



#### EDITORIAL

## Fight oppression, fascism, and treachery of the US-Marcos regime

**W**ith unwavering determination and under the leadership of the Party, the broad masses of the people will firmly march along difficult path of struggle in the coming year to intensify their fight against the corrupt, oppressive, brutal, and treasonous US-Marcos regime.

The situation of the majority of the Filipino people has worsened due to the hardships and burdens imposed by the US-Marcos regime's policies and programs. In the past year, the social and economic conditions of the people have further deteriorated. Due to policies that promote reliance on imports and kill local production, prices of food, oil, and basic necessities have skyrocketed, as well expenses for healthcare, education, and other services.

Marcos is deaf to the workers' demand for just wages to provide their families with decent living. He throws crumbs to the workers while

satiating big foreign capitalists. Peasant lands are being grabbed all over by landlords, and large plantations and mining companies.

The livelihood of small fishermen, drivers, operators, and other sectors of the toiling masses is being taken away. There is an acute lack of jobs, especially for the youth, in a non-industrialized economy. Millions of workers and families are forced to eke out a living. Thousands are forced to leave every day for overseas to take risks and earn a little for their families.

Social inequality and injustice are worsening. While the majority are struggling to survive in poverty,

Marcos and his corrupt bureaucrats, favored capitalists, and big landlords continue to indulge in excesses and luxuries. The Marcos family itself lives in luxury, with frequent trips abroad, parties and concerts in Malacañang, use of helicopters for private trips, and more. They accumulate more wealth through corruption, kickbacks, exploitation of workers and peasants, and plunder of the country's natural resources.

Especially in the face of the upcoming elections, the ruling Marcos faction is busy consolidating its power to monopolize power. He is using it against the people and his political rivals. He is now kicking out the Dutertes, whom he allied with to cheat their way through the 2022. However, he is turning a deaf ear to the people's demand to arrest Ro-

drigo Duterte and remove Sara Duterte so that they can be punished for their crimes of murder and plunder of the country's wealth.

The brutal war of suppression by Marcos has no bounds. State terrorism will intensify to crush their struggle. Amidst declarations of being "insurgency-free," Marcos is imposing undeclared martial law on thousands of rural barangays tightly controlled by his fascist minions. Marcos is narrowing the space for legal struggle. Whether in the countryside or in cities, state forces conduct relentless surveillance, harassment, Red-tagging, arrests, and filing of fabricated cases against the masses who stand and fight for the country's national and democratic interests.

Marcos' treachery to the Filipino people is boundless as he bows to the power of his imperialist master. Under the puppet Marcos, the brazeness of US military intervention is unparalleled. He blindly follows all the dictates of the US, including the construction of additional military bases and secret

facilities. He has placed the reactionary armed forces under the command and control of US military officials. Marcos is using the country as a US pawn in raising armed tensions with imperialist rival China, including the navigation of massive US Navy armadas within the Philippine archipelago.

In the coming year and subsequent period, the broad masses of the Filipino people must further strengthen their struggle against the puppet, oppressive, and fascist Marcos regime. They must forge the determination and capability of the people to rise up and protest. They

must display their outrage over Marcos inutility to lower prices of food and other commodities, and the failure to create regular jobs for millions of workers. They must fight for their democratic demands for land, wage and salary increases, livelihood, and adequate social services.

The determination of the Filipino people must be strengthened to shatter the terrorist fear sown by the US-Marcos regime. They must courageously fight state fascism in all ways. Give voice to all the victims of military killings and violence in the countryside and cities. Gather their strength in a united march in


all parts of the country to demand and fight for justice. The entire nation must stand up for the rights and aspirations for justice for all victims.

The people must show their patriotic outrage against Marcos, strengthen the call to dismantle all US military bases, remove all US war

equipment stockpiled in the Philippines, oppose war exercises, and expulsion of all American troops, as well as Japanese troops being dragged by the US. The nation must fight for a truly independent foreign policy that promotes peace and dialogue, particularly to resolve maritime conflicts with China.

The Party is determined to overcome its past weaknesses and raise its capability to lead the masses in their numbers. It encourages all its cadres and the revolutionary masses to further forge their determination to expand and strengthen the Party, the New People's Army, and revolutionary mass organizations, advance the national-democratic revolution, and achieve victories this year and in the years to come.






Vol LVI No. 1 | January 7, 2025

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

### Contents

Editorial: Fight oppression, fascism, and treachery of the US-Marcos regime	1
US-Marcos regime brings catastrophic devastation	3
Groups celebrate CPP 56th anniversary	4
Commercial fishing in municipal waters denounced	4
USS Carl Vinson's transit in PH sovereign seas	4
Relentless AFP human rights violations	5
In short	6
Strengthen people's solidarity with political prisoners	7
Militarization of Cebu farms and communities	8
DepEd's "last mile school" program	9
Imperialist intervention in Syria	10

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

 [ang.bayan@cpp.ph](mailto:ang.bayan@cpp.ph)

# US-Marcos regime brings catastrophic devastation to the people

The US-Marcos regime brings more suffering, not prosperity for the new year, as 2025 begins. On the year's first day alone, the public was battered with a new series of price hikes and utility charges. These are new assaults on people's livelihood and worsening living conditions.

The third in a series of increases in water service charge in Metro Manila took effect on January 1, with Maynilad Water Services charging ₱7.32 and Manila Water Company ₱5.95 per cubic meter. A ₱0.70 to ₱1/liter increase in petroleum product prices was announced on January 3 to start on the second week of the month. Meanwhile, power companies will also charge higher electricity rates this January based on the ₱3.05 billion increase allowed by the Energy Regulatory Board for the entire year.

On top of all these is the additional 1% increase in salary deductions for Social Security Service. This is the fourth since 2018, which pushed ordinary workers' monthly salary deductions by 12% to 15%.

These burdens add to the long list of hardships Ferdinand Marcos Jr imposed since coming to power.

In the past year, oil companies raised petroleum prices at least 31 times. This resulted in net increases of ₱13.05 per liter of gasoline, ₱11.30 per liter of diesel, and ₱6.95

per kilo of LPG (equivalent to ₱83 per 11-kilogram tank). These increases add to expenses in public transport, fishing, farming, manufacturing, fuel and overall transportation. In November 2024, jeepney drivers reported losing up to ₱2,000 in 25 days of plying their routes. Meanwhile, fisherfolk reported reducing their fishing time from 6-8 to 4-6 hours due to high fuel prices, which account for 80% of their fishing expenses.

Oil companies continued to amass higher profits. Petron, the country's largest oil company, increased its profits to ₱17.3 billion in the first half of the year alone. The next four largest companies meanwhile earned ₱1.7-₱7 billion profits in the same period. The US-Marcos regime partook of the superprofits gained from high oil prices by imposing layers of taxes on consumers.

The regime also allowed power companies to raise its rates by up to six times. In Metro Manila and nearby provinces covered by Meralco, this meant increases of up to

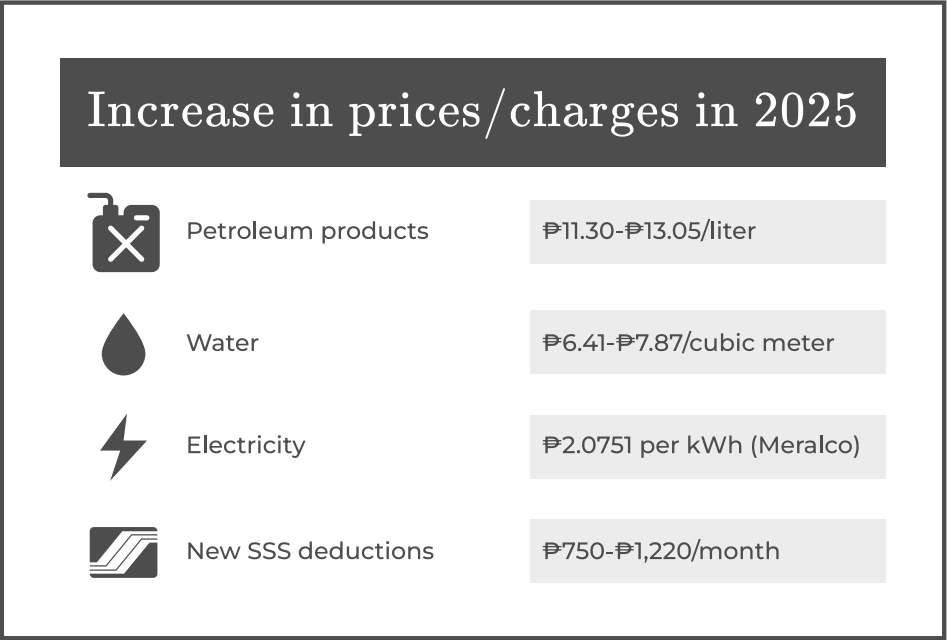
₱2.07/kwh or an additional ₱415.02/month for a family consuming 200 kwh monthly. This eats up to 17% of a worker's minimum wage. In other parts of the country, power distributors' charges sometimes surged to ₱19/kwh.

The regime defended the companies' "need" to raise its rates to supposedly "recover" generation charge increases caused by increases in electricity price in the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM). Like oil, WESM is monopolized by the biggest comprador bourgeoisie having shares or directly owning the distributing companies. Among these is Meralco, which generates and sells energy to WESM through Meralco PowerGen Corporation and Cebu Energy Development Corporation, and enters into Power Supply Agreements with its own companies.

While people toil to avoid service disconnection, Meralco boasts of a sure ₱43 billion target net profit for 2024, 17% more than its 2023 profit.

In 2024, water rates in Metro Manila increased by up to ₱7.87 per cubic meter. This is the second in the 5-step rate increases started in 2023. This forms part of the 5-year program approved by the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage System (MWSS) for companies to "recover" their inflation-driven "losses" and to add infrastructure for "efficient" services. The program supposedly targets a ₱19.25 to ₱20.37 per cubic meter total increase by the end of 2027, but after three years, increases have already reached ₱18.48 to ₱20.40.

Aside from the two NCR companies, Davao City Water also imposed steep rate increases of up to 32%. This is part of the total 60% increase



"US-Marcos regime..." continue on page 4

Groups celebrate CPP 56th anniversary

VARIOUS NEW PEOPLE'S Army (NPA) units and the revolutionary masses in the countryside, villages and communities across the country launched activities to celebrate the 56th anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

In Manila, allied organizations of the National Democratic Front (NDF)-Metro Manila held a lightning rally on December 23, 2024 at Recto Avenue to celebrate the CPP's anniversary. Marchers called on the Filipino people to advance the national democratic revolution amid worsening poverty and the ruling classes' intensifying political conflicts.

In Rizal, the NDF-Rizal hung streamers and posters at the start of 2025. It featured colorful and eye-catching designs celebrating the Party's anniversary that were hung in public centers in Antipolo. They also pasted stickers and distributed leaflets about the NPA.

The national leadership of Compatriots, Katipunan ng mga Gurong Makabayan at Makabayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan also sent their greetings to the Party. International parties and friends of the CPP, including the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist), "Serve the People" (Vietnam), Anti-Imperialist Action Ireland, Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), Friends of the Filipino People in Struggle, and its chapters from various parts of the world, have also sent their greetings.

Fisherfolk denounce opening municipal waters to commercial fishing

VARIOUS FISHERFOLK GROUPS strongly condemned the Supreme Court's decision to grant a company its petition to open municipal waters to plunder by large-scale commercial fishing. Municipal waters cover seas within 15 kilometers from the shoreline.

According to Pamalakaya, this decision will devastate the livelihood of around 2 million fisherfolk. Small-scale fishers who use traditional and manual fishing methods cannot compete with the advanced, and often destructive, equipment and technology of commercial fishers.

Due to advanced equipment, large fishing vessels quickly depletes all types of marine resources.

"US-Marcos regime..." from page 3

since 2022. This is equivalent to a ₱60-₱80 increase in charges for families consuming 20 cubic meters per month.

Conversely, the reactionary state has given little to zero relief to people. Fourteen regional wage boards ordered a very insignificant ₱31.29 average daily wage increase. Wage increase for agricultural workers (₱21/day) is lowest and the highest is for non-agricultural workers (₱75/day), both in Calabarzon. Nine regions increased wages of domestic help by ₱500-₱1000/month. This is a gross insult to workers who need a minimum of ₱1,200/day to decently support a family of five.

Meanwhile, the regime mandated early in 2024 a mere ₱200 increase in the salary of the lowest-paid employees. The order did not cover contractuels under job order/contract of service and local government employees.

AB

USS Carl Vinson's transit in Philippine sovereign seas, condemned

THE COMMUNIST PARTY of the Philippines (CPP) called on the Filipino people to strongly denounce the transit of the US Carrier Strike Group (CSG) One in the Surigao Strait between Leyte and Mindanao in the last week of December 2024. It brazenly crossed the Philippines' sovereign waters from the Pacific Ocean to the West Philippine Sea.

The US naval formation, led by the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier, is a monster war machine capable of carrying a large nuclear arsenal. It was accompanied by three additional warships.

Meanwhile, plans revealed by the AFP and the Department of National Defense to purchase the Typhon Mid-range Capability (MRC) missile system from the US is blatant kowtowing to US imperialism. In April 2024, the Typhon missile system was positioned by the US in the northern part of Luzon, and used in the Balikatan war games. It has yet to be removed.

Following this, Surigao del Norte 2nd District Rep. Robert Ace Barbers last January 2 pushed anew for building an Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement site in his province. He said the province needs it because the "eastern part of the country is vulnerable to smugglers and foreign incursions."

Party information officer Marco Valbuena said Marcos' servility to its US imperialist master is unparalleled in its complicity in this affront to Philippine sovereignty. "It shows how the country is being used as a launching pad for US operations to flex its muscles in the Pacific and as a pawn in the US' heightening of inter-imperialist tensions," he said.

# Relentless AFP human rights violations

Amid Christmas celebrations, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) conducted unbridled attacks against the Filipino people. The last few days of December 2024 saw relentless cases of killings, arrests, and violations of international human rights law.

**Killings.** AFP soldiers stationed in Barangay Pagui, Uson, Masbate, shot and killed two young men on their way home from a Christmas party in the said barangay on the morning of December 27, 2024. They instantly killed 18-year-old Barangay Mongahay resident Redjan Monreal, and 14-year-old Barangay Mabini resident JP Osabel. Both victims were shot in the head.

The soldiers themselves admitted to the killings, claiming they mistook the two for armed NPA combatants.

**Arrests.** Police arrested three development workers associated with the Paghida-et Kauswagan Development Group Incorporated (PDG Inc) on January 2 in Negros Occidental. Federico Salvilla, Perla Jaleco, and Dharyll Albanex were arrested on charges of "terrorism financing," a violation of the Terrorism Financing Act of 2012.

PDG Inc is an organization in the central and southern part of Negros Island that promotes the rights of farmers and fisherfolk for sustainable agriculture and social reforms.

**Violations of international humanitarian law.** On October 31, 2024, 12th IB soldiers captured Benmar Panoy (Ka Benmar) alive during an encounter in Sitio Hilwan, Barangay Manika, Libas, Aklan. The soldiers tied

him up, shouted "advance happy new year" and fired multiple shots. They even dared comrades to retrieve the Red fighter's remains from them.

On December 10, 2024, the 12th IB riddled with bullets the remains of Jason Katipunan (Ka Jason) who was killed in an encounter on December 9 in Barangay Tacayan, Tapaz, Capiz. According to the NPA, Ka Jason was immediately killed by a single bullet wound to the body. They laid the remains in a secluded area for his family to retrieve but AFP soldiers discovered it the following day.

In Oriental Mindoro, the 4th IB harassed and tormented the family of martyred NPA combatant Marife Gayadan, an Iraya-Mangyan, as they attempted to retrieve her remains. Gayadan was killed in an en-

counter between the 4th IB and the New People's Army (NPA) in Sitio Tinis-an, Barangay San Vicente, Roxas, Oriental Mindoro, on December 18, 2024. The soldiers finally seized the martyr's remains to "bring it home." The soldiers kept guard even during the wake.

**Demolition.** Over 100 hired goons demolished [urban poor] houses in Dalat, San Roque, Bangkal, Davao City, on December 21, 2024. According to the Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (Kadamay)-Davao, the violent demolition of community homes injured three residents. The local government dispatched the demolition team.

**Harassment.** National Task Force (NTF)-Elcac personnel conducted surveillance on and harassed Gabriela-Southern Tagalog secretary general Krizia Cirujano during the holiday season. Two men who refused to identify themselves visited the Cirujano family's home in Dasmariñas City, Cavite, on December 19, 2024.

**Union busting.** The capitalist owner of Paperland Inc. illegally terminated Reynato Ayroso, president of the Militant Manggagawa ng Paperland Inc. (MMPI-ANGLO-KMU) union on December 22, 2024. He was fired for asserting workers' right to a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) and other rights. The company charged Ayroso with "insubordination". Ayroso has long been targeted for his fight for the CBA, Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) inspections, and workers' rights.



128%

national budget deficit as of November 2024, equivalent to **₱1.18 trillion.**

6%

or a mere 11 of 186 major infrastructure projects will resume construction in 2025.

Many question the huge national budget allocation for this.

3 **impeachment complaints** have been filed against Sara Duterte by December 2024



57%

estimated poverty incidence among children (child poverty), twice initial estimates.

Source: PIDS

97.94%

of 2022 CLOA budget spent by DAR, but accomplished only 32.94% of its registration target.

Source: COA

₱194 B

measly amount slashed by Marcos from the 2025 infrastructure budget to make it appear lower than the education budget.

1,000

rice and corn mills closed from 2012-2022,

the highest since enactment of rice import liberalization, causing a decline in rice and corn production.

Source: 2022 Census of Agriculture and Fisheries



15,000

mere additional classrooms planned for 2025 by DepEd despite 250,000 shortage across the country.

# Strengthen people's solidarity with political prisoners

The Marcos regime's iron bars and suppression campaigns could not stop the ardent patriotic spirit and struggle of political prisoners in the Philippines. It is just that the Filipino people reciprocate with giving them unwavering support and solidarity.

Political prisoners are victims of the reactionary state's brutal counter-revolutionary war. They were arrested and detained for fighting for the toiling masses' interests. They were charged with criminal cases to obscure the political nature of their cases. Their continued imprisonment violates the civil rights of political prisoners.

Karapatan currently records no less than 757 political prisoners in the country. Among them are 103 elderly and 97 sick, 156 women and 17 National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) peace talks consultants and staffers. The Marcos regime arrested and jailed no less than 148 political prisoners.

Political prisoners and ordinary prisoners endure dire conditions in the country's jails. There are two types of prisoners: 117,850 prisoners awaiting court trial in Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) jails and 53,397 convicted prisoners in Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) prisons.

Their main problem is the country's slow pace of justice, resulting in extremely overcrowded jails. They are made to suffer inadequate and unnutritious food in jails, poor medical services, and extreme restrictions of prison visitors.

Trials take years or even decades. Some are released after being acquitted, but only long after languishing in prison. Some political prisoners have been acquitted of the original case but are charged by the

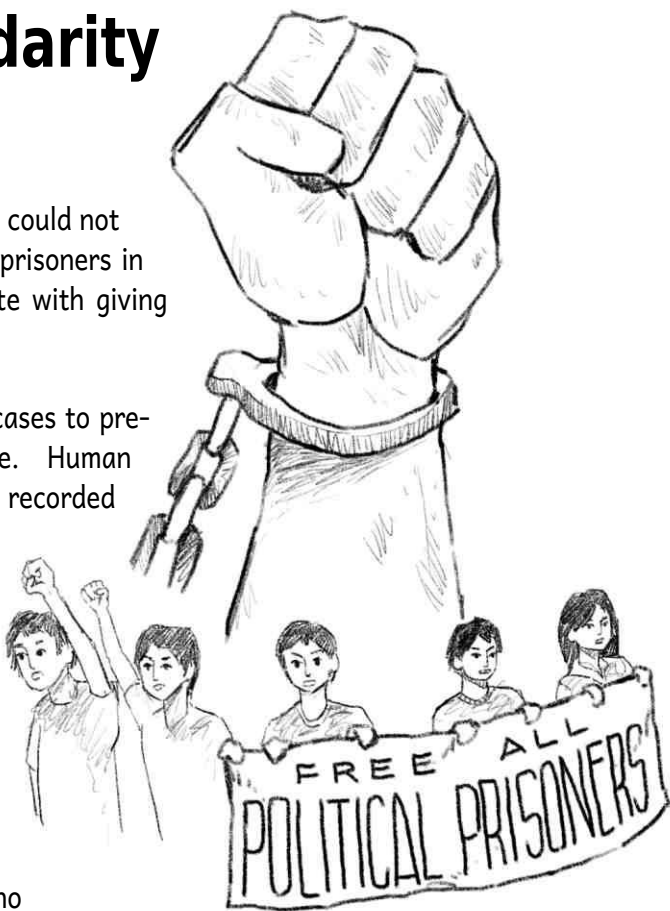
military with more cases to prevent their release. Human rights groups have recorded eight political prisoners who died of illness and old age under the Marcos regime, while 12 died under the Duterte regime. The rate of suicide due to hopelessness among Filipino prisoners is also reportedly rising.

## Solidarity and support

National-democratic groups and human rights organizations have intensified their campaigns to support and free political prisoners since the second half of 2024. Samahan ng Ex-Detainees Laban sa Detensyon at Aresto and 13 other organizations led a new campaign on June 27, 2024, at the Bantayog ng mga Bayani in Quezon City.

Kapatid, an association of relatives of political prisoners and volunteers, helped conduct a series of visits and support for political prisoners, especially in December 2024. They brought material support as a celebration of Christmas and to boost the morale of political prisoners.

Church people, workers, youth students, and other sectors visited the jails in Taguig City, Mandaluyong City, Quezon City, Muntinlupa City, Pampanga, Tacloban City, and other places. Various organizations,



including associations of Filipino and foreign migrants, launched letter-writing and donation campaigns.

This year's second visit peaked with a celebration of holy mass by the newly installed Cardinal Pablo Virgilio David on December 26, 2024, in Camp Bagong Diwa, Bicutan, Taguig City. Among those he fraternized with were detained NDFP peace consultants. San Carlos Bishop Gerardo Alminaza also held a mass in Bago City District Jail in Negros Occidental on December 30, 2024.

The two church leaders called for the immediate release of political prisoners. They also called on the government to pass a law that would give just compensation to prisoners who suffered long imprisonment but later acquitted by the court.

In all these activities, political prisoners demonstrated their unwavering commitment and spirit for the national and democratic aspirations of the people.

AB



# Militarization of Cebu farms and communities

State forces are intensifying militarization and terrorism in farms and urban poor communities in Cebu. The Marcos regime is suppressing the unity and struggle of Cebuanos for their rights in favor of landlords and the comprador bourgeoisie.

## Land grabbing in Aloguinsan

Approximately 40 soldiers under the 31st Civil Military Operation (CMO) forcibly and surreptitiously entered and set up camp in Sitio Camaren, Barangay Bonbon, Aloguinsan, Cebu on December 4. Covering 168 hectares of land cultivated by the San Roque Farmers' Association (SRFA), the area has long been claimed by the landlord Gantuanco family.

The military encamped and harassed people in the area before. In August 2011, police and soldiers violently dispersed protests and unity among farmers who opposed the seizure of their farms, arresting 39 farmer leaders and supporters of SRFA. This was despite farmers being recognized by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) as legitimate claimants of the land. The Gantuancos and the

military relentlessly harassed residents in the following years.

Attacks on SRFA intensified again in October 2022 when the 31st CMO Special Company arrived in the barangay. Soldiers visited households, bringing noodles, slippers, and money in exchange for farmers to "clear" their names.

Farmers and their families were threatened with imprisonment unless they sign. They forced 17 farmers to "surrender" to disband the SRFA. Soldiers even established their controlled farmers' organization called the Santa Cruz Farmers Association, which later became the Camaren Farmers Association in June 2023. The military and the National Task Force-Elcac openly subjugated the Barangay Bonbon local government and even the Aloguinsan town officials.

In response, the SRFA strongly

urges farmers and the local government to immediately expel the military from the community. The farmers' right to oppose exploitative and oppressive landlords and their military mercenaries must be respected.

## Militarized urban poor communities

Urban militarization primarily involves the deployment of military units in urban poor communities in Metro Cebu. In recent months, the urban poor have reported the presence of 14th CMO Battalion elements in Ermita, Pasil, and Mambaling. Similar reports of military presence came from the urban poor in Quiot Pardo, as well as in Mandaue and Lapu-Lapu City.

When the urban poor held an assembly on December 2, soldiers visited members of the homeowners association to warn them against attending. Red-tagging, intimidation, and surveillance are rampant in urban poor communities.

"They used psychological warfare by repeatedly asking neighbors about the leaders' homes, even though they already knew the location... and stalked these homes when the members or leaders were not around, putting pressure on their children or siblings to face them," Kadamay-Cebu stated.

Small vendors belonging to the Movement against Carbon Market Privatization (MACMP), an association opposing the privatization of the Carbon public market, also reported similar forms of harassment. The military's tactic is to promise government aid and assistance to vendors who will leave the organization.

In Mandaue City, residents reported repeated visits of the 14th CMO to locate and harass urban poor organization members who resisted illegal demolitions. The local government even assisted in locating these leaders by providing a list of their names.





# DepEd's "last mile school" program for counterinsurgency and corruption

Five years of the Department of Education's (DepEd) Last Mile Schools Program (LMSP) has exposed the program's corruption and rottenness. Furthermore, the LMSP has been used by the reactionary state for its counterinsurgency campaign to break the unity of Lumad schools in Mindanao.

The DepEd launched LMSP on July 18, 2019, supposedly to address the lack of facilities and resources in remote and far-flung areas, which it calls geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, primarily indigenous communities. In the past five years, the program received funds of no less than ₱14.01 billion for building facilities and their accompanying requirements. The Marcos regime allotted ₱3 billion for it in 2025.

The Commission on Audit (COA) report published in December 2024 revealed the DepEd's failure to complete infrastructure projects in LMSP schools funded as early as 2021, based on data gathered and audited in December 2023.

The COA found that 76 out of 98 facilities worth ₱1.4 billion under DepEd's "Last Mile School Program (LMSP)" were not completed as of December 31, 2023. The COA was extremely alarmed that DepEd completed only 22, or 22.45% of the total, despite paying contractors ₱211.23 million in "mobilization fees."

These infrastructure projects should have been completed within 150 days after permits were granted, and should not have exceeded May 31, 2022. These classrooms' construction has reportedly been delayed for more than a year and a half, or 555 days.



Leonor Briones was then DepEd secretary from 2021 to 2022 under the Duterte administration, replaced by Vice President Sara Duterte from June 2022 to July 2024 under Marcos. Duterte boasted in 2023 that LMSP was among her priorities. Teachers demand her accountability for the gross mismanagement of the department's funds and resources.

## Counterinsurgency campaign

Teachers said the government has not only failed to complete buildings but has also trampled on students' right to education, and on teachers' right to decent teaching conditions. Apart from being plagued with corruption, LMSP also outrightly serves counterinsurgency purposes. The program's launch in July 2019 coincided with the Duterte regime's closure of Lumad schools in Mindanao accused of being operated by the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army.

A few days before formally

launching LMSP, the DepEd ordered the temporary suspension of 55 Salugpungan schools in the Davao region, based on reports from Duterte's military officials that these schools were teaching Lumad youth and students to rebel against the government. Prior to this, Rodrigo Duterte threatened in July 2017 to drop bombs on Lumad schools.

DepEd finalized the closure of the 55 Lumad schools in October 2019, using as pretext the schools' failure to meet "government requirements." In the following years, DepEd finally shut down all 216 Lumad schools in Mindanao.

To suppress Lumad organizations and communities who dared to organize and establish their own schools, DepEd replaced these with "last mile schools" that were either not built or mismanaged.

Teachers and advocates for the rights of national minorities have long called for the reopening of Lumad schools to secure the indigenous youth's right to education. **AB**

# Imperialist intervention in toppling Syrian government

The first week of December saw the rapid collapse of the Syrian government and the ouster of its president Bashar al-Assad, following an assault by a coalition of jihadist and groups supported, armed, and coordinated by the US, Turkey, Israel, and even the UK.

Leading the assault was the Hey'etu Tahrîrî-Şâm (HTS or Damascus Liberation Movement), which emerged from the fallen ISIS group. It was labeled "terrorist" by the US government, but received aid from the UK, a US ally in NATO. Also among the attackers were the Syrian National Army directly supported by Turkey, and the Free Syrian Army (or Revolutionary Commando Army) directly supported by the US military based near the Syrian border with Iraq and Jordan.

Within just 10 days, HTS reached Damascus, the country's capital, from its stronghold in the province of Idlib in northwestern Syria. Its forces killed hundreds of civilians and Syrian soldiers in a violent campaign to capture Damascus. It swiftly overran the Syrian military forces.

The Assad regime's ouster is part of the intensifying global inter-imperialist rivalry, particularly in the Middle East. It is a result of the continuous foreign intervention in Syria, primarily by US imperialism under its

so-called Greater Middle East Initiative launched as early as 2004. Part of this US intervention was arming various groups since 2012 and fomenting armed conflict in the country.

Right after the al-Assad government's fall, the US recognized HTS, removed its "terrorist" designation, considered its leader Abu Mohammad al-Jolani as a "moderate" and gave him a new image in imperialist media. The US and UK imperialists, along with Turkey, are now intervening in the formation of a new Syrian government. Meanwhile, Israel took advantage of al-Assad's fall and quickly occupied the Golan Heights, contrary to the United Nations' recognition of this area as part of Syria. Israel also launched airstrikes as far as Damascus to further expand its occupation of Syrian territory.

Undeniably, the overthrow of the Syrian government is part of the US and its imperialist allies' push to escalate the armed conflict in the Middle East. Israel's genocide in

Palestine and the heroic resistance of Palestinian forces, as well as Hezbollah and Lebanese forces, continue to heighten.

Simultaneous with the attack on Damascus, HTS forces, along with the Syrian National Army and supported by Turkish airstrikes, also attacked Kurdish and revolutionary forces in the Kurds autonomous region in northeastern Syria. This area is known as the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, or Rojava.

This area is primarily held by the YPG (People's Protection Unit) and YPJ (women's militia), which are part of the Syrian Defense Forces. Various revolutionary armed groups, including some units of TIKKO, the Workers and Peasants' Army of Turkey (the military wing of the Communist Party of Turkey-Marxist-Leninist or TKP-ML), are also located here.

According to the TKP-ML, what occurred in Syria was not a "people's revolution" but a takeover by the "NATO project" carried out by US, UK, Turkish, and Israeli operatives. "The emergence and growth of Salafist jihadist groups, particularly HTS, which seized power in Syria, is a direct result of the training and funding provided by imperialists and reactionary states in the region." With the HTS takeover, supported by US-Israel, NATO, and Turkey, the Kurdish people, particularly women, face a significant threat of occupation and violence.

Anti-imperialist and revolutionary forces should stand in solidarity with the Syrian people in their struggle for genuine democracy and national independence. With the overthrow of al-Assad, Syria will fall under the domination and control of US-Israel and Turkey, whose aim is to control the entire Middle East and its rich oil resources.

