

EDITORIAL

Expose the fraud-ridden rotten reactionary elections

Fraud is the hallmark of elections under the reactionary state in the Philippines. This was once again demonstrated in the recent elections where manipulation of the vote results was widespread, systematic, and brazen to favor the ruling puppet Marcos regime.

In the face of numerous anomalies and failures of the Commission on Elections and Miru Systems' vote counting system, a large part of the public do not believe that the election results reflect the true votes of the people. Since the start of com-

puterized counting in the Philippines, fraud has reached unprecedented levels, with widespread vote padding and shaving that no one gets to see or understand, except for the ruling clique and the private foreign company

that created the system, which is not open to public scrutiny.

Other forms of electoral fraud are also rampant, such as vote buying, use of public funds (especially in the distribution of government aid), violence and intimidation, and Red-tagging.

The Marcos regime maintained its majority control of the Senate and House of Representatives. Through its control of Congress, Marcos will surely push for a budget, laws, and programs that follow the dictates of foreign banks and companies, which will burden and oppress the people. This dominance in Congress will surely be used to protect the interests of the Marcos clique.

The US imperialists extensively interfered in the Philippine elections. It is deeply concerned about the worsening political crisis of the ruling system, in the face of the intensifying conflict between the Marcos and Duterte cliques. In particular, amid the worsening economic crisis and growing public anger, it is concerned with the increasing isolation of its puppet Marcos, and strengthening of the Duterte clique, which is being used by its rival China to deepen its influence in the Philippines.

The US used its power, influence, and connections with its agents in politics, business, media, church, and other sectors to create a "third force" composed of parties and politicians friendly to the US,



currently aligned with the Liberal-Akbayan-Pink (LAP) coalition. Political accommodations were made to ensure that its candidates would lead in the Senate and party-list system, to be used as a counter-weight against the Duterte clique in the 2028 elections.

It exerted pressure on Marcos to carry the LAP's senatorial candidates, Bam Aquino and Francis Pangilinan. The spokesperson of Marcos' party admitted that they thoroughly supported the candidacy of the two. At the same time, LAP stalwart Leni Robredo made a deal with the Iglesia ni Cristo for it to carry Aquino, in exchange for her endorsement of Rodante Marcoleta, a known Duterte attack dog, especially against ABS-CBN in 2020. Everyone was "surprised" that Aquino and Pangilinan got the second and fifth spots (from 13th place down in the surveys). The Marcos clique, LAP, and their supporters in the academe, media, and church are concocting a convoluted narrative to explain this "surprise", in an attempt to douse the movement against fraud and dirty politics with cold water.

Like in the previous elections, US imperialism pushed for the Mar-

cos regime's all-out campaign against patriotic and progressive groups that ran for the senate and party-list. It used the NTF-Elcac, military, and police, and the entire state resources to carry out widespread Red-tagging, intimidation, filing of fabricated cases, arrests, and killings. To justify the political repression, Marcos used the fascist reasoning that these groups form an "insurgency in electoral disguise," in an attempt to close all avenues for democratic expression.

As in previous years, they were targeted by the systematic reduction of votes of progressive party-lists using the computerized counting system. The US and its puppet Marcos regime support pro-US reformist groups like Akbayan, which they deceptively describe as "Left" to lead the people away from the path of genuine patriotism and democratic change. The goal is to silence all those who speak out against the increasing US military intervention in the Philippines, and how the country is being used as a large military base for stationing thousands of American troops and deploying weapons as part of its war preparations against China.

Despite this, these groups were

able to launch a nationwide campaign. They clearly carried the program to advance the national and democratic aspirations of the people, and the calls for living wages and salaries, jobs, lower prices of food and oil, and other urgent demands and needs of workers, peasants, and other oppressed and exploited sectors of Philippine society. By participating in the elections, they were able to challenge, expose, and criticize the rule of the bureaucratic capitalists, comprador bourgeoisie, and landlord class.


The recent elections in the country once again showed that there is no true democracy in the Philippines. The reactionary government is only adorned with the trappings of a democratic political content, where only parties and candidates with vast amounts of money to buy power are the ones who can truly play.

History shows that revolutionary struggle is necessary to achieve genuine change that the Filipino people aspire for. The goal of the revolution is to seize political power from the ruling classes, to build a truly democratic government that represents the interests of the people. The oppressed classes need to take hold of state power to implement changes in the economy and social system in favor of the people.

This change can only be achieved through revolutionary armed struggle, as the primary form of struggle, along with other forms of resistance. By advancing the protracted people's war to crush the enemy's strength part by part, the New People's Army and the masses are step by step building a new democratic government and a new social system, where the masses benefit from the wealth they create.

The Filipino people and their revolutionary forces are persevering on the path of armed struggle with the determination to advance and achieve victory in the future. Nothing can stop them from fulfilling their historical task of achieving national liberation and true democracy.

AB




Vol. LVI No. 10 | May 21, 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.

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

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More of the same in the 2025 elections

Like in previous elections, "guns, goons, gold" ruled over the 2025 midterm elections. There was blatant fraud and maneuvers using automated elections and violence against ordinary citizens. The elections saw nothing new, and merely gave a democratic facade to the installation of representatives of big landlords, big comprador bourgeoisie, and the US imperialists.

Riddled with fraud

Days before the voting, Miru and Comelec were exposed to have replaced the system controlling the "automated counting machines" by-passing independent scrutiny and review.

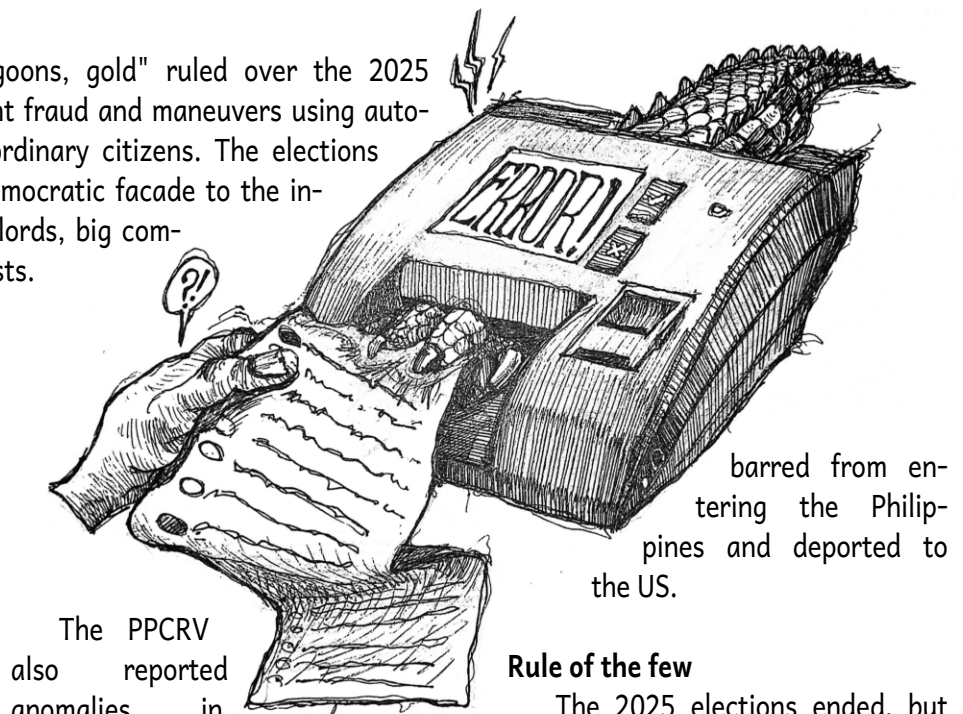
On the day itself, election observer groups reported various anomalies. Kontra Daya reported having received complaints, more than 50% of which were machine-malfunction related, followed by illegal campaigning, vote-buying, and missing names in voter lists. Red-tagging and the dissemination of fake news were also reported.

As soon as the precincts opened, complaints poured in regarding "inconsistencies" with the machines from South Korean company Miru Systems Co. Ltd, which the government paid ₱18 billion.

Many reported that their ballots were rejected due to "overvoting", as well as "undervoting" despite them having been marked completely. Groups also noted permanent markers having excessively thick ink and machines being excessively sensitive.

According to the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), the enormity and type of complaints received was unprecedented. They stated that a match between the votes on the ballots and those registered by the machines would be impossible to determine unless counted manually.

Recorded "overvotes" amounted to 18.2 million, with 16.8 million for senators and about 3.3 million for the party-list. In addition, many precincts started the voting late because the machines failed to take in ballots.



The PPCRV also reported anomalies in Comelec's transmission of results. At 8:00 p.m. on election day, the group complained that it did not receive the electoral transmissions simultaneously. The 15% they received contained only "headers" and not the actual votes. The counting became even more dubious when Comelec suddenly subtracted 5 million votes from 15,000 precincts because they were allegedly counted twice.

Overseas Filipino workers' "online voting" was also riddled with anomalies, making it difficult for them to cast their votes.

Incidents of election-related violence during the campaign were also reportedly rampant. From January to April, 26 incidents were reported. On the eve and the day of the elections, widespread shootings and armed attacks reportedly resulted in 16 deaths.

Meanwhile, the European Union Election Observation Mission could not fully carry out its duty to observe the elections in the country after Comelec barred them from entering precincts on election day. They also noted widespread vote-buying in the country.

The International Observer Mission also recorded overlapping anomalies in their observation. They also faced direct state repression when one of their delegates was

Rule of the few

The 2025 elections ended, but nothing changed and the same names of winners and those in power remained.

Five Marcoses won in the last election. Imee Marcos will sit as senator, Cecilia Araneta-Marcos as governor, and Matthew Joseph Manotoc as vice governor, while Ferdinand Alexander Marcos (Sandro) and Angelo Marcos Barba will sit as congressmen of the first and second districts of Ilocos Norte.

No less than five Romualdezes, also relatives of the Marcoses, won positions in Leyte. Martain Romualdez won as congressman of the first district of Leyte. They took the positions of mayor, vice mayor, and one councilor in Tacloban City. One Romualdez will also sit as one of the three representatives of Tingog Party-list, a party created by the family.

On the side of the Dutertes, six won in the election. These are in addition to sitting Vice President Sara Duterte and a barangay captain in Davao City. The Dutertes captured the whole of Davao City (mayor, vice mayor, congressmen of the first and second districts, and one councilor). Rodrigo Duterte was elected mayor even though he is jailed at the International Criminal Court in The Hague for crimes against humanity. One Duterte also won as first nomi-

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Makabayan vows to continue the struggle

AFTER THE ELECTIONS, the Makabayan Coalition expressed gratitude to all supporters, campaigners, and voters for its 11 senatorial candidates and four party-list groups. The coalition assured everyone that it would continue to fight for the Filipino people's democratic rights even after the campaign and elections.

The Makabayan senatorial candidates received from half a million up to 4.64 million votes. The four Makabayan party-list groups—ACT Teachers, Kabataan, Gabriela Women's Party (GWP), and Bayan Muna—garnered a total of 1.08 million votes. Kabataan and ACT Teachers each secured one seat, while GWP and Bayan Muna failed to win.

According to the coalition, the votes and support they received are not merely numbers on a ballot, but proof of resistance against a rotten system that has long plagued the country. They said it symbolizes the number of Filipino workers fighting for higher wages and decent jobs, farmers standing up for their land rights, the youth seeking a just and free future, and other struggling democratic sectors.

Makabayan managed to launch a national campaign and gather millions of votes despite open cheating in the 2025 elections through automated machines, sustained and coordinated state forces attacks, relentless Red-tagging and repression, and disinformation campaign.

The coalition stood firm against these. They joined the demonstrations and pickets of Kontra Daya and Bagong Alyansang Makabayan in various parts of the country.

On May 13, the rallyists marched to the Manila Hotel in Manila, where Comelec held the national canvassing. On the same day, groups and parties launched protests in Iloilo City and Cavite City. On May 14, GWP protested again at the Manila Hotel, and demonstrations also took place in Quezon City, Trece Martires City in Cavite, Batangas, Laguna, Aklan, and Cebu. Similar protests occurred in the following days.

Groups also launched a big rally on May 19 at the Manila Hotel, coinciding with the proclamation of the winners in the party-list elections.



Sixty-day march from Zamboanga. Farmers, fisherfolk, and indigenous people from various provinces launched a sixty-day march to oppose land and water grabbing, which threatens their homes and livelihoods. The march began on March 13 in Zamboanga Sibugay and ended in Metro Manila on May 10.

Tribute to health workers. Unions under the Alliance of Health Workers held noise barrages and pickets on May 7 to commemorate the Day of Health Workers. These actions mainly took place in Metro Manila, while a gathering was also held in Baguio City led by the Coalition of Health Workers' Organizations in the Cordillera.

Oppose dredging. Residents of Barangay Silonay, Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro opposed the planned dredging of their shoreline and nearby Barangay Maidlang. They expressed their opposition during a public consultation held on May 9, with support from Mindoro Forum Network (MFN), Alyansa Laban sa Mina, and barangay officials. Large trucks arrived at the Silonay-Bucayao River estuary on April 29 for sand testing, which alarmed residents.

From page 3

nee of the PPP Party-list.

Meanwhile, the Duterte Youth Party-list obtained three positions, and while the nominees are not Dutertes, they serve as an extension of their power.

In the Senate, two Tulfos are now seated after Erwin won. The Cayetanos and the Villars also have two senators each. The Ejercito-Estrada siblings have previously held seats under the same family.

The Buluts remain strong in Apayao, the Ortegas in La Union, the Dy family in Isabela, Ebdane in Zambales, Kho in Masbate, the Tans of Samar, Alonto-Adiong of Lanao del Sur, Hataman-Salliman of Basilan, the Sali family in Tawi-Tawi, and many others. AB

2 Red fighters abducted and deliberately killed by the 62nd IB

THE 62ND IB soldiers captured and deliberately killed New People's Army-Central Negros Red fighter Tony Pahayahay (Ka Pido) on May 1 in Barangay Humay-humay, Guihulngan City, Negros Oriental. Pahayahay sustained injuries during the encounter, and troops captured him one kilometer from the site of the clash. Meanwhile, soldiers captured another wounded Red fighter and have not yet revealed his identity.

Human rights violations continue in other parts of the country.

Arrest. Police arrested 10 residents and indigenous Molbog people in Sitio Marihangin, Barangay Bugsuk, Balabac, Palawan on May 15. The indigenous people oppose San Miguel Corporation for claiming their land to build a resort covering more than 5,500 hectares.

Militarization. Several barangays in the towns of Baleno and Masbate City have been under RCSP since March. According to PKM-Masbate, the military represses residents' mobility and food consumption. The military also openly steals their livestock.

Red-tagging. Intense Red-tagging forced two student leaders from UP Cebu to withdraw from running for student council elections on campus this May. The two candidates and their families experienced great fear after their photos and names appeared on social media, linking them to the armed revolutionary movement.

Manipulation, speculation and monopoly pricing of oil

Every Tuesday, the prices of petroleum products change in the Philippines. From January to May 20, prices rose eleven times while decreasing ten times. The increases are larger than the decreases, which resulted in a net rise of ₱4 per liter for gasoline and ₱3.80 per liter for diesel.

On May 20, democratic groups led by Bayan Muna protested anew against another large price increase (₱1.30 per liter for gasoline; ₱1.80 for diesel, and ₱0.95–₱1.40 for kerosene). This happened despite the continuous decline in the world price of crude oil since April, by as much as \$10 per barrel.

Oil companies and the Department of Energy (DoE) always claim that price increases “mirror fluctuations in the price of crude oil on the world market.” Among the reasons cited are production cuts by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), increased demand in cold countries, as well as the outbreak of armed conflicts related to oil producers.

Manipulation and monopoly pricing

The Philippines is not an oil producer. Only one refinery remains in the country. In 2024, the Philippines consumed an average of about 471,000 barrels of various petroleum products per day, 95–99% of which are imported. In 2022, 78.2% of imported oil was refined, while only 21.8% was imported as crude oil.

Thus, local oil prices are truly affected by the fluctuating price of crude oil worldwide, but not directly. Changes in refining costs, supply or refinery process problems, locally imposed taxes (12% VAT and excise), transportation costs, and the exchange rate between the peso and dollar have a more direct effect on local prices.

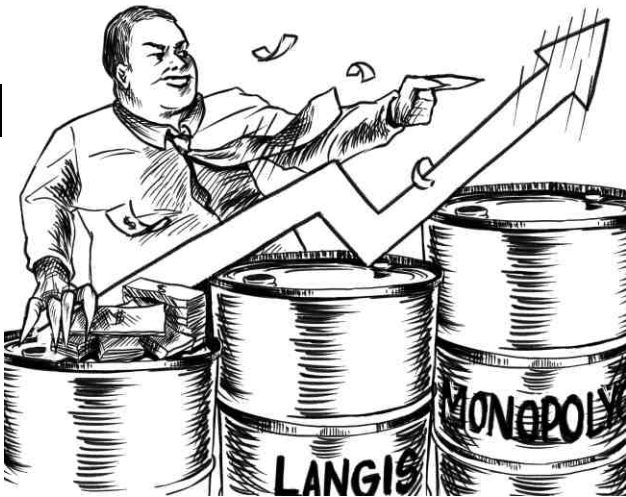
Overall, the OPEC+'s cartel actions affect prices because they control 40% of the supply and 80% of oil reserves worldwide. The cartel can

set the selling price of crude oil in the market far above its production cost. Saudi Arabia's Aramco, for example, produced crude oil at a cost of \$11.80 per barrel in 2024. This year, the selling price on the world market is about \$31 per barrel.

OPEC+ manipulates the price of crude oil in the world market by coordinating supply cuts or increases. One study states that up to 30% of the world oil price results from OPEC+ manipulation of supply.

OPEC+ last set a production cut in November 2023. Member countries agreed to reduce production by 2.2 million barrels per day to stop the then-declining price of crude oil. But starting this April, the eight largest producers agreed to gradually increase supply over the next three months. Observers say this move responds to Iran's violation of the agreed production quota, and at the same time, counters the US threat to flood the market with relatively cheaper shale oil. The US is not part of OPEC+, and any movement in its oil production threatens to take market share from OPEC+.

In daily trading, speculation in so-called “futures trading” also affects the fluctuation of oil prices. This is a system of trading on future prices of oil yet to be produced and used. The price of “futures” is set according to speculation on market movements, possible production bottlenecks, and geopolitical events such as the sudden outbreak of wars or uprisings. But according to a recent study, 60–65% of oil price movements within a trading day now result from “algorithmic trading,” or the buying and selling of “futures”



according to technical data movements. This no longer has anything to do with actual market movements or world events.

Deregulated manipulation

In the Philippines, oil companies further boost local prices using the Oil Deregulation Law, a law that removed state control over the industry. Under this law, the state allows companies to “adjust” their prices according to movements in the world market and to directly pass on any changes to consumers. The law was passed to promote “free competition” in the sector.

Instead of “competition,” the law created a cartel-like situation where oil companies find it easy to manipulate, overprice, and collude. Oil companies have no obligation to inform the state and the public how much of the price change is due to changes in the world market price; how much is due to refining, storage, and transportation; and how much is claimed as profit. In 2019, the state tried to require companies to publish these figures, but companies actively opposed and blocked this.

Local prices have in the past been proven to rise more than the increase in the price of crude oil on the world market. In a study by Ibon Foundation covering price changes from 1999 to 2011, local oil prices were 20–22% higher than the increase in world oil prices. Two of the largest oil companies in the country, Shell and Caltex, are subsidiaries of multinational companies, which engage in price manipulation and speculation on a global scale.

15.4 million

votes, or 26.85% of all votes for the party-list system in the 2025 elections, were declared invalid or blank, slightly higher than in the 2022 elections which had 15 million.



8 years have passed

since Rodrigo Duterte declared **martial law** in Mindanao and bombarded **Marawi City** on May 23, 2017. This lasted until December 31, 2019.



To date, only about 4.2% of victims—or **713 out of 17,000 families**—have received compensation from the state.

Source: Marawi Compensation Board, Marso 2025

first **political prisoner** to win as councilor in the election for the UP-Diliman University Student Council. She received **4,830 votes** and was elected as the top councilor. She has been in jail in Tuguegarao City for **nearly five years** on fabricated charges.



#1 USC councilor UPD

Amanda Lacaba Echanis

144 killed by Zionist Israel

on the first day of the large-scale ground invasion, **Operation "Gideon's Chariot,"** which started on May 17.

Israel aims to fully occupy the whole of Gaza.



Buhay gerilya
EPISODE 2

interview with NPA-Mindoro spokesperson Madaay Gasic, is available for viewing on PRWC, FB/BuhayGerilya and YouTube.



Africa Day

will be celebrated on May 25 to mark the founding of the **Organization of African Unity**, which later became the **African Union**. The OAU was established to promote unity and cooperation among anti-colonial liberation movements and newly emerging independent governments in 30 African countries in the 1960s.

MENTAL
HEALTH
MONTH

12.5 million Filipinos

or 11-16% of the population, endure mental health problems, most commonly in the form of depression and anxiety.

1,530 registered mental health professionals

the Philippines had in 2023, or 3 for every 100,000 Filipinos.

Widespread land grabbing for foreign plantations in Lanao del Sur

In the municipality of Amai Manabilang (formerly Bumbaran) in Lanao del Sur, large-scale and violent land grabbing now affects Moro, Lumad, and settler farmers. The successive Duterte and Marcos regimes, the local Manabilang dynasty, and the Armed Forces of the Philippines have all conspired to evict residents and use their lands for foreign multinational companies.

The reactionary state uses the Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA), a government-owned and controlled corporation (GOCC) under the office of the president, as an instrument for land grabbing. The SPDA, established as early as 1975, received the right of “*eminent domain*.” This means the SPDA holds legal authority to expropriate private lands for “*public use*.” The agency has the power to award seized lands to any favored local or foreign corporation.

Development for foreigners

Initially, the SPDA forcibly claimed 26,000 hectares in Lanao del Sur and placed them under the Agro-Industrial Development Program (AIDP), a “*special agro-economic zone*” allegedly meant to develop the province’s backward economy. The AIDP covers an area

previously under the Kapatiran Agro-Industrial Development Cooperative, a “*cooperative*” used by the Marcos dictatorship to subdue Moro National Liberation Front fighters. Of this, 16,000 hectares are located in Wao and 10,000 in Amai Manabilang. This “*special economic zone*” provides foreign companies many incentives, such as exemption from income tax, VAT, and tariffs on imported materials. It also grants discounts on rent, electricity, and water.

Since 2020, the SPDA has allowed at least five large companies into the “*special agricultural zone*.”

The largest is American company EcoPlanet Bamboo which the SPDA granted an initial 8,360 hectares spanning 10 barangays bordering Amai Manabilang and Ta-



lakag, Bukidnon. At present, about 2,000 hectares already grow commercial bamboo. The company plans to plant a total of 100,000 trees, at a rate of 500 trees per hectare.

EcoPlanet Bamboo markets its bamboo plantation as an “*environmental project*” that will revive denuded forests. But in other parts of the world, the project and the company itself have proven to be a “*scam*.” The company’s ownership is dubious as it is mired in debt, and its promises of jobs, development, and environmental protection are deceptive.

Another land grabber is the Asia-Pacific Precision Agriculture Group, also an American company. It took over 2,000 hectares and planted corn using advanced technology, thus created no new jobs. The company destroyed nearby forests to build roads for easier access of production machines and vehicles.

The SPDA also awarded land to Kennemer Foods International and Sumifru. Kennemer is a Philippine company funded by a Dutch bank and supplies cocoa to Mars Inc, another American company. Meanwhile, Japanese company Sumifru produces bananas for markets in Japan, Thailand, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia. Sumifru now “*rents*” lands at a rate of ₱25,000 per year or ₱2,038 per month.

Deceptive peace

THE SPDA IS a tool in the oppressive “*counterinsurgency*” war under the guise of “*economic development*.” It was established in 1975 as part of the package for the “*surrendered*” revolutionary Moro National Liberation Front forces in the past. In 1980, the SPDA established the Kapatiran Agro-Industrial Cooperative Settlement Project in the towns of Wao and Bumbaran/Amai Manabilang.

The SPDA also became part of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) signed in 2014. This agreement resulted from several decades of peace negotiations that ended with the surrender of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and disarmament of its forces. One of the controversial provisions of the CAB is the “*wealth sharing*” between the yet to be established Bangsamoro parliament and the national government. Contracts and agreements between Moro officials, the national government, and foreign corporations pass through this arrangement.

Abdulghani A. Salapuddin currently leads the SPDA. He is a former representative of Basilan and a former MNLF fighter.

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The Marcos regime's “peace plan” is bogus and merely recycled

The Marcos regime drew endless ridicule for its “new” peace plan which the National Security Council made public in the last week of April. The regime formally endorsed the National Plan for Unity, Peace and Development (NAP-UPD) when it issued Memorandum Circular No. 83 on May 2.

As the NAP-UPD propagated, the regime and the NTF-Elcac boasted they would completely defeat the armed movement by the end of the year after dismantling the “last standing front” which they claimed was in Camarines Sur.

According to the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), Marcos and his officials are fooling only themselves by saying the revolutionary movement can finally be defeated. The continuing deployment of military combat battalions against New People’s Army units nationwide belies this claim.

The CPP ridicules the idea of achieving peace amid tyranny and harm to the people. Soldiers continue to lord over hundreds of farming and indigenous communities under the guise of “community support.” In these communities claimed to be “insurgency-free,” people’s

rights are suppressed and abuses abound.

No peace can be achieved with the continued imprisonment of consultants for peace negotiations aimed at resolving the roots of armed conflict, according to the CPP. The regime only seeks to force Red fighters to surrender, betray their revolutionary struggle, and leave the Filipino people defenseless against the brutal and violent state machinery.

As long as the roots of armed conflict remain unrecognized, there can be no peace, according to the CPP.

Progressive organizations also ridiculed the NAP-UPD, calling it “recycled.”

According to Bagong Alyansang Makabayan and the National Union of People’s Lawyers, the NAP-UPD retains the old repressive methods for “achieving peace.” This is clear

in designating the NTF-Elcac as the program’s main executor, in line with the “whole-of-nation” approach. They say the NAP-UPD merely gave a new face to the already tried and failed counterinsurgency strategy.

The groups are aware that the NAP-UPD’s real target are the open mass organizations of workers, peasants, and other oppressed people, to silence their resistance against the reactionary government. The plan to further escalate political repression against democratic sectors is clear, from denying them democratic space in schools, workplaces, and even parliament. The intention to use repressive laws like the Anti-Terrorism Law and Anti-Terrorist Financing Law to “shut off” the alleged “flow” of finance and support for the armed revolution is also clear. Civilian are maliciously linked to the armed movement to serve as pretext to harass, illegally arrest and detain, forcibly disappear, and even kill them.

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Other foreign companies set to enter include Nestle (coffee), RNF Industries Corporation (avocado), and other exporters.

Violent evictions

The SPDA’s claim that AIDP lands are vacant or “denuded forests” a lie. Most of these lands have long been occupied and tilled by Moro, Lumad, and settler farmers. A large portion consists of ancestral lands belonging to the Maranao and Higaonon.

The SPDA exploits the lack of legal proof of ownership among Moro, Lumad, and settlers to seize their lands. The agency demolished homes and bulldozed farms, including hectares of sugarcane, vegetable, and corn fields. Violent demolitions and evictions took place

with the help of soldiers, police, as well as elements from the CAGU, MILF, and the Manabilang family’s private army.

Some families lost up to 30 hectares of farmland, including vegetable farmers growing carrots, cabbage, potatoes, and more. Many refused to relocate to sites which offered each family only 40 square meters of land. Those who pleaded to stay on their farms received only a quarter of a hectare.

Some evicted farmers now work in Sumifru’s plantations where they are paid very low and often delayed wages. They receive no benefits or job security.

EcoPlanet planted bamboo on farms that still had standing crops. Company personnel even planted seeds right up to the gates of

homes. Others were forced to “donate” their land to the company.

In all of this, the Manabilang family, which dominates the local government, is complicit. They made an example by arresting those who refused to leave, imprisoning them, and imposing high bail to threaten those who resisted. The Manabilang family rules through terror. They are notorious for the massacre of 17 Ilonggo settlers in 2014.

Nevertheless, some remain committed and uprooted newly planted bamboo from their farms. Residents have at times stopped the bulldozing of their sugarcane fields. They have called on officials and even traveled to Cagayan de Oro to stage protests. All these actions are only the beginning and may serve as capital for their next struggle. **AB**

Clamor to terminate PrimeWater contract mounts

Water that is tea-colored or coffee-colored, foul-smelling and undrinkable; water available only at midnight or early morning, some days with no water at all, only air comes out of the tap for several minutes but the meter keeps running; expensive and continually rising water service fees—these are the deplorable conditions and ordeal of residents who have been under PrimeWater’s water supply service for several years.

Privatization of water service

PrimeWater Infrastructure Corporation (PrimeWater) is a company owned by the largest bourgeois comprador family in the entire Philippines, the Villar family. Across the country, PrimeWater controls up to 130 water districts from cities and municipalities through joint venture agreements (JVA). An estimated 16 million people depend on it.

The JVA places local water districts (LWD) under a public-private partnership (PPP) with PrimeWater. This system turned water service from being a public utility to a private enterprise.

In the JVA, the company binds LWDs to 25-year contracts. PrimeWater takes charge of the operation, repair, development, and construction of infrastructure, maintenance of the water supply and septic management system, and collection of service fees. PrimeWater also sets the rate increases and service charges as part of its supposed fund for service development. LWDs are merely tasked with monitoring.

Contrary to the promises in the JVA, LWDs have for several years complained about PrimeWater’s blatant non-compliance of contracts, resulting in failed service to the areas they supply with water throughout the Philippines. The Commission on Audit has also repeatedly pointed out PrimeWater’s non-compliance with its contract, failure to provide sufficient funds or investment for service improvement, and the decline in LWD income while PrimeWater earns more in terms of profit sharing and other anomalies.

Terminating PrimeWater

From mounting complaints about PrimeWater’s rot-

ten service, the filing of petitions, launching press conferences, noise barrages, to filing formal complaints, residents and organizations advocating for the right to water service have undertaken various forms of collective action. This compelled LWDs and local government agencies to investigate, act, and terminate the contract with PrimeWater.

The LWD of San Jose Del Monte issued a resolution ending the JVA with PrimeWater on April 3, the province of Quezon on April 30, and the Metro San Fernando Water District in La Union on May 8.

Meanwhile, Camarines Norte Water District filed a Notice of Intention to Pre-terminate the JVA with PrimeWater on January 20, as did the City of San Fernando Water District in Pampanga on May 1. Leyte Metropolitan Water District in Tacloban City also expressed its intention to revoke the JVA on May 5.

The call of Bacolod residents and those living in Tierra Nova Subdivision, Barangay Bagumbong, Caloocan, to end the PrimeWater JVA in their area is also mounting and gaining strength.

In Congress, party-list representatives under Makabayan filed House Resolution 2279 on May 6, urging Congress to investigate PrimeWater’s JVAs with more than 130 LWDs nationwide. Rep. Arlene Brosas of Gabriela Women’s Party called for the immediate enactment of House Bill 10150 or the Anti-Privatization of Public Water Systems Act.

PrimeWater consumers and Bayan Muna also filed a complaint in Malacañang on May 8 to urge Ferdinand Marcos Jr to terminate all JVAs with PrimeWater due to its repeated failures and legal anomalies.

