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Editorial

Protests and mass struggles after 2016 elections

Widespread fraud and manipulation in the upcoming reactionary elections are bringing forth a situation that can potentially generate widespread anti-fraud protests that will dovetail with rising democratic mass struggles.

The Filipino people are closely watching the May 9 elections as this opens the opportunity to end the rule of the US-Aquino regime. They are impatient for Benigno Aquino III to leave Malacañang in order to hold him responsible for large-scale corruption, state violence, US puppetry and numerous other crimes and transgressions against the people.

The electoral campaign reflected the people's widespread hatred of Aquino. Despite all-out use of state resources, his candidate, Liberal Party's Mar Roxas, consistently placed last in most of the surveys. On the other hand, rival parties compete in their anti-Aquino propaganda to win voter support.

The people are vigilantly guarding against maneuvers to install Roxas. They know this is part of the plan of the Aquino regime to perpetuate itself in power. If Roxas is installed, the Aquino-Cojuangcos will continue to benefit from bureaucrat-capitalist state favors for their businesses and those of their big bourgeois comprador partners.

Maneuvers to install Roxas is centered in the automated election system controlled by the Comelec and the US. This is the same system used in 2010 to ensure victory of US favorite Aquino.

The AES is an anti-democratic

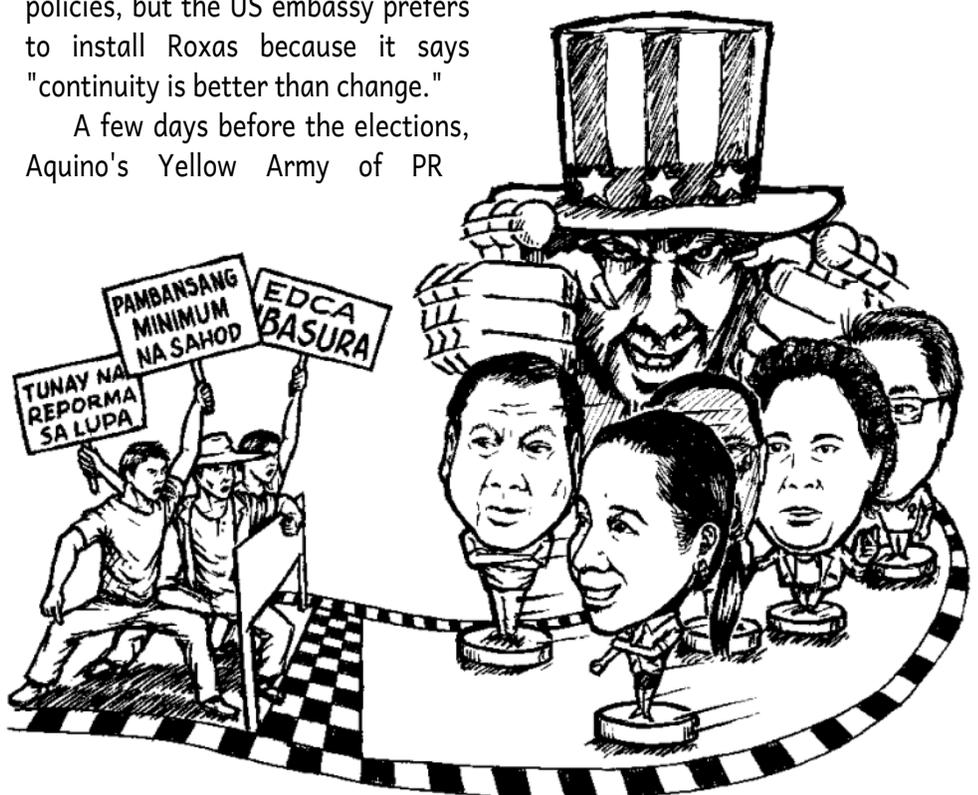
system that takes away the voters' right to count their votes. Counting is entrusted to Smartmatic, a foreign company which has been involved in election anomalies in the US and other countries. Machine specifications and the operating system source code are not open to the public. In testing the machines, there were numerous errors in registering votes, especially for the president and vice-president positions.

Roxas is the favorite of the interventionist US. Other candidates also favor pro-US and pro-neoliberal policies, but the US embassy prefers to install Roxas because it says "continuity is better than change."

A few days before the elections, Aquino's Yellow Army of PR

(public relations) and media specialists are obviously setting the scenario of mounting support and eventual victory for Roxas. In their controlled surveys, they make it appear the Roxas is now in second place. They are playing up this scenario to lend credibility to maneuvers to have Roxas win the elections.

While the Liberal Party largely controls the AES, Comelec/Smartmatic's computer network is also vulnerable to attacks by various groups. This was proven recently when a small group penetrated the Comelec website, and downloaded and put the entire database of registered voters online. Groups formed and funded by rival factions or parties can develop more advanced capabilities.



The upcoming elections is bound to worsen ruling class factional strife. A Mar Roxas victory through widespread AES cheating is sure to bring together rival parties and candidates, as well as broad democratic and progressive forces, into an alliance that will lead anti-fraud mass protests.

On the other hand, victory by other parties will not ensure consensus or acceptability of the entire ruling class. This early, supporters of various candidates have vowed to lead a "revolution" in case their bet loses.

The Filipino people and revolutionary movement must take advantage of the ruling class rivalries in order to advance the interests and welfare of the toiling masses. They must expose, condemn and oppose widespread election fraud in order to expose the rottenness of the entire reactionary elections and ruling system.

In line with condemning reactionary electoral fraud and maneuvers, the people must advance

their struggles to end burdensome and oppressive neoliberal policies. They must amplify their clamor to bring back the national minimum wage, increase wages, end contractualization, advance genuine land reform, scrap the K-12, abrogate EDCA and end Oplan Bayanihan and advance peace negotiations.

They must immediately challenge whoever wins or whatever government is formed after the elections. The people must strengthen their organized ranks in factories and campuses, in the poor communities in the cities and countryside. They must strengthen their struggles against poverty, hunger and oppression.

The next reactionary government is bound to be confronted with intensifying struggles of the broad masses. The further worsening of the global crisis of capitalism is aggravating and deepening the crisis of the semicolonial and semifeudal system and pushing the people to tread the path of revolutionary struggle.

Workers commemorate May 1

Workers' basic needs are neglected, their rights violated and their dignity attacked for the sake of superprofit—this was declared by Elmer Labog, Kilusang Mayo Uno chairperson, during the 113th year of International Labor Day workers' commemoration last May 1.

Thousands of workers and organizations marched from Welcome Rotonda to Mendiola to demand the establishment of a national minimum wage and an increase in daily wages. Workers also condemned widespread contractualization and wage depression.

Groups also slammed the Aquino government's decision to peg wage rates to the "poverty threshold." According to Rea Alegre of All Workers' Unity, present wages are not pegged to the amount required for a family to live decently, but to a value estimated just to keep the family at the threshold of poverty.

Labor unions also commemorated the first month of the massacre and violent dispersal of farmers in Kidapawan, North Cotabato last April 1.

From Mendiola, their chant, "Death to Imperialism" echoed as they marched to the US embassy.

US imperialism opposes genuine agrarian reform and industrialization. In collaboration with its puppet in Malacanang, neoliberal policies were implemented which brought down wages, removed job security and removed standards for safe working conditions and made basic services inaccessible to the people. Politicians and workers' alliances abroad also expressed solidarity with the demonstrators.

Various protests were also held

	
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in different parts of the country.

More than 40,000 Bicolanos launched protests in different provinces in the region. This includes a big turnout in Masbate where 23,000 protesters participated.

Meanwhile, unions under KMU-Southern Mindanao assembled in Magsaysay Park, Davao City. More than 6,000 workers and supporters joined the activity.

In Panay, more than 12,000 people launched protests. Among them were 4,500 people who rallied in Roxas City, Capiz and 5,000 who assembled in Jaro Plaza, Iloilo city.

Two thousand workers from Misamis Oriental and Bukidnon also held a program to demand job security and wage increase.

PAMANTIK-KMU led thousands of workers from Southern Tagalog in a program held in Calamba, Laguna. Groups paraded a 7-foot Aquino effigy inside a prison cell, named the "Massacre King."

"Aquino regime's neoliberal policies massacred the workers and the Filipino people, we will not let him get away with his lies and sins to the masses," said Allan Bagas, secretary general of PAMANTIK-KMU.

Workers and other sectors also launched protests in Cordillera, Central Luzon, Eastern Visayas, Central Visayas, Caraga and

SOCOSKARGEN.

Most recent victories

In time for Labor Day, workers also celebrated their recent triumphs. Last April 26, TV5 workers successfully pushed for a wage increase up to P4,500 in the next three years in accordance to their CBA (collective bargaining agreement). They were also able to assert an increase in their rice subsidy and zero-interest on the company's educational loan assistance. According to Vladimir Martin, union president, the union also clinched political victories such as a new union satellite office, union leave benefits; and, the elimination of listed offenses against the company's Code of Conduct.

Also in April 26, National Labor Relations Commission released its final decision recognizing 100 members of Talents Association of GMA (TAG) as regular workers of the giant television company. The decision was made after a year of workers' struggle against the TV corporation.

Labor Day abroad

Labor day was also commemorated in different countries around the world.

Workers' marches in various cities were held in the US. In Seattle, anti-capitalist sectors and organizations were violently dis-

persed.

In France, thousands of youth, workers and families held a peaceful assembly in different parts of the country. Groups denounced the law which allows longer work hours and allows companies to easily lay-off workers. An estimated 3.2 million French workers are unemployed.

Meanwhile, the brutal dispersal of thousands of protesters in Istanbul, Turkey led to the death of a demonstrator and the illegal arrest of around 200.

In Greece, two of the country's largest unions launched a general strike against austerity measures which has led to the delay of public services. More than 27% of the workforce are unemployed in the country.

In Germany, organizations and unions also marched to demand equal labor conditions and minimum wage.

Thousands of workers also gathered in Seoul, South Korea to call for wage hikes and denounce their government for its anti-labor reforms.

Garment workers in Bangladesh also rallied to demand better labor conditions after the series of factory collapses in their country. Similar protests were held in Japan, Hongkong, Indonesia, Russia, Cuba, Chile, Portugal, Bolivia, India, and others. AB

Workers hold barricade against Nakashin

WORKERS of Nakashin-Davao barricaded in front of its office in Davao City last April 21 to protest their arbitrary dismissal. Nakashin is a Japanese owned frozen food exporter of products such as banana, mango and pineapple.

Last April 9, management illegally dismissed 75 workers who refused to sign a blank waiver and quit claim. According to workers, they have already served the company for three to eight years. If they sign the waiver and quit claim, their length of service in Nakashin will not be acknowledged.

"We should be regular workers by now, but they want us to go back to zero," said Lester Millado, president of Nagkahiusang Mamumuo sa Nakashin (NAMANA).

NAMANA already filed a case last December 2015 against the company because it failed to pay their Service Incentive Leave (SIL). But despite hearing their grievances, the Department of Labor and Employment even tried to persuade them to just accept the company's offer.

This is not the first time that the company dismissed the workers. Last January, 15 workers were illegally terminated. Out of 300 Nakashin workers, only 20 are regulars. AB

Endo and other forms of contractualization

SM does not engage in contractualization—this piece of chicanery was the response of Harley Sy, the son of SM owner, to vows to end contractualization from all five presidential candidates. In particular, the candidates promised to stop the “endo” (end of contract) system prevalent in the country. According to Sy, the company hires seasonal, not contractual, workers which is not prohibited by law.

The Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) denounced this barefaced lie. Since the 1990s, 92% of SM’s workers have been contractuals, it said. SM’s “seasonal” workers virtually work for the company all year round, starting in December for the Christmas season, onwards to the New Year, Valentine’s Day, Graduation Day, Mother’s Day and so on. They sign contracts for two to three months and are repeatedly “endoed” (laid-off).

KMU also doubted that anyone who wins the presidency can stop Endo without firmly opposing its bases. The Endo system is most rampant in export-processing zones, where low wages and disregard for workers’ benefits are offered as incentives to foreign investors. Through contractualization, the reactionary state ensures maximum profits for capitalists

while workers are subjugated. This is the crux of the neoliberal program of liberalization and deregulation of the trade and service sectors.

The Endo system encompasses probationary workers, casuals, those who are commissioned or project-based, and seasonal workers in the industry and service sectors. There are also those who do not sign contracts, such as apprentices, those on-the-job or in dual-training such as student nurses and TESDA graduates, part-time workers, those who are employed by the hour, piece-rate workers, relievers and emergency or on-call company workers.

In call centers, “account-based” workers, or those employed based on contracts between the company and their clients, are the norm. They are usually laid-off even before an “account” is fulfilled.

Workers who pass through labor agencies or contractors and are not directly hired by companies are also considered contractuals. Examples are the “talents” employed by big television networks. They are not part of the company’s regular working force as they are “agency regulars.” They are hired through the 5-5-5 system wherein they sign five-month contracts, are retrenched, then rehired for additional two 5-month contracts before graduating to being “open contract workers.” Through this scheme, numerous companies have circumvented the obligation to regularize workers even after years of service.

In many cases, the supplying labor agency is also owned by the principal company. In 2012, the US-Aquino regime strengthened this system through DOLE Order 18-A which legitimized labor agencies and allowed big companies to avoid their responsibilities as primary employers.

Any promise to end contractualization is bound to fall through if its many forms are not acknowledged and its perpetuating policy regime is not rejected. AB

The reactionary state’s minimum wage lie

For the past three decades, the reactionary state has denied the workers’ right to a minimum wage. Worse, it does everything to further depress daily wages.

On May 1, the Aquino regime declared that the 137 regional minimum wage rates are on par with the poverty threshold. It also declared that because of the two-tier wage system, more workers are now receiving wages exceeding this threshold.

The government’s numerical hocus-pocus has nothing to do with the worker’s real situation. These numbers are released only to deceive and silence the people.

In determining food expenses, the government does not espouse even its own Food and Nutrition Re-

search Institute of the Department of Science and Technology’s 2014 formulated “Pinggang Pinoy”. The prescribed fish, meat or egg was replaced by mung beans as protein source, and the four pieces of *pandesal* (soft rolls) have been considerably reduced in size, to drastically lower the costs of what is considered “adequate” food and as such, a family will no longer be considered poor.

The government periodically revises its criteria of what it considers basic needs, in order to claim that the country’s poor people are

decreasing. It is not the minimum wage rate that has been raised to address poverty, but the definition of the poverty threshold that has been extremely lowered to meet the already low wages.

Workers’ wages are determined by the struggle between workers and capitalists. In this struggle, workers assert the determination of wages based on their own and their families’ basic needs for decent living.

This is called the living wage. In a consensus gathered by the International Labor Organization, the living wage covers expenses for adequate food, water, housing, education, health care, transportation,

clothing, and other essential needs including some savings or reserve for emergencies.

In the Philippines, Ibon Foundation set the living wage at P1,090 daily based on data from the National Statistics Office and the annual rate of inflation. Thus, the P481 daily minimum wage for the National Capital Region (NCR) can not address daily expenses even if there are two regular workers in the family.

Minimum wages have never been on par with living wages for workers and their families, and are even less to raise them from the poverty threshold. Even the National Statistics Coordination Board's 2013 report shows that 28% of Filipinos live in extreme poverty. The report, done every three years, shows that the poor's numbers never decreased through the years. Up to 2016, prices of basic consumer needs rapidly doubled while wages increased minimally.

At present, regional wage boards have fixed daily wages at P217 in MIMAROPA to P481 in NCR. AB

NPA kills 18 soldiers in offensives in Northern Samar

NPA offensives in the month of April killed eighteen and wounded four elements from the 20th IB. NPA-Eastern Visayas (Efren Martires Command) commended the NPA-Northern Samar (Rodante Urtal Command) for its daring offensives against the 8th ID.

According to Ka Karlos Manuel, militarization is currently rampant in Northern Samar as the last hurrah of the outgoing US-Aquino regime.

In fact, since February, soldiers have been wantonly disregarding the laws of war by basing themselves in the barangays (villages) of San Miguel and Perez in Las Navas, and in Sta. Fe, Anongo, Layug and Calingnan in Catubig.

In response, an NPA unit attacked a three-truck military convoy with command-detonated explosives at Barangay Sta. Fe, Catubig, around 11:30 a.m. on April 20. Five soldiers were immediately killed and three were wounded and taken to Catubig.

On April 19, NPA snipers killed a soldier in Barangay Perez, Las Navas, around 10:30 p.m.. The soldiers retaliated with indiscriminate firing which hit one civilian. AB

On April 17, a 20th IB unit based in the center of Barangay Tagab-iran, Las Navas was subjected to harassment operations by the NPA-Rogelio Bantilo Command. Killed in the operation was M/Sgt. Gorota.

Four troopers were killed on April 8 and three on April 9 in harassment operations by Red fighters from the Silvio Pajares Command against soldiers encamped in Barangay Osmeña and Barangay Bagakay in Palapag town.

On April 6, four soldiers were killed and another was wounded when the NPA seized the initiative in a surprise encounter with elements of Bravo Coy, 20th IB in Barangay Catotoogan, Las Navas, around 7:30 a.m.. Embarrassed, the 20th IB reported to the media that they were able to overrun an NPA camp, and confiscated backpacks and firearms. AB

NPA releases prisoners of war in Mindanao

Eight captured policemen and three soldiers have been released by the New People's Army (NPA) since the last week of April in different places in Mindanao.

On May 4, the NPA turned over SPO3 Warren Coñales from the Impasug-ong Police Station and PO3 Edwin Castor from the Wao Police Station to Bukidnon Provincial Police Office Director S/Supt. Reynaldo Pedulla through Archbishop Antonio Ledesma and Iglesia Filipina Independiente Bishop Felixberto Calang, after the local crisis committee of Bukidnon and Lanao del Sur negotiated with the NPA. The two policemen were captured at an NPA election checkpoint in Impasug-ong, Bukidnon on April 3.

On May 3, Pfc. Devin Tawide and Glenn Austria were released in a field ceremony in San Luis, Agusan del Sur. Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte attended the event. Tawide and Austria were captured at a checkpoint in Barangay Lower Olave, Buenavista, Agusan del Norte during the simultaneous checkpoints launched by the NPA in various roads in Mindanao.

Also released on April 26 were Army Private First Class Edgardo Hilaga in Tulunan, North Cotabato. While people gathered in the village plaza, Hilaga was turned over to Mayor Duterte some five days after he was captured in an election checkpoint set up by the NPA-Front 72, Mount Alip Subregional Command on April 21.

According to Hilaga, a trooper of the Charlie Company of 7th IB, 602nd Brigade, the NPA treated him well, providing all his needs. Efren Aksasato, National Democratic Front-Far South Mindanao Region spokesperson, explained that Hilaga was released because he had no cases of human rights violations and because the local church sector and Makilala local government unit promptly conferred with them.

In Davao, the NPA also released five captured policemen on April 25. In a ceremony at the Barangay Lumiad gym in Paquibato, the 1st Pulang Bagani Battalion

turned over Chief Insp. Leonardo V. Tarongoy, station commander of Paquibato Police Station; PO3 Rosenie L. Cabuenas; PO3 Rudolf Pacete; PO3 Abdul Azis A. Ali Jr.; and PO2 Neil C. Arellano to Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, before hundreds of residents and third party facilitator Reverend Jurie Jaime of Exodus for Justice and Peace.

The National Democratic Front-Southern Mindanao release order was read on this occasion, and signed by the NPA, Mayor Duterte, and Rev. Jaime.

The five policemen were captured on April 16 when they acted as reinforcement troops to the Philippine Army-CAFGU who were attacked by the NPA in Barangay Salapawan, Paquibato, Davao City. Also released was SPO4 Rene Rombo of Kinoguitan Police Station of Misamis Oriental, who was captured in the NPA's simultaneous election checkpoints on April 3.

AB

NPA ambush yields 6 firearms in Davao

RED FIGHTERS of the 3rd Pulang Bagani Company ambushed joint operating troops of the 2nd Scout Rangers Company and the 84th IB in Sitio Colorado, Barangay Sibulan, Toril, Davao City, at around 10 am, April 25. The New People's Army seized two M4 Remington rifles, four caliber .45 pistols and some live ammunition. Three enemy troops were killed and several others were wounded.

According to Rigoberto F. Sanchez, spokesperson of BHB-SMR, the tactical offensive was launched to exact revolutionary justice for the heinous murder of an 11-year old boy on April 1 in Barangay Baracatan, Toril.

AB

Medical training for the people's war

Significant steps are being taken by NPA medics towards the intensification of the people's war. In line with this, successive trainings for thousands of medics across the country are being resolutely launched.

Early this year, a medical training covering the first and second levels was launched in one of Bicol's guerrilla fronts. The trainings lasted for almost 30 days.

The training not only resulted in a new batch of medics with developed skills in treating illnesses. It also strengthened the resolve of the participating Red fighters to further invigorate their roles in the overall march of the revolutionary movement.

Ka Joel, one of the veteran medics who led the trainings, asserted that the NPA medics' superior performance is their unit's commitment towards the aim of the strategic stalemate. "Aside from the regular services to the people's army and the masses such as the treatment of common illnesses, we likewise view that with the intensification of the war, we will be fulfilling tasks other than acupuncture or tooth extraction," said Ka Joel.

He identified the need for training combat medics. "It is a reality in war that injuries are incurred, making it important for our medics to learn the treatment of various types of gunshot wounds. Currently, we have started with minor operations. In the future, we need to undergo trainings on how to operate on bullet wounds."

In Ka Joel's more than three decades' experience of being a medic, he has administered first aid in the middle of battle for a number of times. Extensive experience has taught him that wound complications can easily be prevented if the attending medic is knowledgeable in the correct handling of injuries.

Likewise, Ka Joel underscored the care for mental health as an important aid in assisting comrades as well as masses who are suffering from trauma or other mental illnesses as a result of battles or barrio militarization. For this reason, in the lectures regarding the treatment of mental illnesses, Ka Joel and the other medical instructors deemed it important for the political officers of the people's army to learn the correct methods in caring for the mental health of the revolutionary forces.

During the lectures and workshops, Red fighters who have similar mental troubles were gathered. This aims to have the medics unite on the methods of handling such cases. For the same purpose, the medics also plan to gather barrio folk who have experienced intense militarization.

When asked, the medical trainees agreed that practice is the best method for developing medical work.



Ka Arvy and Ka Ric offer the same opinion: Knowledge develops through constant practice.

“Actual operations pose different concerns,” said Ka Arvy. “Some details are not taught by lectures, such as the needed dexterity during operations or tooth extraction.” Ka Ric adds that when medics constantly treat illnesses and prescribe medicines, their pharmacological proficiency likewise improves, particularly in giving out correct dosage of medicines, or in administering anaesthesia. Part of the medics’ program of work is to record every medical case that they handle, regardless of the result of their medical actions.

At any rate, Ka Joel said that

medics must not only be competent in administering treatment. Another important task is the activation of the mass organizations’ health committees since these serve as machineries for setting up guerrilla hospitals in the countryside. “Due to the mobility of the people’s army, patients may be left in the care of the health committees after being administered first aid,” Ka Joel said. Whenever necessary, the committees may also identify and develop contacts among doctors and generate facilities in the town centers or cities.

Such organizational invigoration is only one of the prospects that Ka Joel and the other NPA medics look forward to. Ka Joel knows that it is not enough to

identify comrades showing interest in the medical field and assigning them to undergo necessary trainings. In accordance with this, they must also be provided with the appropriate medical equipment for the more effective performance of their tasks.

In conclusion, Ka Joel adds that it is likewise important to fill up the medical staffs at the different territorial levels. These collectives will not only focus on performing medical duties at the regional level down to the barrios and generating a mass movement in health care. This will also ensure that the medics develop their resolve to advance in the service of their fellow Red fighters and the people. AB

Soldiers kill 4 civilians

In a matter of six days during the last week of April, five cases of violations by the Aquino regime’s armed forces have been recorded, victimizing no less than 207 civilians. Four were killed, around 100 terrorized, six lumads fired upon, and 98 farmers violently dispersed, in which four among them were illegally arrested. This number adds to the more than 500,000 victims of human rights violations since Aquino took power.

Bukidnon. Michael Sib-ot and six-year-old Edjan Talian were killed by soldiers who fired at them in their community at Sub-village Kaulayan, Talakag last April 27. The child Edjan was fetching water when he was hit by soldiers indiscriminately firing on the residents and their houses. Sib-ot, on the other hand, was shot when he attempted to seek refuge at their church after being accused of carrying a gun. After the crime, soldiers coerced the victims’ relatives into signing a document exonerating them of the crimes. They were also forced into joining organizations of the reactionary government. The family members rejected both attempts.

Camarines Sur. Elements of the 49th IB killed coconut farmer Rolan Lonin Casiano of Barangay Lower Santa Cruz, Ragay, Camarines Sur in the evening of April 27. Casiano, 32 years old, was an organizer for the Camarines Sur People’s Organization.

According to Karapatan-Bicol, Casiano momentarily left the wake that he was attending that night. Fifteen soldiers came in, while another five waited for him at a nearby river. A gunshot to the side of the body caused his death.

The rest of the civilians in the wake, as well as those

in the nearby houses, were also terrorized by the soldiers. Men were ordered to take off their shirts and lie prone, while the women and children were crammed into two small rooms. Three neighboring families were also restrained from going out of their homes. Karapatan-Bicol added that around 100 civilians were present that night and were subjected by the 49th IB to such terrorism. They heard the gunshot that killed Casiano and his final groans.

The following day after Casiano’s murder and terrorizing the village residents, the AFP Southern Luzon Command, the 49th IB, and the PNP-Ragay were one in declaring that an encounter in the area occurred, and that a member of the NPA was killed. Casiano is the 65th victim of extrajudicial killings in Bicol by the Aquino regime.

Surigao del Norte. Datu Arnel Nayer was killed when soldiers belonging to the 30th and 29th IB fired upon six members of the Mamanwa tribe in Barangay Camam-onan, Gigaquit, Surigao del Norte at around 1 p.m. last April 24. Also wounded in the incident was Lino Mansumay.

The lumads were digging up sweet potatoes in their farms when ten soldiers arrived. Datu Arnel and his group were only 20 meters away from the soldiers when they were shot. Five of the lumad victims were able to escape while Datu Arnel was left behind. The tribal leader’s body was found the next day, far from the area of the shooting. The body was buried by the soldiers in a shallow grave covered with dirt and dry leaves.

According to the group Kahugpungan sa mga Lu-

madnong Organisasyon sa Caraga (Kasalo-Caraga), Datu Arnel was a staunch defender against government land-grabbing of their ancestral lands since 2013. Gigaquit is being targeted for its carbon deposits. Kasalo-Caraga adds that “the Aquino regime continues to kill Lumads in the mountains being terrorized by soldiers.”

According to Karapatan’s figures last March 2016, of the 318 victims of extrajudicial killings under the Aquino regime, 89 of whom are minorities, and 152 hail from Mindanao.

Isabela. Police and goons violently dispersed last April 26 a protest-camp set up by farmers belonging to Danggayan dagiti Manalon ti Isabela-Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (Dagami-KMP). The protest-camp was set up by the farmers in Barangay Mambabanga, Luna to assert their rights over the land being grabbed by landlord and former Luna mayor Manuel Tio.

According to Dagami-KMP, Tio conspired with government agencies and abused his influence as mayor in order to falsify lease papers and make it appear that the farmers have already sold the land to him. No less than 20 farming households have tilled the land since the

1970s.

Tio himself led his goons and the police in the violent demolition of the protest-camp. Among those hurt were minors who were children of the protesting farmers. Household belongings of the farmers, including food and cash, were confiscated from the protest camp. Four of the farmers were illegally arrested and charged with trespassing.

Northern Samar. Activist Emil Go was killed last April 29 in the town of Palapag. Go is an active member of electoral group Makabayan that is fighting against the Ong political dynasty in the province.

According to Fr. Santiago Salas of the National Democratic Front-Eastern Visayas, the Ong family is the mastermind of Go’s murder. He said that Go was killed because of his support of Makabayan’s “new politics”. The Ong political dynasty is notorious not only in employing goons in its active involvement in illegal activities, but also in paying off the 803rd Infantry Brigade to protect their family’s interests. The incident is presently under investigation by the New People’s Army. AB

Panama Papers

Corruption under neoliberalism

On April 3, the public was made aware of the so-called Panama Papers, the collection of more than 11 million documents which detailed the ownership and operations of 214,000 shell companies used to hide billions of stolen wealth by high officials and personalities from all over the globe. The exposé was made by the International Coalition of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ).

Among those exposed are Russia’s Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, Syria’s President Bashar Assad and China’s President Xi Jin Ping. The papers also named Iceland’s Prime Minister Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson, Ukraine’s President Petro Poroshenko, Libya’s deposed leader Mohammar Gadhafi and Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak.

US-controlled leak

The Panama Papers is part of the US political tactic of using corruption as an issue to pressure, force, strong-arm or oust leaders who oppose or do not fully follow its dictates. It is part of the USAID-funded Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project.

The ICIJ, which spearheaded

the project, is funded by the Ford Foundation and finance speculator George Soros. It consists of known pro-US journalists. The leaders they exposed are mostly state leaders who openly oppose the US or those whom the US is currently pressuring to yield to its dictates.

The documents are said to be leaked from Mossack Fonseca, a law firm based in Panama City which specializes in putting up shell companies for the richest individuals and organizations in the world, including criminal

syndicates. Panama is located in South America and is known as a tax haven and the rich’s favorite place to stash their wealth as it is virtually tax-free.

No US official nor any allied leader in Europe and the Americas, nor even officials from its puppet states, were named in the Panama Papers. This is despite the fact that most of Mossack Fonseca’s clients are from the US and Europe. Only UK’s David Cameron was named among the US allies in Europe. This



is mostly due to Cameron's consent to holding a referendum which opened the possibility of a "Brexit," or Britain's exit from the European Union, which the US vehemently opposes. Exposing Cameron also serves as a warning to other allies who tend to deviate from US wishes.

The US is using the Panama Papers to discredit leaders it considers as enemies and unreliable allies. It aims to stimulate unrest among the peoples to create anti-government movements which it hopes will push for regime changes. This is not the first time the US has used the people's popular hopes to pressure anti-US regimes.

Worsening corruption under the neoliberal regime

Through the controlled leak, the US is using corruption as an issue against regimes it aims to pressure or oust.

The US is also touting the leak

as part of its "clean government" program and against the corruption of "dictators, tycoons and criminals." But it can not deny the prevalence and severity of corruption by high officials in countries under its influence and authority in different parts of the world in the past 30 years.

In addition to the Panama Papers, there have been numerous exposes of graft, anomalies and corruption. These are not new nor separate from the capitalist system. In fact, these have worsened under the neoliberal regime where widespread deregulation and privatization of public assets have enriched numerous bureaucrats in power.

In backward countries, the surefire way for bureaucrats to get rich is by holding state power. This is done through stealing state funds directly and giving away big contracts to family members, allies or favored companies. This type of

corruption is endemic to neoliberal programs such as the Public-Private Partnership, which imperialists are now implementing in the Philippines and other countries.

In imperialist countries, this means further gains for the biggest finance speculators. Due to trade and finance liberalization and deregulation, they are free to come-and-go from numerous countries to extract maximum profits and accumulate more capital. With their finance institutions and big banks, they are always on the lookout for places where they can hide their wealth while minimizing their obligation to pay the appropriate taxes.

Thus, as long as the neoliberal regime is in place, companies similar to Mossack Fonseca will continue to thrive, and countries such as Panama that offer sanctuary to big capitalists and their bureaucrat cohorts will continue to exist. AB

Group condemns abuses against Palestinian children

AROUND 700 Palestinian children and youth are prosecuted yearly by Israeli military courts occupying the nation. Thus declared Defence for Children International (DCI) Palestine in its latest report "No Way to Treat a Child." The group further said that this number is dramatically increasing.

DCI Palestine stated that since October 2015, there has been an increase in violations of the rights of Palestinian children and youth by Israeli forces. In the past 10 years, 87% of Palestinian children have been sent to prison prior to, and during trials of, their cases. The group also underscored the cases of solitary confinement that last for more than a week in order to extract false confessions from the detainees. Between the years 2012-2015, no less than 66 children and youth were held in solitary confinement.

Furthermore, DCI Palestine said that trauma and imprisonment have severe effects on the children. Aside from these, children and the youth suffer various types of maltreatment from Israeli forces. These include violent arrest raids, beatings, threats and insults, and other physical and psychological forms of abuse. AB