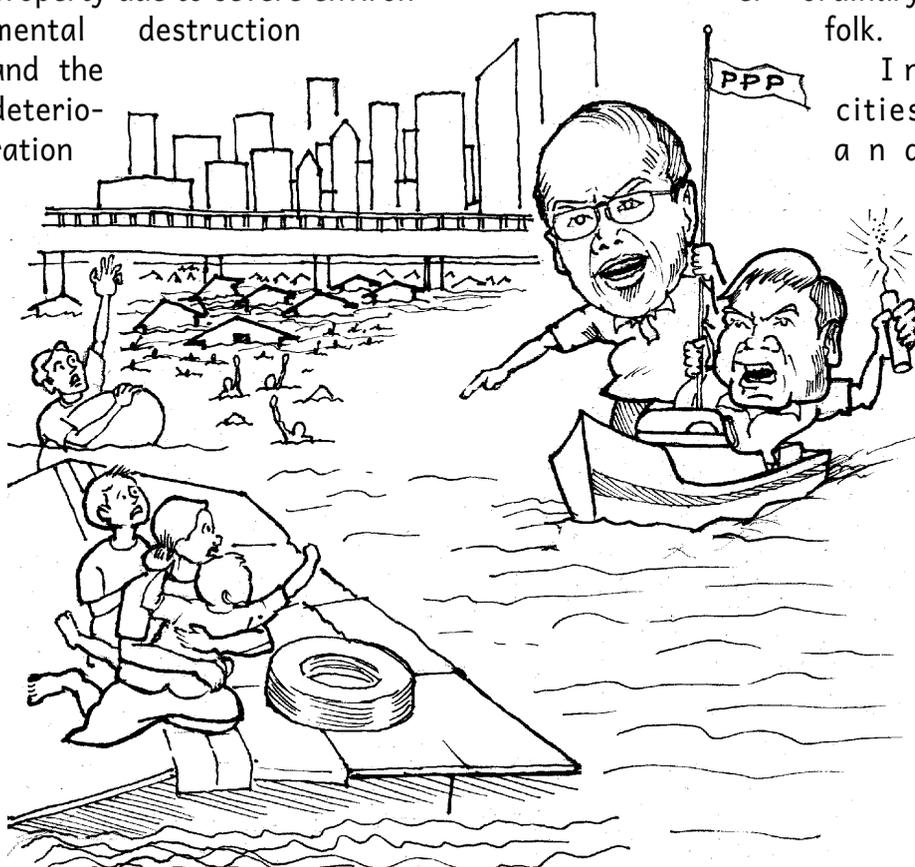
This grave disaster demonstrated the stark divisions among classes in Philippine society. The floods mainly wrought havoc on the lives of workers, the unemployed, farmers, fisherfolk, rank and file employees and small professionals and other ordinary folk.

In cities and

town centers, they are the ones who live along the esteros, riverbanks, lakesides and other areas where the infrastructure for sanitation, garbage disposal and flood control are inadequate or totally absent. In the countryside, they are the ones who are most in danger of being swallowed by the waters of swollen rivers or buried under tons of mud.

They are the ones who strive to eke out a living in the face of deepgoing crisis and widespread poverty. They belong to the most oppressed and exploited classes whose protection and safety lie at the bottom rung of the state and ruling classes' priorities.

Whenever typhoons and oth-



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er disasters strike, the lives and safety of the toiling masses are always in peril, while big capitalists, landlords and bureaucrat capitalists remain in the comfort of their luxurious homes in exclusive subdivisions far from the floods. While the ordinary folk are in danger of losing their lives, the wealthy classes' biggest headaches are temporary power outages or the loss of cellphone service.

The Aquino regime manifested its real class character in the face of this major disaster that affected millions of people. The landlord Aquino bared his contempt for the poor when he slammed the victims for their "hard-headedness" and blamed them for the tragedy that had befallen them, even as hundreds of thousands of families were still mired in the mud left behind by receding flood waters. Aquino even execrably exploited the tragedy to parade his favored senatorial candidates before several evacuation centers.

But whatever gimmickry

Aquino resorts to, he cannot cover his multitude of sins. He has failed to institute measures against flooding and disaster preparedness. He must answer for banning the use of calamity funds to prepare for disaster.

This August, Aquino did nothing in the facing of rising dam water levels, despite the fact that the people have for years been demanding that dam waters should not be allowed to reach dangerous levels. For three years, he has been in power, but he has yet to undertake a major overhaul of the system of garbage collection and waste disposal, the cleanup of waterways, the desilting of lakes and rivers and the rehabilitation of forests and watersheds. Instead, he has occupied himself with enticing foreign companies to invest in mining operations in the country's denuded mountain areas.

A far greater catastrophe awaits the poor with the Aquino regime's plan to effect the widespread demolition of urban poor communities. Aquino even has

the gall to use the recent calamity as a pretext to call the planned evictions of the urban poor as measures to ensure their safety. It is the height of irony for Aquino to claim that destroying (and even blasting) people's homes and livelihoods are acts that are meant to "protect" them. In fact, they will be torn away from their sources of livelihood and exiled to farflung areas that are just as prone to flooding, landslides and other disasters.

Aquino's real objective in evicting the urban poor is to turn over the land where their houses are, for the use of his big businessman friends and their foreign capitalist partners. This has been his intention since he came to power—to launch widespread demolitions, in accordance with plans to construct structures under his Public-Private Partnership program.

The far greater catastrophe afflicting the Filipino people is the catastrophe of unemployment, slave wages, landlessness, upwardly spiralling prices of food and other commodities, unaffordable education and health care, intensifying militarization, repression and human rights violations.

Aquino's insistence on serving the interests of foreign big capitalists and the exploiting and oppressive classes is the worst debacle that will bring untold harm to the Filipino people. The criminal neglect and the oppression and suffering inflicted on the victims of calamities and the toiling masses are rousing them to tread the path of struggle and revolution. It may be fraught with danger and hardship, but it is the path that will surely lead the people to a bright, prosperous, just and democratic future. **AB**

	
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# Government negligence in the face of tragedy and disaster

The Filipino people once again bore witness to the Aquino regime's grave neglect in the face of disaster and unbridled exploitation by big capitalists amid tragedy.

Typhoon Gener struck the country on July 28 and continued its onslaught until August 9 due to the monsoon winds. Initial estimates put the number of people affected by the strong rains, floods and landslides at up to two million. By August 7, up to 1,266 villages in 152 towns and 28 cities in Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog, Cordillera, the National Capital Region and Western Visayas bore the brunt of the calamity. Diseases like dengue fever and leptospirosis likewise became rampant, bringing to the fore the government's failure to deliver social services.

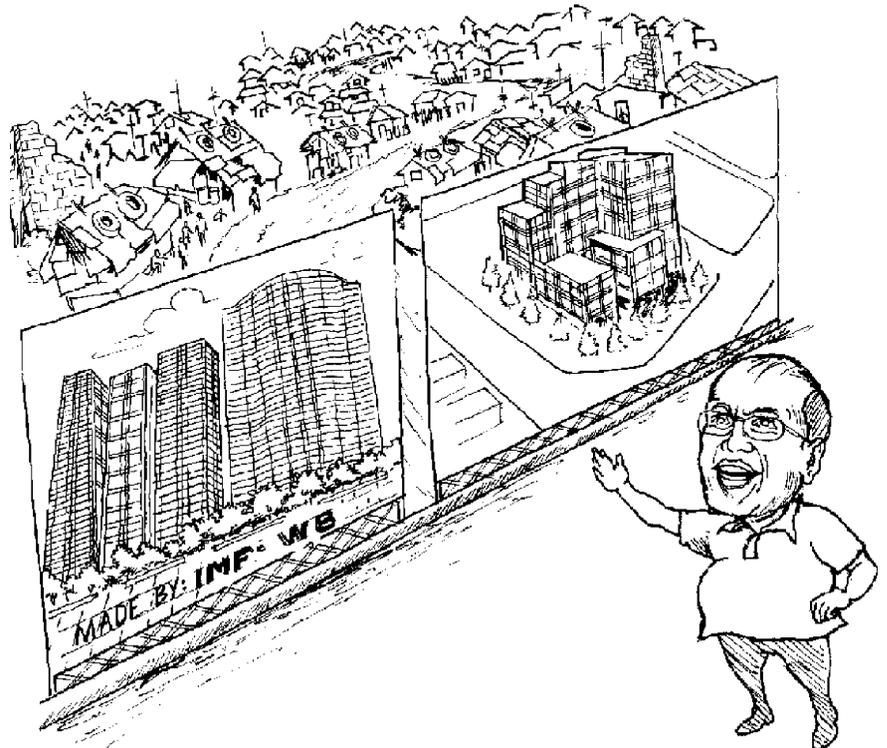
The people's abject conditions were brought about by the lack of effective measures and programs by the Aquino regime to address disasters. When typhoon Gener had just entered the Philippines, progressive parties and organizations urged the Aquino regime to take immediate action. In particular, the Kalikasan Partylist proposed that the government allot the funds and resources needed to mobilize local disaster response systems; immediately put a stop to the operations of Philex Mining in the face of a spillage in the mine tailings dam of the Philex-owned Padcal Mine in Tuba, Benguet as well as 37 other big mining companies nationwide; and provide immediate relief to flood victims. Not only did Aquino disregard such warnings, he boasted that his regime was ready for any disaster.

He bragged that huge quantities of relief goods for evacuees had already been prepositioned. After three days of continuous floods, however, the truth blew up in Aquino's face. No less than local government officials admitted that they only had a day's supply of relief goods. Government agencies were practically paralyzed in mobilizing enough resources for quick rescue and relief operations. Neither could they accommodate the steady stream of flood victims in the cramped evacuation centers.

Aquino and his regime are guilty of grave negligence. In 2011, Aquino refused to allot funds for disaster preparedness. He also barred moves to increase the ₱5-billion Calamity Fund. By the middle of 2012, the fund had almost been depleted. This August, the prolonged rains

and floods spurred the release of ₱5.9 billion out of the ₱7.5-billion Calamity Fund for 2012, leaving a mere ₱1.6 billion for the regime to spend for the other storms and calamities up to the end of the year. Worse, Aquino ordered the cancellation in 2011 of 19 flood-control projects (worth ₱1.9 billion) such as dams and dikes in various parts of Central Luzon.

Still part of the regime's gross negligence is its disregard for the welfare of employees of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), the government agency tasked with weather prediction. Rank and file employees of PAGASA receive only ₱7,000 a month, which is woefully inadequate for their and their families' day to day needs. The employees had been asking for a raise since March, along with a demand to restore their benefits. The regime has failed to address these issues to date. Instead, Aquino berated the employees by telling them "not to add to the disaster" when they asserted that government provide the proper salaries and benefits. AB



# Bayanihan movement for the people

When disaster strikes, the toiling masses and progressive sectors further strengthen the bonds of solidarity. Thousands of them volunteered in early August to undertake organized rescue efforts for the victims of calamity and provided relief despite the absence of funds from the government or big private corporations.

Among those who led such efforts was the MAKABAYAN coalition which launched Bayanihan Alay sa Sambayanan (BALSA). Under BALSA, various sectoral undertakings such as ACT Relief Operations; Lingap GABRIELA; Oplan Sagip Kanayunan of KMP, PAMALAKAYA, Amihan, UMA, NNARAYouth, Sinagbayan and Rural Missionaries of the Philippines; Sagip Migrante Fund Raising Ride; Bulig Bayan of BAYAN-Panay; DAMBANA (Damayang Simbahan sa Panahon ng Disaster); Sining Kalinga of young artists; and Tulong Kabataan of Kabataan Partylist and its organizations solicited and distributed relief goods. Unions, federations, NGO and various other workers' groups likewise

joined hands under Task Force Obrero (TFO). The All UP Workers Alliance, Anakpawis and Kalikasan Partylist in coordination with the Southern Tagalog Serve the People Corps also conducted relief operations. This "bayanihan" was joined by famous personalities like actresses Angel Locsin and Monique Wilson and athlete Phil Youngusband.

While the people's solidarity shone through, the corruption and greed of the ruling classes reared their ugly heads in the midst of tragedy and disaster.

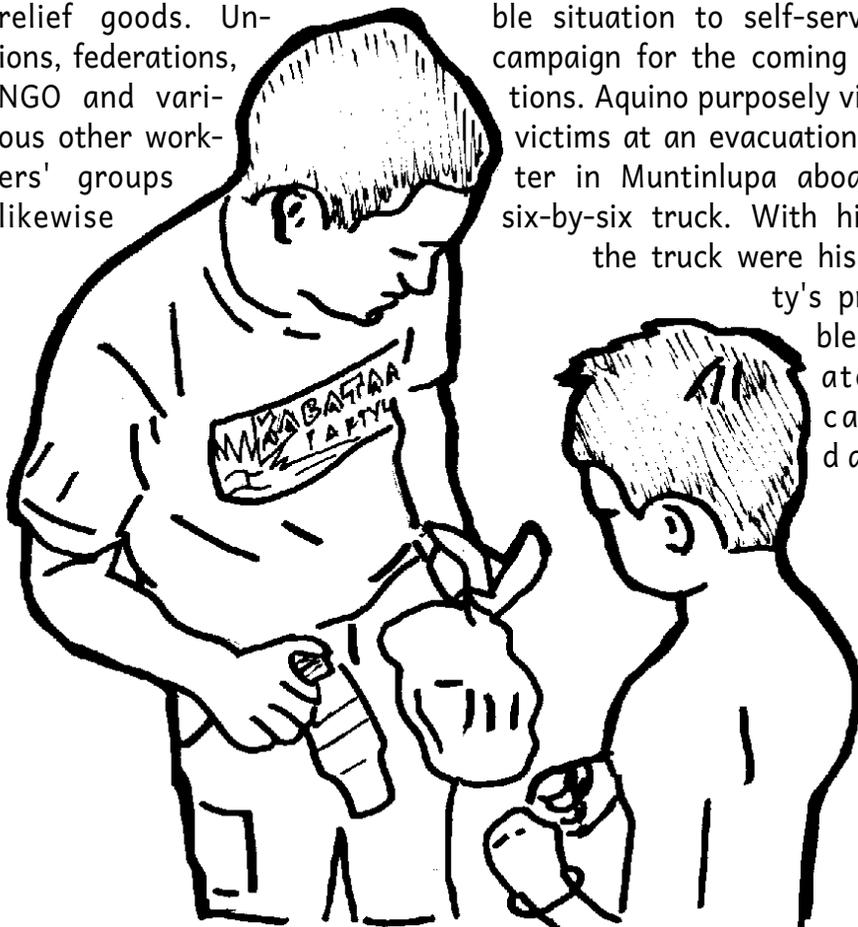
On August 8, Aquino and members of his political party shamelessly exploited the terrible situation to self-servingly campaign for the coming elections. Aquino purposely visited victims at an evacuation center in Muntinlupa aboard a six-by-six truck. With him in the truck were his party's probable senatorial candidates

who acted as if they were on stage and waved at the evacuees. Among these brazenfaced politicians were Aurora Rep. Edgardo Angara Jr., Bureau of Customs chief Ruffy Biazon, TESDA director general Joel Villanueva and Akbayan Party stalwart Risa Hontiveros.

In their desire to portray themselves as the only people giving aid to the needy, they even had the gall to stop progressive organizations. In Pinagbuhatan, Pasig, policemen barred members of Kabataan Partylist from conducting relief operations because they were holding discussions with the victims.

But nothing tops the greed of foreign and local companies for huge profits. On August 7, amid non-stop torrential rains, oil companies raised the prices of petroleum products by up to ₱0.80 per liter. They raised them again on August 20 and are slated to impose another hike on August 25. The day before, the Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) raised power rates. Meralco and Petron, one of the three biggest oil companies in the country, are owned by Aquino's uncle Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco.

The Business Processing Association of the Philippines (BPAP) likewise asked Malacañang to exempt call centers from an order suspending the operations of all schools, businesses and government offices during the disaster. The BPAP wanted its employees to report for work, saying that their clients were not from the Philippines and were therefore not affected by the floods. It did not care if their employees drowned or got caught in the flood. The BPAP is an association of 600 companies running call centers nationwide. **AB**



## NPA assists flood victims in Rizal and Laguna

The New People's Army's (NPA) entire membership in Rizal and Laguna provinces declared a week-long cessation of military actions against the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) to mobilize Red fighters in providing continued assistance to flood victims.

In separate statements, the Narciso Antazo Aramil Command (NPA-Rizal) and Nilo Hatol Command (NPA-Laguna) announced a temporary ceasefire from 12:00 a.m. of August 11 to 12:00 a.m. of August 17.

Meanwhile, Comrade Luis Jalandoni, a member of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) Executive Committee likewise appealed to foreign friends and the international community to provide assistance to the calamity victims in the Philippines.

During the ceasefire, all NPA units in the two provinces, including members of partisan units and people's militias remained on a defensive mode in order to devote all forces and resources to assisting the victims of calamity. Nonetheless, the NPA units remained vigilant against any attack and offensive actions by the AFP-PNP against the people within the territory of the People's Democratic Government (PDG).

During the same period, elements of the AFP-PNP at CAFGU were able to freely enter the territory of the PDG to visit their loved ones and help their families who were likewise victimized by the massive flooding. It was possible for them to do so without fear of possible offensive actions by the NPA against them.

On August 5, however, while most of Laguna was under water and pummeled by strong rains, NDF-Laguna members Jesus Abetria and Restituto Galicia were abducted in Longos, Kalayaan, Laguna and mercilessly tortured by the military.

They were kidnapped while en route to a hospital for medical treatment after consulting with members of the Nilo Hatol Command on plans to mobilize Red fighters to assist the victims of the massive flooding. They are currently detained at the Philippine Army national headquarters in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

## Flood control masterplan is a masterplan for demolition



Up to 195,000 families victimized by the massive floods are to be victimized twice over by widespread demolitions should the Aquino regime's planned "flood-control" projects push through.

To justify the Flood Control Masterplan, the Aquino regime has been portraying it as the solution to future calamities. In fact, it is nothing but a masterplan for widespread demolitions that will be done in the name of "protection."

Aquino pins the blame for the floods on the urban poor, saying that their shanties have been blocking the water ways. This is pure nonsense, as the regime knows full well that the real reason behind the floods is the wanton destruction of the environment.

On August 13, Department of Public Works and Highways secretary Rogelio Singson said that "if push comes to shove, we will have to blast the houses if they won't leave within a certain period." Department of Interior and Local Government Sec. Jesse Robredo likewise said that barangay chairmen would be held accountable for the "cleanup" of esteros, and for ensuring that residents do not return to rebuild their houses once these have been demolished.

The first target of Aquino's masterplan is to re-

pair and raise the level of dikes in Pampanga, Malabon and Navotas; improve a number of pumping stations in Metro Manila; and clean up esteros especially at the Marikina and Pasig rivers and around Laguna Lake. The funds for these projects will be sourced from the masterplan's P352-billion budget.

Part of the masterplan involves the construction of an industrial and commercial district on a 94,000-hectare area around the lake—one of the 54 principal projects under the Public-Private Partnership program.

More than 120,000 families who depend on fishing for a living are in danger of being evicted from this area. Another 20,000 urban poor families are being targeted for eviction this year. First in line are houses that have been built above esteros and beneath bridges, and second are houses built within three meters from the esteros.

The urban poor find the regime's relocation program unacceptable, especially since the resettlement site in Rodriguez, Rizal itself was hit by massive floods and landslides. Also, the government can accommodate only 9,000 out of the 20,000 families whose houses will be demolished this year.

Relocation is likewise not a simple matter of moving people to another site, but of livelihood in the relocation area as well. Said a community leader, with the forcible demolitions, they will be removed from the "danger zones," only to be transferred to the "dead zones." It is the equivalent of Aquino declaring war against the urban poor. **AB**

## Dam owners' greed for water and profit

The irresponsible and dangerous system of releasing water from dams came to the fore when floods rampaged through and inundated vast areas of Luzon after typhoons Ondoy and Pedring in 2009. But after three years, the reactionary state has failed to undertake any measures to enforce a protocol for releasing dam water.

As usual, the greedy capitalist dam owners allow dam water to reach dangerous levels and release water only at the last minute. This has worsened flooding in many areas of Metro Manila and vast areas of Central and Southern Luzon.

Before the San Roque Multipurpose Dam released water, the level had reached 278 meters, compared to its maximum capacity of 280 meters. The Ambuklao Dam in Benguet allowed water to reach 751.8 meters, a mere 0.14 meters away from the maximum 752 meters. At the Binga Dam, also in Benguet province, the water was at 574.37 meters, just 0.63 meters away from its spilling level of 575 meters. At the La Mesa Dam in Quezon City, the water was at 79.91 meters, just 0.24 meters away from its maximum capacity of 80.15 meters.

These dams are owned by big comprador bourgeoisie like the Lopezes and the Aboitiz group. Their greed for water is driven by their greed for profit. For them, the higher the water level, the lower the cost of power generation and the bigger the profit. They refuse to consider the destruction to the environment and the people's livelihoods once they release excessive volumes of water, especially when agricultural lands and fishponds become flooded.

The rampaging dam waters likewise dump silt in rivers, making the latter shallower and prone to overflowing. New waterways are created, resulting in flooding in hitherto unaffected areas. Soil in areas around the dams that come under water loosens, resulting in widespread landslides. **AB**

## Stop the privatization of water services

Various sectors strongly condemn the program to privatize the potable water system nationwide. According to the Water for the People Network (WPN), the privatization of water and the agencies that distribute this resource will result in severe water scarcity and sharp increases in the cost of services.

The WPN is a broad network with members across the Philippines advocating people's control over water services and natural resources. Another group that is greatly opposed to water privatization is Mindanawon against Privatization of Water and Energy Resources

(M-Power).

In particular, WPN is battling Senate Bill 2997 or the so-called Angara Bill and its counterpart version in Congress, House Bill 5497, which will pave the way for the full privatization of water districts nationwide.

Both bills call for the forma-

tion of the Water and Sanitation Regulatory Authority (WSRA) under the Office of the President that will ensure the regime's implementation of the Public-Private Partnership program related to water.

The privatization of water runs counter to the people's interest. Access to clean water is one of the basic human rights. Thus, water services must be under the public sector and not under the control of corporations whose only concern is to amass huge profits. Among the biggest bourgeois compadors interested in water privatization in the Philippines are the Ayala and Lopez families.

History has proven that the cost of water services skyrockets once they fall in the hands of the private sector. A striking example is the Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), which was privatized in 1997 on the orders of the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. In 15 years, charges for water services in Metro Manila shot up by more than 1,000%. Since February this year, Metro Manila consumers' monthly bills have been hiked by ₱58-69 without prior consultation.

The private water concessionaires likewise raised water charges even if they have already been collecting ₱1.00 per consumer per month (for a total of ₱1 billion per year) for the improvement of water services and other infrastructure that have yet to be implemented. The water companies have thus been charging more in order to expand their businesses.

Neither is privatization the solution to the lack of water. After 15 years of being run by private water concessionaires, consumers continue to complain about inadequate water supply in Metro Manila. To date, there are more than 200 areas in the national capital region that do not have continuous supply of water. **AB**

## Foreign and big comprador bourgeois control over water

The Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) was privatized in 1997 through a ₱7-billion loan from the International Financial Corporation (IFC), a company under the World Bank. Its business partners include big bourgeois compradors like the Ayalas and the Lopezes and foreign companies like British United Utilities, the US-owned Bechtel and the Japanese-owned Mitsubishi.

Maynilad, one of the private water concessionaires that took over, went bankrupt. In 2006, it was sold for US\$504 million to a consortium composed of DM Consunji Holdings (DMCI), Metro Pacific Investments Corporation and Japanese corporate giant Marubeni.

Currently, the Ayalas are on an expansion binge in Cebu. In May, the Manila Water Consortium comprising the Ayalas and the Gaisano family (owner of Metro Gaisano mall) began the ₱700-million Carmen Bulk Water Project under the Public-Private Partnership program. The group will be controlling water from the Luyang River in Barangay Cantumog, Carmen town to the detriment of the people. The Ayalas plan to allot 200 cubic meters (the equivalent of 200 drums) of free water to Carmen's 45,000 residents who used to benefit from the waters of Luyang.

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## Aquino's budget: Antipeople spending

The Aquino regime's proposed budget for 2013 is deceptive and antipeople. Behind the supposedly bigger allocation for social services, the budget is geared towards the massive privatization of public services and facilities under the Public-Private Partnership program (PPP).

Contrary to Aquino's claims of empowering the people, debt service remains his priority, with an allocation of ₱333 billion, as well as strengthening the fascist armed machinery (₱122 billion). These allocations far outstrip the budgets for health care (₱57 billion) and housing (₱21 billion).

On the other hand, up to ₱30 billion has been set aside for the empty, deceptive and corrupt Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program which is also being used as an instru-

ment of bribery in reactionary politics. Despite criticisms of the "pork barrel," a huge fund has been allocated for this means of fattening up allied politicians (₱44 billion).

Aquino boasts that his regime has raised the budget for basic education by 23% compared to 2012 levels; for state universities and colleges by 44%; and health by 24%. But the better part of these funds will be allocated to the regime's PPP program.

Aquino's big businessman allies are very eager to be

part of the PPP, among them a P26-billion project to construct and repair classrooms and other educational facilities, a P14-billion project to repair 25 hospitals at the provincial and district levels and a P3.2 billion project to build infrastructure for state universities and colleges (SUC).

No less than Aquino has said that the higher allocations for education and health are in accordance with his regime's "reforms." He particularly referred to the advancement of the pro-imperialist K+12 program for basic education and the reorientation and further commercialization of SUCs to serve the needs of foreign corporations. The corporatization of national and regional hospitals also falls along this line.

This early, foreign and local capitalists are already in a mad scramble to get their hands on these projects. For not only will the regime guarantee the profits of private contractors against the rising cost of public utilities. The PPP budget itself guarantees that they will profit as soon as the projects are begun. For instance, the budget for the construction of 9,300 new classrooms under the Department of Education's PPP School Infrastructure Project that is slated to begin this year is highly bloated. Aquino has allotted P650,000 for every classroom that is estimated to cost only P325,000. At 9,300 classrooms, the contractors can expect to rake in up to P3 billion.

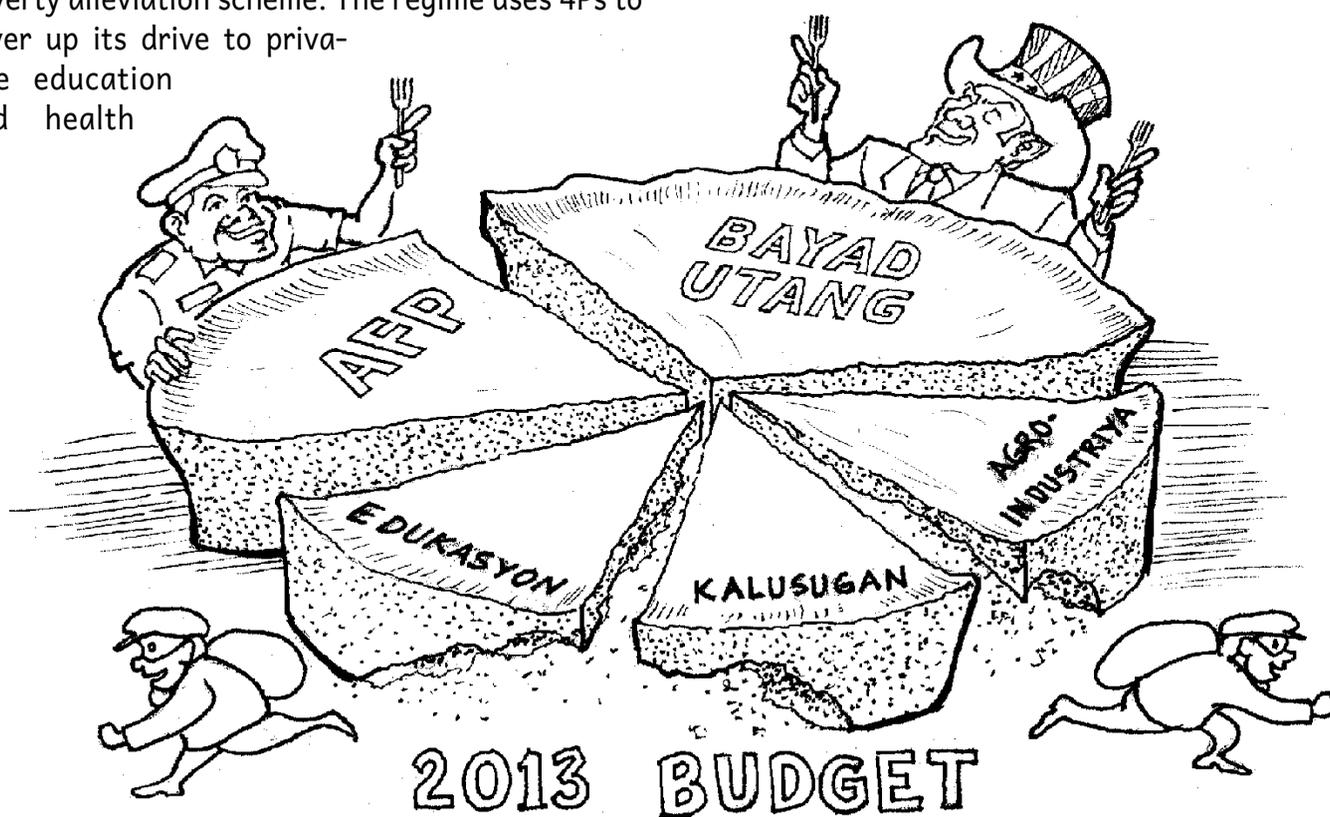
To obscure continuously spreading poverty, massive unemployment and landlessness, Aquino relentlessly pours in funds for the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), his regime's bogus poverty alleviation scheme. The regime uses 4Ps to cover up its drive to privatize education and health

services.

Contrary to Aquino's claims that the people's health is his priority, his regime has not allotted a single centavo to national and regional hospitals and health institutions capable of comprehensively treating the majority of diseases. It has allocated a very inadequate amount for the purchase of medicines and other basic medical needs (P891 million) to combat the major diseases that are killing Filipinos, such as tuberculosis and dengue. It has also provided a very small amount (P9 billion, including the Calamity Fund) to address flooding and other disasters.

Its budgetary allocations for agricultural development and irrigation (P74 billion), setting up local industries (P700 million) and other endeavors that would guarantee genuine economic development are grossly inadequate. It has not allocated a single centavo for across-the-board salary increases for employees and other measures that could provide them even temporary relief from economic hardship.

Worst of all, Aquino plans on spending money that his regime does not have. More than a third (37% or P758 billion) of the 2013 budget will be sourced from loans. The remainder (P1.7 trillion) will be coming from projected tax revenues and other income, with the targets based on economic growth estimates and other indicators that have rarely conformed to reality in the past 13 years. In the final analysis, the Aquino regime will rely and depend on more debt to the greater detriment of the people. The government has already incurred more than P5 trillion in debt so far this year. **AB**



# "Pork barrel," a tool of the patronage system

"Correct spending: the people's command" was the Aquino regime's message in its proposed budget for 2013. But contrary to its "path of righteousness" slogan, Aquino's budget remains a milch cow for bureaucrat capitalist politicians. Like the past regimes, the Aquino government uses the budget as an instrument to strengthen its influence among politicians, mainly through the "pork barrel."

## "Pork barrel"

"Pork barrel" is the term used for the funds allotted to congressmen and senators. It has long been a symbol of widespread and systematic corruption in the reactionary government. Despite Aquino's claims to the contrary, the dirty patronage system persists under his rule.

The "pork barrel" consists of the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF), Financial Subsidies to Local Government Units (FSLU) and funds for infrastructure projects identified by Congress. This system has been in place since 1990.

The Aquino regime has been increasing the "pork barrel" allocation yearly. From ₱7 billion in 2009, Aquino raised it to ₱22 billion in 2011 (an increase of 233%) and ₱25 billion in 2012. Next year's allocation will be a whopping ₱30 billion, three times bigger than the combined budgets of the Congress and Senate.

Congressmen receive up to ₱70 million yearly while senators get ₱200 million annually. They choose from a "pork buffet menu" or a list of projects in the national budget that may be funded through the "pork barrel." The four biggest items funded by the PDAF are roads, 27% (₱23 billion); financial assistance, 18% (₱15 billion); multi-purpose buildings, 17% (₱14 billion); and financial assistance for general programs, 15%

(₱12.5 billion).

Claims by the ruling classes that the "pork barrel" addresses the people's most urgent needs are pure hogwash. Most legislators use the "pork barrel" to strengthen and further expand their influence and ensure that they remain in power. For instance, despite the urgent need for potable water systems, only up to 4% of the entire PDAF is allotted for this purpose.

Politicians prioritize their bailiwicks, favored local governments and institutions that are often led or controlled by their relatives and allies. They choose projects that will attract the most attention, among them roads, waiting sheds and other structures where they could prominently display their names and faces.

They exploit the people's poverty, giving out financial assistance for education, medical treatment or burial expenses in order to court their support. They control the distribution of resources and favors or rewards such as jobs or recommendations, subsidies and other benefits. These are tried and tested methods used by politicians to expand and deepen their influence.

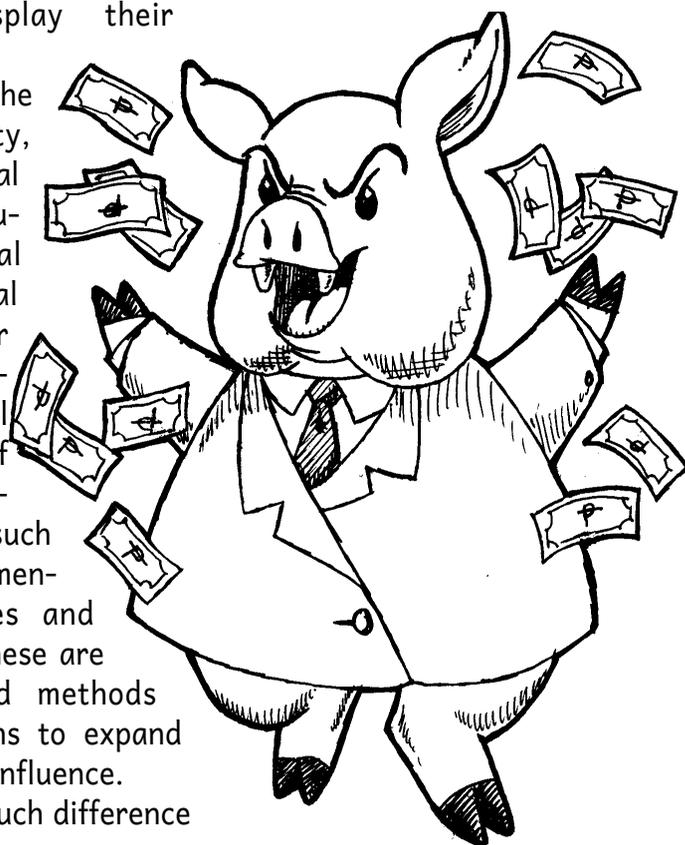
There is not much difference

in the way the senators use their "pork barrel." Most of them have favorite local bailiwicks, home towns or provinces, favored local governments and institutions. This is how they decide where to allocate their "pork barrel."

The senators' favorite provinces are Albay, Pampanga, Batangas, Cavite, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pangasinan, Rizal and Bataan which have the biggest voting populations. Metro Manila is among the favored areas for projects, especially the 4th and 2nd districts of Manila which have become the wealthiest districts because they happen to be the bailiwicks of most senators. Usually, the local politicians in their favorite areas are allies or family members of senators.

## "SOP" in the PDAF

From now on, the requisites for PDAF projects will be strictly complied with, or so Aquino claims under his "path of righteousness" slogan. Among the items that would supposedly be



subjected to close scrutiny are the awarding of contracts and the process of procuring materials for projects. But these measures amount to nothing in the face of the decades-strong practice of the SOP ("standard operating procedure") in the use of the "pork barrel" and the rampant corruption that permeates the entire ruling system.

Under the SOP system, congressmen submit a list of projects targeted for funding via the "pork barrel." After approval, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) issues a Special Allotment Release Order (SARO). As soon as they choose their projects, the congressmen indicate to the local governments which company (usually owned by their friends or family members) should implement the project.

A bogus "public bidding" follows, where the participating companies submit their cost estimates for the project. The estimates automatically include the following "SOPs:" 20% or more for the congressman, 10% for the DPWH district engineer, 2% for the Commission on Audit, 2% for the DBM and 5-20% for the town mayor. In militarized areas, the AFP battalion commander and the PNP provincial director also receive their own cuts.

This system of "SOP" ensures that the congressmen are able to pocket their share of the largesse, even if the funds are directly released to the company or agency that will be implementing the project. Infrastructure projects are the sure favorites for "pork barrel" funding because of the ease with which the "SOP" can be hidden in the cost estimates. The bigger the project, the bigger the kickback. Thus, estimates put the proportion of public funds that actually go into project implementation at a maximum of 40%.

Because Malacañang controls the fund releas-

es, the Aquino regime has been able to use the "pork barrel" to advance its own interests. The decision on who could be given his or her "pork barrel" allocation or when this will be released is based on political considerations, among them the need to ensure the "cooperation" of legislators in meeting the regime's objectives. No less than Sen. Miriam Santiago has disclosed that Aquino used the "pork barrel" to secure the senators' vote to convict Supreme Court Chief Justice Renato Corona.

Oppositionist Rep. Mito Magsaysay and DBM Sec. Florencio Abad Jr. also recently figured in a verbal tussle when the latter declared that the Aquino regime would not be releasing the PDAF allocations of Arroyo allies because of certain "political realities." This runs counter to Aquino's earlier statements that he would never, ever use the "pork barrel" to bribe congressmen. Aquino is expected to likewise use the "pork barrel" to ensure that charter change is advanced and to gain support in the coming elections.

The system of patronage and dirty politics is one of the basic characteristics of the rotten ruling semicolonial and semifeudal system. The big comprador bourgeoisie and big landlords use state power to ensure the subjugation of the majority of the people under the exploitative and oppressive system. Bureaucrat capitalism permeates the entire political system, in all branches and levels of the reactionary government.

Genuine systemic change or treading the "path of righteousness" can never be initiated by the ruling classes. These will be born out of the overthrow of the rotten and parasitic bourgeois state, and arise from the forging of genuine people's power under the People's Democratic Government. **AB**

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## Enemy suffers 32 casualties in SMR

**T**he enemy suffered 32 casualties in a series of armed actions launched by the 3rd Pulang Bagani Company (3rd PBC) of the New People's Army in Southern Mindanao Region against the abusive troops of the 66th IB and 5th Scout Ranger Company (5th SRC).

On July 31, at around 4 a.m., the 3rd PBC ambushed a platoon under the 66th IB in Purok-1, Barangay Paloc, Maragusan, Compostela Valley. Seven soldiers were killed on the spot, including their commanding officer Second Lieutenant Fernan-

dez. Ten other soldiers were wounded. A Red fighter was martyred in this gunbattle.

The ambush that resulted in 17 enemy casualties was part of a series of tactical offensives launched by the NPA in the form of ambushes, detonation of

explosives and other special operations against the 66th IB and 5th SRC, which have been deployed to the area to protect huge foreign-owned mining companies and banana plantations. The AFP suffered at least 15 other casualties in these previous military actions.

Aside from being instruments in seizing the farmlands of settlers and Mandaya and Mansaka minorities, the 66th IB and 5th SRC were also involved

in attempts to bust the legitimate workers' union at the DOLE-Stanfilco banana plantation through the establishment of the yellow WIPER (Workers for Industrial Peace and Economic Reforms). The group is led by Chito Herbolingo, a member of the rabidly anti-communist Alliance for Nationalism and Democracy or ANAD.

The AFP has retaliated through indiscriminate bombing raids and combat operations that have wrought havoc on the livelihoods of hundreds of farmers in the ten villages of Maragusan covered by the military's rampage. The AFP has also been imposing food blockades and limiting the number of hours that residents could work on their farms. Soldiers have also mauled and inflicted serious physical injuries on a number of peasants and mass leaders.

Meanwhile, in Barangay Bit-os, Butuan City, the NPA seized four firearms (two M16 rifles and two 9 mm pistols) and rounds of ammunition in an ambush by the Cesar Cayon Command on abusive policemen who have long been extorting money from smallscale loggers in the area.

The NPA ambushed PO2 Adonis Dumaboc and PO2 Sergio Saragospe at around 9 a.m. of August 6. They were both aboard a motorcycle. Dumaboc was killed while Saragospe was wounded in the attack.

Residents and the so-called "bukot-bukot loggers" (smallscale planters of falcatta, gmelina, mahogany and other fast-growing trees) have long been complaining about extortion. Everyone is victimized, whether they are illegal or legitimate loggers. The two policemen were among the various forces and agencies of the reactionary government maintaining checkpoints along all land and river routes going to Butuan City, in order to harass everyone passing through and extort money from them.

The residents call them "Lolong," after the biggest crocodile ever captured in Philippine history. The extortion victims were elated when they heard about the ambush, because it serves as a warning against other greedy gators. **AB**

## Bounty on Madlos and Tiamzon violates JASIG

**B**enigno Aquino III's order to renew and raise the bounty for the capture of Benito Tiamzon and Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlos, both prominent leaders of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) involved in the peace talks is a violation of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG). Aquino announced on August 17 that the reward for their capture had been raised to ₱5.6 million.

This latest move shows that the Aquino regime is not serious about negotiating peace with the NDFP, said the Communist Party of the Philippines. The JASIG prohibits the surveillance, arrest, imprisonment and filing of criminal charges as well as the conduct of pursuit or punitive operations against personalities of both parties involved in the talks. The agreement was signed by the principals of the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the NDFP in 1998 in order to create favorable conditions for the peace negotiations.

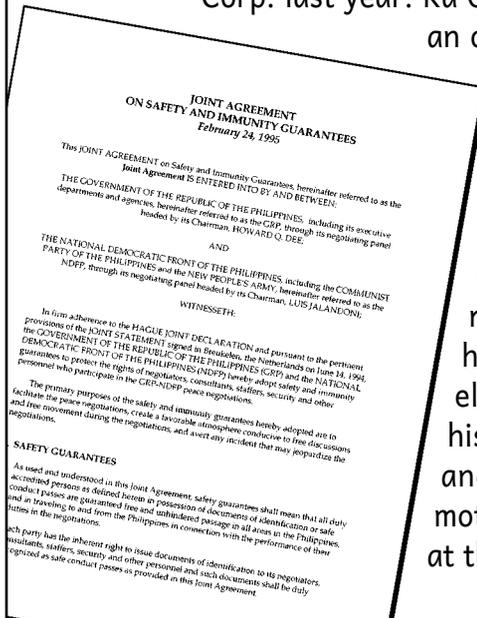
NDFP-Mindanao spokesperson Ka Oris slammed the issuance of the bounty as malicious and designed to scuttle the NDFP-GPH peace talks.

A ₱2 million bounty was also offered for the capture of fugitive fascist Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan, accused personalities like ex-Gov. Joel Reyes of Palawan and Delfin Lee of Globe Asiatique and convicted Surigao del Norte congressman Ruben Ecleo. "To maliciously peg criminals such as Palparan and Ecleo at level with revolutionaries like Tiamzon and myself is ... worthy of rebuke," said Ka Oris.

The NDFP-Mindanao spokesperson likewise assailed the filing of trumped-up criminal charges against his son Vincent Isagani. Vincent was among those charged by the military in connection with an attack by the New People's Army (NPA) on the Platinum Group Metal Corp. last year. Ka Oris said that his son is

an ordinary employee at a private company in Cebu and is not a member of the NPA.

Ka Oris asked Aquino to order the revocation of the warrant of arrest against his son so he could travel freely and represent his father at the wake and burial of Ka Oris' mother who died recently at the age of 98. **AB**



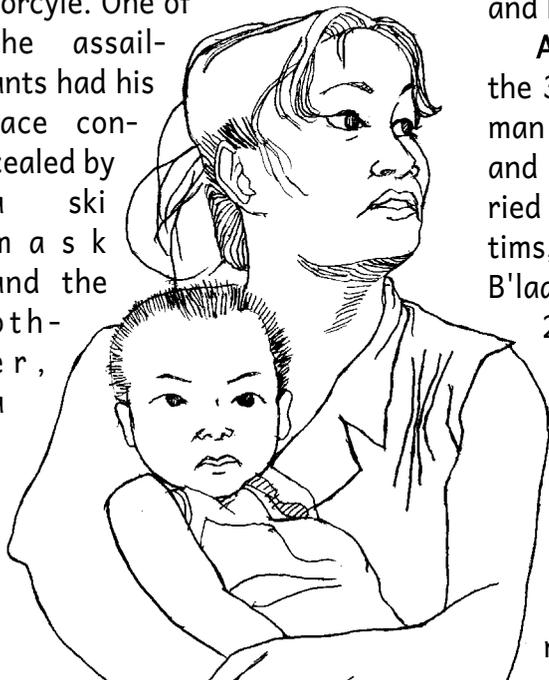
# Military steps up violence against women and children

Marking the intensification of violence against women and children by the fascist military, three women and two children became victims of human rights violations in the first half of August. Children from various towns in Bondoc Peninsula also fell victim to various forms of abuse when troops from the 85th IB encamped at the village centers and used the elementary school buildings in these areas as their barracks.

**August 15.** Elements of the Philippine National Police (PNP) arbitrarily blocked 28 members of the human rights watchdog Karapatan who had just attended the group's 4th national congress in Tagaytay City. The delegates were on the way back to Manila aboard a Victory Liner Bus when policemen blocked them in front of the PNP Academy in Silang, Cavite. They were detained for half an hour. The policemen did not give any reason for the detention. But the delegates heard some policemen at the back conversing with a high-ranking official who said, "Those people are members of Karapatan. Investigate them and take their pictures."

**August 7.** Merlyn Bermas, barangay chair of Malaya, Labo, Camarines Norte was gunned down by two men aboard a motorcyle. One of

the assailants had his face concealed by a ski mask and the other, a



helmet.

Bermas had served as village chair for more than 15 years and courageously defended the human rights of her constituents. She was aboard a tricycle with a sidecar and was on the way home from marketing in Barangay Anameam, Labong when she was shot by the gunmen.

Bermas was shot twice in the back. Gerald, a four-year old boy who was sitting on her lap was hit in the head. Neither of them made it to the hospital alive.

Bermas had led an investigation on the massacre by military elements of a peasant family on February 25. Farmer Benjamin Mancera and his sons Richard and Michael were killed in this incident. His daughter Leonisa was wounded. Bermas and other barangay officials extended sanctuary to Leonisa and her mother Lourdes.

**August 6 and 7.** Elements of the 39th IB under Lt. Col. Norman Zuniega illegally arrested and detained two women married to NPA guerrillas. The victims, who are members of the B'laan tribe are Lindy Dawang, 21 and Tayet Magwan, 27.

Dawang is six months pregnant. She was arrested on August 6 in Barangay Daligasaw, Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur and forcibly taken to the 39th IB headquarters. Magwan was arrested on August 7 in Ba-

rangay San Isidro, also in Sta. Cruz and brought to the same military camp with her two-year old child.

The victims, who were arrested without warrant, are feared to be undergoing interrogation and possible torture.

Maj. Jake Obligado, 10th ID Civil-Military Operations chief gave a different story and claimed that the victims voluntarily surrendered.

The arrests of Dawang, Magwan and her child are violations of the rules of war, particularly the Geneva Conventions and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. They are likewise violative of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law signed by the Government of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines.

**February to April.** The Children's Rehabilitation Center reported that minors from South Quezon suffered various forms of military abuse, as documented in a psychosocial activity conducted by the child rights advocacy group in San Andres and Lopez towns from June 25 to July 2. More than 200 children aged five to 16 attended the activity.

The children recounted the military accusing their fathers of being NPA guerrillas. Most of the children were interrogated by soldiers on whether their parents kept any firearms. A child said that a soldier took their boat while another child said that soldiers had stolen their rice. Most of the children expressed fears that their parents would be killed or abducted by the military. The children called for the withdrawal of military troops from their communities. **AB**

## Tribute to mass leaders

The national-democratic movement bestowed the highest honors on Ka Nelson Mallari, Coun. Ramon Te and Atty. Federico "Dick" Bunao, leaders of the mass movement who had recently died.

Ka Nelson, an Aeta, was the spokesperson of the Katribu Party and was one of its nominees. He died in a vehicular accident on July 22. He also used to be the spokesperson of the Central Luzon Aeta Association. He led campaigns to defend the rights of Aeta minorities and opposed militarization in Central Luzon. Ka Nelson was harassed several times during the Arroyo regime when he served as an organizer in Zambales province.

Ramon Te, councilor of the second district of Caloocan City died of a heart attack on August 10. He was the vice chair for Luzon of the MAKABAYAN coalition and was a member of Partidong Anakpawis and the National Union of People's Lawyers. He was one of the convenors of the Riles Laan sa Sambayanan Network, Taxpayers Unity Against Toll Fee Increase in South Luzon Expressway and Koalisyon ng Progresibong Manggagawa at Mamamayan. He advanced the platform of the Partidong Anakpawis in his district.

Ka Dick, on the other hand, was an exemplary lawyer for the working class and the poor. He died on August 4 from a heart attack. He was one of the lawyers of the National Federation of Labor Unions (NAFLU) in the 1980s. He later served the Cordillera region under the Cordillera Labor Center and the Cordillera Peoples Alliance beginning in the 1990s. He consciously defended the interests of the working class and practiced his profession in the service of the national-democratic cause.

## Kontra-Daya: Disqualify bogus parties

POLL fraud watchdog Kontra-Daya demanded that the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) disqualify 39 groups from the partylist system from participating in the 2013 elections. Said Kontra-Daya convenor Fr. Joe Dizon, most of these parties' nominees are not genuinely part of the sectors they purportedly represent. Kontra-Daya had earlier filed a case calling for the disqualification of Gloria Arroyo's son Mikey as nominee of Ang Galing Pinoy.

Among the other personalities identified by Kontra-Daya are Margarita "Tingting" Cojuangco, an aunt of Benigno Aquino III and a former Tarlac governor who is currently a nominee of Aksyon Magsasaka-Partido Tinig ng Masa; and Stephen Paduano, also known as Lualhati Carapali, one of Aquino uncle Danding Cojuangco's men and a member of the bandit Revolutionary Proletarian Army. Paduano is a nominee of the Abang Lingkod Party. Kontra-Daya also questioned the participation in the partylist system of Atty. Ferdinand Topacio (nominee of Pasang Masda); Grace Ibuna of the Movement of Women for Reform and Change; and Leah Navarro of the Black and White Party who all represent traditional political clans or have government connections.

Kontra-Daya moreover identified bogus parties such as the Alliance of Organizations, Networks and Associations of the Philippines (whose nominee is the son of Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez); Alliance of Mindanao Elders (whose nominee is Rep. Jorge Banal Jr.'s father); Agrarian Development Association (whose nominees are Eric and Owen Singson who belong to one of the most powerful political clans in the Ilocos region); and Alliance of Rural and Agrarian Reconstruction Inc. (whose nominee is Gen. Quirino dela Torre, who served as PNP-Central Luzon chief during the bloody Hacienda Luisita Massacre of 2004).

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## 30 strikers killed in South Africa

AT least 30 striking miners of Lonmin PLC Platinum Mine were killed when they were gunned down by policemen in Rustenburg, Johannesburg, South Africa on August 16. The shooting occurred when more than 3,000 policemen attacked the ranks of thousands of strikers and their wives. The day before, nine workers had also been killed in a series of protests that began August 14. The strikers were demanding more humane working conditions and a wage hike. The incident was the bloodiest in the history of the country's labor movement in the past 20 years.

Lonmin PLC is a multinational company that is 25% owned by Xstrata of Switzerland. Xstrata is likewise notorious in the Philippines for its abuses. The company operates in four provinces of Mindanao.

Platinum is the rarest and one of the most expensive minerals, with its price almost double that of gold. It is used, among others, in making jewelry and high-end watches and airplanes.