



EDITORIAL

Expose and oppose the NTF-ELCAC's palliative projects

The Duterte regime has started to roll-out the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC)'s Barangay Development Program (BDP). Its show-off projects aim to create the illusion that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) brings "development" when in fact these will only cause further poverty and oppression.

A few weeks ago, the NTF-ELCAC bragged of releasing ₱20 million to each of 215 barangays supposed BDP beneficiaries in Region 11. The sum of ₱4.3 billion comes from the ₱16.4 billion BDP fund under Duterte's 2021 budget which identified 822 barangays "cleared" of the NPA.

The ₱20 million per barangay will be divided to ₱12 million for "farm-to-market" roads; ₱3 million for schools; ₱2 million for water system and sanitation; and ₱1.5 million each for reforestation and health stations. These infrastructure projects seek to bedazzle the

masses to make them think that there is progress in their area.

What good to the peasant masses are these roads which are supposed to ease transporting products to the market when landlords already take away their harvest; or when traders deny fair prices? What good will constructing schools or clinics when there are no teachers or doctors? What is reforestation if only commercial trees are planted to benefit the big capitalists?

All these merely cover-up the surface-level problems of the masses. None address the basic

problem of the rural masses: landlessness. This is where all their hardship and oppression stem from. This is the root of their exploitation and the reason why they continue to support and take part in the armed struggle.

Who will benefit from these projects but the contractors and local bureaucrats and officials who will control the funds for these infrastructure projects? This is no different from the congressmen's pork barrel that funds the roads and waiting sheds in their favorite barangays. The BDP is the military's pork barrel, to bribe local officials and support their favorites. Like the anomalous projects of congressmen, the BDPs are bound to be ridden with corruption.

The BDP is a big psywar project. The AFP and NTF-ELCAC want to

make it appear that the military addresses development, education, health and others. Through the BDP, the AFP claims they can win the people's hearts and minds so they will no longer go back to supporting the NPA.

The BDP obscures the AFP's bloody war against the rural masses of peasants and Lumad. It hides the relentless and brutal campaign of killings, arrests, intimidation and threats, repression, red-tagging and forcing people to "surrender." The BDP interfaces with the AFP's Retooled Community Support Program (RCSP) where its soldiers occupy communities and oppress the masses under garrison-like conditions.

In their race to get funds under the BDP, the AFP's dirty war against the masses is set to further intensify. The military is rushing to make more and more villages bow to



their power. The fascist attacks will be grow worse in their desperation to draw the masses away from their army, and declare the barangay "cleared." There are bound to be more cases of the masses being forced to "surrender" and work for the military. There are worsening cases of the military turning their ire and retaliating against the village masses whenever there are successful NPA tactical offensives.

The biggest winners of these

projects are the big foreign companies and big bourgeois compradors who are drooling to enter the rural hinterlands. Most of the BDP's funds or 75.54% (₱12.42 billion) will

go to Mindanao where one finds most of widespread plantations, mining and energy projects covering hundreds of thousands of hectares of land. They drive

away the masses of peasants and Lumad from their farm land and ancestral land. Allotting the largest amount of funds for roads aims to make it easier to haul the minerals to be exported to other countries, the palm oil, bananas, pineapple and other crops for export.

The peasant masses and minority people must fully expose and oppose the BDP projects that do not address their true grievances.

The rural masses must be assisted to assert their clamor for genuine land reform and their demands to reduce land rent, higher wages for farmworkers and fair farmgate prices. Together with the peasant masses, the minority masses must intensify their struggle to defend their ancestral lands.

Thoroughly expose the corruption of military officers, in connivance with local officials and contractors who pocket millions of pesos from these projects. Encourage local village officials to oppose the bribe money being paid to them by the military in exchange for their support of the BDP projects.

The broad masses must continue to resist the garrisoning and brutality of the military in their villages to suppress their resistance and pave the way for the big capitalists to occupy their land, plunder the natural resources and destroy the environment. AB

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cppinformationbureau@gmail.com

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13 tactical offensives in 4 provinces

Within two weeks, the New People's Army launched 13 military actions against operating troops of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the provinces of Bukidnon, Surigao del Norte, Abra and Negros Oriental. Eight of these were mounted in Bukidnon.

Bukidnon. The NPA simultaneously attacked the military detachments in Kipulot, Barangay Pala-capao and Barangay Butong, Quezon on January 20. The NPA also attacked the camp of the Philippine Army (PA) at Barangay Minungan on January 26.

At midnight in January 27, and in the afternoon of January 29, NPA units attacked PA troops at Butay Simong, Barangay Namnam, San Fernando and Buko, Barangay Banlag, Valencia City.

Another NPA unit sniped at soldiers who were stationed at Saluringan, Barangay Canangaan, Cabaclang on January 30. On the next day, the NPA blasted respond-

ing military troopers.

On January 25, the NPA burned down six machineries of Ulticon Builders Incorporated worth ₱9 million. The said company is notorious for giving low wages to workers and abusing farmers.

Twelve soldiers were killed and eight others were wounded in these offensives.

Surigao del Norte. In the morning of January 28, a unit of the NPA-Surigao del Norte attacked the municipal station of the Philippine National Police-Sison in Barangay San Pablo in the said town. After two hours, another NPA unit sniped at a responding unit of the 29th IB in Barangay Tinogpahan.

In the afternoon, the NPA blasted a police mobile who were monitoring the withdrawal of the Red fighters in Barangay San Pablo.

Abra. Red fighters sniped at a unit of the 72nd DRC on January 22 in the boundaries of Tubo, Abra and Besao, Mt. Province. The military sustained two casualties. This was the third tactical offensive of the NPA-Abra (Agustin Begnalen Command) in the month of January.

In retaliation, the AFP dropped 14 bombs in the area on January 24 and 25. These ravaged farms, pasturelands and the forests where the Maeng and Agawa minorities hunt for food.

Negros Oriental. A unit of the NPA-Central Negros ambushed an active element and intelligence agent of the CAFGU Active Auxiliary at Barangay Luz, Guihulungan City on January 28. AB

People's army

It has been long since Ka Rolly got in touch with Red fighters since his family relocated to a remote area in the mountains. He used to farm in the plains but decided to move to the hinterland along with the whole community to escape soldiers who were then conducting Oplan Habol Tamaraw in the area during the time of the butcher Jovito Palparan.

After hearing news about the encounter between the New People's Army (NPA) and military in a nearby village, he immediately went to a riverbank where he expected the Red fighters to pass. Along with his children, they waited for the NPA unit for two days. They brought sweet potatoes and bananas for the Red fighters and cautiously guarded the area.

"This was the task given to me by comrades long ago," he said. Although he has not been able to visit or talk to them for a long time, he performed his task to protect and

support the NPA unit during enemy attacks.

When the unit arrived, he looked for familiar faces. "There were many new faces," he said. He found out that many of those who used to operate in the area were deployed to other units. Despite this, he warmly welcomed the Red fighters, many of whom he just met for the first time. He expects to once again get in touch with former comrades.

The Red fighters were extremely



thankful for Ka Rolly's support to their platoon which struggled for three days to break through the area of operations of the enemy. He allowed Red fighters to temporarily rest at his banana farm. The comrades decided to leave after three days. They were accompanied by Ka Rolly until they could get in touch with other farmers. AB

Strength founded on agrarian revolution

The support of the peasant masses in Cagayan Valley to the New People's Army (NPA) remains firm amid intense combat and psywar operations of the military across the region. "The people here are as hard as stone," soldiers often conclude after repeatedly mounting Retooled Community Support Program operations in a barrio.

According to comrades, agrarian revolution was key to the quick expansion and consolidation of mass organizations. They were able to launch campaigns against usury and landgrabbing, and for wage increases in the past few years.

Agrarian revolution

In a barrio, farmers confronted a usurer who continued to charge them with high interests on loans despite the crisis amid the pandemic and typhoons which successively hit the region. Farmers who failed to pay their loans on time were charged a 100% interest by the usurer.

The starkest case was that of a farmer who borrowed ₱51,700 and was charged ₱358,500 by the usurer. The farmer was unable to pay his debt because his farm was ravaged.

During the confrontation, the farmers were able to demand the usurer to cancel out loan interests of farmers who have been able to settle principal payments. Those who have failed to pay will just be charged principal payments and interests for just a planting season.

In another barrio, farm workers won a daily wage increase from ₱150 to ₱250. They were also able to set the time when workers are supposed to start working every day, and also won their demand to be provided free lunch. The farmers also prohibited liquor drinking



among workers during afternoons as this causes trouble in the barrio.

In two other barrios, poor peasants conducted a campaign to stop the impending land expansion of rich farmers.

Establishing BRCs

The organs of political power continue to be established across the region. The number of barrio revolutionary committees (BRCs) increased by 25% in 2020.

In a barrio, 100 farmers, youth and middle forces assembled to establish a BRC in their cluster. The local Party branch ensured the participation of the masses and promptly called for the assembly. Meetings were immediately organized after the soldiers who conducted focused military operations in the area withdrew.

Farmers have long been planning to establish their own government in the barrio, but that was the only time they were able to accomplish this. During the assembly, the delegates elected the BRC officials and drafted a one-year plan. They also discussed about NPA recruitment.

Two other KRBs were founded in adjacent barangay clusters.

Military offensives

The New People's Army (NPA) in Cagayan Valley was able to mount around 20 armed actions

against fascist enemy troops last year. The enemy sustained at least 55 casualties, equivalent to two platoons.

Latest of these offensives was the demolition operation launched by the NPA-East Cagayan against an operating unit of the 77th IB in Mabuno, Gattaran, Cagayan. Six soldiers were killed during this offensive which was mounted on December 26, 2020, coinciding the 52nd anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Reports by the NPA regional command indicate that the total NPA force in the region increased by 45%-55% in 2020. The NPA also belied the "mass surrender" of so-called NPA members and supporters in the region. The latest batch of "surrenderees" who were paraded last January 28 are farmers who were threatened and coerced by the military.

The region also reported a 15% growth in Party membership during the same period. The Party was able to conduct revolutionary educational discussions including the Basic, Intermediate and Advance Party Courses last year. AB

This article is based on the October-December 2020 issue of Baringkuas, the revolutionary mass newspaper of the Party in Northeastern Luzon.

NPA's resilience amid the AFP's reign of terror in Southern Tagalog

The 2nd ID continues to sow terror in Southern Tagalog (ST) this 2021. At least 25 towns in five provinces across the region are covered by focused military operations and Retooled Community Support Program (RCSP) operations. The region is among the eight focus regions of the regime's counter-insurgency war.

The military campaigns are launched under the command of Lt. Gen. Antonio Parlade, Jr., the most rabid anti-communist troll and chief of the Southern Luzon Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The attacks are mounted despite the pandemic and the region being hit by successive typhoons during the last quarter of 2020.

Five towns each in the southern part of Occidental Mindoro and in Oriental Mindoro have been under attack by the 203rd IBde since 2019. Farmers and minorities in these areas strongly oppose the entry of destructive mining projects, dams and bogus environmental projects which destroy nature and aim to evict them.

The 203rd IBde is employing shock-and-awe tactics to weaken the resistance of the people in the area. In January, the military brigade installed two 105mm cannons in Bansud, Oriental Mindoro. Residents were also terrorized upon seeing a helicopter flying overhead on Christmas eve last year in the towns Rizal, San Jose, Bongabong and Mansalay. This landed at Mantay, Barangay Monte Claro, San Jose where RCSP troops are encamped.

Six towns in Quezon are also covered by operations of the 201st IBde with around 1,900 troops, including that of the 1st IB, 59th IB, 80th IB, 85th IB and 22nd DRC, and police. The heightened attacks are extremely ruthless as communities are still reeling from the impact of successive typhoons which hit the areas. The troopers blocked residents from receiving aid from the NPA.

The 80th IB constructed a new camp in Barangay Puray, Rodriguez, Rizal, while military combat and RCSP operations continue unabated in Antipolo, Rodriguez and Tanay. In the hinterlands, occupying RCSP troopers also block the entry of food and other aid for residents.

The 3rd Marine Brigade also continues to implement FMOs and surrender campaigns in Palawan. At least 600 Marine troops are currently laying siege in the communities of Roxas, Taytay, Brooke's Point, Rizal, Bataraza and Puerto Princesa City. They bribe residents to "surrender and cooperate" with the AFP against the NPA and their fellow villagefolk.

The 2nd ID's starkest crimes and violations of the international rules of war include the killing of retired Party leaders Eugenia Magpantay and Agaton Topacio, the Baras 5 massacre, and the killing of peasant leader Armando Buisan,



and NPA hors de combat Mario Caraig.

Amid all out attacks, the people's army was able to establish new guerrilla fronts and recover former territories in the region. It reorganized the guerrilla fronts in order to allow the NPA units to have a broader area for maneuver while withstanding the intense combat and bombing operations of the AFP.

Armando Cienfuego, spokesperson of the NPA regional operations command, said that "it is clear to the Filipino people who the real terrorists in the country are—the US-Duterte regime and the AFP-PNP which indiscriminately sow fear and terror across the nation." **AB**

Mendiola Massacre commemoration

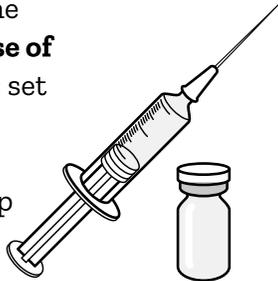
AT LEAST 500 activists marched to Malacañang on January 22 to mark the 34th anniversary of the Mendiola Massacre wherein 13 protesting farmers were killed by the police. Until today, justice is yet to be served to the relatives of the victims. On the contrary, the attacks and hardships suffered by the sector continued to worsen over the years. In 2020 alone, 59 were killed by the regime. Similar protest actions were mounted by farmers in Laguna, Cebu and Negros Occidental.

In Quezon, farmers commemorated the 40th anniversary of the Guinayangan Massacre last February 1. In this massacre perpetrated on the same day in 1981, two farmers were killed when state forces opened fire at around 6,000 protesting farmers.

Meanwhile in Panay, activists founded the Defend Panay Network on January 29, a month after the brutal massacre of nine Tumannok leaders in Tapaz, Capiz.

SOBERANA 2

one of the four vaccines developed by Cuban scientists which is already in the **second phase of testing**. It is set to be mass produced with the help of **Iran**.

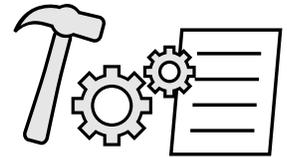


The **Philippines** ranked

79th out of **98 countries**

in terms of **Covid-19 response efficiency**. The list is topped by New Zealand and Vietnam, while Mexico and Brazil rank last. Three of the top countries in this list are in Asia.

Source: Lowly Institute, 2021



5.79 million

Filipino workers lost their jobs by the end of the year. These include those who were reported to have suffered job losses (3.81 million) and those who were dropped from the labor force (1.98 million).

Source: Ibon Foundation, December 2020

15 Sikorsky S-70i Black Hawk helicopters

are set to be purchased by the Duterte regime in replacement for its Huey helicopters.

The regime is set to spend **₱11.3 billion**

for the procurement of these assets.

The total household spending of Filipinos has decreased by

₱801 billion

or an average of **₱2.2 billion** per day in 2020 due to massive income and job losses. Filipino workers suffered an average decrease of **₱23,000** in their wages and income.

Source: National Economic and Development Authority, January 2021

The accumulated

\$3 trillion

income of the **global top 10 billionaires** from March to December 2020 is **enough to cover the inoculation of all people in the world**.

Source: The Inequality Virus, January 2021

62-3-3

vote in favor of-against-abstension to

"economic charter change"

in the committee hearings on amendments to the **1987 Constitution**.



50th anniversary of the

Diliman Commune or the 9-day barricade mounted by students of the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City from February 1 to 9, 1971.

Farmers drove

5,000

tractors in convoy into New Delhi, India to demand their government to junk the agricultural reforms it has implemented which deregularized the sector.

Workers' immediate need for wage increase

The prices of basic commodities are increasing rapidly but workers' wages are not keeping up. The price of pork, for instance, has been steadily increasing since last year rising by 77% this January. This pushed the inflation rate to 3.5% last December 2020, the highest in 21 months. Because of this, the real value of wages has dropped by almost 20%. In Metro Manila, the real value of the ₱537-daily minimum wage is just ₱434, which is only enough to buy a kilo of pork.

Amid this, workers' demand for wage hike is becoming more urgent. The average minimum daily wage in the country is around ₱346 only. This is not even half of the ₱1,057 daily living wage that a family of five needs to survive. This is grossly insufficient to feed the family, and pay for electricity and water bills, as well as educational expenses.

Compared to industrial and service workers, agricultural workers receive even lower wages. There is also a huge wage gap between regions and provinces especially with the implementation of the two-tier wage system.

Instead of addressing the plight of workers, the regime through its labor department has allowed capitalists to cut workers' wages using the pandemic as pretext. Companies which implement the work-from-home arrangement also compensate their workers with lower wages. Data by the National Economic and Development Authority indicate that the average income of workers has declined by ₱23,000 due to wage cuts, forced leaves, and job losses last year.

The National Minimum Wage Bill filed by the Makabayan bloc has been languishing in Congress since 2018. The said measure aims to legislate a ₱750-national minimum wage and dismantle the Regional Wage Boards which are being utilized by capitalists to peg lower wages in regions outside Metro Manila.

Workers and progressive lawmakers also demand a ₱10,000-aid for workers who have lost their jobs during the lockdowns.

A research by Ibon Foundation shows that Rodrigo Duterte is the most stingy Philippine president in terms of raising workers' wages. His regime has only hiked wages in the National Capital Region (NCR) twice, first in 2017 and last in 2018. On average, each regime since Corazon Aquino has implemented wage increases every 13 months. Under Duterte, workers in NCR have not seen a wage increase for 29 months now. In sum, wages under Duterte has only increased by 9.4%, lower than the 24% average increase recorded under the past regimes. AB

Magnolia workers stage picket protest

WORKERS OF MAGNOLIA staged a picket protest in front of the company's factory in General Trias, Cavite on January 28 to demand wage increase and humane working conditions amid the pandemic.

They also urged the company to recognize the collective bargaining agreement between their union and the management. The agreement covers their demand for benefits, a three-year backpay, and bonuses. Magnolia is a company of the San Miguel Corporation which manufactures dairy products such as butter, cheese, and ice cream.

In Mandaue City, Coca-cola workers mounted a silent protest last February 3 to urge the management to regularize 86 of its employees.

Subsidize hog raisers, consumers

THE KILUSANG Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) called on the regime last February 1 to lower pork prices to pre-African Swine Fever levels. This was after the price of pork belly skyrocketed to ₱400 per kilo, and pork shoulder to ₱370. It said that this is doable by providing production subsidy and aid to hog raisers.

In particular, KMP demanded a ₱15,000-production subsidy to hog and poultry farmers, and a ₱10,000-cash aid to consumers. It asserted that aid, and not loans, would save the people from the impact of high pork prices.

It also demanded for efficient state intervention in meat trade in order to dismantle the monopoly pricing of meat products by big traders and cartels. It also asserted that all-out importation which is now being railroad by the regime will not address the inflation of pork, chicken, and other meat products.

On the same day, Rodrigo Duterte signed an executive order which will impose a price ceiling of ₱270 per kilo on pork shoulder, ₱300 on pork belly, and ₱160 on chicken. This will be implemented this February 8.



Thousands of workers set to be retrenched this first quarter

Thousands of workers are set to be laid off this coming February to March after three companies declared their plans to either trim down their workforce or totally close down after suffering bankruptcy during the pandemic.

On February 2, the Philippine Airlines announced its plan to re-trench 2,300 workers citing that it has suffered huge income losses due to low demand for local and international flights. The said workers comprise 30% of the company's total workforce. According to data by the regime, the travel and tourism industry has suffered a total income loss of ₱400 billion in 2020.

Earlier, the Makati Shangri-la Hotel also announced its plan to

temporarily stop its operations since February 1. It has yet to disclose the number of workers it re-trenched.

The car manufacturing company Nissan Motors also closed down its factory in Laguna in compliance with its plan to decrease production across the globe since 2019. The demand for cars has been low even before the pandemic, and it has further decreased last year.

The said workers will add to the

5.79 million Filipinos who have lost their jobs in 2020 due to lockdown restrictions. This contributed to the slumping of the gross domestic product by 9.5% for the entire year. This is the worst economic downturn that the country has experienced since 1946 or after World War 2.

Despite the hardships suffered by those who lost their jobs, the regime has no program to aid them. They cannot expect any subsidy from the regime as it has junked even the Department of Labor and Employment's proposal to allocate a minimum subsidy of ₱20 billion for them in the national budget. **AB**

Supreme Court starts hearing petitions against ATL

The Supreme Court started hearing oral arguments against the Anti-Terrorism Law or ATL last February 2. Seven lawyers representing 37 petitioners participated in the session. Outside the court, around 500 individuals gathered to support them.

To facilitate the hearing, the court earlier ordered the petitioners to consolidate the 37 petitions filed since last year. In turn, the petitioners consolidated their petitions into six clusters.

The petitions were clustered into: 1) establishing legal standing to file the petition in the Supreme Court; 2) challenging the constitutionality of the law, especially its overbroad and vague definition of terrorism; 3) challenging the constitutionality of the powers accorded to the Anti-Terrorism Council; 4) challenging the definition and preemptive punishment of "terrorist acts" which is against the bills of attainder and ex post facto laws; 5) challenging the provision for longer detention which is against local and international laws; 6) challenging

the removal of indemnification for victims of torture and other human rights violations as previously awarded by law.

During the first day, the question whether the Supreme Court was the appropriate court was raised as no case has been filed yet in relation to the law. In response, the petitioners cited the hundreds of cases of red-tagging and related cases of harassment and extra-judicial killings.

On the morning of the same day, lawyers filed a petition for intervention at the Supreme Court for two Aetas who were the first to be arrested, tortured and charged with violating the ATL.

The lawyers argued their cases excellently. The hearing is set to resume on February 9. **AB**

Myanmar reverts to military rule

THE MILITARY IN Myanmar (formerly Burma) staged a coup last February 1 to oust the newly elected officials of the country. Elements of the Tatmadaw, the armed forces in the country, arrested and detained Aung San Suu Kyi who is recognized as the leader of the civil bureaucracy, as well as other government officials. The newly elected parliament was set to be sworn in that same day.

The Tatmadaw alleged without proof that the election was rigged by Suu Kyi's party, as the military-backed opposition did poorly. Independent watchdogs and the local commission of elections belied this accusation.

Through this coup, the military has proved that it still has a tight grip over the state in Myanmar which Suu Kyi failed to quell. The United Nations and many countries strongly condemned the coup. Several protests were also conducted by Suu Kyi's supporters in Myanmar.

State agents kill 5 farmers

Five farmers who actively fought for their right to land were killed by state agents in the past two weeks.

The victims include Antonio Arellano, chairperson of the Paghiliusa sa Mangunguma sa Binabono, one of the organizations which petitioned against the Anti-Terrorism Law (ATL). He was murdered in Barangay Jonob-jonob, Escalante City, Negros Occidental, on the exact day of the first oral arguments against the ATL in the Supreme Court last February 2. Paghiliusa is an affiliate organization of the National Federation of Sugar Workers, an organization often red-tagged by the military in Negros.

State forces also killed farmer Rommy Torres who opposed the Villar family's land grabbing activities in Norzagaray, Bulacan. He was abducted on February 3 in Barangay San Mateo in the said town. His lifeless body was recovered in Laguna on February 5.

On January 21, state forces gunned down activist Vernel Mondreal along the boundary of barangays Salvacion and Igdalaquit in Sibalom, Antique. Mondreal was a coordinator of the Igpanolong Human Rights Desk.

In Sorsogon, police and 31st IB troopers murdered Michael Bagasala in San Antonio, Barcelona on January 24. His cadaver bore marks of torture. Witnesses clarified that Bagasala was tortured before being slain.

The police also killed Noel Degamon, Jr. on January 29 in Barangay Luna, Surigao City. Bagasala and Degamon were former Red fighters who surrendered but refused to cooperate with state forces.

Arrest. State forces arrested farmers Virgilio dela Cruz, Jerry Ramos and Herminio Ramos in Barangay Villaflor, Cauayan, Isabela on January 23. Their residen-

ces were planted with evidences to justify the arrest. They were accused of being members of the people's army.

In the Caraga region, state forces successively arrested last February 6 mass leaders Gina Tutor of Gabriela, Greco Regala of Pamalakaya-Agusan del Norte and Isaias Ginorga of Piston.

Destruction of property. Armed goons of the Yulo family burned down the houses of two farmers in Buntog, Barangay Canlubang, Calamba, Laguna on January 23. After three days, the goons returned to the community and

mauled six farmers. They also threatened to kill the residents if they would continue to oppose the conversion of their farmlands.

Harassment. Around 60 elements of the 2nd IB ransacked houses in Barangay Madao, Uson, Masbate last February 1. The soldiers threatened the residents, and robbed the properties of the family of Enrique Tumampil, leader of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Masbate. **AB**



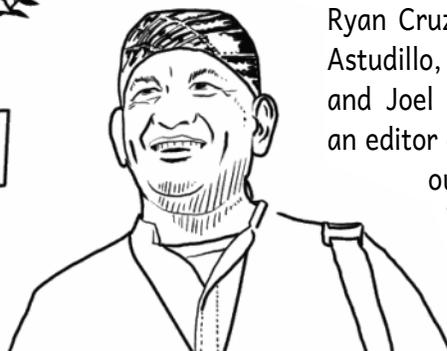
Judge voids search warrants against 2 activists

A JUDGE IN Mandaluyong City voided the warrants that were used to search the houses of Lady Ann Salem and Rodrigo Esparago last December 10, 2020. The judge also said that the evidences of firearms and explosives which were allegedly seized from the victims are inadmissible. Thus, the cases filed by the Philippine National Police against the two are effectively dismissed. This is an important victory for all those who have been arrested using defective search warrants and slapped with trumped-up charges.

The voided warrants were issued by Judge Cecilyn Burgos-Vilavert of Quezon City, who is dubbed the "search warrant factory queen."

Salem and Esparago are among the seven activists who were illegally arrested by the police during the commemoration of the International Human Rights Day last year. The victims, called the Human Rights Day 7, also

include Dennise Velasco; Mark Ryan Cruz, Romina Raiselle Astudillo, Jaymie Gregorio and Joel Demate. Salem is an editor of the online news outfit Manila Today, while the six others are trade union organizers.



What is to be expected from the new US president?

The chief of US imperialism has been replaced last January 20. Joseph Biden was sworn in as the 46th US president with Kamala Harris as his vice president amid the onslaught of a severe economic, political and health crisis in the country.

Like his predecessors, Biden advocates for "US global leadership" which essentially means US imperialist hegemony across the world. However, he is faced with a bigger challenge in the multipolar world wherein Russia and China continue to grow in strength as rival imperialist centers, on top of its capitalist competition with Europe.

Biden is also faced with the American workers' intensifying resistance who seek to defend their economic and political rights. He is pressured to keep his promises and address the people's demand for employment, wage increase, better working conditions and social services, as well as to promote justice that is based on accountability, end racism, police brutality and the militarization of its institutions.

Who is Joseph Biden?

Joseph Biden, 76, is a veteran politician and a member of the Democratic Party in the US. He first attempted to run as president in 1988 but withdrew after admitting to exaggerating his credentials. He ran, won and served as Barack Obama's vice president from 2009 to 2017. Before this, he served as the senator of the state of Delaware from 1973 to 2009.

Biden is known for his right-leaning stances within his party. Among democrats, he was the leading and most rabid advocate of the US war of aggression in Afghanistan and Iraq when he was still the head of the Senate committee on foreign

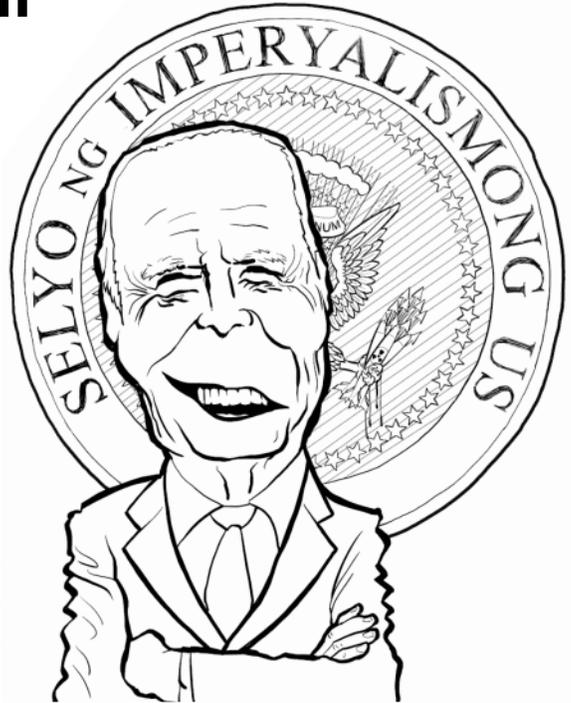
affairs. Later on, he withdrew his support from these wars, but has not supported the call to demilitarize the areas. He administered the "reconstruction" of Iraq under the Obama administration. He supported the US war of aggression in Libya, and the provision of armaments to anti-Assad rebel groups in Syria.

He also has a record of racism as the senator of Delaware who actively opposed the policy for the integration of Black and White students in the 1970s.

Initial steps

During his early presidency, Biden signed 30 executive orders to reverse the worst fascist and anti-immigrant policies of his predecessor, Donald Trump. He also reversed the policies which favor Trump's favored capitalists. These include the order to stop the construction of the US-Mexico border and junk the policy which prohibits the entry into the US of individuals from certain Muslim countries. He also implemented stricter measures against the Covid-19 pandemic. He also continued to provide aid to distressed Americans similar to what Trump did. He also signed orders to prioritize climate justice.

On the other hand, critics pointed out that the orders are lacking. For instance, he has only suspended instead of cancelling student debts.



He has suspended the issuance of new oil mining permits, but continues to allow the operations of 10,000 companies.

International relations

Biden will continue to promote the US' display of imperialist might in the South China Sea to directly oppose the expansionist plans of China. His newly appointed heads of foreign affairs, commerce and intelligence are all known for being aggressive against China.

Initial statements by these officials indicate that the Biden administration will be further aggressive in its interventions in Syria, Iran and Turkey in the pretext of "regime change." Nothing will change with the regime's relation with Israel, and it has no plans to relocate the US embassy which it illegally erected in the land it occupied in Jerusalem. It will continue to be aggressive against Cuba, Venezuela and North Korea. These policies are not new and are actually just a continuation of the policies which Biden supported as vice president of the Obama administration. AB