



EDITORIAL

Decisive battle against Duterte's tyranny in 2022

A decisive battle between the Duterte tyranny and the Filipino people is set to erupt in the coming months. The evil forces of tyranny and fascist terrorism are quickly consolidating, on the one hand, while on the other, the broad ranks of people's progressive and democratic forces against tyranny are coming together. Whatever outcome of this battle will surely bring the ruling political system to even deeper crisis.

This battle presently centers on the presidential elections this coming May and Duterte's end of term as president. In the coming five months, all political forces are set to vigorously push to attain their objectives.

The Duterte, Marcos and Arroyo alliance of tyrants presently dominates the electoral battle because they wield power. They control the military and police that are used to harass, intimidate and suppress the anti-tyranny forces. Majority of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) officials were

appointed and in Duterte's hands. He also controls the automated counting system used in 2019 to install his minions in the Congress and Senate.

Above all, the Duterte-Marcos-Arroyo alliance controls gargantuan amounts of wealth and state resources. The Marcoses are pouring billions of their ill-gotten wealth plundered during the dictatorship to buy the loyalty of politicians, pay for their rallies and motorcades, dominate mass media advertisements, and overwhelm social media to create the illusion of widespread

support. Funds are also pouring from big businesses who once partnered with the dictatorship, as well as from big bourgeois compradors who fear reprisals under the scenario of the Marcoses dominating the elections.

The tyrants are now in a united alliance, even if there is undeniable rifts among them. Duterte continues to use threats of disqualification against Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to wring out bigger concessions and assurances of protection. Duterte has already demonstrated that there are no limits to his avarice for power and wealth, thus, it would come as no surprise if he will betray Marcos and support whoever will bow to his dictates.

The various anti-Duterte parties failed to unite and select a united ticket. Leading the biggest opposi-

tion parties is Leni Robredo of the Liberal Party, although she has yet to show her capacity to lead and unite the people. It does not help her chances of winning that she has distanced herself from the national democratic parties and organizations who are among the most reliable forces fighting Duterte's tyranny and have an electoral mass base of a few million votes.

The opposition forces must continue to build their alliance. However, even if there is no formal coalition or electoral alliance, the opposition forces must forge the broadest movement to counter the restoration of the Marcoses to

power and the perpetration of the Duterte dynasty--a movement against the fascists, plunderers and liars. They must unite in efforts to ensure that ballots are counted right and resist any attempt to steal the election results. They must be ready to rise and act upon the exposure of the widespread electoral cheating of the Marcoses and Dutertes.

The national democratic parties and organizations must unite the leading anti-tyranny parties and urge them to support the patriotic and democratic demands. Among this is the demand for justice for the thousands of victims of the

sham "war on drugs," the release of all political prisoners, wage increases, land for the tillers, an end military dominance in government and society, serious peace negotiations and putting a stop to the war against civilians in the form of military and police occupation of villages, forced "surrenders," and aerial bombing and shelling.

While advancing the political struggles in the cities and countryside, the revolutionary armed struggle must be strengthened to resist the fascist attacks against the masses and carry forward the democratic struggles of the peasant masses.

The New People's Army (NPA) must exert all effort to extend and intensify guerrilla warfare on the basis of a deepening and widening mass base, in order to frustrate the declared objective of the AFP to crush the armed struggle before the end of Duterte's term.

In the coming months, the AFP will definitely carry out large-scale military offensives against NPA units. The fascist terrorism of military and police officers makes the justness of bearing arms and joining the armed struggle ever clear to the people.

The NPA must continue to raise its capacity in guerrilla maneuvers and methods of work to deny the enemy of a target while strengthening, recruiting new Red fighters, expanding its territory, establishing new mass organizations, consolidating guerrilla fronts and opening new fronts, and launching tactical offensives with certain success.

For the Party, the coming months will serve as a fitting opportunity to widely rouse, organize and mobilize the Filipino people. The Party must firmly lead the people's struggles and armed resistance to further expand and strengthen. The upcoming anniversary of the Party will serve as occasion to prepare our minds and strengthen our ranks to shoulder the ever arduous tasks as we march forward along the difficult path of struggles.

AB



ANG Bayan

Vol. LII No. 24 | December 21, 2021

Ang Ang Bayan is published in Pilipino, Bisaya, Iloko, Hiligaynon, Waray, English and Spanish. 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

Demands for livelihood and human rights in 2021

In 2021, democratic organizations sustained their demands for the reactionary state to provide adequate aid to all sectors affected by the economic crisis and pandemic. In May, they established the Ayuda Network which spearheaded the campaign to call on Congress to ensure the allocation of adequate funds for aid. Part of the said network is the 10K Ayuda Network of the urban poor sector with around 200,000 members.

Since February, various groups mounted more than 30 picket protests in front the Congress, in Mendiola in Manila, and in front of various government agencies to demand aid. Similar campaigns and mass actions were also mounted in other regions. In the enacted national budget for 2022, only ₱5 billion was allocated for economic aid, far lower compared to the ₱206.7-billion budget for aid in 2020.

The major mass actions this year also focused on the demand for aid. These include the rallies during Duterte's last SONA, Women's Day in March, Peasant Day in October, Andres Bonifacio's birth anniversary on November 30, and the International Human Rights Day on December 10 with more than 5,000 participants.

Since February, for seven days in 17 weeks, seven lawyers representing 37 petitions against the Anti-Terrorism Law fought for the repeal of the said law. During the hearings, petitioners and democratic groups mounted pickets in front of the court. Groups also protested in July to mark the first anniversary of the repressive law.

Nearly seven months after the first hearing, the Supreme Court issued a decision in favor of the said law, excluding two minor provisions.

In the entire year, democratic groups kept up the call to dis-

mantle or defund the NTF-Elcac, Duterte's civil-military junta. Successive pickets were mounted in front of the Senate and Congress in September during the deliberation of the national budget. From the ₱28-billion budget proposal for the said task force, the allocation was initially slashed to ₱4 billion. In the final budget however, the agency was allocated ₱17.1 billion, nearly the same amount as its ₱19-billion budget this year.

Progressive groups criticized the NTF-Elcac and its red-tagging and suppression campaign against them. Starkest of the atrocities caused by this campaign is the killing of nine activists and arrest of six others by state forces in Southern Tagalog on March 7.

Sectoral struggles

In 2021, Ang Bayan was able to document more than 500 protests across the country. The highest number of protests were mounted in Metro Manila, followed by Southern Tagalog. Protests were also continuously mounted in various cities including Baguio, Angeles in Pampanga, Naga in

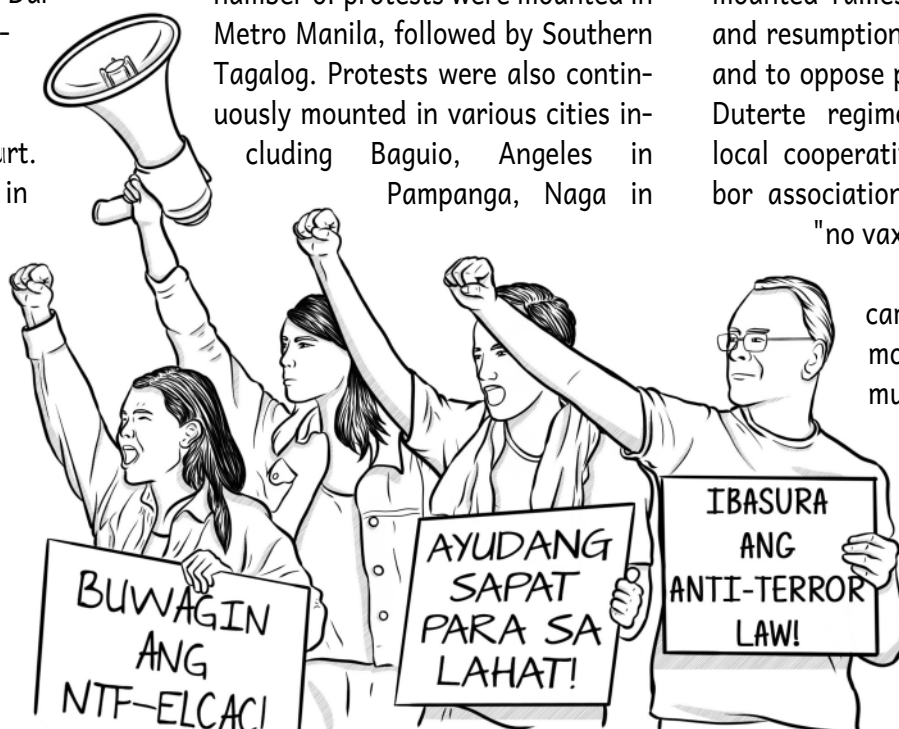
Camarines Sur, Calamba in Laguna, Bacolod in Negros Occidental, Iloilo, Cebu, and Davao.

Notably, health workers spearheaded by the Alliance of Health Workers mounted at least 25 walk-out protests and pickets to demand benefits and protection of their welfare. Youth groups and teachers also protested to demand the safe reopening of schools. Similarly, farmers in Southern Tagalog, Central Luzon and Cagayan Valley held a caravan in Metro Manila to demand genuine agrarian reform and aid.

There were also protests against continuing extrajudicial killings under the bogus "war on drugs," and to push for the conviction of Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court. The said court formally opened in June the investigation on Duterte's crimes against humanity.

Protests were also mounted to oppose oil price increases and skyrocketing prices, demolition, and climate change. Progressive groups also demanded to increase the salary of teachers and government employees, and to end contractualization. Groups also continuously mounted rallies for academic ease and resumption of public transport, and to oppose privatization and the Duterte regime's attacks against local cooperatives. Unions and labor associations also opposed the "no vax, no work" scheme.

Community-based campaigns were also mounted against the multimillion reclamation projects in Manila City, Davao City and Cebu, and against offshore mining in Cagayan Valley and Pangasinan. AB



Groups oppose court decision upholding ATL

Around 5,000 marched in the University of the Philippines (UP)-Diliman on December 10 to mark the International Human Rights Day. Protesters condemned the Supreme Court decision on December 7 which upheld majority of the provisions of the Anti-Terror Law (ATL) despite numerous petitions calling for the junking of the law.

Before the march, the petitioners' lawyers held a press conference at the university. They expressed their dismay over the Supreme Court decision upholding the ATL except for two minor provisions. The court struck down a part of Section 4 for being "violative of freedom of expression," and the Section 25 which allows the Anti-Terrorism Council to designate groups as terrorists per request by other jurisdictions or supranational jurisdictions.

"We don't have a win there," said Atty. Evalyn Ursua, one the petitioners' lawyers, pertaining to two small provisions declared "unconstitutional" by the court. She said that there are more provisions which are far more dangerous and should have been nullified by the Supreme Court. These include the overbroad definition of "terrorism," the absolute powers given to the Anti-Terrorism Council, detention without charges of suspected terrorists for up to 24 days, unilateral freezing of bank accounts without due process, and many others. "The entire law should have been voided," said Rep. Edcel Lagman.

During the march after the press conference, the rallyists called the Duterte-Marcos tandem a "terror team" which is set to sow terror across the country. "

"The Filipino people have suffered six years of state terror, violence, and repression," said Cristina Palabay of Karapatan. "We cannot let another six years of the

same deadly campaign to continue."

Similar protests were also mounted in other parts of the country. In Baguio City, rallyists marched from Session Road to Malcolm Square where a program was held. Activists and their supporters also rallied in Naga City, along with their supporters from other districts of Camarines Sur. In Cebu City, progressive groups mounted a picket in front of the headquarters of the Philippine National Police Region 8 at Osmeña Boulevard before heading to Colon St. In Bacolod, Negrenses marched from Lupit Church to the Bacolod Plaza. In Panay, an activity was held at the Sunburst



Plaza in Iloilo City. Progressives also held a program in Davao City.

Various forms of protests were also mounted across the country. Students of the Central Luzon State University held a candle-lighting ceremony in front of the university on December 9. In Tumauni, Isabela, peasant organizations Amihan and Dagami filed a petition for the local government to probe into abuses perpetrated by the 95th IB and 86th IB.

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Thousands of Lumads evacuate due to bombing

THOUSANDS OF LUMADS or 260 families from the barangays of Napnapon, Damulol, Mina, Badiangon and Tibuhol in Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat hurriedly evacuated, unable to bring anything with them, after indiscriminate military bombing and shelling in nearby areas.

On December 9, 5:15 a.m., at least six huge bombs were dropped by two FA-50 fighter jets along the Napnapon River in Barangay Napnapon. At least seven soldiers, including an officer, were killed after being hit by their own bombs. There was no NPA unit in the area when the bombing took place.

On the next day, the military shelled nearby areas 130 times. More than 400 soldiers were continuously deployed in batches by non-stop helicopters flights which disrupted peace in the area.

To defend the masses, the NPA mounted two harassment operations in barangays Napnapon and Mina on December 15 and 16. One soldier was killed and two others were wounded.

Court dismisses case of "traveling skeletons"

The court dismissed on December 16 a criminal case regarding the alleged killing of individuals in the 1980s and the alleged burying of their cadavers in a mass grave in Inopacan, Leyte. In the decision, the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 32 granted the demurrers to evidence used to charge Satur Ocampo, Rafael Baylosis, Adelberto Silva, Norberto Murillo, Dario Tomada, Oscar Belleza, Exuperio Lloren and Vicente Ladlad.

On top of this, the court also dismissed similar charges against Benito and Wilma Tiamzon, Lino Salazar, Presillano Beringel, Luzviminda Orillo, Muco Lubong and Felix Dumali. Thirty-eight individuals were charged in connection with this case. The court ordered the immediate release of all individuals detained based on this case.

According to the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers, the court dismissed the trumped-up charges because the prosecutors failed to prove the primary crime of murder of the 15 individuals. It said that the prosecutors failed to scientifically prove that the skeletal remains belong to the alleged victims. It added that the court found infirmities to the testimonies of "witnesses."

The case started in 2006 when a soldier under the 43rd IB claimed that "noises" he heard in Mt. Sapang Dako are that of "ghosts" of individuals who were allegedly slain by the people's army two decades ago. This "haunting" led the soldiers to dig an area where they allegedly discovered the skeletal remains of "15 individuals."

The said "exhumed" skeletal remains were used earlier in a similar case also dismissed by the Leyte Regional Trial Court. In the said case, the skeletal remains were allegedly "exhumed" in Barangay Monterico, Baybay, Leyte in June 2000. The alleged victims include Concepcion Aragon, Juanita Aviola and Gregorio Eras—the same persons whose skeletal remains were also "exhumed" in Inopacan in 2006. Because of this, the case was dubbed as a case of "traveling skeletons."

NPA seizes 3 pistols in Surigao del Sur

THE NEW PEOPLE'S Army (NPA)-Surigao del Sur was able to seize three pistols in an ambush against soldiers in Barangay San Vicente, Madrid on December 15. The soldiers were aboard an Isuzu pick-up when they were ambushed. The NPA belied claims by the military that the soldiers were deployed in the area to facilitate preemptive evacuation of residents and distribute relief goods in preparation for the typhoon Odette.

Unfortunately, two motorcycle-riding civilians were injured as they were hit when they overtook the soldiers' vehicle. The responsible NPA unit issued an apology to the victims' families for this weakness and offered to indemnify them.



Hospital union wins certification election. The San Lazaro Hospital Employees Association-Alliance of Health Workers won in the certification elections in the hospital in Manila City on December 7. Health workers voted in favor of the union to represent them in negotiations with the management.

Productive CBA to benefit Daiwa workers in Laguna. Workers of Daiwa were able to assert their demands in the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between the Malayang Unyon sa Daiwa-Olalia KMU and the management on December 7. They agreed to increase workers' wages and benefits. Daiwa Seiko Philippines Corporation in Cabuyao, Laguna manufactures motor parts.

Justice for Guinobatan 2. More than 500 Bicolanos attended a mass at Guinobatan Plaza, Albay on December 15 as part of the campaign to demand justice for Jaymar Palero and Marlon Napire, two peasant activists killed by the police on July 25 in Guinobatan. Both are members of a peasant organization in Albay. The mass was organized by the Justice for Guinobatan 2 Movement.

Demand to resume jeepney operations in Commonwealth, Quezon City. Jeepney drivers and operators mounted a picket in front of the LTFRB in Quezon City on December 7 to demand the 100% resumption of jeepney operations in Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City, and demand the agency to recognize the legitimacy of their franchises. They also demanded a fuel subsidy in the face of continuing oil price hikes. Since 2020, more than 2,000 public utility vehicles have been prevented from plying this route.

Anti-reclamation caravan in Cebu. Hundreds of residents of Calajoan, Tungkil and Guindaruhan in Minglanilla, Cebu participated in a caravan last December 9 to fight the ongoing reclamation and quarrying operations in their areas. They strongly opposed the reclamation operations conducted by the Ming-Mori Development Corporation and Jomara Earthmoving and Development Corporation. They said that thousands are bound to lose their livelihood because of this project.

Costly and ill-prepared vaccination campaign

Vaccines are free but vaccination is not. There is no vaccination in the village where Aya lives, so she and her sister had to travel to the town center on November 30 to receive their jabs. It took here more than an hour to reach the nearest vaccination center. She and her sister had to spend ₱1,000 for transportation and food. They also have to spend more for the second vaccination. In her family, only four have been vaccinated due to lack of funds.

Aya is among the thousands who participated in the three-day national coordinated vaccination campaign on November 29 to December 1. The initial target of the campaign was to inoculate 15 million Filipinos, later decreased to 9 million due to shortages.

At the town center in South Cotabato where Aya went, the campaign was clearly ill-prepared. There were not enough health workers although there were already volunteers from the private sector. In one vaccination center, more than 1,000 individuals lined up to get vaccinated. It only had 70 personnel, mostly Barangay Health Workers (BHW), along with three doctors and a few nurses. As a result, the inoculation program had to be extended to December 3.

"I wish that not only our working hours increased, but also our wages," said Myrna, a BHW who worked at the said vaccination center. BHWs receive a measly monthly compensation of ₱9,900. Their payouts are often delayed by months. They also do not receive benefits from PhilHealth and the Social Security System. They are not eligible to receive a special risk allowance even though they are frontliners and among those primarily exposed to the virus.

The salaries of nurses and midwives are also often delayed. They are supposed to receive ₱30,000 up to ₱50,000 monthly from the Department of Health (DOH). Due to insufficient budget allocated for them, there are no doctors in health centers, even in town centers. Nurses serve as doc-

tors in these areas, and only issue referrals when patients need to see a doctor.

The lack of personnel causes hardships and results in the slow vaccination, especially of workers. "In fact, I was apprehensive of getting vaccinated," said Hener. However, he had to get vaccinated as it was a requirement for work. "Although not mandated, we were practically obligated," he said. This was in compliance to the IATF Resolution-148B wherein employers were allowed to require their workers to get vaccinated, and unvaccinated workers were compelled to undergo Covid-19 tests weekly using their own funds. The cheapest test costs ₱2,500.

On the other hand, employers are not complying with other policies issued by the IATF such as the granting of leave of absence to workers scheduled to be vaccinated. "I am not likely going to be vaccinated today," said Hener. He was only allowed to leave work for a day by his supervisor. "It's so difficult to request for a leave of absence," he added. "For sure, tomorrow, I will be marked absent for not going to work today. On top of hunger and

the costly vaccination, the 'no work, no pay' scheme further burdens me."

Although thousands have lined up to get vaccinated, the large majority of residents in South Cotabato are still unvaccinated. The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, where the province is located, recorded the lowest vaccination rate across the country.

Many residents are worried of possible adverse effects of vaccines to their bodies. This apprehension was caused by widespread disinformation on social media. This apprehension can easily be dispelled through a widespread information campaign regarding the science of vaccines. The government can also encourage residents to get inoculated by bringing vaccination centers near their communities, instead of obliging them to spend for transportation and queue for long hours.

The inadequate facilities and medical personnel is a manifestation of the Duterte regime's criminal neglect for the health sector which was further aggravated by the pandemic. This year, it only allocated ₱4.8 million for the Health Facilities Enhancement Program for the construction of health infrastructures and medical equipment. It also slashed by 2.6% the budget for health workers and support to operations of DOH hospitals. AB



Government evades responsibility

After months of demanding the safe reopening of schools, students were elated with the decision of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to reopen classrooms in January 2022 for in-person or face-to-face (F2F) classes. Aside from medical courses, students in other programs in other colleges will now also be allowed to conduct face-to-face classes.

On social media, students enthusiastically recalled happy memories with their classmates. Many posted videos and pictures which portray happy memories taken years prior to the closure of schools. Their excitement ranges from their desire to once again hail public vehicles or wear their uniforms, to their wish to break free from the hardships caused by online learning.

Some students of the University of the Philippines-Manila (UPM) who were able to attend limited face-to-face classes this year said that this helped to improve their mental health. "Simply asking my seatmate to repeat what the teacher said, if she was able to finish her assignments, or share some information made me a thousand times happier," said one student studying Bachelor of Science in Public Health (BPH). She added that this process helps her better understand the theories that were discussed during online classes.

Majority of the programs that were initially allowed to conduct face-to-face classes this year are those that require the use of laboratories, or medical internship. According to another BPH student, the practical skills they learned are crucial to their studies, and can only be acquired through in-person learning.

Contrary to the excitement of students is the disinterest of the national government to reopen classrooms. When it finally pushed to reopen classrooms, it still evaded its responsibility to

ensure safety. What the CHED only did was to issue some guidelines on what to do and avoid, not for the agency, but for universities and their students.

Among the requisites imposed by CHED was the vaccination of all those who will participate in face-to-face classes. Only weeks prior to the opening of the semester in January 2022, approximately half of the 4 million enrolled college students were yet to be vaccinated. According to ACT Teachers Party, obligatory vaccination and the "no vaccine, no work/salary/face-to-face classes" schemes violate human rights.

The government also has no plans to provide free Covid-19 tests for students.

Colleges and universities were also tasked to retrofit school facilities by themselves in compliance to health standards including social distancing, ventilation, handwashing and others.

Meanwhile, in the national budget for 2022, the budget for state universities and colleges was slashed by 17% from ₱85.95 billion

to ₱71.2 billion. CHED reasoned out that school retrofitting does not require to construct additional classrooms. The commission ordered the adoption of the mode of learning in the United Kingdom wherein students are only required to go to class for four days, and attend 10-17 hours of online classes. But unlike in the Philippines, testing in the UK is free and easily accessible to all students.

The government also neglected the welfare of those who already started attending face-to-face classes. In UPM, many students who attended these classes were forced to drop out due to lack of funds. The government did not provide any assistance for accommodation, transportation or subsidy for students, especially those from far-flung areas.

Recently, CHED practically abandoned all responsibility by announcing that colleges and universities are no longer required to apply for the resumption of face-to-face classes.

The head of the commission will be met with the eagerness of students to demand the safe reopening classes. The UPM students who were interviewed said that they will continue to push and look for better options for their classmates and the entire sector.



— IN — SHORT

\$1,000
per second

profit accumulated by **Pfizer**, **BioNTech** and **Moderna** this year from the **sales of vaccines against Covid-19**. These companies refused to share their vaccine recipes which could have paved the way for the manufacturing of more and cheaper vaccines by poor countries

Source: People's Vaccine Alliance

500+
million
people across the world were or pushed further

into **extreme poverty** as they are made to shoulder payments for health services from their own pockets even prior to the pandemic. This figure has certainly increased this year.

Source: World Health Organization

293 journalists were arrested

24 killed **66** disappeared

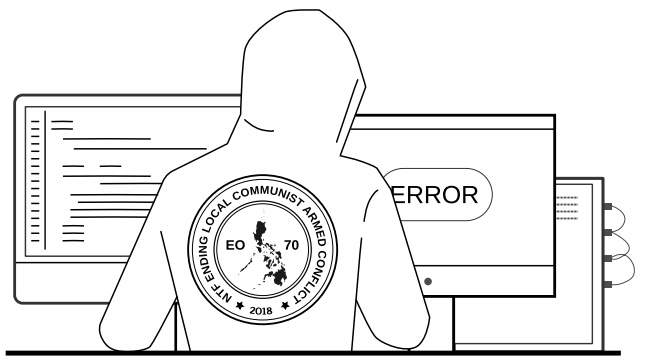
in various parts of the world in 2021. Arrested journalists include **Frenchie Mae Cumpio** of alternative news outfit Eastern Vista in Eastern Visayas.

Source: Committee to Protect Journalists

695MB
per second within 24 hours

flooded the **Philippine Revolution Web Central**, the Party's website, during the first week of November. The cyberattack aimed to deny the service of **PRWC**, and prevent the public from accessing the website.

The **NTF-Elcac** is behind these attacks against the PRWC. These attacks are continuing and blocks the operation of the website until today.



7 original disqualification cases were filed at the Comelec to block Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s

presidential bid in the 2022 elections.

Source: Comelec

Typhoon Odette
supertyphoon which hit

Visayas and **Northern Mindanao** on **December 17**. Initial reports indicate that the death toll has already reached 375. Damages caused by Odette is estimated to reach **₱5 billion**.



₱1 bilyon

worth of **meat, vegetables** and **fruits**

were **smuggled into the country** in **25** operations from **May** to **November 2021**. This resulted in worse bankruptcy among fisherfolk and farmers.

Source: Upisina ni Sen. Tito Sotto



Extreme inequality under capitalism

Bourgeois economists can not deny that extreme inequality between capitalists, on the one hand, and workers and oppressed peoples on the other, has worsened due to the unbridled concentration of capital on a worldwide scale. This has been more pronounced as the Covid-19 pandemic raged. While entire economies went under due to restrictions in mobility and production, the wealth of some capitalists who control international trade and finance have risen to unprecedented levels.

Extreme concentration of capital

The research entitled World Inequality Report 2022 mapped out the “persistence and mutations” of inequality in terms of income and wealth between nations, between people within nations, and between the public and private sector. Income pertains to wages or salary measured by day, month or year while wealth is the sum total of all properties having value.

From 1820 to 2020, the 10% wealthiest population cornered 40% to 60% of the world’s income while only 2% went to the 50% poorest. Inequality is even starker in terms of wealth. “Around 76% of the world’s wealth is in the hands of the 10% wealthiest,” according to the research. This has resulted in extreme concentration of capital, where 10% of the world’s richest hold up to 60%-80% of the world’s wealth while those of the 50% poorest hold “close to zero” capital. Even in capitalist centers, “middle class” wealth is cancelled by the

enormity of their debts.

In the last 40 years, the wealth of nations has increased but governments net wealth has declined. In many countries, governments hold very little wealth and are often mired in debt. This was clearly seen in 2020-2021 when governments had to borrow 10% up to 20% of their gross domestic product from private banks to sustain expenses in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

Rise of the billionaires

The top 1% held 38% of the world’s wealth from 1995 to 2021. During the same period, the poorest majority held only 2%. A smaller group of 0.1% regarded as the “super-rich” owned up to 11%.

The research pointed to the neo-liberal policies of widespread privatization and finance deregulation, combined with low taxation, since the 1980s as the main culprits behind this extreme concentration of capital. In 2021, there were 2,582

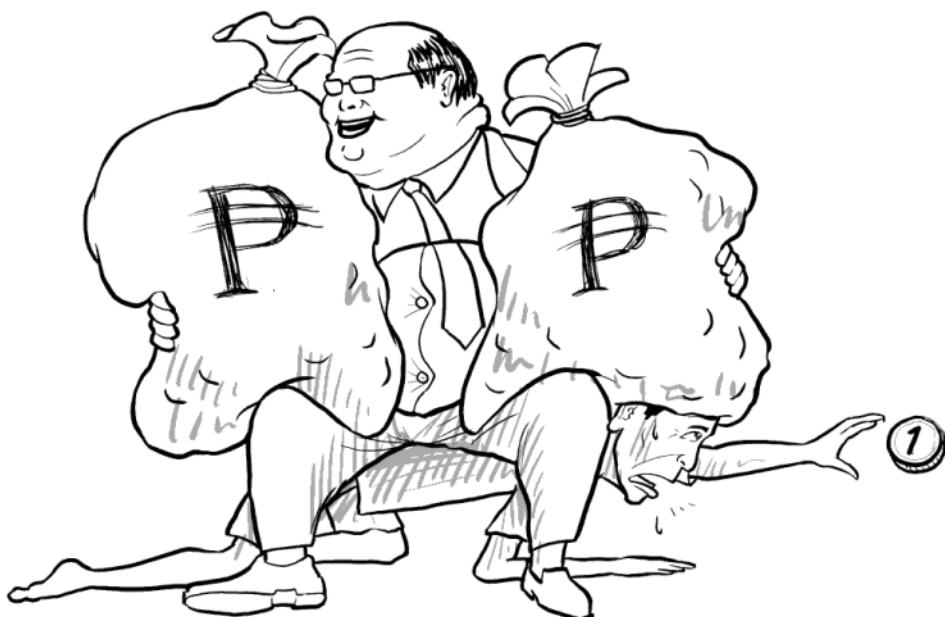
individuals worth \$1 billion and above. Nine of them are worth \$100 billion and above, or an average \$147 billion each—more than the entire Philippine national budget for 2022.

The pandemic is one of the times where billionaire wealth grew highest since capitalism came into existence. In the US, billionaire wealth grew by 60% (up to \$3 trillion) from March 2020 to October this year, according to another research. These billionaires flaunt their wealth by playing tourists in space, buying yachts and planes for “socially-distanced travels” and gambling unhindered in various stock markets around the world. (During the same period, 97 million were pushed into extreme poverty. Around 711 million will live in extreme poverty by the end of 2021, according to World Bank estimates.)

Filipino billionaires

In the Philippines, there are already 2,919 billionaires, mostly bourgeois-compradors. The 50 wealthiest among them are worth ₱10 billion-₱181 billion each. Seventeen of them are included in Forbes Magazine’s list of dollar billionaires. According to Forbes, the wealth of the 13 richest grew by 41% from March to September in 2020. This list includes Lucio Tan, whose wealth increased by ₱22 billion, despite his company, Philippine Airlines, declaring bankruptcy and firing its workers on this pretext.

According to research by the Ibon Foundation, the wealth of 40 Philippine compradors grew by 28% this year. Before this, their wealth grew by 400% from 2006 to 2019. On the other hand, the basic sectors’ real income only increased by 53% during the same period. Among 80% of Filipinos, the highest income is only ₱528,000 per year. AB



State forces kill 3 in Negros

TWO CIVILIANS AND a hors de combat Red fighter were killed by armed state agents in the island of Negros in the past two weeks. Meanwhile, a journalist was killed in Samar.

State forces abducted and tortured Red fighter Florida Ceballos (Ka Kelly) and her civilian companion on December 8 in Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental. Their cadavers were later surfaced by the 95th IB which claimed that these were recovered after an encounter.

Two gunmen killed Henry Hermoso, former barangay official, at his house in Barangay Puan, Villahermoso, Negros Oriental on December 8. The victims has long been subjected to harassment and red-tagging by the military which left him with no choice to often change residence.

Meanwhile, well-known journalist Jess Malabanan was slain in Calbayog City, Samar on December 8. Malabanan served as a correspondent for Reuters and covered the Duterte regime's "drug war." After receiving death threats, Reuters helped him temporarily relocate in Samar. He was a member of a journalist group in Pampanga.

Groups criticize Assange's impending extradition

THE RULING ISSUED on December 11 by the court in the United Kingdom which states that renowned journalist and WikiLeaks Founder Julian Assange can be extradited to the US was met widespread criticism. The request for extradition was initially rejected by a local court to protect Assange's mental health.

While hearing the case, Assange suffered a stroke at the Belmarsh Prison where he is currently detained in the UK. He will face a 175-year sentence if the extradition will push through.

The US slapped Assange with 18 criminal charges under the Espionage Act and Computer Fraud and Abuse Act for WikiLeaks' publication of thousands of classified documents and diplomatic documents, primarily in 2009 to 2010. The said reports exposed the crimes of US imperialism in various parts of the world, especially in its interventionist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Committee to Protect Journalism called the decision "a move that seriously damages journalism." It said that the decision "has set a legal precedent for prosecuting reporters."

Coercion of prisoner violates rules of war

KARAPATAN-SOUTHERN TAGALOG (ST) sounded an alarm regarding the condition of Justine Kate Raca, a prisoner of war held by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), detained for several days in the camp of the 3rd Marine Brigade in Barangay Tiniguiban, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan. Raca was arrested on December 10 after an encounter in Barangay Tinitian, in Roxas town.

Raca decided to surface before the media and surrender after losing contact with her unit and caught in the middle of focused military operations in the area. She did so fearing that the soldiers will not respect her human rights as an hors de combat fighter.

According Karapatan-ST, the military is violating Raca's human rights by detaining her at the military camp to coerce her to sign surrender documents and submit to the AFP schemes and programs. It is evident that she is being subjected to psychological torture to coerce her to agree to be detained indefinitely by the soldiers whom she fears. This treatment is a violation of the rights of prisoners of war or surrenderees under the International Humanitarian Law and Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

Workers form first Starbucks union in the US

WORKERS OF STARBUCKS, a chain of coffeehouses, formed their first union in the US on December 10 in Buffalo, New York.

They called the founding of the union "a major event in the history of the labor movement in the US." This was despite attempts by the company to prevent this effort from coming to fruition since the workers expressed their intent to unionize.

Anti-union tactics carried out by the management include the surveillance of workers in workplaces and during their meetings, and places, calling for meetings to directly call on workers to vote against the election of the union.

The founding of the union will greatly impact 394,000 Starbucks employees across the US and other parts of the world. This has proven the possibility of organizing a union in one of the most anti-union and wage repressive companies. In the US, the company continues to compensate workers with \$14 per hour, even as smaller companies have already increased the minimum wage to \$17 per hour.