



ANG

Pahayagan ng Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas  
Pinapatnubayan ng Marxismo-Leninismo-Maoismo

# Bayan

Vol. XLVII No.7

April 7, 2016

www.philippinerevolution.net

## Hold Aquino responsible for the Kidapawan massacre

The Communist Party of the Philippines strongly condemns the US-Aquino regime for the violent dispersal of the 6,000-strong peasant barricade by its armed minions, which resulted into a massacre in North Cotabato last April 1.

Shot to death were Rotello Daelto of the Arakan Peasant Progressive Organization, Victor Lumandang of the Apo Sandawa Lumadnong Panaghiusa (SLP) and Enrico Pabrica of Kidapawan City. At least 140 were wounded by bullets and mauling. More than 100 were arrested and most of them charged.

The peasants have been barricading the Davao-North Cotabato highway near the National Food Authority warehouse in Kidapawan City for three days when they were dispersed by the police. Among the peasants' demands is the release of 15,000 sacks of rice as food subsidy.

The peasants come from the towns of Matalam, Kabacan, Makilala, M'lang, Tulan, Magpet, Roxas, Antipas, Arakan and Kidapawan City — North Cotabato areas which are severely stricken by drought brought about by the El Niño phenomenon.

In the last seven months, 237,000 hectares of farmland have been affected by drought. According to the local govern-

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Editorial

## Unite and struggle for a national minimum wage

After almost four decades of neoliberal policies' onslaught, Filipino workers are faced with the historical challenge to restore the national minimum wage and raise daily wages significantly. The upcoming commemoration of International Workers' Day this May 1 is an opportune moment to put this struggle in centerstage and unite the broad ranks of workers, semiproletariat, rank-and-file employees and agricultural workers.

The CPP fully supports this struggle of the working masses and the Filipino people. The CPP commends the efforts of national-democratic organizations and labor centers to build the toiling masses and the people's broad unity and strength.

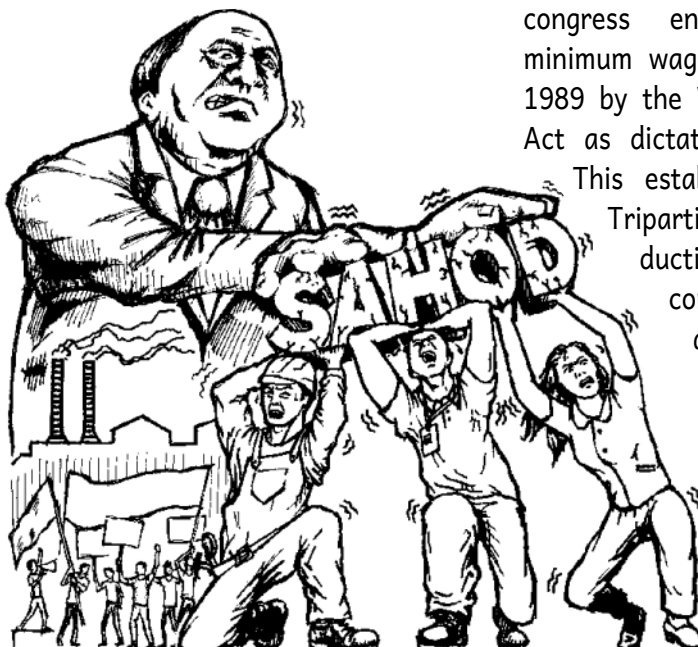
The call for a national minimum wage unites Filipino workers across the nation. This counters the reactionary state's intent to divide the ranks of the workers. This disorganization was caused by the major neoliberal attacks against the working class such as the law on wage regionalization, the so-called two-

tier wage system, contractualization and various forms of labor flexibility.

The struggle for a national minimum wage is a significant part of the struggle to push back the neoliberal system that has unceasingly wreaked havoc on the Filipino working class for the past three decades. During this time, under the direction of the IMF, successive reactionary regimes dismantled the laws that previously set standards for the protection of workers' welfare, from the minimum wage to health and security regulations.

The previous system where congress enacts the national minimum wage was superseded in 1989 by the Wage Regionalization Act as dictated by the IMF-WB.

This established the Regional Tripartite Wage and Productivity Boards which are controlled by reactionary government and big capitalist collaborations which were vested with the power to determine the minimum wage in the covered region.



The justification for the regionalization of wages was the fabricated reason that different regions have different costs of living.

The underlying intent of wage regionalization was to curb and further depress the workers' wages. Under the neoliberal policy of deregulation, the state junked the national minimum wage in order to divide the workers' ranks, strip them of their strength to demand and lead the struggle for higher wages. Yellow unions participated in this process to create an illusion and give the workers false hopes.

Wage suppression is aggravated by the Aquino regime's implementation of the so-called two-tier wage system, composed of a floor wage (arbitrarily based on the purported cost of living in a particular area) and a productivity wage or additional wages given to workers who work satisfactorily from the capitalist's point of view. This system disregards even the regionalization of wages because it sets wage levels even lower.

Even worse is the individual

bargaining system being pushed for and justified by big capitalists. If such such system is allowed, capitalists will further exploit the millions of workers who are willing to accept meager wages just to have work.

Since the implementation of regionalization and other anti-worker schemes, the level of workers' wages have been virtually unchanged. Increases in the cost of living allowance (COLA) and other non-cash incentives are rendered insignificant due to the rising daily costs every year. The reactionary state obstructs significant wage increases, saying this will result in inflation and widespread unemployment and will drive away foreign investors.

In the manufacturing sector, real wages have even shrank. In 2010-2015, the daily cost of living increased by P129 while wages only increased by P77. This is extremely inadequate and leaves the workers unable to cope with ever-increasing daily costs. The minimum wage does not even amount to half of the es-

timated P1,000 average daily cost.

Even government agencies admit that there are currently more than a thousand wage levels. This underscores several times over the absence of a minimum wage at any level, which exposes workers to maximum capitalist exploitation.


Filipino workers, together with the people, must struggle to oppose and reverse the neoliberal policies which press down their wages and wring out the very last ounce of value from their labor-power through various forms of flexibility. They must persevere in the struggle to increase wages so that workers can make ends meet and live decently amidst the skyrocketing prices of basic commodities and services.

As the Philippines sinks deeper into crisis alongside the worsening crisis of the world capitalist system, it is even more urgent for the workers to unite and struggle for the reinstatement of and increase in the national minimum wage.

The workers' campaign to reinstate and peg the national minimum wage at P750 a day, or almost P230 more than the current wage, is therefore fully justified. This can be considered a continuation and furtherance of the struggle for a P125 daily wage which workers have been demanding for the past two decades. In line with this is the demand for the increase of the minimum monthly salary of rank-and-file employees to P16,000 and of public school teachers to P25,000.

In fact, the minimum wage demanded by the workers and employees is far less than the value of their labor-power or the daily cost of living. As sellers of their labor-power, the workers should assert the rightful value for their labor-power which largely translates to their and their families' daily cost of living.

The struggle to reinstate and increase the national minimum wage is a great battle. The drive to

 <p>Vol. XLVII No. 7   April 07, 2016</p> <p>Ang Bayan is published in Pilipino, Bisaya, Hiligaynon, Waray and English.</p>  <p>It can be downloaded from the Philippine Revolution Web Central at <a href="http://www.philippinerevolution.net">www.philippinerevolution.net</a></p> <p>Ang Bayan welcomes contributions in the form of articles and news items. Readers are encouraged to send feedback and recommendations for improving our newspapers. Send your messages to <a href="mailto:cppinformationbureau@gmail.com">cppinformationbureau@gmail.com</a></p> <p>Ang Bayan is published fortnightly by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines</p>	<h2 style="text-decoration: underline;">Contents</h2> <p><b>Editorial:</b> Unite and struggle for a national minimum wage 1</p> <p>Hold Aquino responsible on Kidapawan 1</p> <p>Protests in response to massacre surge 4</p> <p>Ka Roger's remains returns to Batangas 4</p> <p>Banana plantation protests 5</p> <p>Cebu Maternity Hospital protests 5</p> <p>NPA celebrates 47th anniversary 6</p> <p>NPA-NCMR mounts election checkpoints 7</p> <p>NPA-Sorsogon demolishes 31st IB 7</p> <p>Balikatan 2016: Intervention and basing 8</p> <p>Protests against power plant pollution 9</p> <p>Brussels bombing condemned 9</p>
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scrap and depress wages is among the policies perpetuated by the reactionary government by claiming that low wages are advantageous to the Philippine economy because they attract foreign investors. The Filipino workers and people should oppose this twisted logic.

The workers' and people's demands are justified but these cannot be achieved without thoroughgoing struggle. A broad and firm national alliance of workers, employees, agricultural workers, as well as of the unemployed, students and other sectors must be established. The broad support of the church, democratic and progressive personalities, the academe, politicians and others must be clinched.

The parliament of the streets is the most decisive factor in the struggle for the reinstatement of, and increase in, the national minimum wage. Thus, come May 1, the Filipino working class and people must

declare their broad unity and strength. This must serve as the kick-off for the further intensification and advancement of struggles in the coming months.

The necessary massive workers' demonstrations can only be generated through continuous struggles in factories and communities. The working masses' determination to struggle for the national minimum wage and wage increase must be further strengthened by advancing the struggles in the greatest number of the biggest companies in the country.

A massive workers' protest movement must be generated. This must consist of innumerable strikes and struggles in factories, supported by rallies in communities, demonstrations in campuses, protest actions in offices and agencies, and gather all of these in general protests that will shake the whole country. AB

*"Hold Aquino responsible...", from page 1*

ment itself, an estimated 358,800 metric tons of rice and corn have been damaged, as well as hundreds of farm animals. Tens of thousands of farmers were unable to plant and are now stricken with famine.

Because of this, the peasants also called for a just increase in farmgate prices, free seeds of drought-resistant crops, additional farm equipment, and the total cessation of military operations in the province. Cotabato has been declared a calamity area as early as January but the peasants have yet to benefit from the P238-million calamity fund allotted by the provincial government.

The massacre further exposed the anti-peasant and anti-people character of the landlord-bourgeois comprador Aquino regime. Since the start of its term, the regime has had no significant program for peasants or measure to ensure food security for the whole nation and especially in the face of worsening climate change.

Since 2010, under the Aquino regime, the peasant masses have suffered extreme poverty and oppression from landgrabbing by big landlords, mines and big plantations. They have been victimized by the Oplan Bayanihan war against the people. They were subjected to psy-war projects such as PAMANA and 4Ps, touted as anti-poverty programs.

When they refuse to be duped, they are considered combatants and are targeted to be killed or suppressed. In the few remaining months of his term, Aquino chose to have the peasants shot by the state's armed forces rather than respond to their

very basic call for food and livelihood.

During his term, Aquino has responded with lies and violence to the just demands for wage increase for farm workers, the elimination of usury, free irrigation, increase in the prices of rice, copra and other farm products, the elimination of rescada, the restitution to the peasants of the coco levy funds and others. After the massacre, the fascist regime had the gall to declare that it will have its police investigate the incident because many policemen were also wounded.

The peasant masses and the Filipino people must protest and condemn the massacre in Kidapawan, assert justice and genuine land reform and make the US-Aquino regime pay for its crime.

Military violence and terror must not be allowed to prevail in suppressing the people's rights. Boldly and militantly advance waves of broader and more intense mass struggles of the peasantry and the people. Take inspiration from the courage and steadfastness of the Kidapawan peasants to invigorate the peasant movement across the country.

The Kidapawan massacre seeks to instill fear in the people. However, it has only emboldened an increasing number of peasant masses to advance their democratic demands and join the revolutionary forces in waging armed struggle.

The Filipino people call on the New People's Army to serve justice on the killing of civilians by launching more widespread tactical offensives. Punish the perpetrators of the massacre! AB



## Protests surge in response to the Kidapawan massacre

THE FILIPINO PEOPLE condemned the Kidapawan massacre from all sides. Their anger rose even higher when the Aquino regime blamed the demonstrators and subjected them to further repressive measures. They likened the massacre to the massacres in Mendiola in 1987 and in Hacienda Luisita in 2004.

They also condemned the virtual martial law and the vindictive food blockade imposed by the local government of Cotabato together with government agencies on the towns where the protesters came from.

In support of the peasants, film and television actors led by Robin Padilla, sent hundreds of sacks of rice which was blocked by the police.

In General Santos City, peasants barricaded the highway in front of the National Food Authority on April 4 to condemn the massacre and demand that the agency release its food aid.

In Manila, the youth, workers and other sectors launched daily rallies and assemblies since April 2 to express their outrage against the regime. Church people also protested against the police's forcible entry into the Methodist Center where the demonstrators sought refuge after the massacre.

National-democratic organizations and progressive parties immediately launched a National Fact-finding Mission to investigate and document the incident. They denounced the attempts to exonerate the police's culpability in the massacre by bulldozing the street to remove evidence of the shooting. On the day of the massacre, the PNP immediately took custody of the peasants' corpses and planted evidence on them. Among

these were the supposedly recovered .45 caliber pistol and traces of nitrates on the hand of one of the deceased peasants.

Some presidential candidates, senators, the Catholic Church, other calamity victims and even environmentalist groups also expressed their condemnation of the incident. The senate conducted its own independent investigation. The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters also expressed full support for the struggling peasants.

Abroad, migrant Filipinos launched rallies in front of Philippine consulates and embassies in Hongkong, Canada, New Zealand and California, US. On April 2, the call #BigasHindiBala (#RiceNotBullets) appeared 63.4 million times on Twitter, where the peasants garnered massive sympathy and support, while the despised regime was roundly criticized.

Even as they gathered criticism and wrath, Aquino's maggot-brained supporters insisted on incredible excuses for the massacre. Presidential spokesperson Edwin Lacierda particularly insulted the people when he said that the demonstrators were not from North Cotabato, and were supposedly bused by the "Left" for propaganda.

The landlord presidential candidate Mar Roxas supported this stance by saying that the incident is a matter of restoring order in the area and that the culpable must be punished, as if what happened was not a massacre perpetrated by the state. The injured police elements were immediately awarded medals, while no notice was given to the peasants who were shot. AB

## Ka Roger's remains returns to Batangas

On March 31, as the revolutionary forces celebrated the founding anniversary of the New People's Army, the remains of Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, former spokesperson of the Communist Party of the Philippines, were returned to his hometown in Ibaan, Batangas. Before this, thousands of members from different mass organizations held a four-day tribute to the deceased spokesperson.

Around 5,000 marched from Cubao to the University of the Philippines in Diliman, both in Quezon City, where they held a program on March 29. Commuters and bystanders solemnly witnessed the passing march paying tribute to Ka Roger along EDSA.

The CPP and other revolutionary organizations expressed gratitude over the return of Ka Roger's remains to Ibaan. This fulfills the request of his children for their father to be interred next to his

grandchild, Di-ona Andrea. After five years, it is but fitting for Ka Roger to be buried under a gravestone recognizing him as the "Voice of the Revolution."

The CPP encouraged activists who attended



the tribute to revisit his life story through tributes published by the Party and numerous other organizations, personalities, media people and friends. The people will never forget Ka Roger's name because the oppression and exploitation suffered by the people that prompted him to join the people's war continue to prod the toiling masses to join the revolutionary armed struggle.

When he was the Party spokesperson, Ka Roger was a constant pain in the neck of military officials and bureaucrat capitalists because of his prompt exposure and opposition to the lies and deceptions of the AFP and the ruling puppet state. An exemplary propagandist, Ka Roger was indefatigable in defending the interests of the masses of workers and peasants.

He is a symbol of the revolutionary struggle and of the people's aspiration for national and social liberation.

On his death anniversary this coming June 22, let us make it a challenge for the revolutionary movement to create many more Ka Rogers. Give a voice to the various fronts, war theaters, oppressed sectors and classes, mass organizations and organs of political power and let the call for the people's democratic revolution reverberate. Let us follow Ka Roger's example of his ardor and daring in exposing the people's conditions and rending apart the lies of military officials and the puppet state. AB

### **Protests in banana plantation continue**

ON THE MIDNIGHT of April 2, two men riding in tandem fired at the strike camp of protesting Musahamat Farm 2 workers in Pantukan, Compostela Valley. Three members of the Musahamat Workers Labor Union (MWLU-II) were almost hit.

The KMU-Southern Mindanao condemned the Musahamat Farms management and the 46th IB as the masterminds behind the attempted murder of union members. They have subjected the workers to continuing violence. Before the shooting incident, there was an attempt to burn the MWLU-II strike camp on March 15 but the fire was immediately extinguished by the protestors.

The failed murder attempt happened just a day after the massacre of peasants in Kidapawan. This underscores the US-Aquino regime's intensified attacks against workers and the people.

Setting up the camp was the MWLU-II's way of continuing their protest which started in the last week of February. The workers opposed the company's union-busting and successive illegal layoffs since February 26.

According to MWLU-II, a member union of the Federation of Labor Unions-Kilusang Mayo Uno (NAFLU-KMU), 59 workers have already been laid off while 19 were suspended for 30 days. Nineteen more workers are set to be laid off, including nine union leaders.

The layoffs started a few days after the MWLU-II won the Certification Election to represent the interests of workers. The MWLU-II has a total of 321 members. On March 28, the union filed a notice of strike which was supported by the majority of its members.

Before the layoffs, the management of Musahamat Farms, the 46th IB and the Associated Labor Unions-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines contrived to maliciously link the MWLU-II to the New People's Army. They employed intimidation and spread intrigue to isolate the MWLU-II from the workers and target the unionists for extrajudicial attacks. AB

### **Cebu Maternity Hospital employees hold protest**

EMPLOYEES of the Cebu Maternity Hospital staged a hunger strike on March 21 to protest the hospital's illegal lockout and demand a P15 increase in their daily wages.

The Cebu Maternity Hospital Employees Independent Union condemned the hospital management for the lockout which was used to break up the employees' union and refuse their demand for a wage increase.

The union had previously negotiated for a P30 increase in 2015 and P25 in 2016. They reduced their demand to P10 up to P15 for this year, but the hospital management only gave them P4. Worse, no wage increase was allotted for the workers for 2016. This is despite the hospital's P207-million net profit in 2014.

In solidarity, workers led by the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) picketed in front of the Department of Labor and Employment head office in Intramuros, Manila on the same day. The KMU also expressed its support for the 12 doctors and 130 rank-and-file employees of the CMHEIU, a member union of the Association of Democratic Labor Organizations-KMU.

According to Nenita Gonzaga, vice president for KMU Women's Affairs, the hospital's management depressed the salaries of its employees. New employees only get the regional minimum wage of P353; regular employees receive slightly more than the minimum; while those who have served the longest in the hospital only get P10,000 a month. This is despite the daily average of 30 patients regularly attended to by each health worker, a far cry from the standard ratio of four patients to each health worker. AB



## NPA celebrates 47th anniversary

Various assemblies were launched on March 29 across the nation to celebrate the 47th founding anniversary of the New People's Army (NPA). Red fighters took a break to receive visitors from barrios and cities who wished to share in the celebration of victories in advancing the people's war.

Oplan Bayanihan's defeat and the victories of Red fighters figured prominently in the statements of the National Democratic Front-Mindanao and regional Party committees in North Central Mindanao (NCFM), Southern Mindanao (SMR), North Eastern Mindanao (NEMR), Panay and Southern Tagalog.

Ka Oris, National Democratic Front-Mindanao spokesperson, stated the continuous advance of the NPA in the island. He also reiterated the NPA's victories in the past few years.

Meanwhile, counterrevolutionary campaigns have failed to crush NCFM, says regional Party spokesperson Norsen Manggubat. During the past year, the number of organized masses increased by 8.5% while 56 mass struggles were launched. A hundred and fifty thousand peasants and their families benefited

from higher wages of farm workers, lower corn and rice milling charges, increases in the prices of farm products, and potable drinking water systems and other demands.

A hundred and thirty-two military actions were launched, where various firearms, including two K3 machineguns, were seized. Blows were inflicted against seven battalions and two soldiers were captured. The reactionary armed forces and counterrevolutionary bandits suffered 201 casualties, with 124 killed, including a lieutenant. The people's militia contributed 20% of the total actions.

The people of the region hailed the NPA's punitive actions against the multinational plantations of Del Monte, Dole-Itucho, Lapanday and Sumifru which have been involved in landgrabbing, environmentally-destructive operations and in the exploitation of their workers. A 19%

increase in the number of fulltime guerrillas was also achieved, as well as 29% additional platoons and 23% additional high-powered firearms.

In SMR, almost 300 military actions were launched in the region in the past year. More than 100 high-powered firearms were seized in victorious offensives and added to the NPA's arsenal, says Rigoberto F. Sanchez, NPA regional spokesperson. Four hundred enemy troops were killed while 300 were wounded. The greatest number of firearms was seized from the armory of Monkayo town mayor Jose Brilliantes. Seventy-four firearms were seized from this operation and from the simultaneous attacks on 25th IB detachments on April 14, 2015.

To hide its defeat, the AFP has killed 57 Lumads, activists, urban poor and revolutionaries, while forcibly evicting more than 4,000 Lumads from their domiciles and livelihoods.

In Southern Tagalog, 44 tactical offensives were launched last year. According to a statement from the region's Regional Party Committee, guerrilla fronts are now spread over the major provinces of Calabarzon and major islands of Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan) which constitute two-thirds of all towns and cities and 40% of all barrios covered.

Military actions were most intensive during the leaders' summit of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation last November 18-19, when 13 simultaneous tactical offensives in the provinces of Batangas, Cavite, Rizal and Mindoro island were launched.

In Panay, 30 victorious tactical offensives were inflicted by the NPA in the island (Coronacion "Waling-waling" Chiva Command) against the reactionary forces in the whole of 2015. Twenty enemy troopers were killed while 26 were wounded. **AB**



# NPA-NCMR mounts 7 election checkpoints

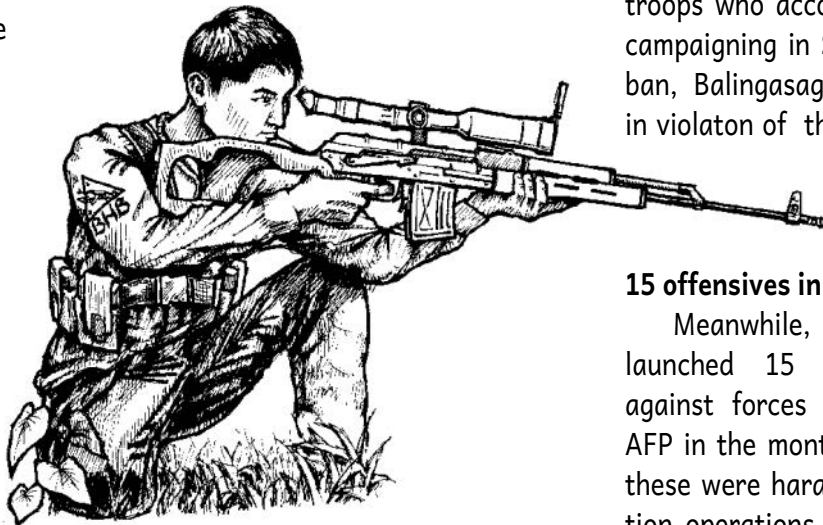
Seven checkpoints were simultaneously mounted by the New People's Army-North Central Mindanao Region (NPA-NCMR) on the morning of April 3. Eight pistols were confiscated in the checkpoints which were mounted in three provinces. Among these were checkpoints along the national highways of the Cagayan-Davao via Buda and Cagayan-Davao via Butuan routes and other highways in Agusan del Norte and Bukidnon.

The NPA-NCMR set up the checkpoints to implement the revolutionary policies on the coming elections, says Ka Allan Juanito, NPA-NCMR spokesperson. He said that candidates and their personnel must closely coordinate with territorial commands to ensure an orderly campaign inside guerrilla fronts.

Among the revolutionary policies that must be followed by politicians and parties include the prohibition of vote-buying, terrorism and vilifying the revolutionary movement. Their personnel are also barred from carrying firearms and spying on the NPA, on revolutionaries and their organizations under the guise of an electoral campaign.

By mounting said checkpoints, the NPA ensured that brutal, anti-people and counterrevolutionary candidates and parties in the partylist system will not be able to campaign inside guerrilla zones. Among these are supporters of ED-CA and the establishment of a US military base in Lumbia, Cagayan de Oro and other parts of the country, and those who serve as agents to plantations and initiate the entry of large-scale mining operations. Also included are candidates who protect paramilitary groups, Oplan Bayanihan's most rabid implementers and those involved in criminal syndicates.

To avoid untoward incidents, the NPA-NCMR reminded politicians to refrain from mingling with state armed forces in private vehicles, riding on military vehicles, or allowing AFP personnel to convoy them



when campaigning.

Three active members of the Philippine National Police, namely, SPO4 Rene Rombo, SPO1 Warren Hansol Conales and PO3 Edwin Panis Castor and two active 23rd IB troopers, Pfc. Glenn Austria and Pfc. Diven Abion Tawide, were arrested by the NPA at the checkpoints. All five were declared prisoners of war and treated according to the rules of the NPA and the provisions of CARHRIHL.

Another police officer and a retired soldier were arrested but were immediately released by the NPA on humanitarian considerations. SPO1 Gilbert Aguiman was allowed to bring his sick son to Cagayan de Oro. Orlando Magamay, a retired soldier, was also released on humanitarian considerations.

During the pursuit operations launched by the military and police against Red fighters, the NPA was able to inflict further blows against the enemy. Two 8th IB soldiers were wounded when the NPA used a command-detonated explosive against the pursuing enemies on April 5 in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon. The Red fighters also harassed the 23rd IB camp in Barangay Tama, Magsaysay, Misamis

Oriental.

The NPA confiscated three shotguns and a .38 caliber revolver from the soldiers and a businessman who is abusive to his workers. Another NPA unit also harassed enemy troops who accompanied politicians campaigning in Sitio Lantad, Kibabalan, Balingasag, Misamis Oriental, in violation of the NPA's policies regarding the elections.

## 15 offensives in March

Meanwhile, the NPA-NCMR launched 15 tactical offensives against forces and agents of the AFP in the month of March. Among these were harassment and demolition operations against reactionary troops. In another statement, Ka Allan said the enemy troops incurred 36 casualties, while the people's army seized eight firearms.

### NPA demolishes 31st IB in Sorsogon

TWO TROOPERS of the 31st IB were killed while two others were wounded when the NPA-Sorsogon set off a command-detonated explosive against an operating enemy column in Barangay Calmayon, Juban, at 4:00 a.m. of March 28.

Meanwhile, one soldier under the 61st IB was killed in two successive tactical offensives launched by the NPA-Central Panay (Jose Percival Estocada, Jr. Command or JPEC) within 12 hours.

The NPA first harassed an enemy unit that was launching psy-war operations in Barangay Katipunan, Tapaz, Capiz on February 20, around 8:00 p.m.. The next day, at 10:15 in the morning, another unit of the JPEC harassed reinforcements from the neighboring town of Aglinab, killing one soldier. **AB**

Among these tactical offensives were the series of harassment operations by the Mt. Kitanglad Subregional Command against the 1st Special Forces Battalion (SFB) on March 29 and 30. The Red fighters first harassed a squad of the 1st SFB who were guarding a Dole-Itucho plantation in Barangay Casisang, Malaybalay City on March 29. The operation, which was launched at around 5 p.m., killed two soldiers and wounded another. This was followed by another harassment operation against troops of the same unit who encamped in Barangay Lourdes, Valencia City, Bukidnon. Six troopers were

killed while two were wounded.

The South Central Bukidnon (SCB) Subregional Command also launched a series of harassment and demolition operations against 68th IB troops on March 21-25 as a counter-attack against operating enemy troops. The 68th IB suffered eight casualties in battles that took place in Barangay Magkalungay, San Fernando, Bukidnon. The SCB also launched three harassment operations against 8th IB troops on March 9, 11 and 17. Eight soldiers were killed while two were wounded in these actions.

AB

## Balikatan 2016: Intervention and basing

The 32nd Balikatan exercises will be held on April 4-15 in various locations in the Philippines. Up to 5,000 American troops and 4,000 Filipino troops are set to participate. Troops from 11 other US-directed armies in Asia, including that of Japan, will take part as observers.

The Balikatan 2016 is the first major exercise to be held after the Supreme Court's ratification of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement which allows the US to construct military bases in the country. In its statement for the anniversary of the New People's Army, the Communist Party of the Philippines considers these military bases and other forward locations as legitimate targets of attack by the people's army.

Before the arrival of the US participating troops, a huge number of US military vehicles and equipment have already arrived in Subic Bay Freeport on March 28. Among these are hundreds of Humvee vehicles, trucks, jeeps, backhoes and bulldozers. For the first time, the US brought its advanced rocket launchers to the country, the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System or HIMARS, to be used in live-fire exercises in Crow Valley, Tarlac. This will be stationed at the new US military base in Palawan after the exercises. Other military vehicles and equipment will also be brought to

its other bases.

The current Balikatan follows the successive encroachments of US warships into Philippine territory in the South China Sea in February and March. The majority of these ships, which includes a carrier strike group composed of four warships, entered without consent from the Aquino puppet state. The illegal navigation was conducted as a show of force after the US accused China of basing missiles and other military equipment on the disputed islands and reefs in the area. The sail-by was conducted during the US senate's hearing on the Pentagon's request for additional budget for the year.

Simultaneous to the Balikatan, the US plans to patrol the South China Sea near the islands and installations built

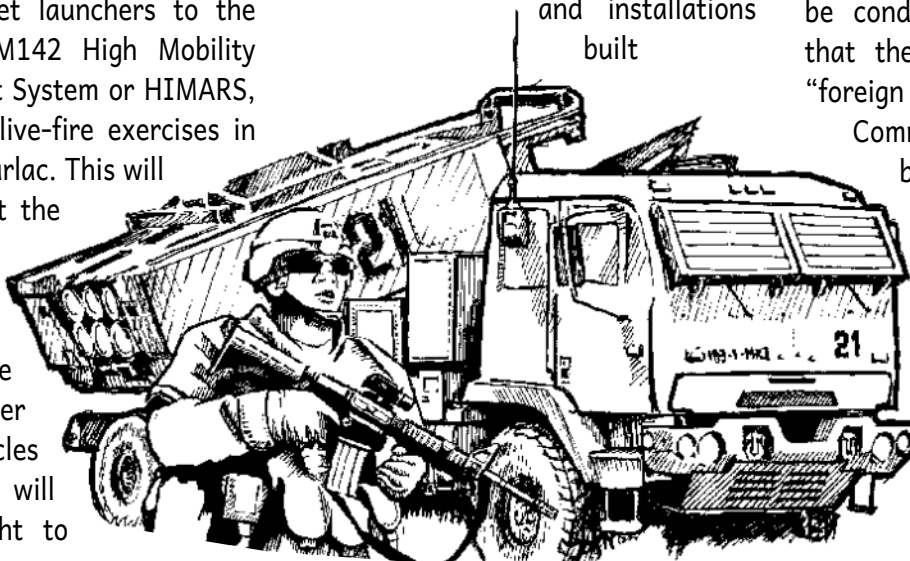
by China. This is the third of such patrol operations intended to provoke a hostile reaction from China. The US is set to conduct the operation after its president Barrack Obama failed to secure China's cooperation on the issue of the disputed islands during the International Nuclear Summit.

### Militarized humanitarian aid

According to statements of the US and the puppet Aquino regime, the present Balikatan will be used to raise the HADR (humanitarian assistance and disaster relief) capability of Filipino and US troops. Under this pretext, the US has been launching civic-military operations in Jaramin and Tapaz in the province of Capiz and in Dingle, Iloilo, all in the island of Panay, since March 15. These activities serve to lay the ground for the planned "landing exercises" to be conducted by US troops in San Jose, Antique this April. The exercises will be conducted under the scenario that the island is occupied by a "foreign armed force."

Command-post exercises between high officials of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in Metro Manila and their military bosses in the US Pacific Command in Hawaii will also be held, using the scenario of a massive earthquake in the national capital.

The US using HADR





training and operations as a pretext for its presence and intervention in the country is not new. In 2013, it launched Operation Damayan after Eastern Visayas and Panay were hit by typhoon Yolanda to position one of its biggest warships, the USS Ronald Reagan, on the gulf of Leyte and reutilize the airfield in Guiuan, Eastern Samar. The US occupies the airfield up to the present.

The US uses calamities to justify sending armed forces as forward and main forces, instead of civilian agencies and rescuers. The US does this to soften the image of its armed forces and seize opportunities for intervention. This is also used by the US military to broaden the role of the armed forces in the face of budget cuts of its agencies and branches.

To avoid being construed as

interventionist and aggressor, the US uses humanitarian operations to position its military troops and war materiel in various countries. It uses its massive budget to conduct sham rescue operations, water and food distribution and others. By positioning its military, the US is able to obstruct humanitarian aid from other countries hostile to its own interests.

According to its own Department of Defense, HADR not only provides aid to nations struck by calamities. It also provides various forms of advice and aid, training, intelligence information using satellites, surveillance and reconnaissance reports. The more troops it is able to deploy in an area using humanitarian pretexts, the bigger its opportunity to collect intelligence data. Military

objectives are always integrated in the US' humanitarian efforts.

For instance, the US launched Operation Tomodachi in Japan in 2011 as a "friendly" gesture after a massive earthquake hit the country. The US spent \$80 million for this purpose. Three weeks later, the US obliged Japan to continue hosting and funding its military base in Okinawa. This despite the Japanese people's extensive protests against the US military presence in the area.

On April 4, national-democratic organizations protested in front of the US embassy in Manila demanding a halt to the exercises and the abrogation of all treaties that allow these. They also condemned the Aquino regime's puppetry to the US. AB

### **Groups launch protests against power plant pollution**

HUNDREDS of poor peasants, small-scale fisherfolk and environmental activists from Batangas rallied in front of the head office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in Quezon City on March 17 to protest the anti-people and environmentally-destructive programs of the Aquino regime.

The protesters demanded the closure of the Calaca Coal-fired Power Plant and other plants such as the Batangas City Coal Power Project and Southern Luzon Thermal Energy Corporation. They also criticized Aquino for allowing the construction of more coal-fired power plants in the next three years because this will cause damage to the environment and the people's health.

According to Petti Enriquez, secretary-general of Bukluran para sa Inang Kalikasan sa Batangas (BUKAL-Batangas), during the 31-years operations of the Calaca Coal-fired Power Plant, those living nearby have contracted various illnesses. Enriquez pointed out that upper respiratory tract infections, pneumonia, hypertension and diarrhea have spread. The fisherfolk also brought samples of seawater from Calaca to show the DENR how the plant's carbon residue blackened the sea.

People from Batangas, Zambales and Metro Manila also protested in front of the DM Consunji (DMCI) office in Makati City on March 3. They called on the DMCI to cease their destructive mining operations and power plants which emit pollution. The DMCI, owned by the big bourgeois-comprador Consunji family, runs the Calaca Coal-fired Power Plant, the Zambales Diversified Mining Corporation which grabbed land from the peasants, and numerous other destructive mining, power and logging companies. AB

### **Bombing in Brussels condemned**

ON MARCH 22, members of the Daesh (also known as ISIS or IS) bombed the main airport and a train station in Brussels, Belgium. More than 30 were killed while 250 were wounded. This happened just a few months after the horrific bombing by Daesh members in France in November 2015.

The Daesh also masterminded bombings in Nigeria, Tunisia, California, Turkey, Indonesia, Burkina Faso, Somalia and Ivory Coast which victimized hundreds of civilians.

The International League of People's Struggle strongly condemned these bombings. It said, bombings that target innocent civilians will never become acceptable nor will they be justifiable by any political aim or military strategy.

Nevertheless, according to ILPS, US-created terrorist groups such as the Al Qaeda and Daesh have caused less damage compared to the US and NATO forces' mega-terrorism against the peoples of the world. Its wars of aggression and military interventions reduced whole civilian infrastructures, industrial areas and cities to rubble. Millions of people have been killed and many more wounded, forced to evacuate their communities and become miserable refugees because of these wars and bombings. AB