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Editorial

Struggle of oppressed women under the US-Aquino regime

On the occasion of the 102nd commemoration of International Working Women's Day on March 8, the Communist Party of the Philippines and the entire revolutionary movement salute the Filipino women who are struggling for national democracy as activists, Red commanders and fighters and communists. The widespread participation of women is decisive in dismantling the current semifeudal and semicolonial system and building a socialist society.

Women comprise half of Filipino society. They suffer from layers of exploitation and oppression—as part of the toiling masses, as part of a people ruled by puppet reactionary regimes, and as the progenitors of the new generation within unequal marriage and family relations.

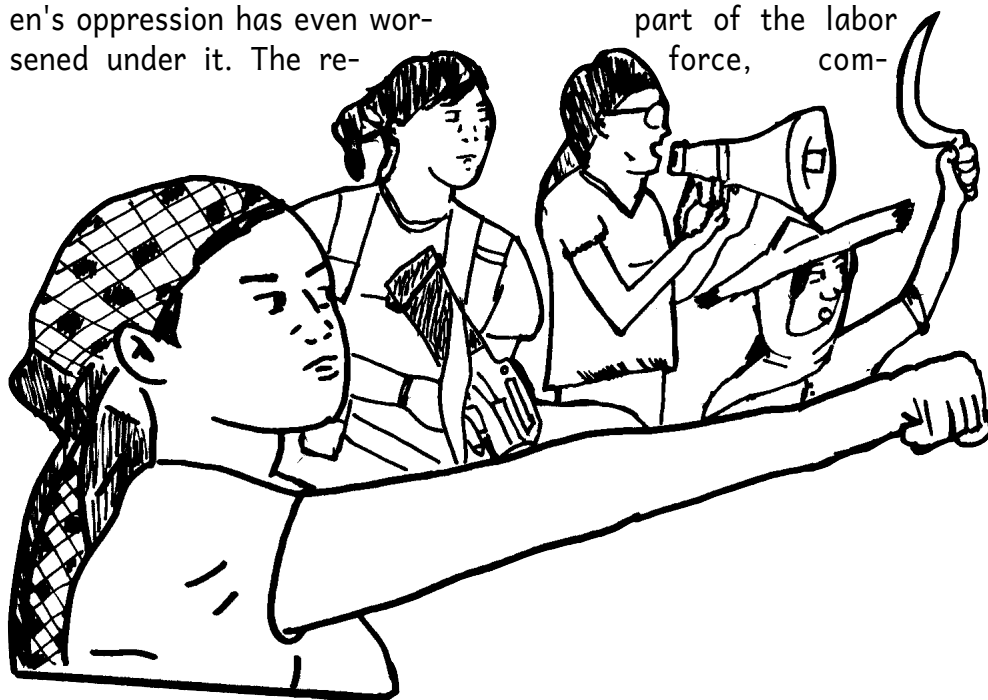
Contrary to the US-Aquino regime's boastful claims, women's oppression has even worsened under it. The re-

gime has stepped up programs and policies that have for decades been disastrous to the toiling masses, especially the women. Not only has Aquino continued the state's pro-imperialist policies, he has surpassed the puppetry of previous presidents.

There remains a huge gap in the labor force participation of women. Only half of women are part of the labor force, com-

pared to 80% of men. Those with jobs are in sectors that pay the lowest wages and have the worst working conditions. One of these is the service sector where more than half or 68% are women and the majority (85%) are contractual. Women receive lower wages compared to men. With minimum wages pegged at low levels and with real wages eroded by inflation, capitalists are able to extract double profits from them.

The US-Aquino regime continues to push migrant labor as the solution to women's unemployment. According to women's rights advocates, seven out of ten migrant women are in pri-



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vate service, putting them in a sector where they are most vulnerable to abuse. Worse, there are growing numbers of migrant young women and children (age 15 to 24) who go abroad and work as domestic servants in private households.

Like the men of the peasantry, peasant women are exploited and oppressed due to landlessness. They are burdened by exorbitant production costs on the small areas of land that they rent, spending up to P56,000 per hectare in producing palay. Peasants could hardly break even because merchants short-change them in buying their produce, purchasing palay at only P12-14 per kilo, whereas rice sells for at least P30 per kilo in the market.

Women from the toiling masses suffer the worst effects of widespread landgrabbing, the plunder of natural resources and the destruction of the environment by foreign companies and their local partners. During calamities brought about by strong typhoons and landslides,

up to 85% of those who are forced to stay in evacuation centers are women and children. Here, they suffer from hunger, illness and malnutrition. They are vulnerable to harassment, oppression and state violence once they stand up for their rights.

Aside from poor resources and joblessness, many women suffer from hunger and poverty due to the pro-imperialist policies of liberalization, privatization, denationalization and deregulation of successive regimes.

Because of the widespread privatization of hospitals and the commercialization of the school system, they are deprived of basic health and education services. Up to 12 women die from childbirth every day because of lack of access to medical attention. The Aquino regime's claims of address-

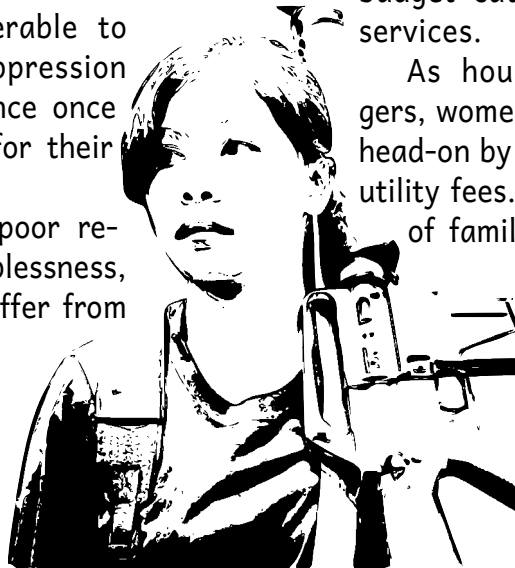
ing women's health and reproductive rights fall flat in the face of its all-out drive to privatize public hospitals and its budget cuts for medical services.


As household managers, women are being hit head-on by hikes in public utility fees. A huge chunk of family incomes are swallowed by incessant increases in transportation costs, house rentals and power and water rates. Many of the poorest families do not have decent housing. They are compelled to forego other basic needs such as education. On many occasions, they are forced to curtail their food consumption. Many mothers hardly eat, prioritizing their children instead.

Women suffer the most brutal forms of societal and state violence. Up to 5,180 rape cases were documented by state agencies last year. In seven out of ten cases, the victims were children.

The US-Aquino regime's Oplan Bayanihan systematically targets women and children in its brutal campaign against the struggling people and the revolutionary movement. In 2012, fifteen women and 12 children were killed by AFP soldiers during military operations. Sexual violence and women's exploitation are part and parcel of these military operations. Ten cases of individual and gang rape perpetrated by elements of the reactionary army were documented in 2012.

It is the duty of the revolutionary movement to mobilize



	
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more women to fight for their rights and welfare and for national democracy. It is not enough for them to be granted limited rights under the current system. Their rights to a just wage and decent jobs, to equal treatment in society and within the family, and to maternal welfare must be addressed.

The liberation of women is a function of their participation in the broad mass movement for revolutionary change. On the other hand, the victory of the national-democratic revolution relies on the widespread participation of women, especially those in the countryside where the armed revolution is being waged. Their participation and leadership in revolutionary practice is especially important, since it is in these areas when feudal culture and anti-women traditions are at their strongest.

We must ensure that the revolution advances in ways that encourage the participation of more women. We must conduct massive education drives among their ranks to raise their capabilities and consciousness and encourage them to undertake more and broader duties and tasks to advance the revolution to a higher level. They must be continuously prepared for ever greater participation in building a new society.

The struggle of women to liberate themselves is linked to the Party and the national-democratic movement's goal of seizing state power and building the dictatorship of the proletariat, which will enable the implementation of genuine changes that will ensure their rights and equality between women and men in law and in practice, within the family, the state and society. **AB**

Series of fee hikes loom

Simultaneous fee hikes have been set in the coming months. The scheduled power, water and transportation fare increases once more bring to the fore the fact that the liberalization, privatization, deregulation and denationalization programs implemented by successive regimes since the 1980s have been heavy burdens to the Filipino people. The current US-Aquino regime is antipeople and pro-imperialist in its perpetuation and defense of these policies.

This March, power rates are set to increase by 19 centavos/kWh, equivalent to an additional ₱39 for an average family consuming 200 kWh per month. Meralco claims that it needs to raise power rates because it has to pay more than ₱53 billion in the stranded costs of independent power producers (IPP) from which it sources electricity.

"Stranded costs" are actually debts incurred by IPPs in building and maintaining their plants. As a result of the anomalous contracts entered into by the US-Ramos regime in the 1990s, these debts were assumed by the reactionary state and passed on to the people in the form of public debt or through ceaseless power rate hikes. Meralco lets consumers and other electric cooperatives shoulder this burden in the form of "universal charges."

This practice ensures the profits of private companies despite fluctuations in power production and in the peso-dollar exchange rate, the obsolescence of their plants and technology and even losses resulting from bad investment decisions.

Water rates were hiked just this February. The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System and Maynilad raised fees by up to ₱1.47 per

cubic meter or a ₱22 raise for the average family consuming 30 cubic meters every month. This is the result of the "automatic adjustment" provision that allows automatic fee hikes vis a vis inflation and peso-dollar exchange rate fluctuations.

This March, the Department of Transportation and Communications announced that fare hikes in the MRT and LRT would push through. From a maximum of ₱15 per passenger in the last seven years, fares will be raised to ₱60.

The US-Aquino regime justifies these hikes, citing the train system's maintenance costs and reduced subsidies. Nonetheless, state "subsidies" have never been used in the train system's actual management or maintenance. They have instead been used to service the debts of the Metro Rail Transit Corp. (MRTC), the consortium of private companies formed to oversee the building of the infrastructure and the operations of the train system under the Ramos regime's build-operate-transfer program. Among the consortium members are Ayala Land Inc., Fil-Estate Management Inc. and their foreign partners like Sumimoto Corporation and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Inc.

Among the MRTC's creditors are the Export-Import

Bank, Sumimoto Bank and the Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI), banks owned by families or companies that are also part of MRTC. A few examples are Ayala Land Inc. and BPI which are both owned by the Ayala family and the Sumimoto Corporation and Sumimoto Bank which are both owned by the Sumimoto Group of Japan.

Aquino plans to surpass the privatization policy which already ensures that capitalists rake in huge amounts of money, by scrambling to entice foreign investors through the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) program.

Aquino is now pushing for the "top-up subsidy" provision to become part of the ₱60-billion build-operate-transfer contract for constructing the LRT-1 extension. The provision protects investors against threats of regulation (or state control over fees such as transportation fares). It will ensure a 15% return on investment for capitalists for the next 15 years even during times when fares could not be raised, or when any court puts a stop to transport fare hikes or declares them illegal.

Favored businessmen, relatives and cronies of the Aquino clique are in fierce competition to land the contract. Among them are the Ayala family and the business group represented by Manuel Pangilinan, as well as bureaucrat capitalists raking in huge profits from the privatization and deregulation of power and water. Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, the Ang family and their foreign business partners are likewise part of the mad scramble.

The LRT 1 extension is one of the biggest projects of the US-Aquino regime under the PPP. AB

Oil palm plantations evict Higaonon minorities

Hundreds of Higaonon families have already been evicted by the Aquino regime from their farms and homes since the oil palm plantation A. Brown Company, Inc. (ABCI) penetrated Opol, Misamis Oriental. As a result, the Higaonon minorities have been suffering intense oppression and violence, driving them to demand the expulsion of the plantation from their ancestral land. The Higaonon are one of 18 Lumad tribes in Mindanao. They live in the upland areas of Misamis Oriental, Bukidnon, Agusan del Sur, Agusan del Norte, Lanao del Norte and Camiguin island.

The lands of the Higaonon Lumad have long been subjected to landgrabbing. Logger Vicente Paras seized their land in the 1960s. In 1991, he was able to acquire 532 hectares of "public land" by conniving with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Through the Higaonon's continuous efforts, their ancestral land was recognized in 2002. The DENR granted them a Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) contract that guaranteed their long-term stay on the land, as long they took responsibility for planting trees in the denuded forests. By 2005, Barangays Tingalan and Bagocboc had become thriving farmlands.

Nonetheless, it did not take long for the DENR to renege on its pledge to the minorities when Nakeen Development Corp. and A. Brown Energy Development Corp., both ABCI subsidiaries entered the picture. The Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) and A. Brown along with members of organizations formed by the DENR began conducting meetings. This was followed by a number of maneuvers to justifi-

fy the seizure of the Higaonon lands.

Operations of the 2,000-hectare ABCI oil palm plantation in Opol began in 2010. This was ABCI's expansion from its 800-hectare plantation in Dalirig, Manolo Fortich and Kalabugao, Impasug-ong, both in Bukidnon. ABCI, which is owned by Filipino-Americans Walter A. Brown and Annabelle Brown is into power generation, mining, quarrying and real estate. Nakeen and ABERDI are ABCI subsidiaries that operate plantations and palm oil mills.

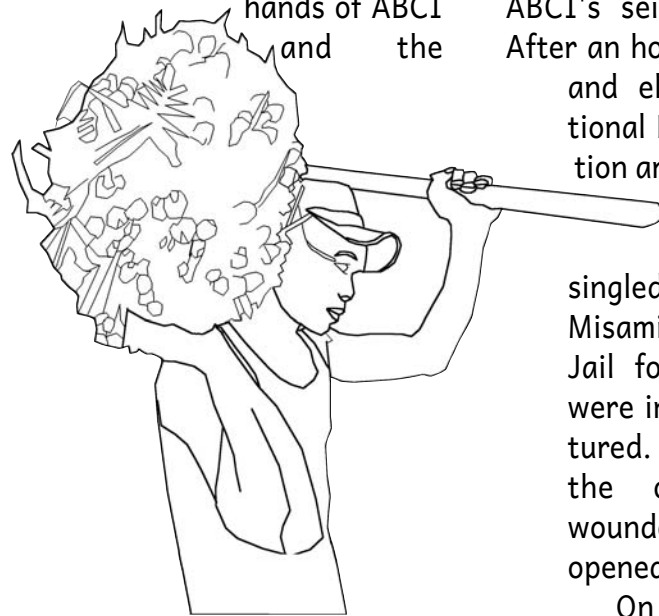
Since the oil palm plantation in Opol began, the Higaonon have suffered from hunger and the violation of their rights. "As national minorities, we have the right to the land, but we have been continuously deprived of it," said Rubenson Batuto, a Higaonon whose clan has lived in Barangay Tingalan, Opol even before the Spaniards arrived.

Since the plantation's operations began, there have been growing numbers of Opol residents suffering from coughs and colds, skin diseases, diarrhea and other ailments. Their symptoms have worsened since the plantation began using agro-chemical

pesticides like carbofuran (Furadan) and glyphosate. Furadan is a pesticide long banned in the US. The herbicide glyphosate is also toxic to humans and animals.

In addition, the Higaonon's coconut and banana trees—their only source of livelihood—have slowly been dying.

The Higaonon minorities have suffered violence in the hands of ABCI and the



Aquino government's men. On March 10, 2011, eight tribespeople who left their village as a group to gather bamboo were blocked by guards. They were Edwin Baranggot, Jemar Armilla, Fausto Magpulong, Raul Magpulong, Jose Paborada, Dante Paborada and Ruel Tagupa. They were all members of Pangalasag, an organization formed by the Higaonon to fight ABCI's seizure of their land. After an hour, A. Brown guards and elements of the National Bureau of Investigation arrived. Two of the Higaonon (Baranggot and Armilla) were singled out and held at the Misamis Oriental Provincial Jail for two weeks. They were interrogated and tortured. Jose Paborada, on the other hand, was wounded when the guards opened fire.

On October 12, 2012,

motorcycle-riding gunmen killed Pangalasag chair Gilbert Paborada. ABCI has been threatening to kill Paborada since 2011 unless Pangalasag stops its opposition to the plantation.

The Higaonon have also been harassed numerous times—their houses burned down and their crops destroyed and replaced with oil palm.

In the face of such oppression, the Higaonon strongly demand the immediate pullout of ABCI from Opol. They demand a stop to all forms of human rights violations, respect for the right of the Lumad to their ancestral land and compensation for the victims. They call for a stop to the desecration of areas sacred to the Higaonon, the cleanup and rehabilitation of areas contaminated by toxic chemicals from the plantation and immediate economic assistance to the farmers. **AB**

The palm oil industry in the Philippines

Oil palm plantations are among the biggest in the Philippines. There are currently 54,448 hectares planted to oil palm in the country. The Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA) has also reserved 304,000 hectares for the expansion of oil palm plantations. From the present six palm oil mills, there are plans to expand this to 17.

Malaysian investors who visited the country in December assured that they had ₱23 billion to invest in an oil palm plantation in the Liguasan Marsh. The latter, which is a protected area, has been opened by the Aquino regime to foreign investors.

The palm oil market continues to expand both here and abroad. Aside from its uses in cooking, it is also widely used in the food, drug, cosmetics and agro-chemical industries. It is also processed as bio-fuel. There are big profits to be made from oil palm because only a small amount of capital is needed and the trees only

take three years before they bear fruit. They can be harvested twice a month and remain productive for 22-25 years.

Oil palm production is best in countries with tropical climates like Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. At present, 90% of all palm oil comes from Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. Although oil palm plantations have been existing in the Philippines since the 1950s, their aggressive expansion began only in the past decade.

There is no truth to government claims that the establishment of oil palm plantations are part of reforestation and are good for the environment. These vast plantations are destructive to soil ecology and pave the way for the proliferation of pests, thus necessitating the use of pesticides, herbicides and other agro-chemicals. This has resulted in the loss of biodiversity, damage to groundwater and marine life, soil erosion and the pollution of rivers and streams.

Support the struggle of the FPPI workers

In January, the Filipinas Palmoil Plantation Inc. (FPPI) management deviously and illegally terminated 293 workers who joined a strike against the oil mill.

Up to a thousand workers, including their families struck on November 18, 2012 because of the FPPI management's unjust treatment and illegal dismissal of 293 casual workers. They lifted their strike a few days after the secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) assumed jurisdiction over the labor dispute in January.

DOLE-Caraga had conducted an inspection in October 2012, interviewing more than 200 workers. The investigation revealed FPPI's gross violations of labor standards—its payment of wages lower than the designated minimum and the workers' lack of SSS benefits. The labor department recommended the payment of at least ₱9 million in damages to the workers.

The FPPI Workers' Union had long been demanding that management implement labor standards, among them raising workers' wages, regularizing workers who had been employed by the company for five to 30 years and providing benefits stipulated by law. In 2010, they were forced to strike after management refused to honor the Col-

lective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) signed in 2008. A CBA deadlock occurred in 2011.

The workers have also been terrorized, with elements of the Special CAFGU Active Auxiliary (SCAA) and company guards threatening and harassing them. On December 13, at 10 p.m., SCAA elements opened fire just a few meters from the picket line to intimidate the workers. This was one of many incidents intended to harass the strikers.

The union was forced to strike anew in November 2012 after the FPPI fired workers who refused to retract their testimonies given to the DOLE. Out of more than 200 respondents, the management was able to convince only eleven workers to revoke their statements in exchange for continued employment as casuals and a cash payment of ₱3,000.

The 293 workers who have been fired have clearly been discriminated against and their rights violated. Not only have they been deprived of their rightful wages and benefits as regular workers and union members. They have also been deprived of job security and the basic right to life. Even their children have been compelled to work at the plantation at a young age. Close to 25% of FPPI workers are children. AB

NPA thwarting Oplan Bayanihan in Central Negros

The revolutionary movement in Central Negros belied claims made by the Philippine Army's 3rd Infantry Division that it is on the verge of crushing the New People's Army (NPA) in Negros. This, despite the hordes of troops from the Philippine Army's 302nd and 303rd Infantry Brigade, Scout Rangers and the Philippine National Police (PNP) that have been sent to the area.

From 2012 to early 2013, the membership of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) grew by 40%. The number of NPA fighters also grew by 20-25%. A big number of activists has also been recruited due to the 35-40% growth in the mass base, said Ka JB Regalado, spokesperson of the Leonardo Panaligan Command (LPC) of the NPA Central Negros Front Operations Command.

The NPA under the LPC successfully launched military operations from December 2012 to early January 2013 against the Philippine Army, PNP, paramilitaries active in "counter-insurgency" operations, military intelligence assets and local counterrevolutionary bad elements.

In these military actions, the NPA was able to seize 12 firearms of various caliber—four M203 grenade launchers, a sub-

machine gun, a carbine, a shotgun, two cal .45 pistols, a cal .38 pistol and a cal .357 revolver, magazines and ammunition. The NPA also confiscated military equipment like a handheld



radio, a pair of night vision goggles and three cellphones.

The enemy suffered eleven dead in these firefights—four soldiers from the 11th IB, one from the PNP, a military asset of the 11th IB, two armed village watchmen and three elements of the Barangay Patrol Action Team (BPAT). At least eight enemy elements were wounded—two from the Philippine Army, two from the PNP and two local counterrevolutionary bad elements.

Regalado assailed the AFP's mobilization under Oplan Bayanihan of a number of Social Democrats, Popular Democrats and clerico-fascists belonging to the Church and Military Action Group like Fr. Rolex Nueva and Jack Pamine. These elements have been actively peddling the line that the NPA should surrender to duly constituted authorities while turning a blind eye to widespread cases of human rights abuses committed by "Peace and Development Teams" of the military and police. AB

NPA frees 2 POW in Compostela Valley

Red fighters of the New People's Army (NPA) released two prisoners of war (POW) in a remote village in Laak, Compostela Valley on February 21. The prisoners were arrested at an NPA checkpoint in Barangay Mangloy, Laak on January 17.

After the release of SPO1 Ruel Pasion of the Philippine National Police and Pfc Jezreel Colanggo of the Philippine Army 60th IB, they were remanded by the NPA Compostela Valley-North Davao-South Agusan Sub-Regional Command to the organization Sowing Seeds of Peace. Afterwards, they were brought by helicopter by Davao City vice mayor Rodrigo Duterte to their respective regional headquarters.

According to the revolutionary people's court that ordered the NPA to release the two captives, there was no sufficient evidence that Pasion and Colanggo had committed crimes against the Filipino people and the revolutionary movement.

The release of the two prisoners of war was a favorable response to their families' requests and due likewise to the concerted efforts of peace advocates like Sowing Seeds for Peace. It was also in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). AB

NPA disarms Dolefil-Stanfilco cohort

Red fighters of NPA Front 72 in Mindanao disarmed men of the notorious Baclid Brothers in Sitio Lacobe, Barangay Malabuan, Makilala, North Cotabato on February 23. Brothers Toks and Teding Baclid are CAFGU elements under the Philippine Army 38th IB and collaborators of Dolefil-Stanfilco.

According to initial reports, the NPA seized an M79 grenade launcher, two cal .38 revolvers, eight home-made Uzi machine pistols and five home-made Ingram machine pistols.

In a statement, NDF-Far South Mindanao Region spokesperson Ka Efren also reported that the farmers in the area were also elated at recovering the land seized earlier from them by the Baclid Brothers.

In 2004, the Baclid Brothers were armed by the 38th IB and former North Cotabato Gov. Manny Piñol to evict 60 farming families from Sitio Lacobe and seize 178 hectares of produc-

tive land planted to rubber trees.

The landgrabbing was perpetrated simultaneously with an intense military operation in the area by the 602nd Brigade to protect Dole-Stanfilco which was then rapidly expanding its banana plantations. CAFGU detachments were built in strategic barangays around the Dole-Stanfilco plantation, including Barangay Malabuan.

Eventually, the Baclid Brothers also annexed another 600 hectares from the neighboring barangays of Bato and Villa Flores. Because most of the landgrabbing victims were beneficiaries of the bogus Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, they filed a case at the Department of Agrarian Reform Adjudication Board (DARAB). But the board threw out the case in January on the pretext that there was no existing agrarian issue as there were no prevailing landlord-tenant relations between the parties involved. AB

In Bukidnon

NPA metes blows on pursuing soldiers

A series of gunbattles have erupted between AFP soldiers and the New People's Army (NPA) Mt. Kitanglad Sub-Regional Command in Bukidnon after the successful NPA raids on the multinational giants Del Monte and Dole on February 19.

Red fighters met pursuing troops from the 403rd IBde with gunfire on February 23 in Licoan, Sumilao town in Bukidnon. A corporal was wounded in this firefight.

On March 2, two soldiers were killed after an NPA unit closed in on a seven-man scouting unit under the 403rd IBde at Mt. Nanluyaw, which is part of the Mt. Kitanglad mountain range. The Red fighters took advantage of the thick fog to gain the upper hand in the fighting. A military rescue helicopter had a hard time retrieving the casualties because of the impenetrable fog and clouds.

Two days after, on March 4, the guerrillas harassed the pursuing soldiers anew.

Meanwhile, Red fighters under the NPA 1st Pulang Bagani Company used command-detonated explosives (CDX) on the 69th IB (the so-called "Palparan Battalion") while the latter was conducting patrols in Purok Tubod, Barangay Lumiad, Paquibato District, Davao City on February 12.

Two soldiers were killed and five wounded. The NPA military action was done to punish the 69th IB for its brutality. **AB**

NPA ambushes 83rd IB in Catanduanes

Three soldiers were killed in an ambush by a unit under the NPA Nerissa San Juan Command on elements of the 83rd IB in Barangay Bislig, San Andres, Catanduanes at around 7 p.m. of February 20.

According to the NDF-Bicol Information Office, the soldiers who were aboard two six-by-six trucks were on their way to a military operation when they were ambushed by the Red fighters. The military admitted to suffering one wounded in the NPA military action. **AB**

CPP condemns armed suppression of Filipinos in Sabah

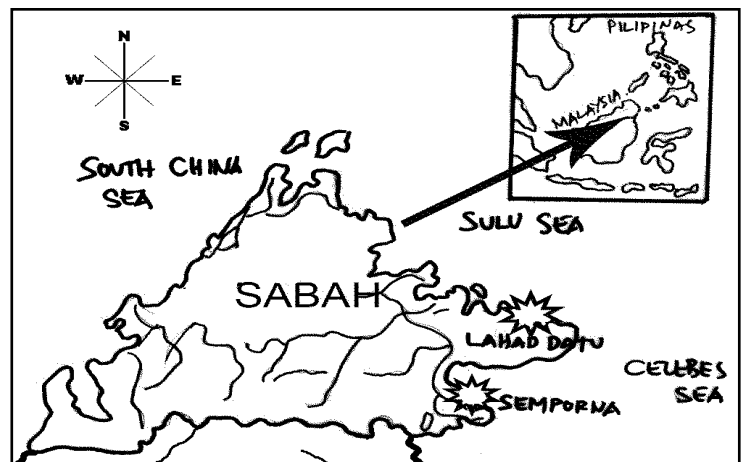
The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) roundly condemned both the armed suppression by the Malaysian military of an armed group sent by the Sultanate of Sulu to Lahud District, Sabah and the US-Aquino regime's endorsement of the Malaysian military's actions. The armed group had been sent by the Sultanate to assert its claim to Sabah as part of Philippine territory. Various sectors have condemned Aquino's dismissive attitude towards the Sabah claim.

Benigno Aquino III was lambasted in a picket-rally on March 5 at the Malaysian Embassy in Makati for endorsing the Malaysian police and military attacks on Filipinos in the island. Aquino was severely criticized by representatives of Muslims from Sulu, the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy, the Moro Christian Peoples Alliance and the Katribu, Migrante and Bayan Muna parties and the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan.

Up to 19 Filipinos have already been killed since Malaysian security forces began suppress-

ing Sultan Jamalul Kiram III's "Royal Army of the Sultanate of Sulu" on March 1. Eight Malaysian policemen have also been killed in continuous fighting as of March 5. Malaysia has even used two jets to drop bombs on the coastal village of Tanduaao, where an armed group from the Sultanate comprising more than 200 persons arrived on February 9 to assert the Sabah claim.

Kiram's men were angered not only with Aquino's passive attitude on the Sabah issue, but for his blatant call on them to surrender to the Malaysian military



forces and his threat to file charges against them once they return to the Philippines. This has only succeeded in firing up their determination to pursue the fighting.

Worse, the Aquino regime has been inutile in defending the Filipinos who have been long-time residents of Sabah and are now being harassed by Malaysia. According to the latest records, there are some 800,000 Filipinos living there (comprising more than 20% of Sabah's population). Most of them are undocumented migrants who went to Sabah to look for work and escape the vicious military campaigns against the struggling Moro people.

Due to the Aquino government's disregard for the interests of the Filipino people, the Malaysian government will continue its brutal treatment of overseas contract workers, most of whom are Muslim Filipinas.

The Malaysian government has long been oppressing Filipinos in Sabah due to its refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the Sultanate of Sulu and the Philippines' claim on Sabah and respect the rights of Filipinos who have long been living in their ancestral land. AB

The CPP on Sabah

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) takes cognizance of the claim on Sabah made by the Sultanate of Sulu in behalf of the Filipino people. Based on legal and historical records, the region was once part of the territory of North Borneo and given to the Sultanate of Sulu in the 16th century and eventually rented out to the British North Borneo Company. In 1963, Sabah became a member of the Federation of Malaysia.

In the face of the Philippine government's refusal to assert the Sabah claim, the democratic and patriotic forces can work with the Filipino claimants to help pursue it in various political, diplomatic and other possible arenas, including raising the issue before an international tribunal. In these fora, there can be a united effort to put to the fore the oppressive conditions of migrant Filipino workers in Sabah, and measures to organize and empower them to defend their rights and advance their welfare.

At the same time, the progressive and democratic forces should encourage the Sabah claimants to unite with the rest of the Filipino people in vigorously demanding an independent foreign policy whose guiding principles are national self-determination, territorial integrity and the people's sovereign interests. They must demand the abrogation of the Visiting Forces Agreement and the Mutual Defense Treaty with the United States which allow the permanent stationing of US troops, the rotational docking of US warships and use of Philippine airspace by US jet fighters and drones. AB

Continuing connivance and maneuvers by the Cojuangco-Aquino family and DAR

Peasant groups and other progressive organizations launched a protest action in front of the Metro Town Mall in Barangay Sto. Cristo, Tarlac City on March 3 to oppose the doctored list of 6,212 farm worker-beneficiaries of Hacienda Luisita issued by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).

Among those included in the list are loyalists of the Cojuangco family—Windsor Andaya (an HLI supervisor), Noel Mallari, Julio Suniga, Eldie Pingol, HLI engineer Rizalino Sotto and Edgardo Aguas, barangay captain of Central village within Hacien-

da Luisita. These people argued for the perpetuation of the anti-peasant stock distribution option (SDO) scheme and fiercely opposed land distribution, said Randall Echanis, deputy secretary-general of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP).

Echanis said they had submitted a petition to strike out the names of these six persons from the list. But DAR secretary Gil de los Reyes denied having received such a petition.

The Cojuangco-Aquino clan included their loyalists among the beneficiaries so that if land distribution could not be avoided, they already have people among the ranks of legitimate beneficiaries to help the landlord family reclaim the hacienda

in the future.

The progressive peasants also condemned the DAR's move to require the farm workers to sign promissory notes before the land distribution could begin. This requisite is designed to hobble the beneficiaries with conditions related to amortizing the land in order to provide the Cojuangco-Aquino clan with a way to revoke the distribution.

The KMP reiterated its call for the free distribution of Hacienda Luisita, saying that the farm workers had long paid for the land with their blood and sweat. The Cojuangco-Aquinos have also lived off the land for 55 years through their illegal control of the vast estate. **AB**

Aquino gives go-signal to Xstrata-SMI

The real objective of Executive Order (EO) 79 and the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) which is controlled by Benigno Aquino III's cabinet can no longer be denied. In its first major decision, the MICC granted an Environmental Clearance Certificate (ECC) to the operations of the giant Xstrata-Sagittarius Mines Inc. (SMI) in Tampakan, South Cotabato.

The MICC deliberately ignored the destructive effects of Xstrata-SMI's open-pit mining operations and disregarded the people's vehement opposition to it. It used its power to make final decisions on all mining applications filed with the DENR and its agencies to run roughshod on the Environment Code of South Cotabato which bans open-pit mining. The MICC's decision is also an insult to the memory of Xstrata-SMI's victims, like the Capión family which has already had four members killed by military men on the giant mining firm's payroll.

On the other hand, giving Xstrata-SMI the green light favors Aquino's uncle Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco who is a shareholder of SMI. **AB**

Victims of typhoon Pablo succeed in making DSWD grant their demands

After three days of barricading the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) regional office in Southern Mindanao, victims of typhoon Pablo successfully asserted their demand for the distribution of relief goods to them.

The confrontation on February 26 and hours of negotiations the day after resulted in a signed agreement where the DSWD would be distributing 10,000 sacks of rice to the victims. Relief operations would also continue until June instead of being terminated on March 9. The DSWD likewise agreed to immediately distribute 100 sacks of rice to the victims upon their return to their respective communities.

A system to verify the volume of assistance and ensure its immediate delivery will also be put in place. The system will be drafted by Barug Katawhan, the DSWD, local government units

and Balsa Mindanao.

The agreement also calls on Barug Katawhan, the local police and the DSWD not to conduct reprisals against each other.

The agreement was the culmination of the victims' intense struggle. On February 26, more than 5,000 victims stormed the DSWD office in Davao City. They entered the office and took away stored foodstuff that had not been distributed to them for a long time. A simultaneous protest action was likewise launched by progressive groups at the DSWD office in Quezon City.

According to Barug Kataw-

han, the mass action at the DSWD was an organized effort to obtain relief. They said that the calamity victims in December continue to suffer from hunger and had lost their livelihood but had still not received



enough assistance from the government. They assailed DSWD Corazon "Dinky" Soliman for reneging on an agreement on January 15 to distribute 10,000 sacks of rice and provide other assistance.

Barug Katawhan said it will face the cases that Soliman would be filing against them for storming the DSWD office. But the organization also challenged the police to investigate DSWD officials involved in corrupt practices, including selling and hoarding relief goods, overpricing bunkhouses and conducting election campaigns in the process of providing assistance.

They also condemned the DSWD for insisting on being provided with a list of the victims, saying that this would only be used by soldiers in their military operations to worsen human rights violations. **AB**

Leader of calamity victims slain

A local leader of victims of typhoon Pable was mercilessly killed a day after DSWD Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman announced the filing of criminal charges against the leaders of Barug Katawhan because of their protests at the government agency's offices. Assailants aboard a motorcycle shot to death Cristina Jose as she left a village council meeting in Binondo, Baganga, Davao Oriental. Jose, a member of the barangay council, was then with her 11-year old daughter and a niece.

Jose's killing was perpetrated just days after she exposed the military harassment that she and other victims had suffered after they joined protests in Davao City against the DSWD. **AB**

Victimizing civilians

Contrary to the Aquino regime's claims that it upholds human rights, the military and other security forces have continued to victimize civilians.

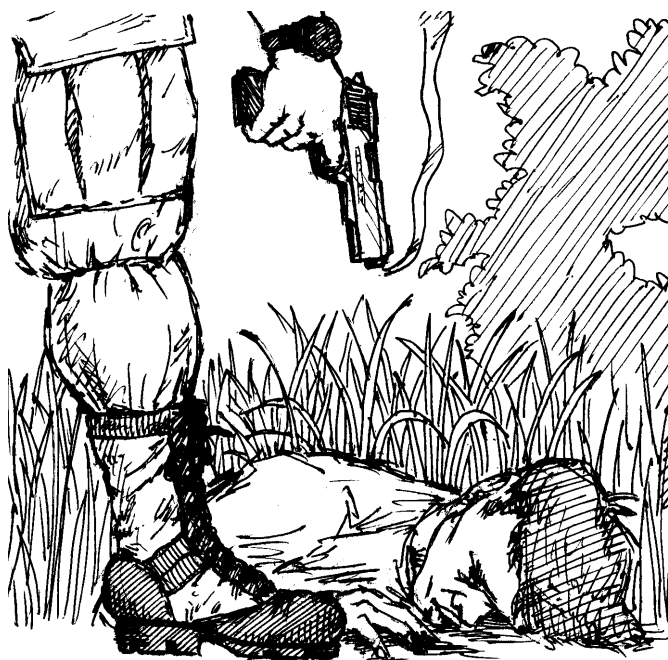
In Sorsogon, Lt. Col. Teody Toribio, 31st IB chief named and accused close to 50 civilians in Barcelona, Sorsogon of being members of the New People's Army or hosting them in their homes. Toribio hurled the accusations on February 17 during his weekly radio program on Padaba FM in Sorsogon City. The civilians fear that they have now been marked for liquidation by the military.

In Aklan, a security guard shot to death Dexter Condez, spokesperson of the Boracay Ati Tribal Organization (BATO) on the night of February 22 in Barangay Manoc-Manoc, Boracay Island in Malay, Aklan. Condez was on his way home from a meeting of tribal leaders with sisters of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul when he was gunned down by Daniel Celestino, a security guard in the employ of Crown Regency Resort and Convention Center.

Condez had been leading the Ati minorities' struggle to claim 2.1 hectares out of the more than 1,000-hectare area of Boracay Island. The move has been strongly opposed by three big companies, including the Crown Regency Resort.

In Kalinga, a soldier shot and killed on February 1 Abe Tinggangay of Buscalan, Butbut, Kalinga. The assailant was Pfc. Ringold Gomez of the 21st

IB. A speeding six-by-six truck loaded with soldiers had hit a motorcycle ridden by Tinggangay and Edwin Daligdig. The soldiers were on their way to Tinglayan town to conduct a military operation. Daligdig was wounded and rushed to the Kalinga Hospital. Tinggangay followed him to the hospital to check on his condition. While Tinggangay was at the doctor's office, Gomez suddenly barged in and shot him in the foot. The shooting sent the people at the hospital scampering away. Meanwhile, Tinggangay, who was left behind during the commotion, eventually died from loss of blood. **AB**



Break-ins worry activists

Twelve cases of break-ins of offices of activist organizations have been recorded by KARAPATAN and the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) from March 2012 to the second week of February.

The activist groups said the break-ins were not ordinary robberies but formed part of AFP military operations against organizations branded as fronts of the Communist Party of the Philippines. They fear that these are preludes to planned attacks against government critics.

Among the offices that had been broken into were those of the ANGLO federation on Kamias Road (February 21); BAYAN-NCR in Cubao (February 14); Salinlahi Alliance for Children's Concerns and Parents Alternative, Inc. at Project 3 (January 13); Health Alliance for Democracy at E. Rodriguez (December 25); and Gabriela Women's Party at Tandang Sora (June 16). All of the offices are in Quezon City.

In almost all cases, the items taken were used for data storage, such as flash disks, hard drives, laptops, cell-phones and cameras. **AB**

Venezuelan Pres. Hugo Chavez passes away

Pres. Hugo Chavez of Venezuela died of cancer on March 5.

The Communist Party of the Philippines extended its condolences to the people of Venezuela and hailed his anti-imperialist legacy.

In the past 14 years, Chavez was twice elected president of Venezuela. Under his leadership, Venezuela dismantled foreign control over the oil industry and nationalized it.

The huge resources derived by government were used to improve social services and significantly reduce the poverty incidence.

In cooperation with Cuba, Chavez led countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to unite against US imperialism's "free market globalization." **AB**