



EDITORIAL

Unite against the Anti-Terror Bill! Overthrow the US-Duterte regime!

On orders of Rodrigo Duterte and his National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), his minions railroaded the Anti-Terror Bill the past few days. It now awaits Duterte's signature.

The Anti-Terror Bill will complete Duterte's martial law reign, short of formal declaration. This will give him vast powers to accuse anyone of being a "terrorist" and have them surveiled, arrested and put under prolonged detention.

This bill will further intensify suppression of organizations and individuals long targeted by Duterte and the AFP as "CPP/NPA supporters" for their relentless exposure, denunciation and opposition to corruption, fascism and foreign subservience, and for defending the people's democratic interests. The most vulnerable are the workers and poor people, the peasant masses, Lumad and Moro who ex-

perience repeated abuses of power by soldiers and police.

The people are disgusted at how Duterte and his minions trampled on congressional procedures to rush the Anti-Terror Bill without being reviewed and amended. They are nauseated at how he prioritized the bill and disregarded the people's clamor for free mass testing and other medical measures amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

The order to rush the Anti-Terror Bill came from Duterte and his junta composed of Delfin Lorenzana, Eduardo Año and Hermogenes Esperon, all former military officials and lackeys of US imperialism. They aim to consolidate fascist rule amid

widespread hunger, poverty and the people's seething rage against the regime's militarist and failed response to Covid-19. Duterte wants additional martial law powers to silence the people, but is afraid to openly declare it for fear that this will rouse further outrage and protests.

The rush to enact the Anti-Terror Bill is also part the deal-making with the US government to allow Duterte and the AFP to purchase new helicopters, artillery, rockets, missiles and other weapons. This is also linked to the June 2 suspension of termination of the Visiting Forces Agreement in line with recommendations of his military officers to allow US ships and troops to enter the country in connection with continuing US support for the AFP's brutal coun-

terinsurgency and war of suppression.

Over the past years, Duterte has built his martial law regime brick by brick with the 950-day Mindanao martial law, Memorandum Order 32, Executive Order 70 which formed the NTF-ELCAC, and recently, the claim to "emergency powers" purportedly to fight Covid-19.

He wants to have the Anti-Terror Bill enacted at once to reinforce the fascist order which he succeeded to set up through the Covid-19 militarist lockdown and perpetuate this under a "new normal" of checkpoints, and population control restrictions. This is being done behind the veil of fighting the pandemic but in fact serves to strengthen militarist rule and pursue the scheme to establish a fascist dictatorship.

The Anti-Terror Bill deliberately contains vague and overly broad definitions of "terrorism" and "supporting terrorism" to serve as a wide net to cast over the Filipino

people and all their democratic forces. It extends the powers of the military and police to arrest and detain anyone to 14-24 days without warrant or filing charges, practically suspending the writ of habeas corpus. Worse, it removes any military or police liability from damages which will surely result in even worse forms of abuse of power.

Over the past years, AFP and PNP officers have arbitrarily accused critics of the regime of being "communist fronts" or supporters or linked to the CPP and NPA. They are anti-communist zealots who see red whenever anyone stands for and defends the interests, welfare and rights of the oppressed and exploited. This will worsen under the bill.

Duterte uses "anti-terrorism" to fool the people and make them accede to repressive laws that will crush their basic rights. Over the past years, the fascists falsely equate communists, revolutionaries and even social activists with ter-

rorism, when in fact, communists, as all other democratic forces, are among the most militant opponents of the use of terrorism to instill fear among the people.

In fact, right now, the biggest terrorist in the country is Duterte himself as he has ordered the killing of tens of thousands in the drug war and the destruction of Marawi City. He has also ordered police and military raids and massacres against peasant communities. He has ordered mass arrests, military control of rural villages, the use of attack helicopters to drop bombs causing widespread terror and other fascist crimes.

With absolute powers, Duterte is set to commit the worst forms of corruption, completely surrender the country's national sovereignty and subservience to imperialist US and China, bury the country deeper into debt, impose more taxes on the people, press down wages, favor foreign big capitalists, squander funds to purchase fighter jets, helicopters and bombs, and impose even worse neoliberal policies that will cause greater sufferings on the Filipino people.

Duterte's rushing of the Anti-Terror Bill amid the Covid-19 pandemic has fanned the flame of the people's anger. The regime's actions of the past months—from the non-health military lockdown to the shutting down of ABS-CBN, from the arrest of critics and jeepney drivers to aerial bombing of rural communities, from checkpoint arrests and inhumane punishment of tens of thousands to the recent killing of urban poor leader Carlito Badian, from the anomalous procurement of overpriced PPE sets and testing equipment to the plunder of billions of pesos in emergency spending—are set to worsen once Duterte signs the Anti-Terror Bill.

The Party urges all democratic sectors—health workers, drivers, women and children, media workers, artists and cultural workers,

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teachers and government employees, the youth and students, movie and television personalities, small professionals, the religious and all workers, peasants, the urban poor and unemployed—to unite and bring together all their grievances and aspirations.

The Filipino people are being galvanized to take action. They must assert and protect their democratic rights now before they are all taken away by the fascist regime. The Filipino people must get organized. They must demand freedom of the press and freedom to express. They must fight back and protest fiercely.

They must take action in their campuses and communities, in their factories and offices, in churches and parks, and defend these as freedom-zones where they can collect the people's strength in numbers. They must quickly prepare their ranks, educate the entire people, heighten their determination and be ready to lock horns with the regime's anti-democratic forces until the Anti-Terror Bill is junked or until Duterte is ousted. AB

NPA-Bukidnon mounts grenade attack on abusive police checkpoint

THE NEW PEOPLE'S Army (NPA)-Bukidnon lobbed a grenade at a checkpoint manned by elements of the First Bukidnon Police Mobile Force Company in Barangay Cabulohan, Cabanglasan on June 1. Two policemen were wounded in the offensive.

A day after the incident, responding police troops were again blasted by another NPA unit.

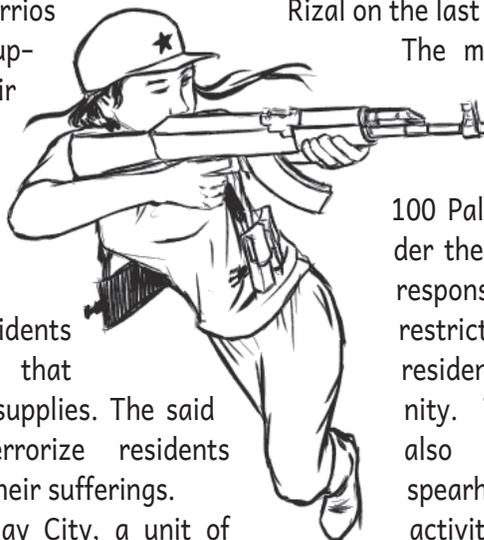
Along with the military, the said police elements are responsible for blockading and harassing farmers and Lumads from various villages in Cabanglasan. They man several checkpoints and block residents from traveling from and to barrios to buy food supplies and sell their produce. They are also responsible for confiscating the goods bought by residents as they claim that these are NPA supplies. The said checkpoints terrorize residents and aggravate their sufferings.

In Malaybalay City, a unit of the NPA-Bukidnon ambushed op-

erating soldiers of the 8th IB at Sitio Bendum, Barangay Busdi, Malaybalay City on May 19. Two soldiers were killed and there others were wounded.

In Palawan, a unit of the Binvenido Vallever Command also fired at a detachment of the 18th Special Forces Company at Mantayog Falls in Barangay Bunog, Rizal on the last week of May.

The military unit is responsible for hamletting approximately 100 Palaw'an families under the guise of Covid-19 response. They severely restrict the mobility of residents in the community. The soldiers are also notorious for spearheading antisocial activities even in adjacent communities. AB



"Suspension" of VFA termination, not a surprise

RODRIGO DUTERTE'S "suspension" of the notice of termination for the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) which he signed on February 11 came as no surprise.

Since the issuance of the notice, it was very obvious that the regime will not proceed with the termination. Duterte only wanted to seek more funds and weapons from the US for his regime. Duterte suspended



the termination after the US certified its approval of Duterte's request to buy new helicopters, missiles and other military equipment worth P75 billion.

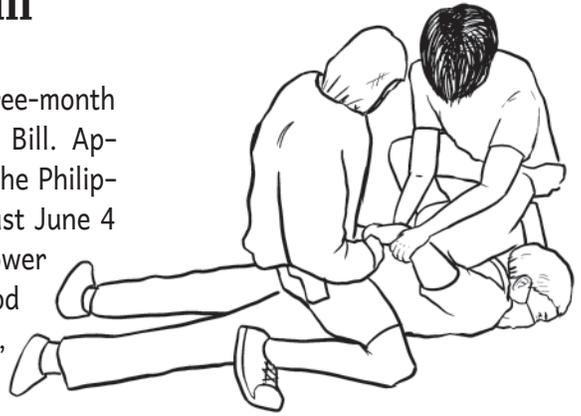
The suspension is linked with plans of the US to further heighten its military presence in the South China Sea and use the Philippines as a

operational base in view of increasing anti-China jingoism and war preparations of the US government.

While many countries are focusing their efforts on combatting the Covid-19 pandemic, the US has been very busy heightening its presence in the South China Sea for the past three months. It has deployed to warships in the said area in April, and has regularly flown fighter jets. US and Australian troops also conducted a military exercise in the said area in May. AB

Protests against Duterte's Anti-Terror Bill

Hundreds of activists took to the streets after an almost three-month lockdown to oppose the Duterte regime's "Anti-Terrorism" Bill. Approximately one thousand rallyists converged at the University of the Philippines (UP)-Diliman in Quezon City, and several others in Laguna last June 4 to oppose the said bill which was then being railroaded in the lower house. Protests were also mounted on June 5 in Iloilo, Cebu, Bacolod and Butuan; and on June 6 in Naga and Legazpi. Simultaneously, numerous online forums and protests were also conducted. In Cebu, the police dispersed the peaceful protest of around 40 activists, eight of whom were arrested.



The Anti-Terror Bill was passed by the Senate early in February with a vote of 19 in favor and two against. This will replace the extant Human Security Act with worse provisions on warrantless arrests and detention against anyone labeled by the state as "terrorist" or a "terrorist supporter." The people strongly oppose the said bill as its definition of "terrorism" and "terrorist" is too broad. They also oppose the additional powers that the bill will grant to the police and military. The Senate bill, which replaced earlier House versions and was certified as urgent by Duterte, was passed without allowing any amendments. The version hurdled Congress with an initial 173 votes in favor of and 31 against the said bill, and 29 abstentions. Following backlash, several congressmen were compelled to withdraw their "yes" votes. As of June 6, 13 more congressmen still need to withdraw their "yes" votes to block the bill transmission from Congress to Malacañang.

The demand to junk the bill continues to gain ground. Campaigns are being spearheaded by national democratic organizations and democratic parties in the lower house. Youth organizations, lawyers, journalists, church people, administrators of Ateneo and De La Salle universities, Moro students, civic groups, UP and Far Eastern University professors, and an association of private groups are among those who expressed their opposition to the bill. Eight big business groups, including the Makati Busi-

ness Club, also issued a unified statement against the bill. In the internet, the slogans #JunkTerror-BillNow and "Activists are not Terrorists" trended and were used by celebrities, musicians, athletes and other personalities. The group Human Rights Watch also criticized the bill on June 4, as well as the United Nations Human Rights Office after it issued its report on the grave human rights situation in the Philippines.

Simultaneous with the clamor to junk the bill, activists also called for mass testing (#MassTestingNow), and Rodrigo Duterte's ouster (#OustDuterteNow).

Free the Cebu 8

The protest dispersal at UP Cebu and the arrest of seven activists and a bystander last June 5 by state forces was met with widespread condemnation. The activists and their supporters stressed that police and soldiers are not allowed to enter the campus premises, unless invited by the university, under existing accords. AB



Anomalous procurement of medical equipment

THE DUTERTE REGIME was exposed for having procured grossly overpriced medical equipment in the past months. The most recent was the procurement of 10 million personal protective equipment (PPE) sets from an unidentified Chinese company at P1,800 per set or a total of P20 billion. PPE sets are commonly bought at only P400-P1,000 per set.

Since March, the regime has squandered about P21.8 billion for the procurement of 11 million sets. Duterte and his officials have pocketed at least P10.8 billion (with PPE priced at P1,000 per set) to P17 billion (at P400 per set) in the purchase of PPE sets alone.

The regime's plan last month to procure polymerase chain reaction (PCR) machines for P4.3 million each, and swab test kits for P1,600 each from Omnibus Bio-Medical Systems Inc., a company being investigated for hoarding and overpricing medical equipment, was also exposed and stopped.

The said equipment can be bought directly from the manufacturer, Sansure Biotech Inc., at only P1.75 million per machine, and P600 per test kit.

10 measures against Duterte's destructive and pandemic effect on the people

The Duterte government's response to the pandemic has been a big failure. The people are mired in hunger and joblessness even as the virus continues to spread after almost three months under lockdown.

The regime squandered the people's sacrifices in one of the world's longest lockdown. It did not strength the health system. It did not undertake mass testing and contact tracing. It remained blind to the extent of infections. It only used the lockdown to pocket billions of pesos, suppress the people and ram neoliberal policies and fascist measures that it failed to enact before the lockdown. The regime should be held responsible for the inutility, corruption, militarism and misplaced priorities in the midst of the pandemic. The people should unite to fight for their democratic rights and welfare.

1) They should demand that the government fund free mass testing efforts instead of wholesale quarantines. Demand the mass mobilization of health workers and people's volunteers for contact tracing.

2) They should demand emergency funding to strengthen public hospitals and medical facilities, provide sufficient protective equipment for nurses, doctors and health workers and raise their wages. Demand free hospitalization of Covid-19 cases to encourage infected people to seek treatment. Demand funding to establish state enterprises for mass production of testing equipment, as well as personal protective equipment. Demand increased funding support for Filipino scientists to conduct research to develop a vaccine.

3) Demand prompt and complete delivery of sufficient food and

economic assistance as promised and allow access to jobs and various means of livelihood to prevent mass hunger. Demand suspension of payments for electricity, water and rent and prohibit disconnections and evictions.

4) Demand democratic access to exact and real-time data and critical information on the pandemic. Demand wider community-based public education to raise the people's scientific knowledge about the virus. Put a stop to censorship and political harassment of private citizens and red-tagging of activists in social media and other platforms.

5) Demand measures to address the impact of the lockdown on vulnerable sectors such as the elderly, those with underlying illnesses (in-

cluding mental conditions), health workers, pregnant women, women in general, as well as people who were forced to evacuate due to militarization and natural calamities. Demand the mass release of political prisoners and those arrested for lockdown violations.

6) Demand immediate removal

of restrictions on livelihood and work and travel. Remove the checkpoints. Demand the restoration of the people's right to peacefully assemble in a safe manner in their communities and public spaces.

Demand appropriate, targeted and time bound quarantine measures to the smallest possible area. Carry out targeted quarantine in a democratic and acceptable manner with the participation of community.

Demand immediate removal of restrictions against peasants/farmers. Demand the withdrawal from rural communities of AFP soldiers spread not only terror but also the virus in the countryside.

7). Demand a safe working environment for workers and employees and demand companies to provide safety equipment and hygiene kits. Demand regular testing, and higher hazard pay. Provide subsidies for jeepney and tricycle drivers and operators and smaller bus companies to enable them to provide health safety in their public utility vehicles and compensate for loss of income.

8) Demand funding so that schools can reopen. This includes more classrooms and teachers, more public spaces for sports and play.

9) Jumpstart the economy by giving economic subsidies and assistance for workers, farm workers and low-income families to stimulate local demand and production.

Demand wage increases and a national minimum wage to raise the standards of living of workers across the country. Demand the re-



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scinding of Labor Order 17 issued last May 16 which allow companies to "voluntarily" reduce wages. Demand full support for returning overseas Filipino workers.

Demand a suspension of land rent and cancellation of peasant debt. Demand free distribution of land to peasant tillers.

10) Demand funding support for small businesses and small professionals to enable them to resume economic activity in a safe manner and continue to earn reasonable profits.

Demand suspension of automatic debt payments. Demand the suspension of the TRAIN law, the withdrawal of Duterte's oil tax and a rollback in the prices of fuel and other basic commodities. Demand a stop to more business incentives while the people bear the burden of higher taxes. Impose taxes on the wealth of the richest Filipinos. AB

Police arrest 6 drivers protesting against jeepney ban

Police forces arrested six jeepney drivers in Caloocan City who protested on June 2 to demand the lifting of the ban on jeepney operations. The protest was part of the national campaign of the Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (Piston) for the resumption of jeepney operations.

Jeepney driver Elmer Cordero, 72, and Piston deputy secretary general Ruben Baylon were among those arrested. The drivers were nabbed despite observing physical distancing while protesting.

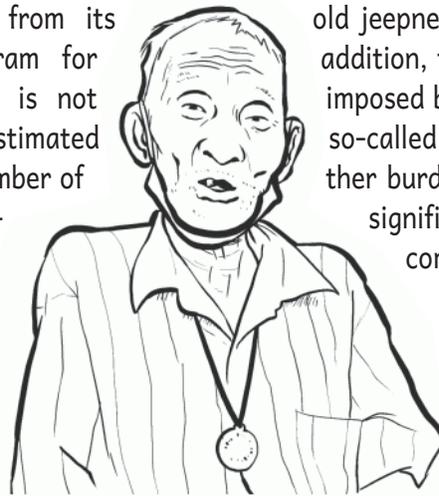
Based on the regime's recent report, only 36,243 drivers have benefitted from its emergency program for the sector. This is not even half of the estimated 240,000 total number of drivers and operators in the country.

Workers obliged to report to work since June 1 and commuters are

greatly affected by the ban which will be in effect until June 22.

Jeepney drivers are required to apply for a special permit to be able to resume their operation. The regime, however, will prioritize the resumption of operation of "modern" jeepneys, while traditional or old jeepneys will be sidelined. In addition, the new jeepney routes imposed by the regime under the so-called new normal will further burden jeepney drivers and significantly reduce their income.

The call for the immediate release of the drivers received wide support from many personalities and organizations. AB



Migrants hit regime for "garbage-like" treatment

Migrante Philippines strongly condemned the Duterte regime for its garbage-like treatment of returning overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who are now queued in Metro Manila due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Approximately 24,000 of them have long been locked up in quarantine facilities due to the slow pace of testing and the delayed issuance of results. One of whom has committed suicide. A group complained that they were made to wait at the airport near heaps of junk, the reason why Migrante called the regime's treatment "garbage-like."

Since April, about 36,000 migrant Filipinos returned to the country, 24,000 of whom have been cramped in quarantine facilities for more than two months. The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration has also been criticized for the limited meal rations brought to the migrants "tardily," for the "financial aid that never came," and for not constantly providing them with protective

equipment and toiletries. In a desperate attempt to go home, some of them paid P4,500 to be tested by the Philippine Red Cross. However, many of those tested negative during the initial test, tested positive upon their arrival in their hometowns.

The said situation is bound to worsen with the deluge of 42,000 returning OFW in the coming months. Approximately 400,000

OFWs are expected to lose employment due to the recession caused by the pandemic. The National Task Force-Covid 19 chief implementer Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr. said that they are not ready for the said deluge of OFWs.

In various parts of the globe, more than 5,300 OFWs already tested positive for Covid-19, 357 of whom died. Many OFWs are still stranded in various countries and could not go home due to lockdown. They neither receive financial nor food aid. Many are already pleading for help about their situation and demand repatriation. Duterte's generals will held accountable for their inept response to the Covid-19 pandemic. AB

Filipino women, overworked and exploited under Duterte's lockdown

The Filipino people face widespread devastation after close to three months of Duterte's martial law lockdown and sheer incompetence in handling the Covid-19 pandemic. Women, especially working women, have borne the brunt of the lockdown.

Women are at the forefront of the battle against Covid-19. Up to 80% of Filipino nurses are women, many of them infected and in quarantine due to lack of proper protective gear. Scores have died due to the infection. They suffer through 12-hour rotations amid personnel shortages. Many forego going home for fear of infecting their children and families as they are not regularly tested. Over the past months, they were subjected to military and police checkpoints and transport restrictions. On top of all of this, they receive 22% less in salaries compared to their male counterparts.

Majority of working women have been left with no income and have been forced out of their jobs due to the lockdown. Predominantly female occupations have suffered as schools, malls, offices, hotels and restaurants were shutdown. Sectors which Duterte rushed to open, such as construction and mining, are overwhelmingly male.

More than half of informal workers are women. They work in enterprises that are most affected by the lockdown such as sari-sari stores, parlors, food stalls and small eateries. Last year, there were more women than men who applied for small enterprise licenses, most of which are probably bankrupt by now.

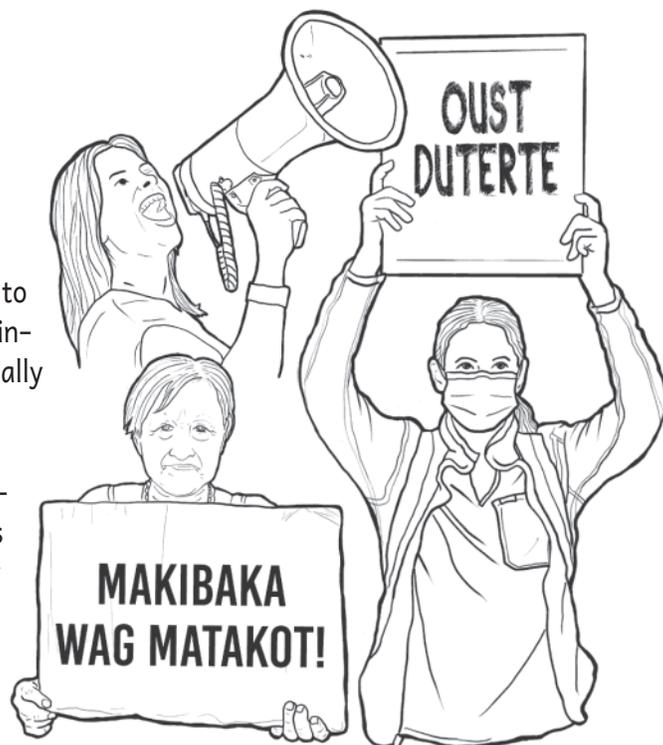
In poor communities, it has been the womenfolk who were forced to wait in line for hours on end to avail of Duterte's stingy amelioration. In 2015, 4 million women, as opposed to 400,000 men, were considered "poorest of the

poor" and were enrolled in the DSWD's 4Ps program. They bear the burden of stretching meager aid and finding other sources of food for their families.

In rural areas, women suffered as agricultural production consistently and progressively contract. More women are landless than men. Over the years, six in ten women have worked as unpaid family workers in agricultural businesses and farms. The lockdown aggravated their situation as they have no income, no savings, and no prospect of earning a living.

Travel restrictions and unemployment have contributed to the uncertainties of overseas women workers. Many of them work as domestic helpers, sales ladies and in other services, and have been dismissed in droves by their employers. They come home only to be subjected to prolonged detention in quarantine facilities, including pregnant women.

Under the lockdown, prenatal care have been overlooked as hospitals and community clinics were diverted towards emergency response. Breastfeeding mothers and their newborns are largely being neglected amid the overstressing of the weak public health system. With limited funds and resources, most new mothers have been forced to forego immunizations. The military lockdown has further worsened the sorry state of basic infant vaccinations against measles, diphtheria



and polio.

Under Duterte's lockdown, a woman's burden of cooking, cleaning, washing dishes, doing the laundry and market runs have doubled. Between two working parents, it has been the mothers who gave up more professional duties to care for the children and elderly family members. With the shift education to "homeschooling," it will mostly be the women who will shoulder this added responsibility, regardless of their occupation.

Inside locked homes, vulnerable women are left with no protection against domestic abuse and sexual violence. The United Nations already warned that strict lockdowns lasting six months could lead to 31 million additional cases of domestic abuse.

Under Duterte's misogynist rule, violence against women have been on the rise even before the lockdown. Police have recorded high rates for rape, up 31% from 2018 to 2019, and physical violence, up 15% in the same period. The DSWD meanwhile registered 55% increase in the number of sexually exploited women in the same period. Under the lockdown, reports have been trickling in about policemen soliciting sexual favors in exchange for travel passes and minors engaging in prostitution.

Tax cuts for billionaire's Covid-19 "donations"

Everyday, news are filled with reports of "donations" provided by businesses owned by billionaire bourgeois compradors.

"Our companies are here to support all efforts, and we are continuously looking for ways to further extend help and support," declared Kevin Andrew Tan, head of the Alliance Global Group Inc., the company that controls Megaworld, Emperor Inc., Resorts World Manila and McDonalds. He boasts of having "donated" P603 million.

Similar boasts have been made by other big companies such as SM, San Miguel, Bloomberry, Udenna, Aboitiz, Ayala Group, Globe Telecom, Jollibee, Metro Pacific, Coca-Cola, POGO companies, Filinvest, Okada Manila, TikTok, LBC, Pepsi and PHINMA.

In a pandemic and crisis, it is indeed a good thing that everyone chips in, especially the billionaires, to help in the country's effort to overcome the threat of the spread of Covid-19. However the question is: Are the donations of big business now reaching P20 billion really untainted?

The simple answer is: No.

According to Revenue Regulation No. 9-2020 issued by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), cash donations, medical equipment and supply, relief goods and use of property "shall be considered fully deductible against the gross income of the donor-corporation/donor-individual."

Donations can be coursed through the national government or any of its agency, including local government or government corporations, or registered NGOs, humanitarian organizations, institutions or foundation. This means, even donations to their own foundations can be deducted from their taxes.

Thus, Jollibee's and McDonald's "treat," the PPE and relief goods "donated" by big companies,

in fact, are to be paid for by government in terms of tax deductions.

Last April 22, the Department of Transportation announced it would pay Dennis Uy P35 million for the use of two 2Go ships as quarantine facilities for returning OFWs. The following day, Uy boasted he would not accept any payment and will shoulder the costs. The truth is, Uy will get more if the costs which he claims will run to P260 million will just be deducted from his taxes.

Beside the tax deductions from their donations, these companies also got to earn from their property idled during the pandemic. Among these are the lots and building that were used for the much-vaunted "mega-swabbing" center in the Sy family's Mall of Asia, in the Enderun Trent in Taguig owned by Dennis Uy's Udenna Corporation and in the Philippine Arena in Bulacan owned by Iglesia Ni Cristo. The Yaps, the Ayala's Razons and Villars, meanwhile, got the contracts to build the Palacio de Maynila "mega-swabbing" center.

The government has effusively thanked these companies. In fact, their "help" will be paid for at the cost of P511 at the expense of the government and people.

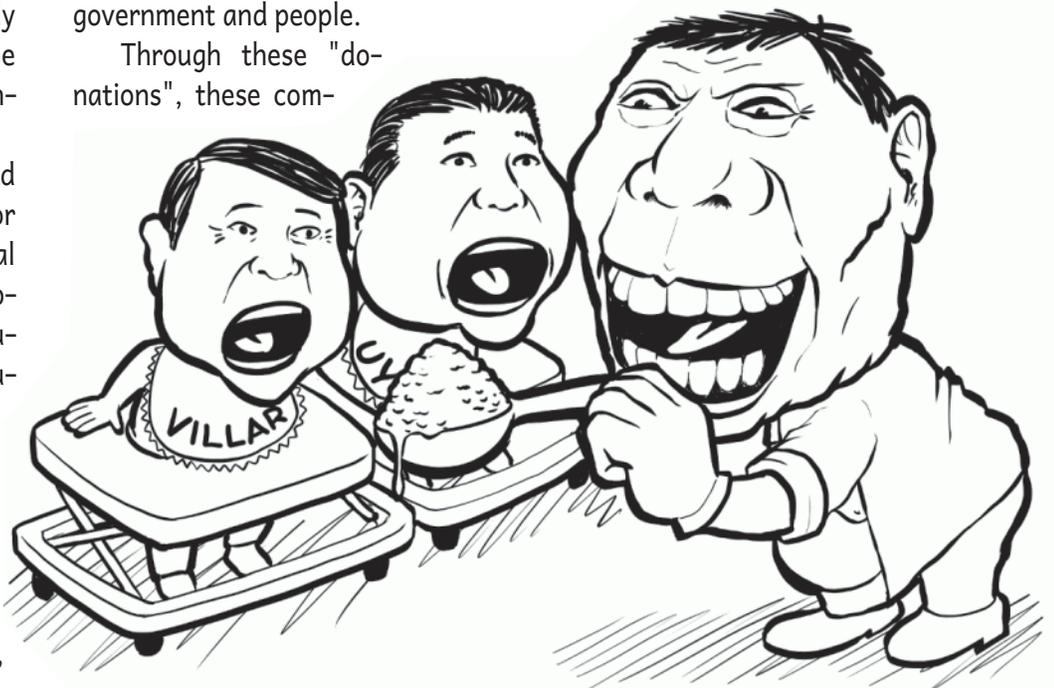
Through these "donations", these com-

panies were also able to sell their products during the economic and business lockdown. In addition, these companies got free advertisement in government radio and television where they were acknowledged everyday.

To capitalists, nothing is free or given away without returns. "Donations" coursed through various government agencies are actually "debts of gratitude" which they would likely use in the future. For example, Filinvest Corporate City Foundation can remind the Muntinlupa local government the test kit donations it gave just in case they face a land dispute in the city.

Big capitalists have played a major part in the Duterte regime's Covid-19 program. Even the Department of Health's data collection and processing has been contracted to Thinking Machines, Inc, a company recommended by Filinvest Corporation.

The planned staysafe.ph program for contact tracing was created by MultiSys, in partnership with private companies. This program aims to conduct widespread surveillance of the movement of individuals in the name of rapid contact tracing. AB



Socialism and health care

The concept of government responsibility in public health care was first upheld in Russia (later the Soviet Union federation) under the socialist state and the leadership of communist leader Vladimir Lenin. In 1920, he declared: "We have started a great war, a war which we shall not end soon. This is a bloodless war waged by the armies of labor on starvation, cold and typhus, a war for an enlightened, bright, well-fed and healthy Russia."

Before Russia built socialism, no other country had a system of public health care. Epidemics of infectious diseases was rampant brought about by the abject, grimy and congested communities of workers and toiling people. Doctors worked for themselves or are funded by charity and religious institutions. Most of the people do not received medical attention.

All these changed under socialism which considered the people's health as state responsibility. Amid the Spanish flu pandemic, the Soviet Union in 1919

started centralized state health service for all. It established the People's Commissariat for Public Health to attend to people's health.

In 1924, the Soviet government declared the view that doctors should have "the ability to study the occupational and social conditions which give rise to illness and not only to cure the illness but to suggest ways to prevent it."

Capitalist countries in Europe and elsewhere followed the Soviet Union's footsteps. This became a

basic characteristic of the socialist system in China and a large part of the world. The Soviet Union's example served as inspiration for the workers and toiling masses across the globe to march along the path of socialist revolution.

In the US and other former socialist countries, the public health system has been eroded by several decades of neoliberalism. Because of this, a great majority of the people do not receive proper health care. A vibrant system of public health now can be seen only in Cuba and other countries which continue to uphold socialism.

The Covid-19 pandemic shows not only the need to strengthen the public health system, but moreover, the need to establish a genuine democratic state that will truly prioritize and take care of the people's interests and welfare. AB

Government debt set to reach P8.75 trillion

THE DEBT-ADDICT Duterte regime is exploiting the Covid-19 pandemic to secure onerous loans under the guise of stimulating the economy and aid distribution. Within three months, the regime has secured about \$5.5 billion (P275 billion) in loans from banks and imperialist financial institutions. Should the loans be implemented, the national debt is expected to reach P8.75 trillion that will be shouldered by the people. This means, every Filipino is saddled with approximately P79,945 of debt, which is 27% that recorded when Duterte first came to power.

The most recent borrowing is the \$750-million (P37.5-billion) loan package co-financed by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The other loans were previously made under bilateral contracts with the ADB (\$1.7 billion or P85 billion) and the World Bank (\$700 million or P35 billion). The regime is also set to borrow money through the issuance of government bonds (\$2.35 billion or P117.5 billion).

Pope Francis: Divert weapons funding to research

POPE FRANCIS PRAYED on May 31 that government leaders' consciences would "be touched so that enormous sums spent to possess more armaments and to perfect them be instead destined to the promotion of sufficient research to prevent such catastrophes in the future."

Pope Francis urged government leaders to "take a far-sighted attitude, helping the most needy now and putting in place long-term economic and social solutions."

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) welcomed the statement of Pope Francis. It said that this is an "urgent appeal in the face of rising militarism and fascism while people are suffering from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic."

Among these is the Duterte regime which is obsessed with purchasing attack helicopters, bombs, cannons and other war matériel to wage war and suppress the democratic rights of the Filipino people." In line with the call of Pope Francis, the people must demand the realignment of war funds to research and emergency public health and economic measures to alleviate the sufferings of the people.

"I can't breathe..."

The rage behind US protests

Americans mounted daily protests in all states in the country since black American George Floyd was killed by the police on May 25. Amid the pandemic, thousands of people took to the streets to confront the police and express their rage. The peoples of at least 20 countries expressed support for the protest. They united under the Black Lives Matter campaign to demand an end to racism and marginalization suffered by black people because of the color of their skin. Among those that supported the cause was the International League of Peoples' Struggle. The group Anakbayan-USA also participated in the protests.

Floyd, 46, was a worker who lost his job due to the Covid-19 lockdown in the state of Minnesota. He was arrested by four policemen after reportedly trying to use a counterfeit bill to purchase items from a store. He died on the spot from suffocation when a police officer pressed his knee against the victim's neck for nearly nine minutes. Floyd's last words were: "I can't breathe." These words reflect the plight of many black people in the US who are suffering from racism and racist killings. Floyd's autopsy indicates that he was positive for Covid-19.

Public outrage

Racism particularly against black Americans worsened under the fascist government of US President Donald Trump who is responsible of fomenting hatred against blacks, women and minorities. In his first year as president, hate crimes (violent crimes perpetrated against victims because of their race, religion and gender among others) have increased by 13%. The rate has further increased in succeeding years wherein nearly half of the victims are

black.

From January 2015 to May 2020, at least 1,260 black Americans were gunned down by police officers. The figure does not include those killed under police custody or killed in a different manner such as that in the case of Floyd.

In US history, collective public outrage against racist killings against blacks have repeatedly broken out. The most recent protests against racial discrimination, and particularly against brutal police killings against black people, was sparked by successive cases that victimized Floyd and 83 others just within this year.

Deeper anger

More than this, protests which have spread across the US is tightly interconnected with economic injustices which primarily burden the black people. This has worsened amid the onslaught of the Covid-19 pandemic wherein more than 1.8 million have been infected in the US and 100,000 have died.

One third of those who died are blacks even if they just comprise 13% of the total population.

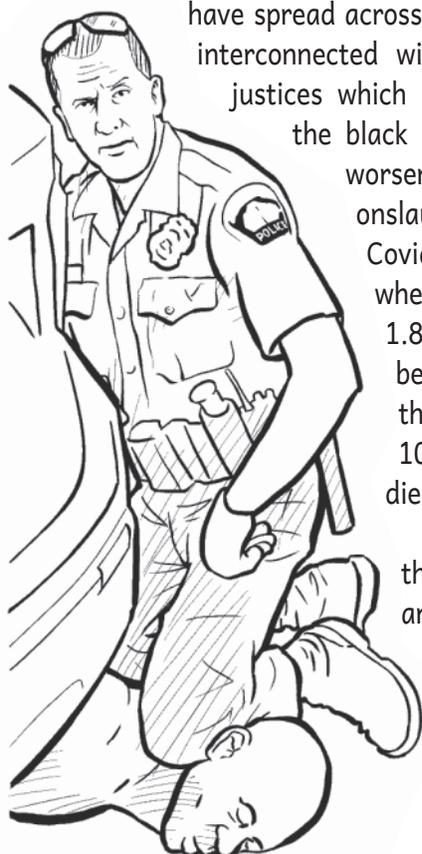
This vulnerability is not caused by their race per se, but is an effect of the US government to address the public health crisis and entrenched national policies. Before the pandemic, black people have already been suffering from low wages, absence of health services, unemployment, housing and other basic needs.

Blacks also comprise a significant part of the 21 million American workers who lost their jobs by May. The unemployment rate in the US has now reached 16% which is worse than that recorded during the financial crisis in 2008. With the deterioration of the US economy which is set to further worsen, the black people are bound to carry the heaviest burden. For them, the economic crisis is several times more enraging than the virus or racism.

Daily protests were also mounted in the face of the Trump government's fascism. Mobilization were participated in not only by blacks but also by workers and middle forces from various races. Trump exposed himself as a cruel fascist who is determined to suppress and quell the growing protests. The fascist core of the US government unfolded as its bourgeois democratic trappings eroded.

Fearing that protests will further grow, Trump commanded state forces to attack protesters with tear gas, rubber bullets, chemical irritants and through other suppressive ways. He also mobilized the National Guard in many US states to strengthen the police to suppress the protests. He also implemented curfew but this has failed to stop mass protest actions.

More than 500 were arrested during the protests, including 20 journalists. Scores of journalists were also hit by tear gas, rubber bullets and pepper spray. AB



2 mass leaders brutally killed in Eastern Visayas

Two mass leaders were killed by state forces in Eastern Visayas in May. Prior to the killings, both were labeled as criminals and terrorists by the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC).

On May 28, the lifeless body of Carlito Badion (Ka Karlets), national secretary general of Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (Kadamay), was found in Pagsanga-an, Riverside, Ormoc City, Leyte. The body was buried in a shallow grave. Badion was abducted by armed men on May 26 and was brought to Barangay Guintigui-an where he was reportedly tortured. According to those who saw the body, the victim could have been killed using a blunt object. One of his feet was crippled by polio.

Badion was known for fighting along with urban poor residents in occupation and mass housing campaigns, and community barricades against demolition. He was also a vocal critic of Duterte's Oplan Tokhang and its



campaign of mass killings in urban poor communities.

The police made it appear that the killing was a simple case of robbery and homicide to cover up the political motive behind it.

On May 29, elements of the 43rd IB killed peasant leader Allan Aguilando (Mano Boy), chairperson of the Northern Samar Small Farmers Association, in Barangay New Rizal, Catarman, Northern Samar. He was shot at the back of his head and his face was hacked with a machete.

Aguilando was at the forefront of campaigns against militarization and exposed the devastation wrought by successive disasters in the province. He also led the march of Samarños to Manila in 2016

and 2018 to hold the regime accountable for its negligence and to demand aid. To collect their bounty, the 43rd IB made it appear that the victim was a member of people's army and was killed in an "encounter."

Arrest. In Las Navas, elements of the 803rd IBde blindfolded, hogtied and arrested peasants Carlos Baluyot, Alvino Lucapa and a minor in Barangay Logging on June 1. Baluyot is a leader of the Alyansa san mga Parag-uma Kontra-kagutom san Las Navason which opposes militarization.

In Western Samar, soldiers also nabbed peasants Cosme Cabangunay and his children Jevie and Jason on May 27 in Barangay Canvais, Motiong.

Meanwhile, elements of the 85th IB also abducted Marvin Lote-ro and Wilmar Marinas in Barangay Mabini, Lopez, Quezon on June 2. The victims are yet to be surfaced.

All of those nabbed were accused as members of the people's army. AB

Opol arson and other lies

THE NEW PEOPLE'S Army (NPA)-Misamis Oriental clarified that it had no hand in the torching of four houses and a church in Barangay Limonda, Opol on May 28. The arson was reportedly perpetrated by four armed men. It is more likely that this was perpetrated by elements of the 403rd IB who reported that shouts of "Mabuhay ang NPA" were heard after the torching, as they were the only people in the area during the incident.

The NPA-Northeastern Mindanao Region also clarified that Ka Maria Malaya and Ka Joaquin Jacinto, spokespersons of the revolutionary movement, were not killed in a "series of encounter" that took place on May 14-19. The 401st IBde reported on May 28 that the two leaders were killed along with 18 others to increase their bounty. Earlier, Duterte set a P2-million bounty for the capture of NPA commanders.

AFP squanders P25-million in 1-day offensive

THE ARMED FORCES of the Philippines (AFP) squandered approximately P25 million in public funds in its offensive last May 14 at Sitio Hayon, Libas Sud, San Miguel, Surigao del Sur.

In a single day, it dropped eight 230-kilo bombs using FA-50 fighter jets, and launched 24 rockets using helicopters. The area was also strafed using .50 calibre machine guns, and shelled six times using a howitzer. The military spent about P22.4 million for these. An additional P2.5 million was spent for the flight of helicopters and FA-50 fighter jets. Approximately P20 million was spent for the salary, food and hazard pay of 600 soldiers and police.

The attack on May 14 was part of the 20-day joint combat operation of the military and police in five towns along the border of Surigao del Sur and Agusan del Sur. An NPA camp was bombed during the operation.

The NPA-NEMR paid tribute to five Red fighters who were killed in the intense military attack. Simultaneously, the unit also honored other Red fighters who were martyred in the past two months.

100 Lumads, arrested in Northern Mindanao

More than 100 Lumads were arrested in various parts of Northern Mindanao in the course of three months of combat operations by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

The worst among these is the arrest of 100 peasants and Lumads in Sitio Balaas and Airburn in Barangay Mabuhay; and Nabangkal in Barangay Magkalungay, San Fernando, Bukidnon. They have been accused of being members of the people's army and detained in the 88th IB headquarters in Maramag.

In Malaybalay City, more than 700 residents of Sitio Sta. Rita and San Roque in Barangay Sinanglanan, fled their community last May 14 due to intense military opera-

tions in their community. They brought with them their animals and sought shelter in the neighboring Sitio Malappag.

No less than 645 troops of the 8th, 88th, 60th and 56th IB have mounted focused military operations in Malaybalay City, San Fernando and Cabanglasan.

In Agusan del Norte, two pregnant women identified as "Apay" and Wena" were arrested by elements of 23rd IB last May 16 in in Sitio Cabalalahan, Guinabsan, Bue-

navista. The victims are currently held in the 23rd IB's headquarters in the same town. It is not yet clear what charges they are facing.

Soldiers torch houses, school

Lumad homes and a community elementary school were set on fire last March 16 by military elements in Barangay San Vicente, Esperanza, Agusan del Sur. The arson was committed after a military misencounter resulted in five casualties among the soldiers. A day before, residents fled the said community because of intense operations and military oppression. Six Lumads were arrested for interrogation. AB

Military harasses ICRC convoy

ELEMENTS OF THE 9th Special Forces Company and police held and arbitrarily detained a convoy of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Lianga, Surigao del Sur on May 29. The convoy was reportedly transporting two wounded Red fighters identified as Jea Angeles Perez and Noel Dadang. Flagging down and detaining a vehicle with the Red Cross emblem is prohibited by the international humanitarian law.

After interrogating the health volunteers, the military "escorted" the convoy to a hospital in Tagum City. The two wounded individuals are now being treated at the said facility but are at the same time being detained by the military.

Offensives mounted by the CPI-Maoist

RED FIGHTERS OF the Communist Party of India (CPI)-Maoist seized 16 weapons, ammo vests, magazines, ammunition, and handheld radios in its successful ambush in Minpa, Sukma District, Chattisgarh on March 21. Seventeen *jawan* (police) were killed and 15 were wounded.

Two others were killed and three were wounded in another ambush mounted by the Red fighters in Gadchiroli District, India on May 17.

The military actions were launched by the CPI-Maoist to punish the police for evicting residents from their communities to pave way for the entry of plunderous mining companies.

Free Huzaifa Halabiya Bader!

THE COMMUNIST PARTY of the Philippines expressed its support for the Palestian people's call for the release of Huzaifa Halabiya Bader who was arbitrarily arrested by the Israel government on May 25. Baser, who was formerly arrested in June 2018 and was released in December 2019, was rearrested without charges and trial.

Bader is among the approximately 5,000 Palestinian political prisoners arrested and currently detained by the Israel government, 500 of whom are under "administrative detention," Israel's euphemism for detaining Palestinians without charges and trial.

The bloody record of Elbit Systems

THE ELBIT SYSTEMS, the largest Israeli weapons company, is the prime beneficiary of Israel's bloody siege and occupation in Palestine. It accumulates hefty profits by supplying weapons and military equipment to Israeli military forces which they use in suppressing the Palestinian people.

Among those manufactured by the company are Hermes 450 drones which has the capacity to carry and launch Hellfire missiles. This was among the primary weapons used by Israel in laying siege on Gaza Strip in 2014. The siege killed 2,314 civilian Palestinians, and injured 17,125 others. Among those killed were 164 children.

At least 28 governments are now using drones manufactured by Elbit. These include the Philippines which bought 12 drone (three Hermes 450 and nine Hermes 900) in 2017 under the AFP Modernization Program. The said drones were bought at P8 billion in sum. Two Hermes 450 drones were already delivered to the Philippines last year.