

EDITORIAL

## With Duterte in jail, intensify the struggle against the US-Marcos regime

**T**he Filipino people seeking justice enthusiastically welcomed the arrest and detention of former chief tyrant Rodrigo Duterte at the facilities of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Netherlands on March 11. This is a major victory, not only for the victims of the widespread killings ordered by Duterte under the guise of the "war on drugs," but for all victims of fascist attacks under his terrorist regime.

This opens up the possibility of holding Duterte accountable and punishing him for his crimes against humanity, something that is almost impossible under the corrupt ruling political and justice system in the Philippines.

Eight years have passed since the case was initiated at the ICC. It was further delayed by the Marcos regime's refusal to cooperate with the ICC since 2022 due to Marcos' alliance with the Dutertes. Only now

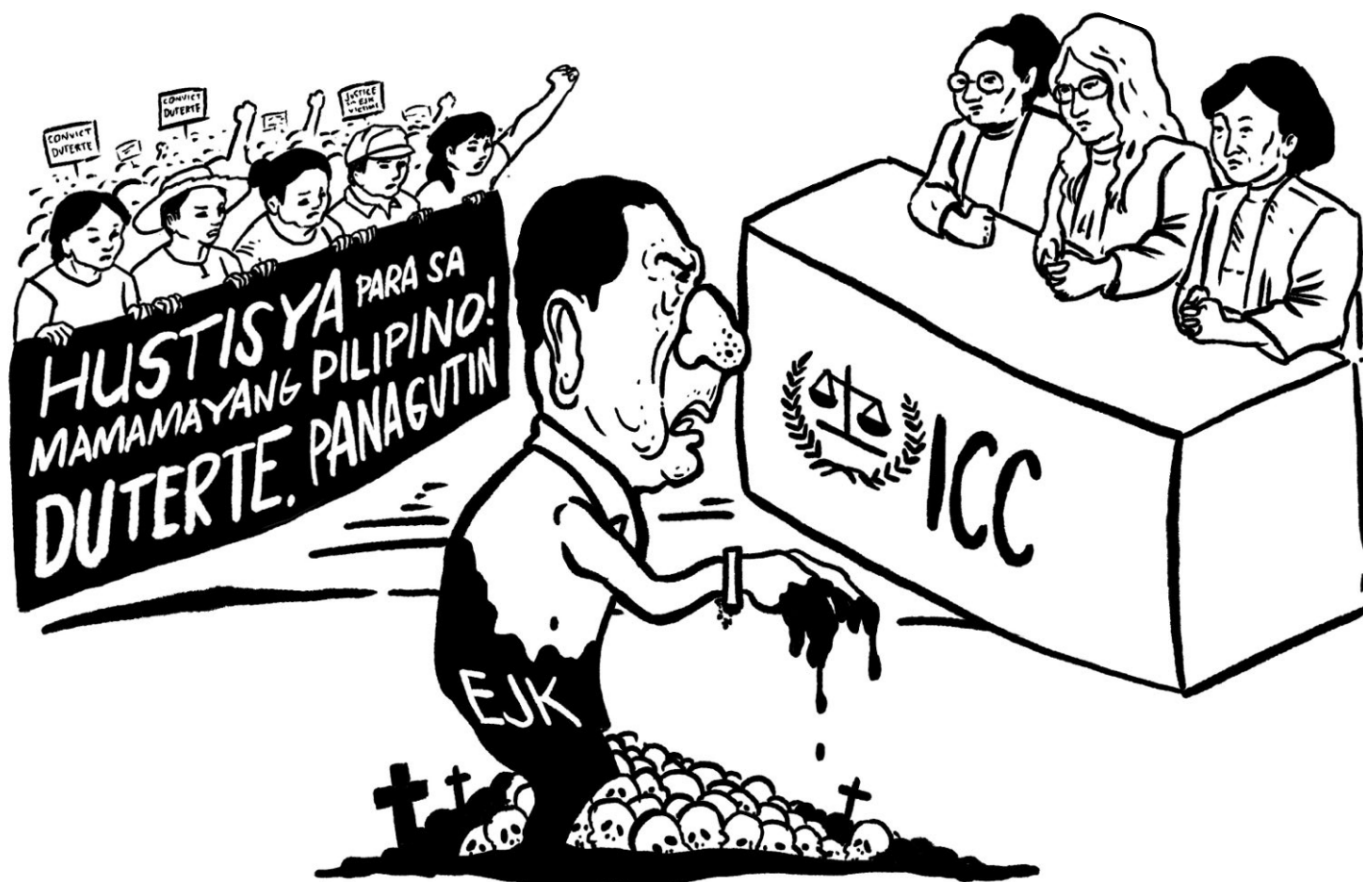
that this alliance has completely fallen apart, did Marcos agree to allow the ICC to proceed (including the ousting of Sara Duterte) in his efforts to consolidate his power and remove major obstacles to his plan to extend his rule beyond 2028.

In truth, Marcos remains deaf to the people's cry to hold Duterte accountable for his crimes, just as he is deaf to the cries for justice for all human rights violations during his father's dictatorial rule. The

fascist policies of the Duterte regime are the same being implemented by Marcos Jr today to carry out the widespread suppression of the people waging resistance.

The Dutertes are now funding a systematic and widespread campaign of disinformation and fake news on social media. To gain public sympathy, the Duterte camp is now portraying the former fascist tyrant as "pitiful" and "a victim" of political persecution, and that his arrest is against the law and the country's sovereignty. This is being claimed not so much as an argument in the ICC, but to stir up the emotions of Duterte's supporters and to drum up rallies.

They are covering up tens of



thousand of skeletons of the victims of killings during Duterte's brutal reign. Even victims and their families are being subjected to intimidation and threats. They are obscuring the fact that Duterte used his power under the guise of the "war on drugs" to control the drug supply and become the lord of all drug lords in the Philippines. They are erasing from the people's memory the sufferings and hardships under Duterte's anti-worker, anti-peasant, anti-poor, and anti-national policies, along with the massive corruption and wealth accumulation of his family and cronies.

The fight of the victims and the Filipino people in the ICC is far from over. It will still go through many twists and turns. It is necessary to encourage and help the thousands of other victims and witnesses to speak out and testify to strengthen the case in the ICC and the call to punish Duterte and all his co-perpetrators for their crimes.

The trial of Duterte in the ICC has opened a new field of struggle for accountability against wicked dictators, tyrants, and iron-clad fascists, who are almost impossible to punish under the Philippine reactionary courts. It is necessary to

support and strengthen the call for the Philippines to rejoin the ICC and to push the Marcos regime to do so. In the face of the unequal application of the law under the Philippine puppet state, rejoining the ICC favors the search for justice of thousands of victims of fascist suppression and state terrorism. At the same time, preparations should be made to file cases in the ICC against Marcos, officers of the AFP and PNP, and commanders of divisions and battalions, who perpetrate crimes against humanity and war crimes.

At the same time, widespread propaganda and education should continue to be conducted to push for accountability against Duterte and to demand justice from Marcos for fascist suppression, people's suffering, corruption, and subservience to foreign imperialist interests. "Marcos-Duterte, walang pinag-iba" ("Marcos, Duterte are all the same") in terms of heinous crimes of extrajudicial killings, abductions, torture, imprisonment, and fabrication of cases and evidence, against the struggling people. The fight against Marcos and officers of the military and police who continue to perpetrate fascist



violence and intimidation against the people should be strengthened.

"Marcos-Duterte, walang pinag-iba" in terms of inflicting suffering on the Filipino people. Nothing has changed in rising commodity prices, widespread unemployment, and the decline of the livelihood of the majority of the people. Nothing has changed in the policies that oppress the people, such as freezing workers' wages, the massive importation of rice and other agricultural products to the detriment of local production, and favoring of foreign capitalist plunderers who destroy the country's wealth and environment. Nothing has changed in the unbridled borrowing, corruption in government contracts, smuggling, and coddling of cartels and criminal syndicates.

"Marcos-Duterte, walang pinag-iba" in dragging the country into the conflict between the US and China. Under Marcos, US military forces are exercising greater dominance in the Philippines, and the threat of the country being drawn into an imperialist war is increasing, along with the growing role of the US in supplying arms and equipment to the AFP for use in the war of suppression against the people.

In the end, genuine change that the people desire can only be achieved through revolutionary transformation in the Philippines. The Filipino people who are oppressed by imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism continue to stand up and resist. The rotten reactionary neocolonial state of the big bourgeois compradors, big landlords, and bureaucratic capitalists must be overthrown.

To achieve the aspiration for justice and true freedom, the Filipino people must fully support, advance, and intensify the armed struggle being waged by the New People's Army. Only through the victory of the people's war can justice be given to all victims of oppression and exploitation, and the desired national liberation, democracy, and socialist future be achieved.

<div></div> <div>Vol LVI No. 6   Marso 21, 2025</div> <div>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.</div>	<div>Contents</div> <div><div>Editorial: With Duterte in jail, intensify the struggle against the US-Marcos regime1</div><div>Victims of Duterte's crimes welcome his arrest4</div><div>Economic crisis directly attacks women5</div><div>State violence against women5</div><div>"Tour of duty" in the NPA6</div><div>Review of Ulos 20246</div><div>In short7</div><div>Destructive dam project in Occidental Mindoro8</div><div>US war games in South Korea and Philippines9</div><div>Strike at Nexperia Philippines, victorious10</div><div>Protests10</div><div>AFP kills 3 in fake encounters10</div></div>
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# Victims of Duterte's crimes welcome arrest and ICC prosecution

Victims of extrajudicial killings and fascism under Rodrigo Duterte celebrated his arrest and presentation before the International Criminal Court (ICC) this March. Philippine National Police personnel arrested Duterte based on an arrest warrant issued by the ICC on March 11, which the International Criminal Police Organization served. The warrant was served upon his arrival at Ninoy Aquino International Airport from his trip to Hong Kong.

"I was filled with unparalleled joy, crying tears of happiness upon Duterte's arrest," mother of war on drugs victim and Rise Up Mothers member Nanay Dahlia Cuartero said.

Another victim's wife Jane Lee said she her emotions were overwhelmed. "I was on the verge of tears, I really wanted to see him (Duterte) in prison, that they pay for their crimes. He merely experienced police arrest while our loved ones were immediately killed. The powerful are immensely different from us ordinary people," she stated.

On the afternoon of March 11, widespread protests erupted across the country. Over 500 people gathered at Welcome Rotunda in Quezon City, led by families of victims not only of the war on drugs but also of the Duterte regime's policy of killing activists.

Demonstrations, led mostly by

youth groups, were held in La Union, Isabela, Baguio City, Pasig City, Laguna, Tarlac, Iloilo City, and Cebu City. Students also mobilized within campuses such as the University of the Philippines, Polytechnic University of the Philippines-Manila, University of Sto. Tomas, De La Salle University, and Ateneo de Manila University.

Filipino migrants in many parts of the world also showed their stand against Duterte. Protests were held in the United States, United Kingdom, and other countries. Progressive organizations marched toward the ICC compound to meet Duterte's arrival with protests.

Families of victims and progressive organizations also staged protests on March 14 and again on March 17 to demand the Philippines to rejoin the ICC and to condemn the Marcos regime for its own fascist crimes.

## Complying with due process

The arrest warrant dated March 7 covers cases against Duterte involving killings from November 1, 2011 to March 16, 2019. At least 19 of these killings occurred during his tenure as Davao City mayor and 24 cases during his presidency in the Philippines. These cases best illustrate the pattern of systematic killings under Duterte's policy.

In an ICC document released on March 13, Duterte was named the "most responsible" for crimes against humanity and the "mastermind" behind crafting and implementing plans targeting "ordinary criminals." The document also implicated "co-perpetrators" in Duterte's crimes. The court is expected to release arrest warrants for them as well.

On March 14, Duterte was presented before the Pre-trial Chamber I where he was informed of the charges filed against him and his rights as a suspect. During the 29-minute hearing, the court stated that Duterte was properly served the warrant upon his arrest and informed of his rights as a suspect. It clarified that he underwent medical examination and was declared "fully cognizant" of the court's proceedings.

The court scheduled the next hearing for September 23 to allow Duterte's camp time to prepare. During this hearing, it will be determined whether there is sufficient evidence for prosecution to proceed with formal trial proceedings.

If found guilty, Duterte could face up to 30 years in prison, fines, and confiscation of assets acquired through these crimes. The court may also order him to indemnify victims for all their losses. **AB**



# Economic crisis directly attacks women

**T**housands of women marked the International Day of Working Women amid a raging economic and political crisis. They described the collapse of the standard of living of Filipino families as an assault on women, a direct result of the neoliberal policies of deregulation, privatization and liberalization implemented by successive reactionary regimes. They condemned the current Ferdinand Marcos Jr regime for its failure to lower the prices of food and other goods, as well as allowing private companies to raise charges for public utilities.

The impact of economic collapse, lack of jobs, low wages and low income, and privatized and high costs of social services on women and children is undeniable. The price of rice, meat and fish remains high, despite the regime's promises to lower it through additional imports. Electricity and water charges have increased, and LRT charges will increase starting April 2. Price increases of LPG and other petroleum products remain unabated.

Women and other sectors gathered and held a collective dance protest in Manila, Laguna, Batangas, Baguio, Tabuk City in Kalinga; Iloilo, Capiz and Aklan in Panay; Naga and Legazpi in Bicol, and in Davao.

The state does not count almost half of women aged 15-65 in the country's "labor force". They are considered unproductive, even though they toil with their husbands in the fields, streets and

other places where they can squeeze a little income.

Women recognized as having jobs are in the service sector where contractualization is widespread and where they earn minimum or low wages. They are not regular even in large companies. Within the government, four out of every 10 employees under the job order/contract of service arrangement are women.

In general, they receive lower wages compared to men. They are employed in jobs "suitable" to their "traditional" roles which are more often in the lower ranks of production and bureaucracy. As students, they are usually pushed into courses in sewing, beauty care, and secretarial work that have low wages and often have irregular work days. Jobs with greater potential for regularization and higher positions are reserved for men.

Unionized workers are very few, but unionized women are even fewer. Most of the remaining unions are in traditional industries dominated by men, such as manu-

facturing and construction.

Not surprisingly, women comprise majority of those terminated by capitalists. In recent years, thousands of women lost their jobs when foreign garment companies inside export processing zones in Cebu closed. Meanwhile, the jobs of women who make up to 55% of business process outsourcing or BPO employees are at risk, with the use of artificial intelligence by foreign companies.

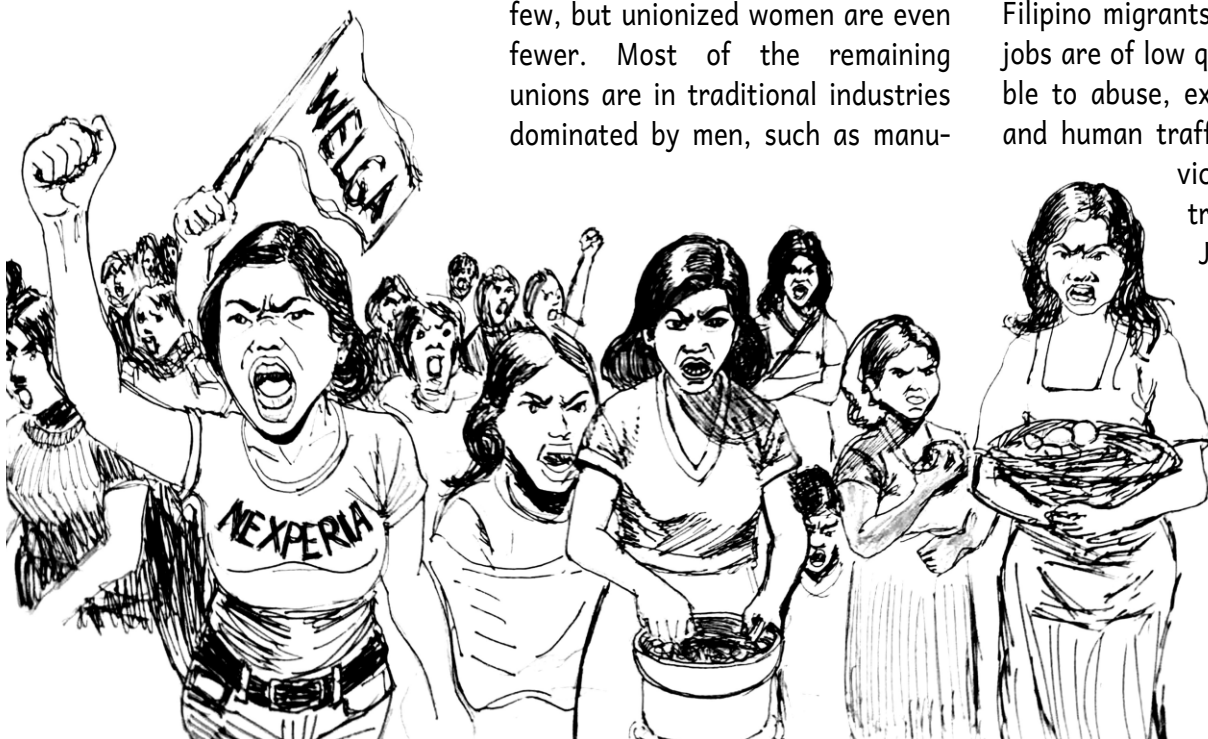
Apart from widespread redundancy-driven layoffs, discrimination also cause many women's dismissal from work. Large companies deliberately do not hire pregnant or married women (because they might get pregnant). They are laid off after giving birth as they are not covered by the maternity leave law. The capitalists and the state provide no support to women with young children.

The inequality and poverty women endure is even starker in the countryside. In several decades of implementing land reform, only 19% of women hold emancipation patents and 31% in certificate of land ownership agreement or CLOA.

The lack of land and scarcity of work force millions of women to go abroad to earn. Six out of every 10 Filipino migrants are women. Their jobs are of low quality and vulnerable to abuse, extreme exploitation and human trafficking. Among the

victims of human trafficking is Mary Jane Veloso, imprisoned for 15 years in Indonesia, who survived the death penalty and, although still imprisoned, was returned to the country, through the persistence of her relatives,

*Continue on page 5*



friends and supporters.

In terms of health, the state's policies are not only a burden, but deadly for women. Until now, the state has not addressed maternal mortality or the death of women giving birth. From January to August 2024, 470 maternal deaths were recorded, equivalent to 59 dying in childbirth per month. In the past year, maternal deaths reached 1,868.

Health facilities for women are not only inadequate, but also privatized. More than half (58%) of maternity facilities are private and charge tens of thousands of pesos for normal childbirth, and much more for caesarean birth. Check-ups and treatment of women's diseases such as breast and cervical cancer are very expensive. In 2022, 33,079 new cases of breast cancer were recorded, where 11,857 were recorded to have died, equivalent to 32 women per day.

The state's protection for women, especially young women, is not enough. In 2023, there were 142,276 cases of teenage pregnancies, and 390 young women gave birth every day. Of this number, 3,343 were pregnancies of children aged 15 and below and 99% of these cases were the result of statutory rape or rape by older men who used power or authority.

The state's lack of protection for children against sexual exploitation is worse. Worldwide, the Philippines is the production center of child sexual abuse materials. In 2023, the Philippines received almost 3 million, equivalent to over 7,500 complaints per day of suspected online child sexual exploitation. These remain unchecked due to the state's failure to respond to the majority of these complaints.

Amid crisis and poverty, violence against women has intensified. In limited police reports, there were 12,046 cases of various types of violence against women from January to November 2024, higher than the 11,585 cases in 2023. Only one in 10 cases of violence against women is reported to the police due to distrust of authorities. Victim's disclosure has been made even more difficult in the era of social media with the pervasive culture of blaming victims, forcing them to remain silence in the belief that reporting the crime will change nothing.

AB

### State violence against women

THE ATTACKS OF the reactionary state against women in the name of counterinsurgency continue relentlessly. Thousands of women have fallen victim to violations committed by its armed forces, especially in rural areas. They are part of communities dominated by the military, subjected to bombings, blockades, and control.

Since Marcos Jr assumed power, state agents killed no fewer than 23 women under the guise of the counterinsurgency. Nine were civilians accused of being Red fighters and killed in fabricated encounters. Among these were Jelyn Deomo, Sheryl Dejomo, and Divina Ajitan, who were killed by the 96th IB in Masbate, as well as Cristina Jacolbe and her daughter Everlee, who were killed by the 79th IB in Negros Oriental. Others were Red fighters who were captured, tortured, and deliberately killed, such as Wilma Tiamzon, Hannah Cesista, Annabel Talon, Glorivic Belandres, and Kaliska Peralta.

Marcos Jr's agents abducted at least 20 women. Three of them—Elgene Mungcal, Ma. Elena Pamposa, and Lyngrace Martullinas—remain missing to this day. Some managed to escape the soldiers's grip, such as Jhed Tamano, Jonila Castro, Rowena Dasig, and Dyan Gumanao. Others were secretly detained in military camps, like Mariel Rebato and Monica Ogacho, along with their infants.

Soldiers specifically target pregnant women or those who have recently given birth whom they suspect to be Red fighters or wives of Red fighters to force them and their spouses to surrender. Among these is Cherilyn Rebita, who was abducted from her residence and secretly detained until she gave birth. Soldiers kidnapped her child to coerce her into surrendering her husband, who is also a Red fighter.

In military-occupied peasant communities, soldiers are at the forefront of violence against women. At least eight cases of rape have been reported in communities in Northern Samar, Camarines Norte, Batangas, and Oriental Mindoro. In two cases, the victims were minors. Two victims reported that other soldiers acted as “look-outs” while the crimes were being committed.

From July 2022 to January, the Marcos regime arrested no fewer than 27 women on fabricated charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives and linked to the armed movement. Many of them are elderly, such as Presentacion Saluta, 63; Dolores Rapsing Belibit, 70; Adora Faye de Vera, 66; and most recently Myrna Cruz-Abraham, 69. De Vera and Cruz-Abraham have been released, but most remain imprisoned in various parts of the country.

# "Tour of duty" in the NPA

**K**a Cloud and Ka Malen joined a New People's Army (NPA) unit in Southern Tagalog for one month as part of their "tour of duty" or TOD. The "TOD," integration or immersion program is designed for the members of revolutionary mass organizations and Party members from urban areas to be exposed to the NPA to gain concrete experience in armed revolution.

Ka Cloud and Ka Malen came from the petty-bourgeois class. They are not used to life in the mountains. They often struggled, especially with trekking, but still happily dared to adapt to the army's way of life. They joined in traversing steep and slippery terrain, in mass work, military training and performing technical tasks.

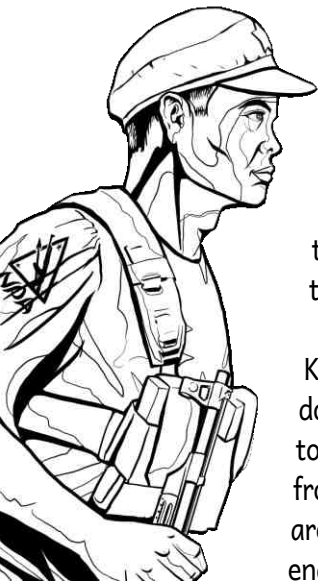
For Ka Cloud, the Red fighters he lived with were the best people he had ever known. He witnessed the fighters' determination amid many challenges of guerrilla life. He saw the commitment of the Red army in adhering to the rectification movement and overcoming weaknesses.

While integrated, Ka Cloud trained as a logistics officer. It became his responsibility to inventory supplies, operate the kitchen and ensure the unit's meals. Early in the morning, Ka Cloud's "Good morning, comrades!" would be heard in the kitchen.

Ka Malen was deeply grateful for the comrades' support and understanding of her difficulties in adapting to life in the guerrilla front. She trained as a political guide for her formation. Here she saw the milieu of ideological struggle and criticism among comrades in the spirit of the rectification movement. She saw the comrades' mutual support.

On the day of the two's departure, the unit held a discussion over coffee to assess their integration with the army. Their stay was short but both of them and the Red fighters who hosted them drew many lessons and inspiration. The two promised that upon their return to any guerrilla front, they would bring along other youth.

The experience of Ka Cloud and Ka Malen proves that skill inadequacy does not hinder urban revolutionaries to become Red fighters. Guerrilla fronts are waiting and Red fighters are ready to train urban youth who endeavor to join the people's army. **AB**



## Review of Ulos 2024

THE PUBLICATION OF Ulos 2024 is truly relevant and challenging. It is indeed a science, and an art as well, to adapt and respond to the what, why and how of the current context of our struggle through works such as poems, plays, balagtasan (poetic debate), song lyrics, drawings and sketches.

The selected works and sketches in Ulos 2024 were effective because they impacted and created varied impressions on readers. Heart-warming are the poems, letters and tribute essays for departed comrades, whose lives became "artistic" and "creative" for performing invaluable missions and duties for the national-democratic revolution. Its pages take the reader to a solemn reflection on various personal and social contradictions, but in the end it explains the correctness in choosing to pursue the selfless aspiration of revolution for the people and the classline.

The flow of written and visual arts was successful in bringing the reader to a higher understanding, higher morale and greater determination to become promoters of a culture of rectification.

It is in this spirit that the campaign and call to read the entire book of Ulos should continue! Combine it with reading of basic documents that need to be studied and analyzed. It is an excellent source of inspiration for conducting investigation meetings, organizing summaries, criticism and self-criticism, and other ideological, political and organizational tasks.

These days, especially in urban areas, the time allotted for reading, analysis, study and mass work has become an arena of struggle against the counter-flow of influence of improper use of the internet and social media. According to the Ulos 2024 preface, "changing mindsets and habits, individual and collective, is a cultural task." If it is necessary to reshape the use of internet and social media, do it. If it is necessary to critically reject the petty-bourgeois influences from various materials and instruments attacking our proletarian spirit and habits, this must be achieved. Together let us critically and creatively promote a culture that stands against subjectivism and petty-bourgeois ideas and habits.

64%

of recorded campaign violations are cases of red-tagging, followed by illegal campaigning, vote buying and illegal use of public resources.

Source: Vote Report PH, March 14, 2025

₱200/day

increase, from ₱150 to ₱350, in special allowance granted by Marcos to soldiers (regular and reserve), over and above the salary of fascists which is already the highest among ordinary government employees. In contrast, the minimum wage of workers nationwide, who receive less than half of a living wage, increased by an average of only ₱35.

50%

increase in the amount of imported pork in January pulling down farmgate prices for local hog raisers. Despite this, market prices of pork remain high.

Jay Kamote, Miggy Mango, Xiaomi Ocho

are additional fake names that received disbursements from Sara Duterte's confidential funds. Including "Mary Grace Piattos," these names sparked investigations into Duterte's anomalous use of funds.

₱2.02 TRILLION

government debt servicing in 2024, 26% higher than the ₱1.6 trillion in 2023. This will further increase in the coming years, with the Philippines' relentless borrowing under the Duterte and Marcos regimes.

4.4 HECTARES

impacted by illegal and destructive quarrying in Bugo, Cagayan de Oro. These were put to a halt by the collective action of residents.

160

states established the **Rome Statute** on July 17, 1998 in Rome, Italy and formed the ICC as a permanent court with jurisdiction over the most serious crimes of international concern, such as genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.



₱1.225 B + ₱274.8 M

squandered on the construction of the Cabagan-Santa Maria Bridge in Isabela that collapsed on February 27, 26 days after it was opened to the public.





# Destructive dam project in Occidental Mindoro

A new threat to the life and livelihood of peasants, indigenous Mangyan-Buhid, and residents at the border of San Jose and Rizal, Occidental Mindoro is the planned construction of a dam on the Kayakyan and Busuanga rivers. The Kayakyan is a major tributary of the Busuanga, one of the large rivers in the province.

Ten communities of indigenous Mangyan-Buhid directly depend on the Kayakyan river for their livelihood and daily needs. It also serves as a source for irrigation in at least seven barangays.



## The Lipitan Small Reservoir Irrigation Project

The Lipitan Small Reservoir Irrigation Project aims to build two dams on the Kayakyan and Busuanga rivers to supposedly improve the irrigation system in the barangays of San Jose and Rizal. It is spearheaded by the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) through the Irrigation Management Office of Occidental Mindoro.

In implementing the project, the fascist government outrightly disregarded its own bogus Indigenous People's Rights Act (IPRA) law which requires getting the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) of indigenous communities affected by the projects.

The said project planned to build two dams. First, the impounding dam which will collect water from the upstream part of the Kayakyan river.

Second, the "diversion dam" to be built on the Busuanga river at the border of the barangays Central of San Jose, Pitogo, and Santo Niño of Rizal. The second dam will divert the flow of water to reach the barangays closer to the center of San Jose.

The NIA boasts that the planned

irrigation will "benefit" 6,676.20 hectares of farmland and 4,334 farmers. But the major purpose of the dam is hydropower that will generate 2.5 megawatts of electricity to supposedly address the large electricity supply shortage in Occidental Mindoro.

The project budget is estimated to reach ₱6.94 billion in loans funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency. Construction will begin in 2027 and is planned to be completed by 2032.

## Plague to the Mindoreño masses

The project will affect an estimated over 40,000 people.

Five communities or approximately 1,400 indigenous Mangyan-Buhid will be evicted from their dwelling places and farmlands. Five more indigenous communities, with a population of 2,200, will be displaced due to their proximity to the river and the site of the planned dam itself.

Villages in the plains along the Busuanga river are also at risk. They are directly affected by flooding that the dam will cause whenever it releases a large volume. Even now, plains on the border of San Jose and

Rizal already flood easily.

In 2024, residents rejected the said project offered to them by the local government. Despite this, 203rd IBde and police armed elements are forcing them to agree to the project. Due to their resistance, they are arbitrarily accused of being supporters of the New People's Army. Even officials of the affected barangays and small business owners are being intimidated to prevent them from speaking out against the project.

Behind the suffering of ordinary people, millions of earnings are expected by private contractors who will grab contracts for the project and auxiliary infrastructure such as roads and bridges leading to the target area. Power concessionaires such as Ramon Ang's San Miguel Corporation and Jolly Ting's OrMin Power Inc will also amass profits from the energy the dam will generate.

The fascist forces of the 203rd Bde and police are deployed and constantly conduct operations to protect the area where the destructive dam project will rise.

*From Alab, revolutionary newspaper in Mindoro.*

AB



# Devastating US war games in South Korea and Philippines

The US imperialists have begun the largest war games or exercises in the Asia Pacific region for 2025. The US started the Freedom Shield war games in the Republic of Korea (ROK) on March 10 while the largest Balikatan war games are scheduled in the Philippines in the coming months. These are being carried out alongside many other smaller war games and US military activities in various parts of the region.

These war games are portrayed as "defensive exercises" and strengthening of alliances. Their true purpose is to strengthen the "interoperability" or the US military's control over the military forces of the Philippines and other countries. The US also uses these to maintain control in the region and further intensify tensions with its rival imperialist country China and with North Korea.

## Freedom Shield 25

No less than 19,000 military forces from South Korea and the US participated in Freedom Shield (FS) 25 which lasted for 11 days or until March 21. There were 17 combined war games launched this year, up from 10 war games in 2024. American and South Korean troops launched various types of military training including live-fire exercises on land, water and air in the country.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) considers these annual war games as the US and South Korean military forces' "preparation for invasion" of their country. In response and to show determination to defend its national sovereignty, the DPRK launched ballistic missiles over the sea.

Before FS25, US military activities were already widespread. One was held on March 5, where the US and South Korea dropped bombs in a community in Nogok-ri, Pocheon town, Gyeonggi after wrong coordinates (location) were fed into a jet fighter computer. The warplane "accidentally" dropped eight MK-82 bombs (each weighing 500 pounds).

The incident injured at least 30 civilians and damaged many houses and buildings while residents experienced extreme trauma and fear.



The mayor of Pocheon demanded that similar war games should not be conducted in their town until the military ensures that a similar accident will not happen again. Three large military facilities, covering 4,960 hectares of land, are located in the town of Pocheon.

## Preparation for Balikatan Exercises "SABAK" 2025

At the start of 2025, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and US forces have already begun preparations for the annual Balikatan war games in the Philippines. The 40th series of Balikatan is set to be launched in Philippine territory in April and May. Dubbed the SABAK 2025, this year's Balikatan is expected to exceed the 16,000 Filipino and American troops who participated last year.

The AFP announced that, aside from the participation of a very large number of US soldiers, armed forces from Australia, Japan and other countries will also participate. In 2024, military officials from 14 other countries served as "observers" in the war games. The war games will primarily be conducted in Luzon and Palawan.

As preparation, the AFP launched the Combined Arms Training Exercise (CATEX) "Katihan" Battle from March 3 to March 12, where 6,000 Filipino soldiers took part.

Several series of military maneuvers were also launched by the Philippines together with the US, Australia, Japan and Canada in Philippine waters and airspace.

On February 21, the AFP chief met with the commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command. The AFP also held meetings with officials and forces from Japan, France, and Germany in the past quarter.

### Strike at Nexperia Philippines, victorious

THE 74-HOUR STRIKE by the Nexperia Philippines Inc. Workers Union pushed the capitalist of the multinational company to give concessions to the workers in its negotiation for a new Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). The capitalist reeled after the company's estimated loss of revenue reached ₱1.26 billion due to the strike from the afternoon of March 5 until March 8.

The strikers were met with support from fellow workers and other organizations outside the Light Industry and Science Park 1 in Cabuyao City, Laguna. The union won the reinstatement of NPIWU president Mary Ann Castillo and another union official who were previously laid off. The union also secured an additional ₱17 per day for 2024, ₱19 for 2025, ₱21 for 2026 and ₱20,000 signing bonus. The agreement also clearly stated that any form of retaliation against workers who participated in the strike is prohibited.

According to Castillo, their strike was successful because many became aware of the situation of workers at Nexperia and joined in their struggle. She added that the unionists' courage was strengthened and they are ready to pursue their fight for their rights.



**Return the Navotas mussel farms!** Fisherfolk and mussel growers belonging to Pamalakaya trooped to the Navotas city hall on March 14, to demand the local government to allow them to rebuild their mussel farms. On this same day last year, the government demolished their mussel farms along the coast under the guise of Manila Bay "rehabilitation". More than 200 mussel farms were demolished last year to give way to the San Miguel Corporation's 650-hectare reclamation project in Navotas.

**Justice for Balubad residents.** Residents of Sitio Balubad, Barangay Anunas marched in Angeles City in Pampanga on March 12 to call for justice for the violent and illegal demolition in their community on March 12, 2024. In the demolition last year, 600 families and 48 farmer beneficiaries of certificate of land ownership award were evicted from their land.

**Consumers against high prices.** Various groups under the Samahan at Ugnayan ng mga Konsyumer Para sa Ikauunlad ng Bayan (Suki Network) staged protest actions on March 14 in various markets across Metro Manila to call for the lowering of prices of food, commodities and utilities. Youth students together with workers also held a separate protest to oppose train fares increase.

### 3 killed by AFP in fake encounters in Mindoro and Negros

TWO CASES OF fake encounters were recorded in Mindoro and Negros within just one week, where three individuals were killed by soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). The deliberate killing of victims by the AFP constitutes a blatant violation of international humanitarian law and the rules of war.

In Negros Occidental, agents of the Crime Investigation and Detection Group apprehended Noynoy Ponteras (Ka Jojo) and Marisa Pobresa (Ka Kim) on March 7, at 7 p.m., in a village in Bacolod City. The next day, they were presented as having been killed in an armed encounter between the AFP and the New People's Army (NPA) in Sitio Paraiso, Barangay Caduhaan, Cadiz City. According to the NPA-Negros Island (Apolinario Gatmaitan Command), the two were subjected to torture before being deliberately killed.

In Oriental Mindoro, the NPA-Mindoro (Lucio de Guzman Command) refuted claims by the 4th IB that a Red fighter was killed in an "encounter" on March 14 in Sitio Cabuyao, Barangay Panaytayan, Mansalay. According to the people's army, there was no unit or element of the NPA present in that village at that time. The identity of the victim has yet to be determined.

In both incidents, the AFP claimed to have seized weapons, ammunition, and explosives from the victims.

**Arrest.** Forces of the 3rd Special Forces Battalion arrested and attempted to hide Lumad Manobo leader Michelle Campos and three of her companions. They were traveling on March 5 at night in Barangay Das-agan, San Francisco, Agusan del Sur. They were only able to speak with human rights groups on March 11 at a hospital in Prosperidad.

Meanwhile, Lumad leader Genasque Enriquez, who was arrested on March 2, remains missing. Campos and Enriquez are well-known advocates for the rights of their community in Lianga, Surigao del Sur against large mining and logging corporations.

**Physical assault.** Alberto Piaduche was apprehended and beaten by the 94th IB on March 9 at night while riding a motorcycle in Sitio Tuyuman, Barangay Caradio-an, Himamaylan City, on accusations of being a member of the NPA. He was accompanied by a relative at that time. Reports state that both were forcibly loaded into a pick-up truck and taken inside a military headquarters. There, Piaduche was beaten and forced to confess connections with the people's army. They were released at midnight. **AB**