

## EDITORIAL

# Unite the people to make Duterte regime answer for its neglect

Millions of Filipinos openly saw the criminal neglect of Rodrigo Duterte's government amid devastation brought by typhoons Quinta, Rolly and Ulysses. As they drowned in floods and rains, Duterte comfortably slept through his responsibilities and duties. To coverup his failings, he blamed victims for supposedly not heeding warnings by authorities. Worse, he chided those who extended help and threatened those who protested the negligence.

Duterte failed to coordinate different agencies and local units, quickly put in place measures and and preposition enough personnel and equipment for rapid response. For years, his regime has cut calamity funds thus impairing responders to simultaneously respond to various disaster-stricken areas.

As a result, millions of Filipinos now suffer the destruction brought by floods and landslides. Several thousand homes in rural areas, town centers and cities were destroyed by strong winds and raging

water and mudflow. Ricefields, vegetable gardens and others crops were inundated. Fishing boats were smashed. Hard earned property and means of living were destroyed. Many were left with nothing. Electricity and water services of private companies were cut. Initial estimate of damage is at P12.3 billion.

Government aid is grossly insufficient and arrives ever so slow. Thousands remain in congested evacuation centers where they are vulnerable to Covid-19 infections.

Praiseworthy are efforts by

mass organizations and individuals to extend aid to survivors. But these are limited and must not be regarded as substitute to the duty of the state to respond systematically to the widespread needs of calamity victims.

It is just that Duterte be firmly held accountable amid disaster especially with regard his regime's priorities in terms of funds and attention. It continues to prioritize counterinsurgency and corruption. It continues to give priority to counterinsurgency and corruption-riddled infrastructure projects. It has cut funds to calamity response by providing it a mere P15.7 billion, 60% lower than P39 billion in 2017. Redirecting funds from repression to rehabilitation must be pushed including the P19 billion NTF-ELCAC funds. The immediate distribution

of P83 billion funds being kept in the DSWD coffers must be pushed to benefit victims of the pandemic and calamity.

In the face of the regime's failed response, people's unity and action must be strengthened and expanded to amplify the demand for the regime to account for its ineptness and neglect. It must reach communities, offices and factories and other places where the regime's intimidation and disinformation reign. They must turn their communities and evacuation areas into centers of protest to push the regime to mobilize all its agencies and

resources to prioritize rehabilitation of all affected. As long as cries are disparate, Duterte will simply ignore the people's anger and disgust.

Victims must understand that they need not wait, plead or beg for the national government's material and financial aid. They have the right to promptly receive state aid for their food, water, clothing, hygiene and medical needs. They have the right to funds and services for quick clean-up of their flooded communities, rapid restoration of water and electricity services and assistance for rebuilding homes and

infrastructure. It is their right to receive emergency aid to recompense their flood-damaged property including their jeeps, motorcycles, boats, home appliances and others. They have the right to receive state funds to compensate for destroyed fields, businesses and other means of livelihood.

Every year, more than 20 storms enter the Philippines. It is thus just to demand that officials, agencies and companies be made to account for the inundation of communities as in the case of Magat Dam. The disaster-preparedness of these agencies must be assessed in order to prevent repeated tragedies.

The regime must also be held to account for its failure after four years to carry out substantial environmental rehabilitation, dredging of rivers and lakes and other measures to prevent flooding. Denounce Duterte for his sham demand for "climate justice" while it relentlessly pushes for mining, logging and foreign-funded infrastructure projects that bring widespread environmental destruction.

The Duterte regime's criminal neglect of the people's well-being amid the calamity comes on top of several months of failed response to the pandemic, economic devastation and brazen corruption. It brings disaster with its unremitting borrowing from foreign institutions, pro-capitalist policies that oppress workers, lack of subsidies for agriculture and other measures that bring worse sufferings to the impoverished masses.

Duterte is a disaster who for four years has devastated the country and slaughters anyone in his path. He has brought immeasurable destruction to fields, businesses and livelihood of millions of people. The people's anger must continue to be consolidated into a storm of protests that will push Duterte to resign or cause his ouster from power and subsequently make him for all his crimes.



# ANG Bayan

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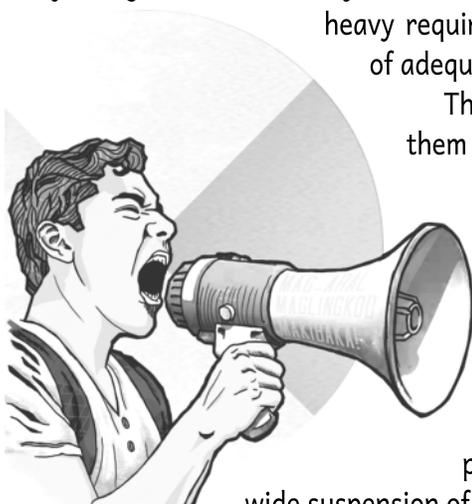
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## Students call for youth strike

Students from the Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU) and University of the Philippines (UP)-Diliman in Quezon City called for a youth strike to hold the Duterte regime accountable for its criminal negligence. Around 400 students converged in front of ADMU last November 17 to demand the regime to address the crisis caused by calamities and pandemic. They also protested last November 20. The mobilizations were led by Kabataan Partylist and the National Union of Students of the Philippines. Similar protest actions were mounted in Bulacan and Cebu.

Youth groups successively issued their declaration of resistance following the call of ADMU student leaders to withhold the submission of school requirements until Rodrigo Duterte is ousted. This was followed by statements from students demanding an academic break or temporary suspension of online classes. The UP Diliman faculty also demands early end of semester. They all agree that it is not just to resume classes and burden students with heavy requirements amid calamities and absence of adequate internet service.



The demands of students aim to give them time to recover especially those in areas battered by recent typhoons. Only four universities implemented a weeklong academic break. The Commission on Higher Education rejected calls for a national academic break. The representative of Kabataan Partylist already filed a resolution to provide a framework for the nationwide suspension of classes.

AB

## Offensives in Bukidnon, Sultan Kudarat

THE NEW PEOPLE'S Army (NPA)-Bukidnon blasted an operating platoon of the 8th IB at Sitio Ulayanon, Barangay Calabugao, Impasug-ong on November 5. Five soldiers were killed and five others were wounded.

In Malaybalay City, Red fighters also harassed operating troopers of the 88th IB at Sitio Kugun-kugon, Barangay Manalog twice on November 19 and 20. The soldiers are known for illegal cockfighting in the said area.

**Sultan Kudarat.** Three assets of the of the 37th IB were killed in a raid by the NPA-Sultan Kudarat at Sitio Secret Valley and Magon, Barangay Datu Wasay, Kalamansig at around 5 a.m. on October 24. Three shotguns and ammunition were confiscated from the military assets.

## Protests and campaigns to defend people's livelihood

URBAN POOR RESIDENTS of Sitio Back-Matimco, Barangay Subangdako, Mandaue City in Cebu successfully foiled a demolition attempt in their community by putting up a barricade. In Quezon City, more than 1,000 urban poor residents protested in Barangay Bagong Silangan, Quezon City on November 18 to assert their right to decent housing and livelihood

Earlier on November 9, the Pinagkaisang Lakas ng Mamamayan also spearheaded a protest and dialogue of residents with the local government of Quezon City. They were permitted by authorities to cultivate a 118-hectare idle land within the said barangay.

Meanwhile, jeepney drivers and operators along with their supporters protested in Quezon City on November 9. They demanded the full resumption of jeepney opera-

tions.

On November 18, more than 700 riders of FoodPanda Philippines trooped to the Department of Labor and Employment headquarters in Intramuros, Manila to protest against the miniscule pay they are receiving. They reported that in some instances, riders are paid as low as ₱11.45 per 8-kilometer travel. FoodPanda is food delivery company owned by Gemany-based multinational Delivery Hero.

## Union asserts wage increase

Workers of Davao Central Chemical Corporation (DCCC) successfully asserted their demand for wage and benefits increase as stipulated in their collective bargaining agreement (CBA) for 2020-2022.

The CBA was signed by the DCCC Independent Union-NAFLU-KMU and the management on November 17. The said company exports activated carbon and other chemicals.

Workers are set to receive a ₱1,350 monthly wage increase in 2021, and another increase in 2022. Those employed by the company for more than five years will receive an additional ₱2,500.

AB

# Catastrophe brought about by negligence

In the evening of November 13, residents of Cagayan Valley took to social media and text messages their calls for rescue as typhoon Ulysses lashed the region. Flood waters rose quickly following the sudden release of water by the Magat Dam. The Ambuklao and Binga dams also released water when the water level in Cagayan River reached 13 meters.

Within 11 hours, 21 towns and a city in Cagayan, and 22 towns and three cities in Isabela were inundated. The flooding also reached 15 municipalities in Nueva Vizcaya and five towns in Quirino. Many of those who were affected were left with no other option but to wait in rooftops for rescue due to the reactionary government's slow response. Cagayan residents said that this was the worst flooding in the region in the past 45 years.

On November 12, more than 40,000 houses were inundated in Marikina City and two towns in Rizal following the release of water by Angat Dam before and during the typhoon. Flood levels also rose in various areas across Metro Manila due to continuous rains. Many structures, electric posts and cables were damaged due to strong winds. This has left more than million households without electricity. Millions also suffered from water service interruption at a time when it is most needed. At least 73 died due to the flooding. Initial estimates put the value of damages caused by the typhoon Ulysses at ₱10 billion.

In Southern Luzon, many residents, particularly those in the Bicol and Southern Tagalog regions, are yet to recover from the impact of supertyphoon Rolly which hit the area on November 1, were once again slammed on November 11 by typhoon Ulysses. This includes 240,000 families who lost their homes at coastal areas in Albay, Catanduanes, Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte and Quezon. Typhoon Rolly alone has caused damage to infrastructure and agriculture worth ₱17.8 billion. At least

25 were killed during the said supertyphoon which is considered the strongest among the five typhoons which successively hit the country in three weeks.

There are strong calls to hold to account the officials and companies operating the Angat, Ipo, La Mesa, Ambuklao, Binga, San Roque and Magat dams which indiscriminately opened their gates during the typhoon. Local government units were not informed on when and how much water was going to be released by these dams.

Simultaneously, the call to stop the construction of the Kaliwa Dam gained ground once again. Instead of this project, groups are demanding a program for reforestation in Sierra Madre which serves as watershed areas for La Mesa and Angat dams.

Duterte himself admitted that he was asleep when the typhoons hit. However, he refused to accept criticism when he finally appeared in public. He also baselessly accused Vice Pres. Leni Robredo of stealing the limelight, insulted relief operations initiated by her office, and threatened her if she is planning to run for president in 2022. Duterte even had to gall to crack sex jokes during a briefing with local government officials while people were in dire straits.

The creation of another task force was Duterte's response to the severe impact of the typhoon and the people's outrage against his regime. On November 14, his government announced the creation of the Build Back Better task force which is spearheaded by his inutile and unqualified generals and cabinet

members. He placed the entire Luzon under a state of calamity in order to realign more budget to his office and agencies under it.

Unlike Duterte, various democratic organizations and individuals mobilized to aid those who were affected by the calamities. Among those who participated in rescue and relief operations were the Tulong Kabataan Network, Tulong Sulong Cagayan Valley Network, Balsa, Tulong Obrero and offices of progressive partylists in Congress. Humanitarian institutions also rushed to provide aid. The Office of the Vice President also reached out to make the demands and calls for rescue of Cagayan residents be heard. It was also able to raise almost ₱50 million for relief operations. AB

## #NasaanAngPangulo

*hashtag* which twice trended in Twitter during the typhoon to make Duterte accountable for not giving priority to disaster preparedness and for his inaction while Metro Manila, Bicol and Cagayan Valley were submerged in flood.

## Magat Dam

A World Bank-funded infrastructure project constructed by the Marcos regime in 1980. Water from this dam is used by the 380-MW *hydropower plant* of the Aboitiz family and a Norwegian company. The operation of the said power plant is the reason why water was not promptly released from the said dam even amid imminent threat posed by the typhoon which was about to enter the Philippine area of responsibility.

# Floods and forests, plunder and profit

The denudation of forests is undeniably one of the major reasons behind massive floods and landslides in times of calamity. Government data in 2015 indicate that the country has only a remaining 7 million-hectare total forest cover, or merely 23% of its total land area. Only 3% of primary or virgin forests remain in the country. A research also revealed that the Philippines is among the top 10 countries in the world that recorded the highest deforestation rates in the past two decades.

Currently, trees in 47,000 hectares of forests and mangrove areas which help prevent erosion, floods and storm surges are destroyed annually.

Around 27 million hectares of land in the Philippines used to be forested before Spain colonized it. This is equivalent to 90% of the total land area of the country. This decreased to 21 million hectares by 1900 due to massive deforestation mainly attributed to the establishment of export crop plantations and haciendas by the Spaniards. Deforestation escalated during the 1940s after successive puppet regimes promoted lumber exportation as the country's main source of foreign income.

By the early 1970s, over 170,000 hectares of forest lands were being destroyed annually. Less than 5% of this was reforested.

The logging industry also served as one of the most lucrative sources of ill-gotten wealth by those in power, especially during the Marcos dictatorial regime. In 1975, logging companies protected by Marcos extracted a record high of 15.5 million cubic meters of lumber. From 1972 to 1988, around 8.57 million hectares of forested area and 3.8 million hectares of virgin forests were destroyed. By 1990, only 8% of the forest cover in the country remained.

Among the most destructive was Marcos crony Alfonso Lim Sr. who was responsible for denuding forests in Ifugao and Cagayan Valley, which now serve as Magat Dam's main source of water. He owned and operated at least seven logging companies which covered hundreds of hec-

tares of forests in the said areas.

To monopolize the timber industry, Marcos appointed Juan Ponce Enrile as his "general" for logging who was tasked to issue permits to logging companies. At the same time, Marcos also awarded Enrile's San Jose Timber Corp. which covered 95,770 hectares of forests in Northern Samar. This is in addition to the concessions of seven of his other logging companies which denuded forests in Palawan, Samar, Bukidnon, Butuan and Cebu.

Isidro, son of Marcos crony David Consunji, is currently the biggest logging capitalist in the country. He inherited the DMCI Holdings, Inc. which operates in more than 102,954 hectares of forests in 10 municipalities across



South Central Mindanao. Large-scale mining companies also operate in these areas.

Duterte continues to promote logging the export of timber by allowing plunderous logging operations across the country despite the massive destruction these cause to the environment. The Philippines has exported 878,664 tons of lumber from 2016 to 2019. Almost 90% of exports went to China (81%) and Japan (18%). From 2011 to 2015, the country also exported almost 1.6 million tons of lumber. The aforementioned figures excludes the hundreds of millions of exported processed wood products such as plywood and furniture among others, and lumber extracted through rampant illegal logging operations. **AB**

## Bogus reforestation program

THE REACTIONARY STATE has no genuine plan to rehabilitate forests in the country. Its National Greening Program (NGP) is merely a scheme for massive contract growing of commercial timber that are mostly invasive and endanger biodiversity. Local politicians from the big landlord class and their agroforestry business counterparts mainly benefit from contracts awarded under the NGP.

Majority of trees planted in NGP areas are exotic. This include fast-growing commercial trees such as mahogany, falcata, rubber, and export-crops such as coffee and cacao.

The so-called reforestation scheme of the NGP goes against the advice of the scientific community that calls for the planting of trees that are endemic in local forests. The same products are among the country's top agricultural exports.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources itself touted that it is expecting to harvest tons of falcata timber in approximately 79 hectares of NGP plantations and generate a P31.6 billion profit for its contractors. Worse, the NGP is also being utilized by the state to evict farmers and indigenous peoples from their communities and ancestral lands in mountainous areas.

# The fishing sector during the pandemic and fascist lockdown

Even prior to the onslaught of successive typhoons, the fishing sector has already been ravaged by the Covid-19 pandemic and the Duterte regime's failed response. The public health crisis aggravated the livelihood crisis shouldered by one of the poorest sectors of society. Due to lockdown restrictions which limited their livelihood, their conditions further deteriorated. There are 1.7 million registered fisherfolk in the Philippines.

Lockdown restrictions included the "no sail zone" arbitrarily imposed by the Philippine Coast Guard on March 16 in major fishing areas in Metro Manila and adjacent regions. The fisherfolk vehemently opposed the restriction as it adversely affected their livelihood and could have weakened the country's food security. Fishing does not involve congregating people, hence the restriction was unjustifiable. After several days, the state rescinded the order.

Despite allowed to fish, they found it hard to sell their produce as mass transportation was suspended. They could not transport their catch to fishports and trading posts. In Sorsogon, Camarines Sur and Misamis Oriental, hundreds of kilos of fish were left unsold. Seaweed farmers in Coron, Palawan were not able to sell their products as well. Some local governments, such as Sorsogon, took proactive measures to save the fisherfolk by directly buying directly their catch. This, however, was not the case in most areas across the country.

## Insufficient aid, if not none at all

The livelihoods of fisherfolk were severely affected by the pandemic. Their income decreased from ₱300 to ₱500 during normal days under good weather conditions, to just ₱150 at present.

Despite this, many fishing villages were only able to receive aid three times in three months under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ). Each relief pack was estim-

ated to be worth ₱200-₱300, consisting of three kilos of rice and few canned goods. On average, each fishing family only received aid worth ₱6,500, or an average of ₱100/day from mid-March to May.

There are no reports on how the ₱3-billion agricultural aid appropriated to the Department of Agriculture (DA) was distributed. Neither was it ever mentioned if it covered the fishing sector. What is clear, however, is that not a single cent reached fisherfolk. Last October, the DA announced that ₱96.53 million was available for farmers and fisherfolk, not as aid, but as loan.

Fish production dropped by 3.2% during the first quarter. The DA's pandemic program dubbed the "Ahon Lahat, Pagkaing Sapat (ALPAS) Laban sa Covid-19" only focused on transporting produce to markets, and not on how to strengthen production. No support is given to farmers and fisherfolk to ensure that they are able to produce enough for local markets. The

fisherfolk demand a ₱15,000-subsidy to secure their livelihoods as their jobs are crucial to ensuring the country's food supply.

## Neoliberal schemes

The Duterte regime railroaded the passage and implementation of projects that will pave the way for massive demolition amid the lockdown and strict implementation of the stay-at-home policy. This includes the San Miguel Corporation's franchise application to build the Aerotropolis Project in Bulacan which already hurdled the congress and senate. Fishing areas in Cavite were also fenced to pave the way for the Manila Bay reclamation project. The pandemic has failed to stop the privatization of Manila Bay, which includes the dumping of dolomite at a portion of the shoreline along Roxas Boulevard.

The DA used the drop in fishing production last quarter to justify the liberalization of fish importation. It plans to import 400,000 metric tons of scad, *tilapia* and other fish products purportedly to counter the shortage and stabilize fish prices. Importation is the usual the regime's answer to the acute and systematic agricultural crisis in the Philippines. AB



# Duterte's war against children

The Duterte regime failed to protect children's welfare and rights. In the past four years, child conditions have worsened from an already miserable one. Children are among the most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the regime's failure to open schools safely.

They are targets of the sham war against drugs in cities and the counterinsurgency war in the countryside. They have no protection against various types of violence inside their homes and abuses perpetrated by adults and the ruling system.

More than this, they are victims of the semicolonial and semifeudal system which trap millions in poverty. According to latest government statistics, a third of the 40 million children in the country, aged 15 below, lived in poverty in 2015. More than 2 million are forced to work fulltime to augment their parents' incomes. Around one and a half million are neglected or abandoned.

## State terrorism

From April to October this year, at least 34 children, aged 17 and below, were victimized by units of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police in the course of the implementation of Duterte's dirty war in the countryside. Three children were killed by soldiers and five more were nearly killed in cases of indiscriminate firing and soldiers who run amok. The regime is also responsible for the death of the 3-month old infant River Nasino, who was kept away from her political detainee mother.

According to documentation by the Children's Rehabilitation Center, 18 children were killed in Mindanao, Negros, Bicol and Samar during AFP combat operations. The victims include 15-year old Jhun

Mark Acto who was shot by soldiers of the 39th IB, and then presented as a member of the New People's Army in Davao del Sur. Two children were among those massacred by soldiers and landlord guards in Sagay, Negros Occidental.

Reports indicate that 176 out of 228 Lumad schools were harassed and shut down by the military and its paramilitaries in Mindanao as of October. This has forced more than 5,500 students to drop out this school year.

## War against children

In cities, at least nine children were killed by police and the regime's death squads in the course of "anti-drug" operations from January to June this year. From July 2016 to December 2019, 122 children were killed. Of all the documented cases, only the murder of Kian delos Santos, the 54th child victim, made it to courts only because the crime was caught on video. Many orphaned children have been forced to beg on the streets or work fulltime after their parents or carers were killed in this war.

Worse, the regime justifies the killing of children by calling their deaths collateral damage.

Many are accused of drug peddling for syndicates, to justify their killing or detention in crammed jails and facilities. In 2018, the regime even attempted to railroad a bill which aims to lower the age of criminal liability from 15 years old to 12 or even 9 arguing that children "already know what they are doing" at that age.

## Lockdown abuses and oppression

Another group recorded 15 cases of child killing by police forces under the lockdown. These cases include that of a 15-year old girl who was raped by a police personnel in Ilocos Sur. She was killed in an ambush by two other police officers while on her way home with her cousin after reporting the said rape case at a police precinct.

Child oppression intensified under the pandemic lockdown. Most affected are children in urban poor communities who were forced to stay in crammed and humid houses. One of the worst effects of Duterte's lockdown is the rise in online child prostitution and sexual exploitation. From March 1 to May 24, cases of child sexual abuse rose by 364% compared to last year. Half of the victims were prostituted by their own parents or guardians to pedophiles in the US, Canada, Europe and Australia. AB



—IN—SHORT



**₱135 billion**

spent on **6,000 infrastructure projects** in the **past 4 years** that are still unfinished due to **corruption**.

**₱83 billion**

**undistributed DSWD funds** intended for **pandemic** and **calamity victims**.

This includes **₱1.5 billion** disbursed under **Bayanihan 1** and **2**.

**11.5%**

decline in **gross domestic product** during the **third quarter** of the year, prior to the **onslaught** of **successive typhoons**



**₱5 B**

**measly budget** earmarked by **Duterte** for the **rehabilitation of Marawi**. At least **₱70 billion** is needed to fully rehabilitate the city and **ensure the return of residents** to their homes. In **2020**, the government only appropriated **₱3.5 billion** for the said program.

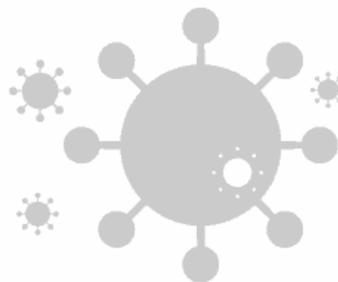
**1.9 M**  
**(1 out of 10)**

**positions** in the **civil bureaucracy** is **unoccupied**, while **joblessness** is high and **government agencies** are in need of **manpower** to boost **public services**.



**₱3.6 T**

estimated value of damage caused by the **Covid-19 pandemic** and **successive typhoons** in **2020**.

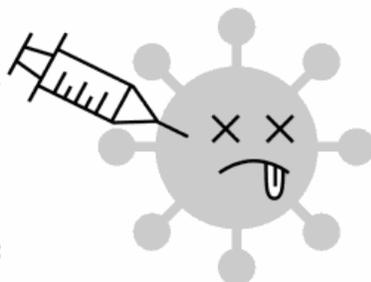


**1 out of 5**

**patients** infected with **Covid-19** experience **mental health problems** for **90 days** after **recovering**. Most of them suffer from **anxiety, depression** and **insomnia**.

**94.5% and 95%**

**effectiveness** of **vaccines** against **Covid-19** being experimented by pharmaceutical companies **Pfizer/BioNTech** and **Moderna**. **Pfizer** requested a permit from the **US government** to vaccinate a **limited group of people** this month.



## Soldiers kill farmer; arrest 16 others

A FARMER WAS killed and 16 others were arbitrarily arrested by elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the past few weeks.

**Killing.** Elements of the 85th IB killed copra farmer and peasant leader Armando Buisan in Barangay Santa Maria, Catanauan, Quezon on November 14. Buisan, 60, was a resident of Sitio Luyahan, Barangay Magsaysay, General Luna and served as the chairperson of the Coco Levy Fund Ibalik sa Amin in the said town.

Buisan was at the forefront of the struggle of copra farmers for nearly three decades. Before the killing, his organization demanded an increase in the farmgate price of copra, and emergency aid from the government following the series of typhoons which hit the Bondoc Peninsula.

**Strafing and arrest.** Operating troopers of the 58th IB indiscriminately strafed and arrested six farmers, including three minors, at Sitio Lanesehon, Barangay Bunal, Salay, Misamis Oriental on November 1.

The victims were on their way to their farm when they were strafed by the soldiers. The victims were de-

tained at a military camp in the said village. In the same evening, 58th IB commander Lt. Col. Canatoy coerced the victims to sign a document stating that they were not maltreated by the soldiers. The victims refused to do so.

In the same evening, another civilian was reportedly mauled by soldiers in Barangay Tingalan, Opol in the same province.

In Leyte, soldiers of the 93rd IB and 802nd Brigade arrested seven siblings at Sitio Utap, Barangay Canlampay, Carigara on November 13. Five of the victims are minors and one was sick. They were nabbed when soldiers raided their house. Their mother, Nora Dionelda, was arrested just because she was suspected of being a wife of a Red fighter. They were detained overnight along with 11 other male residents. Dionelda and his eldest son Ernie are still under detention.



In Negros Occidental, two farmers and members of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas were arrested by the 94th IB at Sitio Basak, Barangay Buenavista, Himamaylan City on November 19. They were accused of being members of the Red army and slapped with trumped up charges of illegal possession of firearms. They are currently detained at the Himamaylan City Police Station.

Meanwhile, 20 youth volunteers and members of Anakbayan were arrested by police elements in Vente Reales, Valenzuela City on November 17. They were arrested while conducting a feeding program for purportedly violating lockdown protocols. AB

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## Attacks against journalists

TWO JOURNALISTS WERE killed, four were arrested, and another was red-tagged by state forces in the past two weeks.

Soldiers of the 2nd IB gunned down writer Ronnie Villamor in Barangay Matanglad, Masbate on Nobyembre 14. He was in the area to cover a case of land grabbing by businessman Randy Favis. He was stopped at a military checkpoint and was shot. The military, however, made it appear that he was killed in an encounter.

On November 10, writer and journalist Virgilio Maganes was gunned down in Barangay San Blas, Villasis, Pangasinan. He was a sur-

vivor of a killing attempt by suspected state agents in 2016.

On the same day, police arrested broadcasters Virgilio Avila Jr. and Mia Concordia in Camarines Norte after being charged with cyberlibel by Gov. Edgardo Tallado. They were released after posting bail amounting to to ₱400,000. The governor also charged journalist Deo Trinidad.

Cyberlibel cases were also used against broadcasters Jun Digamon who was arrested in Davao City on

November 13 and Leonardo Hijara in Surigao del Sur during the same week.

Meanwhile, the regime maliciously linked Inquirer correspondent and National Union of Journalists in the Philippines director Nestor Burgos Jr. to the revolutionary movement on November 5. Burgos is currently based in Iloilo City.

The Philippines is considered the seventh worst country for journalists based on the 2020 Global Impunity Index published by the Committee to Protect Journalists on October 28. AB

## **2 Aetas, first victims under terror law**

THE NATIONAL UNION of People's Lawyers (NUPL) disclosed to the Supreme Court on November 17 the first case in which the Anti-Terror Law (ATL) was used against innocent civilians. Two Aetas, Jasper Gurung and Junior Ramos, were baselessly accused by the 7th ID of violating Section 4 (participating in activities intended to cause death or serious physical harm) of the said law earlier in September. The victims have been detained since August, along with two other Aetas, after being charged with trump up charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives. They were arrested while fleeing military bombing and abuses in their village

According to NUPL, the 7th ID filed the case against the civilians in retaliation for an ambush by the New People's Army against its unit last August 21 wherein one soldier was killed. The case proves how the ATL can be used to twist evidences and tag government critics and oppositionists as "terrorists."

Meanwhile, under the guise of combatting "terrorism," the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) froze the assets of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP) deposited in 22 bank accounts. The AMLC illegally froze the said bank accounts from December 2019 to October this year in compliance with a petition submitted by the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency.

## **Australia's war crimes in Afghanistan**

AUSTRALIAN DEFENSE FORCE Chief Gen. Angus Campbell admitted on November 17 that soldiers of the Special Air Service (SAS) of Australia were involved in the brutal killings of 39 civilians in Afghanistan from 2005 to 2016. An investigation clarified that the victims were all prisoners and farmers, and not combatants.

Information on the case was divulged after the result of a four-year investigation by an Australian judge was published. The cases include killings perpetrated as part of the "bleeding" tradition of the SAS wherein newly deployed soldiers in Afghanistan are made to kill prisoners. It was also revealed that the soldiers were involved in planting guns and radios to make it appear that the victims were killed in legitimate encounters. The federal police of Australia is currently investigating 19 soldiers involved in the said atrocities.

Australia is among the countries which have occupied Afghanistan since 2001 as part of the US' war of aggression which was launched in the guise of "war on terror." Until today, Australian forces, along with thousands of US troops, still occupy the country.

## **Fascists besiege Bukidnon and Lanao Sur**

MORE THAN 900 soldiers of the 82nd IB, 51st IB, 58th IB, 1st Special Forces Battalion and Scout Rangers besieged villages along the boundary of Talakag, Bukidnon and Tagoloan II, Lanao del Sur on October 15-21.

Soldiers aboard five military trucks and two armored personnel carrier (APC) attacked barangays San Rafael, Lemonsudan and Kibulag in Talakag on October 15. The soldiers installed two cannons in the area. On the next day in Tagoloan II, 16 military trucks, along with two APCs carrying two cannons, entered Barangay Pinilayan. This was followed by soldiers aboard four trucks and eight trucks carrying military suppliers the next day.

After a week, the 5th IB also laid siege on several villages in the town of Maquing, Lanao del Sur for three days. Soldiers indiscriminately fired a 60mm cannon. They also coerced residents to surrender.

Soldiers aboard five KM35 trucks and 10 vehicles returned to Barangay Lemonsudan on October 31. They served as security escorts of the mayor of Talakag and Communications Sec. Martin Andanar.

## **Senate increases AFP budget**

THE BUDGET FOR the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) for 2021 was increased from ₱208.7 billion to ₱215 billion during a Senate hearing for the proposed budget last November 20. The Senate particularly increased funding for AFP modernization from ₱25 billion to ₱83 billion (₱58-billion increase).

The Senate also increased the AFP's "unprogrammed" funds by ₱5 billion. The said fund is comparable to the congressional pork barrel. It increased the budget for the procurement of two war planes by ₱2 billion; and another ₱2 billion for the procurement of war matériel for the 11th ID. Under this, ₱800 million is earmarked for the purchase of bombs and ammunition of war planes and helicopters. Another ₱190 million is earmarked as "support" funds for the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict. This is despite mounting calls to defund the said task force and realign its budget for aid programs and rehabilitation for typhoon and pandemic victims.