

EDITORIAL

Trump brings growing threats of war and fascism

With Donald Trump's return to the imperialist throne as the 47th president of the United States, he brings the threat of even larger wars in various parts of the world, accompanied by the further decline in the living conditions of Americans and the growing shift towards fascism of the US reactionary state.

When he first came to power in 2016-2020, Trump became notorious for his ultra-Right, racist, fascist, anti-democratic, anti-immigrant, anti-women, anti-LGBT, and ultra-nationalist policies and actions. He has returned to power after the extreme dissatisfaction of the American people of four years under the Democratic Party amid the ongoing economic crisis and the rising flames of US-ignited wars.

As in the past, Trump rode on the grievances of ordinary citizens on rising prices, low wages, and the greed of large corporations. However, in the end, he fueled anger towards "criminal" immigration and minorities who "steal jobs," destroy "American values," as well as against protesters, drug users, and the homeless. Trump's officials and allies are pushing for Project 2025, a comprehensive reactionary program that pushes for widespread deportation, the dismantling of the Department of Education and other government agencies, cutting corporate taxes, taking away women's right to abortion,

and more.

Trump obscures the root of the crisis of the capitalist system in the US to cover up the fact that he represents the interests of monopoly capitalists who benefit from incentives, tax cuts, and subsidies taken from the pockets of the American people. Trump's first term saw the accumulation of super profits by big

American corporations in finance, commerce, oil, manufacturing of cars, arms, medicine, electronic devices, and more.

Trump pretends to be a "friend of Russia" and claiming he will "end the war in Ukraine in one day," when in fact he himself pushed for increased military aid to Ukraine, aiming US missiles and other arms at Russia. Under his presidency, Trump imposed economic sanctions on Russia. He also abrogated the US-Russia treaty limiting the number and strength of nuclear arms, to allow the US to resume production



of these.

Trump's statements that he wants to "end the violence" in Gaza and Lebanon are empty talk, when in fact he fully supports Zionist Israel and the use of arms to target Iran. In 2018, he ordered and personally inaugurated the transfer of the US embassy to Jerusalem, a city that Palestinians claim as the capital of their country. Trump's secretary of state is a known pro-Zionist and anti-Iran zealot.

Trump's return to power is expected to cause further escalation of US-China tensions. Trump promised to triple tariffs on Chinese imports (which have more than doubled since 2020) and completely stop importing Chinese products by 2028. Trump's declaration of a "strong retaliation" against countries "taking advantage" of trade with the US is a direct threat to China, increasing the possibility of direct armed confrontation with China in the future. It can be recalled that under Trump, Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines was first established, focusing on strength-

ening the presence of US troops in the Philippines, in line with the US "pivot to Asia" policy.

Trump's declarations that he will ensure the US military is the "strongest and deadliest" are in line with the US's push to provoke, fuel, or directly involve itself in wars in various parts of the world. The US is desperate to further expand the scope of its empire, which is slowly declining amidst the unresolved crisis of the global capitalist system. The US aims to control or take away

from its rivals markets and sources of oil, important minerals, and other resources needed for production. The US is currently focused on wars in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, and is continuously heating up the situation in Asia by increasing its presence in the South China Sea and Pacific Ocean, and goading its allies in NATO and Japan to strengthen their presence in these waters.



At present, US imperialism is the main source of the threat of bigger wars in various parts of the world. The US is further intensifying its oppression of peoples aspiring national liberation, its sanctions and intervention in countries defending their sovereignty, and its provocation of wars to force its imperialist rivals to bow, and establish itself as the sole superpower in the world. All these contradictions will surely intensify in the coming years as Trump promotes US imperialist hegemonism.

It is only right that peoples around the world, together with the American people, build a united front against US imperialism and its onerous economic and trade policies, its military interference and aggression, and its provocation of war in various parts of the world.

The Filipino people, in particular, must militantly fight against US imperialism and its use of the Philippines as a large military base and launching pad for wars. The people must strongly oppose the US's instigation of an armed conflict in the South China Sea and dragging the Philippines into its rivalry with China. The Marcos puppet regime must be thoroughly exposed and criticized for its subservience to US imperialism.

More than ever before, it is now necessary to build a broad unity of the Filipino people, and wage all forms of struggle to achieve national and social liberation.



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The unshakeable mass base in Camarines Norte

Oh my god, salad!", "And is that *nilupak*?" "Look, there's pansit and even bread!" comrades exclaimed as they excitedly rummaged through the food Manoy Tano brought. "Hey, don't give salad to those with colds, it will worsen, I'll just take it," joked Ka Ding, laughing. "You seem to have brought the entire birthday feast here, Manoy!"



Ka Ding's unit is operating in Camarines Norte villages being subjected to the military's Mobile Community Support Service Program. Two battalions are currently stationed in the province: the 85th IB and 16th IB under the 2nd ID based in Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal, and the 201st IBde based in the town of Guinayangan, Quezon. These are part of the Joint Task Force in the Quezon-Bicol Zone, which the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) established in a desperate attempt to end the armed movement in the border of Quezon and Camarines Norte.

The AFP declared Quezon "insurgency-free" in July 2023 and Camarines Norte in January 2023. However, an NPA ambush in Tagkawayan, Quezon later that year refuted this claim.

Despite the renewed militarization efforts in the area, the NPA unit adapted quickly. The unit overcame the constant presence of the enemy by adjusting their methods of work among the masses. The unit's political officer Ka Anding said, "Looking at it positively, the enemy's actions pushed us to expand our area of work and reach more masses. Who would have ex-

pected that the masses would still warmly receive us here in Baryo Ligaya?"

It had been years since any NPA unit had visited Ligaya. However, the return of Ka Anding's unit was warmly received by old-time supporters of the people's army. One of those who warmly welcomed them was Tay Monsur, who used to host comrades and served as a militia member.

While having lunch on their bivouac, Red fighters also chanced upon and reestablished links with Manoy Berting, who was also part of the mass base. In the informal gathering, one of the comrades recalled that Manoy Berting's family had previously served as contacts of the people's army. After a lengthy and substantial update and sharing, Manoy Berting invited the comrades to temporarily stay on his property.

"It's safe there, comrades, it's away from the military's patrol route," he said. The unit accepted the invitation and stayed for several days. The comrades helped in production work, assisted with coconut dehusking, and copra processing. They also launched a social investigation into the class composition of the barangay and

studied the economic issues confronting the residents. The masses' solid trust in their army became evident when they specifically sought out the unit to air their grievances regarding their land and the bad elements in the barangay.

The masses could not control their excitement to meet the Red fighters after a long absence of contact. Almost every day, they would send food, such as San Fernando (a type of taro) and bananas for snacks. The comrades were extremely grateful for the masses' deep support for the revolution.

The unit's experience with mass work in Baryo Ligaya was an utter repudiation to the fascist AFP's absurd principle of "draining the water to expose the fish," the unit declared. The water will never run dry from a living spring, no matter how hard they try.

"The oppressed and exploited masses serve as the spring that nourishes the armed revolution," Ka Anding explained. "The unparalleled crisis of oppression, exploitation, and poverty among the Filipino people is the source of this spring. It will continue to flow for the revolution until victory." AB

20 years of unrelenting violence and land grabbing in Hacienda Luisita

Various organizations of farmworkers, youth, and church people commemorated the 20th anniversary of the Hacienda Luisita massacre on November 16. The commemoration featured a tribute to the martyrs of the strike and the supporters of the farmworkers' struggle, including Bishop Alberto Ramento and Fr. William Tadena of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI), Ricardo Ramos, Marcelino Beltran, Abel Ladera, and others.

"Remembering the massacre remains painful, even after 20 years," said a member of the Alyansa ng Magbubukid sa Asyenda Luisita (AMBALA).

"In the past 20 years, the ultimate sacrifice of up to 20 people have not been wasted because the blood that fertilized our soil has nourished a new generation who will carry on the fight and secure the triumph of our struggle," an AMBALA leader vowed. Seven of them died on the day of the massacre, and 13 in the succeeding years of struggle.

As early as 2012, the Supreme Court ruled to distribute the entire 5,000-hectare Hacienda Luisita to 6,453 farmworkers. Despite this, the landlord Cojuangco-Aquino family relentlessly maneuvered to block land distribution using the courts, legislation, their government position, and the military and police. Collud-

ing with successive regimes, the family subjected the land to various conversion schemes and introduced new landgrabbers like the Floirendo and Aboitiz families.

The latest maneuver was Marcos Jr's cancellation of the Notice of Coverage the Department of Agrarian Reform issued in 2014, which covered 318 hectares of land grabbed by the Tarlac Development Corporation (TADECO). The Ayala family grabs this land as part of the 588 hectares it plans to convert into commercial space. In 2019, the Ayala family began demolishing the farmworkers' homes in Barangay Central in the hacienda, threatening to evict 987 families.

Reclaiming past victories, continuing the struggle

The violence against farmworkers is relentless. The military, police, local government, and the NTF-El-

cac even attempted to block the commemoration on November 16. According to AMBALA, they had reserved the covered court for the event way back in July, but the 3rd Mechanized IB suddenly launched a "medical mission" with the surrendered and ousted AMBALA leader and NTF-Elcac agent Florida Sibayan.

"Florida Sibayan is profitting from the members of AMBALA and ordinary farmworkers. Pretending to give relief, she obtains their signature and presents them as NPA (New People's Army) surrenderees. What for? For the reward. That traitor has shallow principles," an AMBALA leader said.

After the activity, residents reported that soldiers from the 3rd MIB, including Sibayan, threatened the commemoration participants in their homes. Among them was Samahan ng mga Kabataang Demokratiko ng Asyenda Luisita (SAKDAL) youth member RV Bautista whom the military claimed to have captured on video participating in the event. Earlier, the military questioned a farmer from Asturias, Hacienda Luisita as to who attended the commemoration.

Despite this, the farmworkers remain steadfast in their resolve to reclaim their past victories and continue the struggle.

"No suppression will stop us. As long as the farmworkers have a basis for struggle, we and the youth will continue to fight and uphold the struggle," an AMBALA leader said.

Currently, farmworkers continue to cultivate the land in various parts of the hacienda to defend their right to the land.





Workers win CBA at Daiwa Seiko Philippines. A day after the workers of Daiwa Seiko Philippines Corporation announced their plan to go on strike, the company's management immediately agreed with the Malayang Unyon ng DSPC-OLALIA-KMU to a new collective bargaining agreement (CBA) which the company had previously delayed and lowballed. The union voted in favor of the strike on November 12 and signed the CBA on November 13.

New CBA at Philippine Span Asia Carrier Corp. After a year, the Samahan ng Manggagawa sa PSACC-NAFLU-KMU won a new CBA in October. The union gained wage increases, benefits such as longevity pay, and other benefits. Despite the management's various attempts to derail the negotiations, the workers were able to assert their rights.

Protest against CBA violations at PhilFoods. Workers of Philfoods Fresh Baked Product Inc in Laguna International Industrial Park in Biñan, Laguna protested on November 11. The union called on the capitalist to honor the agreed upon provisions in the current CBA, including food allowances and retroactivity.

Union's struggle at Golden Zone Garments. Golden Zone Garments and Accessories Inc workers condemned the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) for refusing to recognize their union, Nagkakaisang Manggagawa ng GZGAI, as the sole and exclusive bargaining agent (SEBA) in the company. Majority of the workers voted for the approval of the union as its SEBA, but the DOLE pushed for a "validation" process within the factory despite the union's complete documentation.

Protest against worker repression. Labor groups in Quezon City protested on November 16 to commemorate the International Day Against Trade Union Repression. They lit candles as a call for justice for workers and unionists who were killed by state forces in the past year. The Philippines remains one of the most dangerous countries for workers in 2024.

NPA armed action in Camarines Sur and Negros Occidental

UNITS OF THE New People's Army (NPA) reported armed actions mounted against Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) units and its intelligence agents in recent weeks.

In Camarines Sur, the NPA-West Camarines Sur (Norben Gruta Command) detonated an explosive at a CAFGU detachment in Barangay Mabini, Del Gallego on October 25. The military action was part of the punishment on CAFGU elements under the 81st IB for human rights abuses committed against the peasant masses. The NPA-Camarines Sur also carried out punitive actions against two AFP intelligence agents in August in line with defending the peasant masses.

In Negros Occidental, four short firearms and one laptop were seized from AFP intelligence agent Armie Tuparan in Barangay Carabalan, Himamaylan City on November 14. The NPA-South Central Negros (Romeo Nanta Command) meted out the sentence on Tuparan in accordance with the verdict of the people's court.



UP Visayas walkout. Over 600 students of UP Visayas marched on campus in Miag-ao, Iloilo on November 15 to deliver their grievances and demands to the university administration. Various groups, organizations, and councils participating in the march chanted: "Do better UPV!" The action coincided with the commemoration of National Students' Day on November 17.

11th anniversary of Supertyphoon Yolanda. Progressive groups and survivors of the disaster led by People Surge marched to Mendiola to commemorate the 11th anniversary of Supertyphoon Yolanda on November 8. The group called for justice for those who perished and were ravaged by Yolanda in November 2013 under the Aquino II regime. Meanwhile, an action was held in Marikina City on November 12 to commemorate the 4th anniversary of Typhoon Ulysses.

Prayer-walk in Quezon. Hundreds of Quezon residents participated in the "Prayer-Walk for Environment, Justice, and Truth" launched on November 8 in Lucena City. Church groups, environmental defense groups, and others joined the action to call for an end to destructive projects in the province. The groups marched to the capitol to deliver a petition.

Action against climate change and war. Environmental and democratic organizations in the Philippines joined the Global Day of Action Against Climate and War on November 16. They held a protest before the US embassy in Manila, where they identified the US as the number one perpetrator of climate change and wars around the world. The action coincided with the opening of COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The burden of young workers: unemployment, unlivable wages

Pangolin, 22, graduated with a degree in BA Communications from a private university in Southern Tagalog in July. She studied hard for four years to become a photojournalist. Five months after marching to receive her diploma, she remains unemployed. To make ends meet, she takes on "commissioned" jobs and works twice a week as a "chat assistant" for a company's website. She shoulders the expenses for internet, laptop, and electric bills.

She earns only ₱300-₱600 per commission and up to ₱2,000 as a chat assistant, depending on the products she sold. Her work-from-home arrangement is irregular and pays no benefits, or security.

Pangolin's situation is common among young workers. In July, 1.02 million or 43% of the total number of unemployed were youth, aged 15-24, according to the reactionary state's doctored statistics. During the same month, the Philippine Statistics Authority reported a 14.8% youth unemployment rate, compared to the national average of 4.7%. Meanwhile, 12.1% of youth were underemployed during the same period.

The youth unemployment rate has for decades been higher than the national average because no industries create enough jobs to absorb them. Newly created jobs in the Philippines, if any, are low-quality and temporary. Year after year, their numbers add to the massive army of the unemployed.

The youth unemployment rate remains high despite the ever decreasing number of youth included in the labor force. In the past 15 years (since 2009), the number of Filipinos aged 15-24 included in the country's labor force dropped to 34.4% (from 45%). Students or those in training are often declared not counted in the labor force. However, data shows that nearly 3 million of those not counted in the labor force are in the NEET (not in education, employment, or train-

ing) category. In 2022, almost 4 million youth were in this category. Many of them come from the poorest families, where 25% of youth are not in school and have no job to apply for. In 2018, one in two young women who finished high school were NEET. They are vulnerable to long-term unemployment and extreme poverty.

Meanwhile, most young workers are in so-called elementary occupations (40%) or simple and routine jobs that require physical labor and minimal training. This is despite the supposed increase in the educational attainment of many young people due to the implementation of K-12.

One such young person is Ian,



22, from Sorsogon, who graduated from K-12 in 2020. He qualified for the National Certificate Level 1 in Automotive Servicing from TESDA. But four years after graduation, becoming a mechanic in a big autoshop remains just a dream. Due to lack of opportunities, he works in a factory making ₱520 per day, a contractual with no security and benefits.

"I earn just enough for three meals a day (₱150) and a return fare (₱50)," he said. "After deducting rent and water bills, I have nothing left to send to my family." Had he become a mechanic as per his training, he could have earned up to ₱1,000 per day.

The lack of job opportunities is also the problem of Shein, who graduated with a degree in architecture in October from a public university in Metro Manila. To earn a living, she organizes sales gatherings for her sticker and art creations.

As her degree suggests, she is qualified as a junior architect or architectural apprentice with an entry-level salary of ₱20,000-₱22,000 per month. She estimates this amount sufficient to live independently. "I have no family to support, but I also want to contribute allowance for my sibling's studies," she said.

AB

4 TYPHOONS

were simultaneously active on November 11 in the South China Sea and North Pacific Ocean, a first since 1951.

Typhoons Marce, Nika, Ofel, and Pepito hit the Philippines on November 7, 11, 13, and 17, following the devastation caused by typhoons Kristine and Leon on October 24 and 27.



377,000 students

are at "high risk" of not learning due to class suspensions caused by consecutive typhoons.

Source: Department of Education

₱5-₱10/kilo

drop in the price of a kilo o palay since tariff reductions on imported rice were implemented.

Farmers fear that the price will further plummet come harvest time.



11 MILLION

indigent patients will lose PhilHealth benefits with the ₱13 billion cut in its 2025 budget.

-3.7%

growth rate of agriculture in the third quarter of 2024,

following the -3.2% growth rate in the second quarter, due to consecutive disasters due to El Niño and La Niña.



Ka Lando Rolando Olalia

chairperson of Kilusang Mayo Uno and Partido ng Bayan, was killed by military agents on November 13, 1986, along with Ka Leonor Alay-ay. He led the then-biggest fight for wages and rights of Filipino workers.

48,800/year

or 5 women/girls per hour are killed by their intimate partners or family members worldwide.

Source: UN Women

43.1%

or 102 noche buena items,

such as ham, fruit cocktail, and other salad and spaghetti ingredients, saw price increases this November.

Source: Department of Trade and Industry

UN report whitewashes GRP bloody record against children

The latest official report of the United Nations secretary general on the situation of children and armed conflict in the Philippines reflect a mere fraction of the crimes of the Philippine government and its armed forces. The report blatantly whitewashes the bloody record of the former Duterte regime and the current Marcos regime. The report even "praises the continued efforts of the GRP on the protection of children."

The report cited 58 serious cases of child rights violations with 43 child victims from January 2022 to December 2023. However, only 10 cases were attributed to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (7 cases), Philippine National Police (1 case), and National Intelligence Coordinating Agency with the National Task Force-Elcac (2 cases).

The UN data is significantly far from the true and actual number of child rights violations. Ang Bayan's records found at least 486 cases of child rights violations committed by military, police, and government agencies in the Philippines during the same period. The number of child victims reached 112,527.

Seven children were killed, four were victims of attempted murder, nine were abducted, 35 were arrested and detained, and 33 were physically assaulted. Among the victims were Argie Salvador (17) who was killed on February 11, 2023, in Camarines Norte; the Fausto siblings (12 and 15) along with their parents who were killed on June 14, 2023, in Negros Occidental; and Carling Belan (17) who was killed on June 16, 2023, in Masbate.

The military accused Salvador and Belan of being New People's

Army (NPA) members killed in an encounter. However, their relatives and community strongly refuted this. The killing of the Fausto siblings was blamed on the NPA despite strong evidence that they were massacred by the 94th IB. Meanwhile, the AFP used the children of NPA members to force the latter's surrender.

AFP forces' bombing, shelling, and strafing in the countryside traumatized thousands of children. The military's food blockade during combat operations starved over 13,000 children. Cases of AFP encampment in schools also affected the education of children.

Ang Bayan's initial data for 2024 counted 417 cases of child rights violations committed by state forces with 27,278 child victims.

Compliance of the revolutionary movement

The revolutionary movement strictly adheres to the principles of war and international humanitarian law. This counters the same report's claim that the NPA committed 41% of the cases "recorded" by the UN. The report accused the NPA of recruiting and using child soldiers, killing or harming children, rape, and sexual violence, and abduction.



"We reiterate that the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and the entire revolutionary movement are committed to upholding and protecting the rights and welfare of children in all aspects of our struggle," NDFP Special Office for the Protection of Children head Ka Coni Ledesma responded to the UN report.

Ledesma said this is clearly enshrined in NDFP's Program of Action and Declaration on the Rights and Welfare of Children, which expressly prohibits the recruitment of children under the age of 18 as Red fighters. "These principles align with, and often exceed, the standards set by international humanitarian law," added Ledesma.

The prohibition on child recruitment is also stated in the policies of the Communist Party of the Philippines since 1988, a year ahead of the creation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. "These policies are strictly observed by NPA units in guerrilla zones and local organs of political power across the country," Ledesma said.

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20th IB kills Northern Samar youth

Residents of Barangay Sulitan, Catubig, Northern Samar firmly assert that Jerick Jugal, among those the 20th IB claimed to have killed in a series of armed encounters with the New People's Army (NPA) in Catubig town on November 5, was a civilian.

They called for an investigation and justice for the victim's killing. Jugal's neighbor said he was a responsible son serving as their family's sole breadwinner.

After the alleged encounters, residents of Barangay Sulitan and neighboring communities also complained about the the soldiers' restrictions. They were prohibited from working at their farms or even bringing food into the community.

Meanwhile, the 62nd IB's series of human rights abuses in Guihulngan, Negros Oriental was recorded.

On November 5, 16 soldiers entered the home of Loring Geronimo in Sityo Ponong, Barangay Trinidad. They asked for her hus-

band and child, pointed high-caliber guns at her and her grandson, and subjected the whole family to brutal interrogation. On the same day, soldiers also illegally entered the home of Helen Bardok in Barangay Binobohan without permission while she was at work.

On November 8, 62nd IB soldiers mauled 38-year-old farmer Boyet Ospar in Sityo Manlibod, Barangay Trinidad. Soldiers' illegal occupation and encampment in schools in barangays in Guihulngan City, Vallehermoso, and Canlaon in the past few weeks were also reported. Encampment in civilian schools is a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

Land grabbing. State forces and private guards harassed and

again attempted to evict residents and farmers in Barangay Viga, Angadanan, Isabela. The Gamboa family is grabbing 23.6 hectares of land that for 50 years has been tilled and inhabited by farmers who are members of the Panagkaykaysa ti Mannalon a Maag-agawan a Daga (Pumalag). The town police chief and administrator of Angadanan visited them on October 30 to force them to negotiate with the Gamboas. They attempted to bribe the farmers to vacate the area.

The police chief and two police officers returned on November 2 to order the private guards to confiscate and burn the farmers' placards and streamers. When the residents and police clashed, the police chief pulled a gun and pointed at the farmers. Three farmers were arrested, and the guards threatened to destroy the farmers' crops. AB

<div>NPA condemns 16th IB elements for raping 3 women in Camarines Norte</div> <div>THE NEW PEOPLE'S Army-Camarines Norte (Armando Catapia Command) strongly condemned 16th IB soldiers for raping at least three women the province in recent months.</div> <div>One of the victims was a 21-year-old woman from Barangay Bagong Silang 3. She said she was alone in her house when three 16th IB soldiers arrived in September. One of the soldiers forcibly entered the house and raped her while the other two served as lookouts.</div> <div>On October 7, soldiers also raped another woman from Barangay Bagong Silang 2. The victim said she tried to resist but failed. After the crime, her ₱2,000 was also stolen.</div> <div>Also in October, elements of the same battalion raped a student from Barangay Daguit while on her way to school.</div> <div>ACC spokesperson Ka Carlito Cada said the 16th IB's rapes are not new as the battalion has a history of violence against women since it was first deployed in the province.</div>	<div>9 political prisoners in Negros, acquitted</div> <div>NEGROS COURTS ACQUITTED nine political prisoners arrested by state forces in 2019 and 2022 on criminal charges. The court ordered the police to release the victims from their illegal detention.</div> <div>On November 18, the charges of murder and frustrated murder against Pastor Jimie Teves, Jodito Montesino, Jaypee Romano, Jasper Aguyong, Rogen Sabanal, Eliseo Andres, and Rodrigo Medez were dismissed. The seven were arrested in Himamaylan City in June 2019. They were implicated in an armed encounter between the NPA and AFP soldiers in Kabankalan City in May 2018.</div> <div>On November 13, Carmen Jonahville (CJ) Matarlo and John Michael Tecson were released after the court dismissed the charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives against them. The two were arrested on March 18, 2022, along with National Democratic Front of the Philippines peace consultant Ramon Patriarca in Barangay Suay, Himamaylan City.</div>
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People's fury against Duterte

If only the relatives of the victims of the fake war on drugs could, they would have confronted Rodrigo Duterte when he faced the congressional hearing. The families were seething with anger at his casual defense of the killings, insistence that all victims of the fake war were "criminals," and gross lack of remorse for the lives he took. Even though they were not comfortable seeing him and being in the same room, they tolerated his presence to show him that they were willing to fight for justice in all arenas.

This was the second time Duterte faced a legislative hearing. On October 28, he used the Senate hearing as a platform to grandstand for hours without being contradicted. Along with his co-accused senators, he maligned those who exposed the brutality and corruption of the fake war on drugs. He tried to do the same in Congress on November 13. In the same hearing, he acknowledged "legal and moral responsibility" for the fake war on drugs. He admitted the existence of a death squad in Davao when he was still mayor, funding police operations, appointing an official to lead the group that allegedly implemented the "Davao model" of extrajudicial killings on a national scale, the killing of "6-7 people," and many more. But when asked about specific cases, he had nothing to recall, no names, and no concern.

Duterte's brazenness is an insult not only to the families of the victims and the congressmen he faced but also to the people. He twisted legal terms to deny personal responsibility. He even dared the International Criminal Court (ICC) to arrest him before he dies, but in the same breadth, strongly emphasized that

the court has no authority in the country and does not recognize it. Despite this, there is no doubt that the killings under the fake war on drugs was a policy of his regime. All his statements in the Senate and Congress can be used by the ICC to hold him accountable for crimes against humanity, according to lawyers.

Lawyers, democratic groups, and human rights groups are calling on congressmen to investigate where the funds for the reward system of police and death squads that Duterte revealed came from. They emphasize the need to expose Duterte's use of confidential and intelligence funds when he was still president.

They also agree with a former senator's proposal to open the bank accounts of the Duterte family to see the flow of bribes from Chinese drug lords to them.

In the long fight for justice, the families of the victims did not expect that there would come a time when it would be investigated in the Senate and Congress. But they ask, now that more and more people are asking questions, why is Ferdinand Marcos Jr silent and why is it taking so long for them to show support?

There is enough evidence to charge and prosecute Duterte, they say. This task should not be left to the families of the victims alone. They also emphasize the need to recognize the authority and investigation of the ICC, which is ready to issue an arrest warrant. The country should return to the ICC to speed up the process, they say.

The groups are urging Congress to investigate the hundreds of extrajudicial killings ordered by Duterte against unionists, activists, and human rights defenders. The police and officials involved in the drug war are also involved in these killings. In the upcoming hearings, the cases of the massacre of nine activists in Southern Tagalog, known as the "Bloody Sunday Massacre," will be presented.

During the days of the hearings where Duterte was the main witness, democratic groups, including the families of the victims, held rallies to call for his imprisonment.

