

## AFP suffers 5 casualties in Camarines Sur

TWO SOLDIERS of the 83rd IB were killed and three wounded in a harassment operation carried out by the New People's Army-Camarines Sur last April 9. A team of Red fighters launched the military action against the operating troops at around 8:30 a.m. in Barangay Gubat, Lagonoy.

Following the offensive, the NPA operatives encountered another enemy column. Here, Jeric "Ka Ems" Gestone was hit in the knee. At around 1:30 p.m., the military found the wounded and unarmed Ka Ems. The soldiers dragged and shot him in the head. Ka Ems should have been considered hors' de combat or not in a position to fight.

To cover-up their violation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), the military indiscriminately fired their weapons for one minute to make it appear that Ka Ems was killed in a legitimate encounter.

**Negros Occidental.** The NPA-Central Negros (Leonardo Panaligan Command or LPC) administered punishment against retired SSgt. Jose Joerito Amable of the 11th IB and retired SPO1 Alejandro Borres last April 9 at around 6:25 p.m. in Barangay Balud, Crossing Magallon,

...continued at page 3



### EDITORIAL

## Strengthen the NDFP and carry forward the people's democratic revolution!

**T**he National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) will be commemorating its 45th founding anniversary on April 24. The Party is inviting all revolutionary forces and the Filipino people to hold cultural and political activities to celebrate this historic day.

Indeed, the NDFP plays an important role in building the broadest unity of the Filipino people as they wage revolutionary armed struggle and civil war against the ruling reactionary regime. The NDFP also currently plays an important role in building the broadest anti-fascist united front to isolate, fight, and overthrow the US-Duterte regime.

The NDFP is the most consolidated united front organization of basic revolutionary forces under proletarian leadership. The NDFP is composed of 18 organizations which are united by the Filipino

people's aspiration for national and social liberation as crystallized in the Party's Program for a People's Democratic Revolution and the NDFP's 12-Point Program.

The NDFP is established on the foundation of the basic alliance of workers and peasants, chiefly expressed by the Party's leadership of the New People's Army, as well as by revolutionary mass organizations among various sectors of the toiling masses. It is further composed of various organizations among the petty-bourgeoisie. It reaches out and wins over the middle bourgeoisie and establishes temporary

alliances with other class forces to isolate the main enemy.

The NDFP is a united front that steadfastly serves the revolutionary armed struggle being waged by the NPA. For four decades and a half, allied organizations of the NDFP have extended political and material support to the NPA. From the ranks of the NDFP allies have emerged NPA fighters and commanders. As a solid united front, the NDFP has served as the strong underground core of broad people's movements.

There is a proliferation of revolutionary committees nationwide at the village level which perform governance roles. The NDFP serves as framework for establishing revolutionary organs of governance at the municipal, district, provincial and regional levels. The NDFP represents the people's democratic government (PDG) until it can be formally established. It performs state functions including the administration of justice, taxation and implementation of policies on the economy, environment, and others.

It has established proto-diplomatic relations with states and other international agencies. It has also represented the PDG in peace negotiations with the GRP since 1986.

In 2016, the NDFP spiritedly pursued peace negotiations with the Duterte regime after the latter made public declarations of being "Leftist" and anti-American and promising to release political prisoners, support land reform and pursue an independent foreign policy.

Duterte, however, turned his back against his own declarations and mounted an increasingly brutal and cruel war of suppression under Oplan Kapayapaan, targeting unarmed peasants and minority peoples defending their land. Aerial bombings, curtailment of rights including armed occupation of civilian communities, food and aid blockades, illegal arrests, torture and killings are the norm today under Duterte.

Because of the firm adherence of the NDFP to basic revolutionary principles, Duterte failed to use the peace talks to tie the hands of the

revolutionary forces through a long-term ceasefire. Before long, he declared the termination of peace negotiations with the NDFP, declared the Party and NPA as terrorists and ordered the arrest of NDFP consultants. Amid increasing isolation brought about by strong resistance to his tyranny, Duterte has recently made overtures to revive peace talks, but has not made substantive measure to bring the talks back to track.

The Filipino people are currently suffering gravely under the tyranny and terrorism of the US-Duterte regime. As the strongest united front organization, the NDFP plays an important role in building the Filipino people's broadest unity to isolate and resist the US-Duterte regime. By waging revolutionary resistance, both in the urban underground as well as in rural armed struggle, the NDFP helps strengthen the people's determination to fight and defeat the detested regime.

The basic revolutionary forces must resolutely be strengthened to serve as solid foundation, rampart and scaffolding for building the broadest anti-fascist united front against the Duterte regime. To do so, the broad masses of workers and peasants must be mobilized in a big way to expose and actively resist the fascist attacks of the Duterte regime against the people. Solid blows by the NPA against Duterte's fascist machinery will rouse widespread resistance against the regime's tyranny and terrorism.

All revolutionary forces allied with the NDFP must help in building the broadest anti-fascist united front against the Duterte regime. They must exert effort to link up the struggles against Duterte's fascist terrorism with the people's anti-imperialist and antifeudal struggles. By doing so, the NDFP is being further strengthened as a united front for advancing the people's democratic revolution. AB



Issue XLIX No. 8 | April 21, 2018

*Ang Bayan* is published in Pilipino, Bisaya, Iloko, Hiligaynon, Waray and English. *Ang Bayan* welcomes contributions in the form of articles and news items. Readers are encouraged to send feedback and recommendations for improving our newspaper..

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## Contents

<b>Editorial:</b> Strengthen the NDFP and carry forward the people's democratic revolution!	1
AFP suffers 5 casualties	1
On the 45th anniversary of NDFP	3
China's billion funds and loans	4
Chico River project	4
Filipino workers' situation	5
Workers' protests	7
Balikatan of US troops	7
Attacks on the Moro people	8
Attacks of the fascist regime	9
IFFM report	10
US military aggression in Syria	10
Arrest of Sister Pat	10

*Ang Bayan* is published fortnightly by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines

Isabela, Negros Occidental.

According to Ka JB Regalado, spokesperson for the LPC, Amable is one of the "military tacticians" of Mayor Magdaleno "Magsie" Peña's overbearing and anti-people cruelties in Hacienda San Benito. He also colludes in the militaristic politics in the whole of Magallon as Civil Defense Security Head. After retirement, Amable became active as an intelligence officer of the 303rd IBde. He actively recruits civilians and arms them to harass and threaten all of Peña's political rivals, and hunt NPA members.

Alejandro Borres is likewise one of Peña's goons in Magallon. He is also involved in fighting the revolutionary movement together with Peña and Amable in Moises Padilla.

**North Cotabato.** The NPA-North Cotabato ambushed Antonio P. Takinan, an intelligence agent in Magpet, last April 4 in Barangay Tagbak of the same town. Confiscated from him was a caliber .45 pistol.

The death penalty was based on Takinan's active involvement as an intelligence agent and forcible recruitment of Lumads to the paramilitary CAFGU Bagani Fighters. He is also actively cooperating with the military in their military operations which resulted in intense violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. He likewise coerced civilians to surrender as NPA rebels or admit to supporting the revolutionary movement. He played a major role in the indiscriminate bombing of Lumad communities by the 39th IB last December 21.

**Bukidnon.** A unit of the NPA-Bukidnon harassed troops of the 403rd IBde under the 4th ID in Sityo Pakulab, Barangay Calabugao, Impasug-ong last April 11 at 11:00 a.m. Another encounter erupted between the same NPA unit and the 8th IB in Sityo Ulayanon in the same barangay last April 14 at noontime. There was no casualty on the side of the NPA but Susan "Ka Chay" Cabusao-Guaynon, married and five-months pregnant, was captured. She is currently being held by the enemy.

In a radio interview last April 17 with 1Lt. Erwin Bugarin, spokesperson of the 8th IB, he admitted to have incurred casualties in both firefights. AB

On the 45th anniversary of NDFP

## Groups plan celebrations

ON APRIL 24, all revolutionary organizations in the Philippines and other countries will celebrate the 45th founding anniversary of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. Celebrations will be held under the theme "Build the Broadest United Front to Strengthen Organs of Political Power and the Democratic Coalition Government" in line with the general call of the NDFP.

This theme has an urgent significance in the face of the the Duterte puppet-fascist government's bombastic declaration of smashing the revolutionary movement in 2018. Since its founding during the puppet-fascist US-Marcos dictatorship, the NDFP has won many victories. This includes the establishment of organs of political power or OPP in 73 (out of 83) provinces in the country. It serves as the representative of the said organs in the national and international levels. Among its responsibility is facing the representatives of the reactionary government in negotiations.

In a statement to mark the celebration, Sison explained that for the first time in the history of NDFP, it refrained for a year (2016-2017) in calling the reactionary regime a "puppet." This was to give Rodrigo Duterte a chance to prove his declaration of being a "Leftist" and "socialist"; anti-US and anti-oligarchy; and for reforms and for an independent foreign policy.

At the onset, it seemed that Duterte wanted peace negotiations with the NDFP and the revolutionary forces and the people it represents, according to Sison. Duterte pretended to agree with the needed social, economic and political reforms demanded by the people for the realization of

a just and lasting peace. He promised to honor previous agreements and to grant amnesty and freedom to political prisoners.

But Duterte did not fulfill his promise. On his second year in power, he became very hostile to the NDFP and terminated the peace negotiations. These past weeks, he has again declared openness to peace negotiations. This has yet to amount to anything, especially with Duterte and his AFP setting preconditions which hinder negotiations. Foremost among these is requiring the revolutionary forces to enter a bilateral ceasefire, even if all past agreements have not yet been implemented and no new agreement has not yet been signed. Sison pointed out that Duterte's attempt to revive the peace negotiations is happening amidst the worsening crisis of the local ruling system and of the world capitalist system.

What is important for the NDFP, Sison said, is to be faithful to the revolutionary service to the Filipino people and continue the reforms that will lay down the basis for a just and lasting peace. AB



# China's billion fund and loans, a Duterte fantasy

This April, Rodrigo Duterte once again boasted of bringing home \$9.8 billion from China for the Philippines. This will supposedly create 10,000 new jobs. With his entire family in tow, he went begging to China for funds for his plunderous and anti-people infrastructure projects. But like last year, his boasts are all mere fantasy.

In 2017, Chinese investments in the Philippines amounted to \$1.6 billion, a mere 15% increase from 2016. This is despite Duterte's shameless subservience and sale of sovereign territories in South China Sea.

Prior to this, Chinese investments in the Philippines make up a small portion of the country's direct foreign investments (FDI) and aid. In 2015, Chinese investments amounted to only \$3.6 billion, a mere 1.5% of the entire FDI in the country. Its promised aid only amounted to \$120 million, a mere 0.9% of the entire official aid which entered the country that year.

It has been reported that China-Philippine trade is centered on the Manila-Shanghai/Shangdong/Tianjin axis, all Chinese provinces where Filipino-Chinese bourgeois compradors have investments. In Mindanao, Chinese trade is centered in Davao, where a few Filipino-Chinese families dominate trade between the two countries.

In the past, most Chinese investments are in manufacturing, mining and agribusiness. Under the then US-Arroyo regime, the plan was to give Chinese companies control over hundreds of hectares of agricultural land to be planted with corn, rice and sorghum, as well as cassava and sugarcane for biofuel. Most of these plans did not materialize, especially under the US-Aquino regime which directly confronted China over the South China Sea issue.

There were also projects which fell through due to anomaly scandals, such as the NBN-ZTE deal

from which Gloria Arroyo benefited. In general, these investments are small-scale and fragmented, compared to the Philippines' major trade partners (Japan, Korea and the US).

On the other hand, a large portion of the country's capitalization (estimated at 50-60%) are under the control of Chinese-related bourgeois compradors who have strong links to Chinese capitalists. These include Henry Sy and Lucio Tan, two of the richest Filipinos, who both have extensive business interests in China. They also control two of the biggest banks in the Philippines, and thus control a large part of foreign capital inflow and outflow.

In Sy's case, around 10-15% of his profits from his SM Mall chain are from his malls in China. These malls are a major dumping ground for Chinese consumer projects. His businesses are also a major channel for Chinese capital to gain entry to parts of the local economy closed to foreigners. For instance, Sy is



instrumental for a Chinese company to operate the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines, a public utility privatized by the then Ramos regime. Many of Sy's businesses, as well as other Filipino-Chinese bourgeois-compradors, have individual or corporate partners who are wholly Chinese. Recently, Sy partnered with Dennis Uy in cornering both land and air carrier services. Uy is believed to be a dummy of the Duterte family.

Based on Duterte's statements, most of his Build-Build-Build projects rely on Chinese capital. Last year, finance ministers of both countries have already signed agreements for around 15 of his "priority projects." These included big-ticket projects which Sara Duterte and Duterte's cronies in Mindanao directly control. Most of these projects are plunderous and destructive, and have met resistance from the people. Because of these, and also due to the local bourgeois compradors' infighting, most of the agreements remain on paper. AB

## Group resist Chico River project

THE CHICO RIVER, a major river which flows through the provinces of Mt. Province and Kalinga, was among those peddled by Rodrigo Duterte in China. In exchange for a P3.2 billion loan, Duterte awarded a contract to a Chinese company to build the Chico River Pump Irrigation Project (PIP). In March, the National Irrigation Administration gave the P4.3 billion project contract to China CAMC Engineering Co. Ltd. This loan for this is to be paid within 20 years.

The Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA) strongly condemned the destructive project and the loans which comes with it. This is another of the regime's schemes to sell the national minorities' natural resources and ancestral lands to foreign capitalists. It does not have the approval of the affected communities.

According to the CPA, this will result in the privatization of irrigation, a

basic service, and will force peasants in the area to enter into exploitative agreements and pay high fees for their own resources. The project only hastens the entry of a foreign company to extract profits from the natural resources owned by the people.

The Chico River PIP is not new. This was once known as the Chico River Irrigation Project or Chico Dams Project, initiated by the World Bank on 1976 under the then US-Marcos dictatorship. The project became the center of the Igorot struggle from 1976 to 1985. This is a big part of the people struggles' history against destructive projects which encroach and privatize ancestral lands.

Duterte's revival of the project will surely further unite the the people of Kalinga and Mt. Province against his regime. They will not allow Duterte to use their legitimate demand for a free and appropriate irrigation to step on their right to their own ancestral lands so that a foreign company can make a profit from a social service. They likewise resist other plunderous projects in Chico River such as the Karayan Dam.

The CPA called on the people of Cordillera to intensify their campaigns and struggles, alongside the other peoples of the country, for their right to their ancestral lands and to self-determination. This is alongside intensifying resistance against the relentless fascist attacks by the Duterte regime against the people.

On April 22-25, the Cordillera Day is scheduled to be held at Barangay Asin Road in Baguio City. Various issues affecting the Cordillera people, including the Duterte regime's tyranny and the continuing appropriation of their ancestral lands by foreign companies. The Cordillera Day is an annual commemoration by the Cordillera people marking the day in 1980 when the Marcos regime killed Macli-ing Dulag, a respected Butbut leader who led the fight against the Chico River Dam Project. AB

## The Filipino workers' situation under Duterte

Duterte's duplicity in addressing the plight of workers is contemptuous. In an attempt to appease workers, he made it appear that he was intending to sign an executive order (EO) that will purportedly outlaw and prohibit contractualization or "endo" and establish direct hiring as the employment norm in the entire country. At the last minute, however, he reneged and reasoned out that he will just pass the responsibility of resolving the matter to Congress.

Malacañang first announced that Duterte will sign the order that was drafted by various labor groups. This, however, failed to materialize as Duterte claimed that he still needs to compromise with capitalists and draft a final and "more acceptable" version of the order which has already been approved by the workers. He promised to sign the final version of the order on May 1, but he backed out once again after a few days. On April 19, Sec. Silvestre Bello III of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) absolutely junked the draft order.

### **DO 174: bogus anti-contractualization**

Duterte's pretentiousness and pompousness are nothing new. In his campaign speeches, he posed as a "socialist" and he promised to "end contractualization." In an attempt to make workers believe that this promise was delivered nine months after his inauguration as president, the regime issued Department Order (DO) 174 on March 2017. But just like Aquino's DO 18-A which it purportedly aimed to improve, it reaffirmed the practice of contractualization under the guise of regulation. Instead of prohibiting contractualization, DO 174 merely stressed the importance of strictly ensuring compliance with existing labor standards and laws on contracting and subcontracting. It merely rehashed the same prohibitions that have long been stipulated in previous DOs, including the prohi-

bition of labor-only contracting, which have long been outlawed but are still widely implemented until today across the country.

Similar to other forms of contractualization, flexible labor arrangements such as subcontracting and job outsourcing legitimize the removal of employer-employee relationship between outsourced employees and principal companies. It absolves capitalists from all their legal obligations and leaves the task of respecting labor rights to the agencies. The primary objective of such arrangements is to minimize the labor cost of capitalists.

Under such arrangements, workers are denied their right to be regularized. Furthermore, workers are denied their right to unionize and strike, and collectively demand for their right to minimum wage and benefits, 8-hour workday, health and safety.

Contractualization has remained rampant under the Duterte regime. Orders issued under DO 174 mandating the regularization of workers are merely for show. In February, DOLE ordered Coca-Cola to regularize 675 employees. Similar orders were issued for nearly 8,000 PLDT workers in January. This April, DOLE ordered Jollibee and Burger King to regularize 6,482 and 704 workers, respectively. But none of these corporations has complied. DOLE orders are toothless because the government has no implementing mechanism to ensure the compliance of capitalists. Instead of pe-

nalizing Coca-Cola and other corporations who violate the DOLE orders, the Duterte regime even sent police forces to violently disperse legitimate pickets and strikes and arrest workers on trumped-up charges.

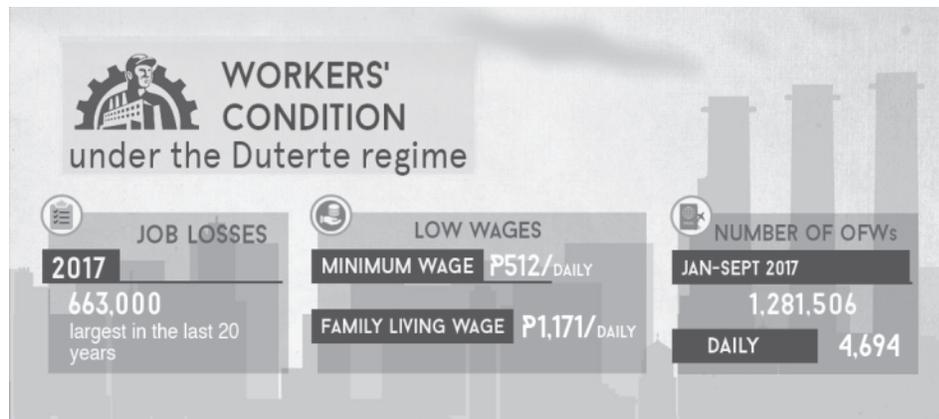
Clearly, Duterte's campaign promise was a lie and a mere publicity stunt to woo voters. He deceived millions of desperate contractual workers who have long been struggling against the exploitative practices of local and foreign capitalists.

DO 174 has failed to address the worsening jobs crisis in the country. In fact, after more than one year since its issuance, the rate of contractual employment remains high across all economic sectors. Government's conservative estimates reveal that 30 million workers are still contractuales until today. Ironically, the reactionary government as an employer remains to be one of the leading implementer of contractualization.

**Unemployment, wages and infation**

The jobs crisis worsens together with the similarly worsening unemployment crisis. According to the Ibon Foundation, the number of employed Filipinos fell by 663,000 to 40.3 million in 2017 from the previous year and the number of unemployed rose by 66,000 to 4.1 million. This is the largest contraction in employment in 20 years or since the 821,000 lost in 1997. The unemployment rate has also risen to some 5.7% and remains by far the highest in ASEAN.

Widespread unemployment and a swelling surplus labor creates conjusive conditions for wage depression and regularization. Due to lack of stable and decent opportunities, workers are left with no choice but to enter exploitative contractual employment arrangements.



Wages also remain significantly low. The P512 minimum wage in the National Capital Region (NCR) does not even meet half of the P1,171 needed by a family of six to live decently.

Over the past years, wage increases have remained very low and insignificant. The economy is said to have doubled (120%) since 2001, but the real value of workers' daily wages rose by less than one percentage point (0.54%). In 2015-2016, the real value of wages eroded by almost 3%. This means the prices of goods and services (or inflation rate) rose faster than wages. In contrast, the net-worth of the 40-richest capitalists in the Philippines grew by almost 14%.

This year, real wages are due to fall further as prices of goods and services are set to rise as a result of the regime's anti-people TRAIN (tax reform). According to some economists, the inflation rate could possibly reach up to 5 to 6%, almost double the government's conservative estimates.

Amid this and the overall lack of employment opportunities in the country, Filipino are forced to work overseas to support themselves and their families. According to the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), 1,281,506 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) were deployed from January to September, or an average of 4,694 per day.

**Neoliberal offensive against labor**

For capitalists, the right to

decent wages, 8-hour workday, security of tenure, and the right to unionize and strike are barriers that need to be removed to ensure greater profit. The rights that have been won and claimed by the workers in their long and noble struggle against the bourgeoisie across the globe are now being revoked through laws, amendments, regulations, and state policies under the framework of neoliberal or imperialist globalization.

Filipino workers are enraged by the regime's failure to end contractualization and its continuous subservience to big local and foreign capitalists. It has put to waste the 2 years of negotiations with workers which has resulted in a draft EO.

This coming May 1, the Filipino people should launch big mass protests all throughout the country to consolidate the collective anger of the workers and the people against the demagoguery of the Duterte regime. They should continuously demand the government to end contractualization in all its forms, alongside their demand for a strategic plan for national industrialization which is crucial in creating sufficient and decent jobs in the country.

Most importantly, workers should continue to contribute their strength and vigor to advance the armed struggle by joining the New People's Army, in order to overthrow the representative of the reactionary classes, the fascist US-Duterte regime, and ultimately, the whole reactionary system. AB

## Workers protests against contractualization

VARIOUS WORKERS GROUPS vehemently condemned Rodrigo Duterte's refusal to sign an executive order to stop "endo." According to the Kilusang Mayo Uno, Duterte wasted the workers' two years of negotiations with him. The group said that the Filipino workers will not forgive Duterte's deception in riding on their legitimate grievances. They pledged to continue fighting for their rights to regular and decent jobs, especially this coming May One.

They will likewise continue to defend victories won through the workers' collective action. Last April 11, Coca-cola FEMSA workers illegally dismissed in 2017 staged a protest in Sta. Rosa, Laguna. This followed most recent negotiations for regularization which again ended in a stalemate. The company intends to reinstate only 152 of the 178 retrenched workers, while planning more dismissals this April.

Earlier, Coca-cola FEMSA workers under the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU)-SMR launched a protest in Davao City last April 9. The protest was carried out by the workers coinciding with Araw ng Kagitingan, and scorned contractualization as a "Death March." They demanded the reinstatement of 65 workers retrenched illegally last March 31, and the regularization of more than 300 contractuels.

Meanwhile, workers under the KMU-Metro Manila and Alma Kontraktwal, staged a weekly "Black Friday Protest" as a build-up for the massive national protest in commemoration of the International Labor Day on May 1. On April 6, they marched to Mendiola to protest Duterte's failure to end contractualization. The workers brought with them an "Endo" or endo of contract notice to Duterte as a symbol of the Filipino workers' indignation over the regime's continuous violations of their rights.

### Students' Black Parade

Students from UP Diliman headed by STAND-UP launched a Black Parade last April 13 to oppose Duterte's tyranny and dictatorship. Up to 500 students marched to reiterate their demand to end martial law in Mindanao and the intensifying repression by the Duterte regime's tyranny.

### Farmers protest

Farmers' group Danggayon dagiti Mannalon ti Isabela staged a picket against the planned Golden Rice field testing by Syngenta on children and pregnant women in Barangay Malasin, San Mateo. The group likewise criticized the imminent commercialization of the said rice variety in Isabela. Syngenta's Golden Rice is a genetically modified rice variety by the foreign agro-industry company being peddled for commercial cultivation in different parts of Asia.

Meanwhile, in Naga City, Camarines Sur, the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Bikol (KMB) held a forum last March 21 to expose the ill effects of Golden Rice to the people.

After the forum, KMB re-launched their campaign against the field testing of the said rice variety. KMB's Ka Bert Autor questioned the renewed Golden Rice field tests in other parts of the country despite the government agreeing in 2013 to end these. AB

## US troops arrive in the country for Balikatan

ON APRIL 19, thousands of American soldiers arrived at the Manila Bay for the annual Balikatan exercises that will commence on May 7. The exercises target barangays in Tarlac, Nueva Ecija, Cagayan and Isabela for civil-military operations. Included in the activities are "preparations" in local government units purportedly for disasters and "extremist" invasion. Military troops from Australia and Japan will participate in the exercises. US utilizes Balikatan to train AFP troops in great numbers and direct its operations.

Previously, the US opened on April 18 in Cesar Basa Airbase in Pampanga the first military facility under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). The aforementioned facility, which is misleadingly publicized as a "humanitarian assistance and disaster relief warehouse," will actually be used to store military equipment and weapons. Philippine officials have neither the authority to enter nor inspect these facilities. Under EDCA, the US can store nuclear weapons or related matériel in these facilities without the Filipinos knowing.

The push for new military bases is part of the operationalization of the Operation Pacific Eagle, replacing the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines which permanently based US troops in the country 15 years.

The bombing campaign of the Duterte regime during the Marawi Siege paved the way for them to return to the Philippines. Here, American troops blatantly played a significant role in the regime's campaign of suppression against various armed groups, including the revolutionary movement. AB

# Worsening military attacks on the Moro people

Last April 15, combined forces of the PNP and AFP attacked a suspected Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters camp in Tual, Paglat, Maguindanao. At the same time, a military operation was launched in communities in Maguindanao. The AFP announced that 13 BIFF forces were neutralized in firefights while nine surrendered last April 9.

The AFP attacked a suspected Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters camp in Tual, Paglat, Maguindanao. At the same time, a military operation was launched in communities in Maguindanao. The AFP announced that 13 BIFF forces have been neutralized in firefights while nine have surrendered last April 9.

Earlier, troops of 2nd Mechanized Infantry Battalion shot dead a Moro businessman identified as Nasrudin Kadatuan after he was accused of being a member of the BIFF. Abu Misri Mama, spokesperson of the BIFF, belied this statement. Mama argued that Nasrudin is a businessman and that even the military knows this fact.

This military practice is nothing new. The AFP has long been attacking communities and tagging residents as members of an armed group to justify their harassment and forced surrenders among civilians. Such viciousness is conducted in the name of “war on terror.”

Not contented with the Marawi siege, the regime is now targeting the BIFF, an armed Moro group which advances the aspiration of establishing a separate Islamic state. BIFF leaders and troops are former members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front who are dismayed with the agreement entered into by the MILF with the Arroyo regime in 2008.

With the objective of completely defeating the armed group, AFP troops are now ravaging communities in Maguindanao. This is part of the AFP’s Operation Darkhorse launched in January

2014 against the BIFF. This operation was conducted in communities of Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Datu Piang and Sultan sa Bagongis in Maguindanao and some parts of Pikit, North Cotabato and has resulted in the eviction of about 35,000 individuals.

Since 2010, around 60,000 individuals have been forced to evacuate by AFP offensives against the BIFF. Among these was the operation launched in 2015 following the botched operation of the Special Action Force last 2015 in Tukanalipao, Mamasapano, Maguindanao. One of the other most ruthless attacks was the aerial bombing by elements of the 6th ID in Barangay Andabit, Datu Saudi Ampatuan, in retaliation to the March 2017 BIFF attack against their detachment.

According to Mama, civilians are the ones gravely affected by the all-out war being waged by the state. He also condemned the terror-tag on the BIFF and emphasized that their struggle is just.

According to some Moro groups, not less than 150,000 people have died and billions of pesos in livelihood and properties have been destroyed in the past decades of the armed conflict. This has also resulted in widespread hunger and poverty in the entire region.

## Coveted wealth of the Bangsamoro

The Duterte regime’s all-out war against the Moro people is relentless in an attempt to subdue the armed struggle of the Moro people. Upon the instruction of US imperialism, the AFP has persis-

tently mounted armed strikes against communities in the ARMM with the objective of repressing Moro groups opposed to foreign concessions.

Among the areas targeted by investors is the 220,000 hectare-area covered by the Liguasan Marsh which extends up to North Cotabato and Maguindanao. The BIFF is active in these areas. In 2011, a US embassy report was exposed stating that 70% of minerals in the country, including natural gas and oil, can be found in Mindanao.

The Department of Energy also reported that the Cotabato Basin, where Liguasan Marsh is located, has 202 million barrels of oil and about 821 billion cubic feet of natural gas, while 209 million barrels of oil and 716 billion cubic feet of natural gas can be found in Sulu Sea.

Aside from oil, Malaysian business groups have also expressed interest in investing \$575 million to convert 66,000 hectares of Liguasan into oil palm plantations. Some parts of Maguindanao are also targeted for banana plantations. Moro ancestral lands are also offered to foreign investors.

Among those still being debated under the BBL are its provisions on the distribution of the Bangsamoro’s wealth, including the 75% profit from the tariffs and additional fees which will be imposed by the regime inside the provinces covered by the Bangsamoro.

But as with past regimes, Duterte’s main objective is to monopolize the wealth of Mindanao. For almost two years, his administration failed to pass the BBL. Duterte mockingly uses peace negotiations to pacify the MILF section while it ruthlessly sows fear among the Moro people. AB

# Attacks of the fascist regime from Luzon to Mindanao

The US-Duterte regime's armed forces continues to ruthlessly attack the people across the archipelago. These past few weeks, there have been reports of an intense torture of a Lumad family by the military, illegal arrest of civilians in Cagayan Valley, and militarization in various towns of Camarines Sur.

**Threats and harassment.** An entire Lumad family was tortured, threatened to be killed, and forced to admit that they are members of the New People's Army by the military.

Last March 22, 2018 the family of Rosalia Cahangan, 41 years old, "Lisa", 16, and couple Jason and Giselle Cahangan, 22 and 19, were threatened, harassed and tortured by troops of 8th IB at their residence in Purok 5, Barangay Dalwangan, Malaybalay, Bukidnon. The military forcibly entered their house at around 4:00 a.m., handcuffed and blindfolded "Lisa", Jason and Giselle and mercilessly dragged them out of their house. They were threatened to be killed if they resisted arrest. Arresting soldiers showed them no warrant.

The military suspected that the Cahangans are members of the NPA when in fact they are members of Pigyayungaan, a local Lumad organization that actively defends their land and ancestral domain.

"Lisa" narrated that they were brought to the camp of the Special Civilian Active Auxiliary (SCAA), a paramilitary unit under the 8th IB. All of them were blindfolded for 12 hours. Male soldiers guarded "Lisa" and Giselle, who followed them even inside the bathroom. "Lisa" was punched in her face when she attempted to remove her blindfold. A soldier pointed a gun at her while while other soldiers threatened to

make her "eat the gun" if she would not admit being an NPA member.

On April 4 and 5, soldiers returned to the Cahangans' residence and brought Rosalia to the camp. She was interrogated and forced to sign a document under the name of "Lisa" stating that she "surrendered". The said document was notarized by a certain "Atty. Pabillon."

Meanwhile, the couple Jason and Giselle are detained in the SCAA camp.

The Cahangan family is among the families who evacuated from their communities in Malaybalay due to militarization and abuses both by the military and paramilitaries.

**Illegal arrest.** The Duterte regime's armed minions are rampaging not only in Mindanao but also in Cagayan Valley where they continuously abuse, threaten and endanger people's organizations and communities.

On February 18, 2018, five peasants dubbed as the "Ilagan 5" from Barangay Old San Mariano, Isabela were illegally arrested by elements of the 86th IB in Ilagan, Isabela. The victims identified as Mauricio Sagun, 65; Maximiano Domingo, 44; Bernard Penaflor, 21; Ariel Penaflor, 49; and Mario Turqueza, 65 underwent intense interrogations and were charged with "illegal possession of firearms and explosives." The soldiers planted a .38 caliber pistol and three grenades in the belongings of the

victims.

Sagun is currently detained in BJMP Ilagan while the four are in Isabela Provincial Jail. The farmers are all accused of being members of the New People's Army.

The detention of the five farmers added to the list of Karapatan's tally of political prisoners to 501, 170 of them arrested under that Duterte regime.

**Militarization.** Since March, military operations have been conducted relentlessly in the neighboring barrios of Goa, Lagonoy, Tinambac, Siruma, Garchitorena, Presentacion and Caramoan and have sown fear and apprehensions among the people of Partido District in Camarines Sur. With no specific schedules, troops of the 83rd IB, 22nd Echo Coy, 93rd DRC and Philippine National Police (PNP) enter and operate in the barrios.

AFP and PNP troops spread psywar while launching combat operations. They said that they will kill all supporters and those who intend to support the revolutionary movement similar to what they openly did in Barangay Gubat, Lagonoy on April 9.

On March 21, while the military and police were operating, local government employees were shot in Sitio Tigman, Barangay Bagacay, Tinambac.

Eliño Teope, Jr., Edgardo San Andres and Nicolas San Agustin, all residents of Bagacay, were wounded. The three are government employees of Tinambac and are part of Task Force Gantad that guards all illegal activities that destroy the environment. AB

## 54 EJKs in Mindanao—IFFM

THE INTERNATIONAL Fact-Finding and Solidarity Mission (IFFM), conducted last April 6-9 in various parts of Mindanao, proved that there are rampant cases of killings and various forms of abuses against farmers and indigenous people perpetrated by the state's armed forces under martial law.

This was the summary of the four-day investigation in Mindanao which was spearheaded by the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) and participated by various people's organizations.

Among the 54 violations reported by the communities to the IFFSM were cases of extrajudicial killings (EJKs) and frustrated EJKs, torture, illegal arrest and detention, trumped-up charges, threat, harassment, intimidation, forced surrender, and illegal search and seizure.

The IFFM reported that the targets of the counterinsurgency campaign of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) are farmers and Lumads. They are accused of being NPA members or supporters and filed with trumped-up cases for their active participation in land struggles and affiliation in peasant organizations.

The IFFM also listed the crackdown on people's organizations, including fake terrorist lists, threats to people's democratic rights and curtailment of basic civil and political rights.

The use of Army troops and military deployment in communities are clearly used to pursue the interests of corporate plantations and other forms of environmental plunder. AB

## US military aggression in Syria condemned

**M**ore than 100 missiles were fired against Syria by the US and its allies, UK and France, on April 14. The attack was pretexted on US accusation that the Syrian government used chemical weapons on April 7 against civilians in the town of Douma, near the capital Damascus.

According to the International League of Peoples' Struggle, the US and its allies have proven themselves to the world as aggressors of the most vicious kind. Under international law, the use of military force can be justified only as an act of self-defense after an armed attack by another state, or, with the approval of the United Nations Security Council.

The ILPS condemned the said attack as the supreme international crime and the worst kind of terrorism against the aggrieved state and people. According to the organization, the US accusation of using chemical weapons is made in collaboration with the pro-US group White Helmets. This group is funded by the US and its allies and

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### Arrest of Australian nun, condemned

THE ILLEGAL arrest by the Duterte regime of Sr. Patricia Fox, 71, an Australian nun, who has long been conducting community service in the Philippines as part of her missionary work in the country, drew condemnation from the people.

Duterte straightforwardly admitted that he personally ordered the Bureau of Immigration to arrest and hold Sr. Pat last April 18 for purportedly vilifying him. Before this confession, Malacañang washed its hands from the incident amid criticism by human rights defenders and the religious sector. In defense, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque apologized for saying that the arrest and detention of Fox was a mistake.

At around 2:30pm yesterday, April 16, six intelligence officers of the Bureau of Immigration went to Sr. Pat's house in Project 3, Quezon City. The BI agents "invited" her for random checking and verification of her immigration papers and status. When they arrived at the BI

office, Sr. Pat was read the Miranda Doctrine or her political rights, and thereafter arrested and detained her.

Sr. Pat was freed on April 17 after proving that her missionary visa was valid and that she has not violated any immigration law.

The Communist Party of the Philippines also said in one of its statements that those who defend human rights and the welfare of peasants and all others who are oppressed, just like Sr. Pat, are friends of the people and are openly welcomed in their homes and communities. It is the opposite of how they consider the brutal and fascist Duterte regime which sows terror and fear in their communities. AB

cooperates with Nusra Front and other terrorist groups in Syria fighting the government of Bashar al-Assad.

The US has yet to prove past claims of Syria's use of chemical weapons. Its accusation that the Syrian government carried out a chemical attack in Eastern Douma defies logic, considering that the region has just been recently liberated by government forces from rebels and terrorist groups armed and financed by the US. In 2013, Syria had disposed of its arsenal of chemical weapons in a deal brokered by Russia and the US. On the other hand, the jihadist armed groups trying to overthrow Assad have been proven in a number of instances to have carried out chemical attacks in a clear attempt to provoke such armed aggression by the US.

In fact, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons was in the country to investigate the supposed April 7 attack. Russia and Syria have asserted that the missile attacks by the US, UK and France were meant to sabotage the investigation.

### Civilians victims of bombing

The airstrikes intensify the continuing war in Syria which started in 2011. The US instigated this war, primarily by sending military advisers, funding and providing weapons to groups opposed to the elected government of Bashar al-Assad. Because of intense US aggression, Syria sought the support of Russia's Vladimir Putin's in order to defend the country. The armed conflict in Syria has taken the shape of a proxy war between the US and Russia, started by the US and its allies. The US intervened in Syria mainly to overthrow al-Assad and replace him with a leader

who will acquiesce to its dictates and turn its back on Russia.

Around 2,000 American soldiers participate in the war, including US warplanes and battleships. To justify its continuous military attacks in Syria, the US used the pretext of fighting ISIS. It is estimated that by 2020, US expenses in the Syrian war would have amounted to \$1.3 trillion. Aside from the US, France and the UK, groups fighting the Assad regime are likewise being supported by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and Israel.

On the other hand, Russia provides major military support to the Syrian government, the two countries being allies since the Cold War. Syria's air defense against the April 14 attack, which claims to have intercepted majority of the missiles, were all provided by Russia. Iran and Lebanon also provided soldiers and military equipment in support of the Assad regime.

In recent years, Syria has become the launching pad and testing ground of advanced weaponry from the US and Russia, such as Russia's latest fighter jet, and the US' newest missile which was used in the said airstrike.

Most affected by these airstrikes are civilians.

An estimated 110,000 civilians have been killed since the start of the war in Syria. Also, up to 12 million of the country's population have been driven away from their homes destroyed primarily by US bombings. In 2017, more than



8,000 civilians were killed through different types of explosives. This is 55% higher compared to 2016.

Syria tops the countries with the most number of civilians killed by bombings. An average of seven civilian casualties per incident was recorded in 1,750 incidents in 2017. From a total of more than 15,300 casualties, up to more than 13,000 or 85% of these are civilians.

According to a journalist group following the US war in Syria and Iraq, 2017 is the bloodiest year for civilians in both countries. Up to 18,000 civilians were killed in US-led operations. From this figure, an estimated 6,102 were killed as a result of airstrikes. Also, the number of airstrikes and artillery fire increased by more than 200%. From 2014-2017, 65% of civilian deaths occurred during the last year.

In the April 14 airstrike, Vladimir Putin warned of severe consequences to the attackers. Russia is intent on keeping its position in Syria towards the Mediterranean Sea, and profit from the world's largest natural gas reserves which crosses the country from Iran. On the part of the US, the Department of Defense stood firm that its troops must remain in Syria, and must be reinforced, despite having supposedly defeated ISIS in the area. With imperialist interests rife in the region, the US intensifies its intervention in Syria to the detriment of civilians. AB