



#### EDITORIAL

## Strive for greater unity to fight the US-Marcos regime II

**T**he Filipino people's unity must be further broadened to fight with determination the incoming US-Marcos regime II that will be established on the foundations of a rigged elections, ill-gotten wealth and historical revisionism.

Although not yet in power, the ruling Marcos-Duterte clique is already grossly isolated due to the Filipino people's extreme hatred of tyranny, corruption and oppression under their dynasties. The broad anti-Marcos-Duterte movement during the last elections must be more firmly united, expanded, strengthened and mobilized.

Marcos Jr.'s regime is set to be weak and unstable amid the worsening socioeconomic crisis, the people's heightening grievances, and intensifying rivalries among the ruling factions. As a result, it is bound to resort to political repression using the state's armed forces.

Thus, the Filipino people must strengthen their determination to stand and resist however difficult or long the coming struggle might be. The ranks of the different sectors, especially of the toiling masses who will serve as the unconquerable fort in the likely prolonged resistance.

Marcos Jr. will occupy the seat in Malacañang and lead the US neocolonial state. He will serve as the chief executive and defender of the ruling system and the interests of imperialist banks and companies in the Philippines, and those of the colluding ruling classes of big bourgeois compradors and big landlords, and their bureaucrat capitalist agents.

The ruling reactionary state is set to be ruled by Marcos Jr., son of the former dictator, whose gluttony was boundless under 14-years of plunder and corruption by his father and mother Imelda, is an indication of the ruling semicolonial and semifeudal system is worsening. Marcos Jr. is in partnership with Sara Duterte, daughter and perpetrator of the dynasty of the tyrant Rodrigo Duterte. Together with Gloria Arroyo, their clique represents the most fascist and insatiable of the ruling class factions.

The return of the Marcoses to power will undoubtedly bring greater suffering to the Filipino people. The estimated \$10-billion wealth plundered by the Marcoses under martial law will forever be taken away from the people. The Marcoses will bring bureaucrat capitalist corruption to

the hilt in their rush to accumulate greater wealth in the form of bribetaking and pocketing a percentage from government infrastructure projects. The Marcoses seek to perpetuate and expand their dynasty.

Marcos will take over power amid a grave crisis of the ruling system. After six years of rule, Duterte will leave a mountain of debt and a government bankrupted by corruption, military and police overspending and tax cuts for foreign corporations. Even now, there is talk of imposing new taxes to pay the debts that provided no benefit to the people. These plans bring greater burden on the people who already are suffering

from rising prices, low wages and lack of income.

Wielding power, Marcos will continue and heighten the campaign to distort history to cover up the crimes and plunder of the Marcoses under martial law and perpetuate the myth that these were "golden years" in the country's history. On September 21, exactly 50 years since martial law was declared, tens of thousands of people are bound to protest Marcos Jr.'s scheme to completely wipe away from the people's consciousness all memories of the dark days of fascist dictatorial rule.

Marcos Jr.'s reign is set to be a continuation of Duterte's tyranny

and a return to his father's dictatorship.

Behind the veil of "unity," Marcos Jr. aims to have absolute control of government and eliminate all forms of resistance to his rule.

He also wants oligarchs and rival factions of the ruling classes to bow to him. The senate and congress is expected

to be under Marcos Jr.'s supermajority control, and like under Duterte, will serve as rubberstamp to his dictates.



Marcos Jr. authoritarian rule will be established under the signboard of "unity." Those who will not "unite" will be denounced as "unFilipino" or "enemies of the state" and will be targets of state suppression. Red-tagging by the NTF-Elcac is heightening against those who question the results of the last elections and against those forces who seek to keep the memories of abuses and corruption under the US-Marcos dictatorship I. Being targeted are democratic mass organizations of various sectors, as well as academics, cultural groups, church people, lawyers and others critical of the looming Marcos rule.

The Party is determined to fight the forthcoming rule of Marcos Jr., to defend the people's interests and advance their struggles for genuine democracy and freedom. The Party is keenly aware how Marcos' rise to power creates conditions favorable for advancing the revolutionary armed struggle because it exposes the rotten core of the ruling system, and because legal forms of expression and resistance are being curtailed.

Just as under martial law, the Party is resolute in leading the struggles against fascism and corruption under Marcos. There is a broad range of forces which the Party can march along with in this path of struggle, thus it must strive to unite with all positive forces to isolate Marcos Jr. and make him a narrow target of a broad protest movement and other forms of struggle.

The Party will further strengthen itself to serve as the strongest core in the fight against the US-Marcos regime II. It will continue to lead and strengthen the New People's Army to serve as the principal instrument in fighting the ruling fascist regime and to further advance the people's democratic revolution for national and social liberation.



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# Dirtiest elections in history spark protests

The Kontra Daya (group against electoral fraud) and democratic organizations described the 2022 elections as the dirtiest elections in the country's history. According to the group, failures were prevalent on election day and the campaign was marked by relentless disinformation.

Initial estimates by Kontra Daya showed around 1.1 million voters were disenfranchised due to the malfunctioning of 2,000 vote counting machines (VCM). Many were not able to vote due to disorder and delays. Many voters were forced to leave their ballots to election officials. Due to these failures, voters urged the Commission on Elections to extend voting hours but were denied.

All in all, election watchdogs such as Kontra Daya and Vote Report PH received 4,000-9,500 reports of anomalies and problems last election period. Around 3,000 of these were confirmed. Of the verified 2,683 reports, malfunctioning VCMs and SD cards constituted 52.3%, followed by electioneering (14%) and election process-related incidents (11.2%).

Both groups raised concern over incidents where the Comelec asked voters to leave their ballots, and allowed others to insert these in the machines, with voters leaving their precincts with no receipts due to the late arrival of replacement machines. They called for an investigation on this system. This year's election recorded the highest number of malfunctioning VCMs compared to the 2010 and 2016 automated elections. According to a statistics professor, "the only way to verify (the machine vote-counting) is through manual counting of votes."

Moreover, reports of vote-buying and police and military presence in voting precincts were reported. More cases of intimidation and violence, most especially in the countryside, were not documented by the

group.

According to Prof. Danny Arao, Kontra Daya convenor, "The conclusion for this elections is simple, this has been the worst. This has been the most rotten. And this has been the most fraudulent."

In addition to fraud, systematic disinformation, social media advertising and algorithms played an important part in this elections.

The dirty elections which favored the Marcos-Duterte tandem sparked various mass actions by the people. Last May 10, thousands, mostly young people, marched to the Comelec office to criticize its failure in the previous elections. They set up the Kampuhan Kontra Daya in Liwasang Bonifacio until May 13 and held discussions and cultural performances. They called on fellow "kakampinks" (supporters of the Leni-Kiko tandem) to continue the fight and not lose hope. Big mass actions were also held in Naga City and Mabinay, Negros Oriental last May 10.

On May 13, four thousand trooped to the Philippine Interna-

tional Convention Center (PICC) in Pasay City where the Comelec was then holding the first day of official canvassing. The march served as culmination of the 3-day camp-out. Earlier, church and religious people held a prayer rally near the PICC to call for the defense of democracy.

The same night, supporters of the Leni-Kiko tandem gathered in the Ateneo de Manila in Quezon City for a thanksgiving program. Leni Robredo announced during the program their plan to establish the Angat Buhay NGO, which she said would be the "largest volunteer network in the country." Meanwhile, she pledged to "look into" the election irregularities, but at the same time, said that they should accept that the results were "not in their favor."

Apart from protests in Metro Manila, the youth also led protests in the cities of Baguio, Naga, Iloilo, Bacolod, Cebu, Davao and the provinces of Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, Bulacan, Pampanga, Zambales, Balanga and Mariveles in Bataan, Batangas, Quezon, Laguna, Aklan, Leyte, Negros Oriental, and Zamboanga. Overseas Filipino youth also protested in Boston and New York City in the US.



# Dynasties dominate the new government

After the May 9 reactionary elections, the number of dynasties and political families elected in office from the provincial to the national levels increased. This comes as no surprise as majority of those who vied for office came from rival dynasties. Many who "won" were supporters of the Marcos-Duterte tandem, or played neutral, and had control over national and local officials of the Commission on Elections.

From the highest positions, the Marcos-Romualdez clan clinched the most positions. From Ferdinand Jr. as the highest official of the country, seven others from the clan will sit in office for the following years. They are Sandro Marcos, son of Marcos Jr., representative of Ilocos Norte first district; Matthew Marcos Manotoc, son of Imee Marcos, as governor of Ilocos Norte; and Cecilia Araneta Marcos as vice governor. They will join Imee Marcos who currently sits as senator.

Three Romualdezes won in Leyte, including Martin Romualdez as congressman, his wife as representative of Tingog Partylist, and cousin Alfred as Tacloban City mayor. Martin Romualdez is being groomed to sit as Speaker of the House.

Meanwhile, Rodrigo Duterte's sons all won positions—Sara as vice president, and his two other children as mayor and representative of Davao City's first district.

In the Senate, six of 24 seats were clinched by politicians hailing from three "fat" dynasties. They include mother and son Cynthia and Mark Villar who come from one of the most favored bureaucrat-capitalist families under the Duterte regime.

In addition, siblings Alan Peter and Pia Cayetano will sit as senators. Brothers JV Ejercito and Jing-



goy Estrada, sons of Joseph Estrada, also got senate seats.

## Clinching seats in local politics

From Luzon to Mindanao, decades-old dynasties continue to rule their turfs.

In Maguindanao, the Ampatuans continue to rule despite the conviction of their patriarch Datu Andal Ampatuan, Sr. and his siblings for the massacre of 58 people, 32 of which were journalists, in Shariff Aguak in November 2009. Of the 39 Ampatuans who vied for positions, 29 "won." Six as mayors, five as vice mayors and 18 as councilors in towns dubbed as the "Ampatuan Empire."

In Metro Manila, familiar faces and surnames were elected into position. In 16 cities and one municipality, eight mayors came from known political dynasties.

In Masbate, five members of the Kho family clinched all high elective positions (governor, vice governor and representatives of three districts.)

In Camarines Sur, the Villa-fuertes, with three positions, ruled. In Albay, the Rosals (two positions) ang Salcedas (five positions) dominated. In Catanduanes, three Chua siblings won as governor, vice gov-

ernor and mayor. Husband and wife Hamor won as mayor and vice of Sorsogon, Chiz as senator and sister Detter as congresswoman, will be in government at the same time.

In Cavite, the Barzagas, Remullas and Revillas perpetuated themselves in power. In addition, Ramon "Bong" Revilla currently sits as senator.

In Ilocos Sur, the Singson family tightened its power grip. Four from their family will sit as governor, vice governor and representatives of two districts of the province. In Abra, father and daughter tandem Dominic Valera and Joy Bernos won as governor and vice governor. Their Bernos relatives clinched three other positions. In Apayao, the Bulut family will continue its dominance after taking four positions.

In Lanao del Sure, three high elective positions went to the Alonto-Adiong family. In Camiguin island, the Romualdo family maintained monopoly of local politics after clinching four high elective positions.

In 2019, 163 political families occupied government positions. This has likely gone up this year. AB

# Ruling classes dominate party list elections

Proclamation of winners in the party list system elections did not push through last May 19 as special elections are yet to be held in Lanao del Sur. Nevertheless, based on unofficial and partial vote tallies, it is clear that the ruling classes have usurped the limited space intended for parties representing the marginalized sectors.

The winners include ACT-CIS, 1-Rider, Tingog, 4Ps, Ako-Bikol, Sagip, CIBAC, Tutok to Win, Duterte Youth and Agimat—all allies of parties of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte.

These do not truly represent the marginalized. In fact, these were fielded, or are linked to, bourgeois compradors, bureaucrat capitalists, landlords, and with the police and military to further cement their hold to power. At least six parties who have representatives from political dynasties are set to be given congressional seats.

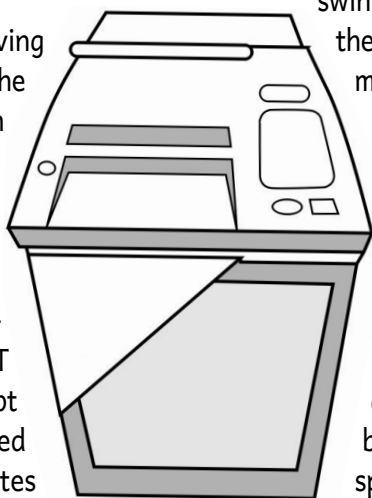
Meanwhile, from having seven representatives, the progressive Makabayan bloc will only have three in the 19th Congress. They will represent the Kabataan PartyList (KPL), Gabriela Women's Party and ACT Teachers Partylist. Except for KPL which garnered twice the number of votes

compared to 2019, all parties under Makabayan had fewer votes than before. Having failed twice to win a seat in congress, the Anakpawis Partylist will not be run in the next election.

Prior to and on election day, NTF-Elcac operatives spread a fake Comelec resolution stating that parties under the Makabayan bloc, Neri Colmenares and Elmer Labog, and even Tropang Angat and 1Sambayan candidates were disqualified from the elections. The task force's red-tagging and slander were in full

swing even earlier. Nevertheless, Colmenares still managed to win six million votes, higher than his 4.66 million votes in 2019.

Even the Akbayan and Magdalo parties, both close to the Liberal Party and to the Leni Robredo camp, were not spared.



In the meantime, the 12 winning senators have been proclaimed. They are Robin Padilla who got the highest number of votes, followed by Loren Legarda, Raffy Tulfo, Sherwin Gatchalian, Francis Escudero, Mark Villar, Alan Peter Cayetano, Juan Miguel Zubiri, Joel Villanueva, JV Ejercito, Risa Hontiveros and Jose "Jinggoy" Estrada. Aside from Hontiveros, all winning senators supported the Marcos-Duterte tandem. AB



## Lifting of open-pit mining ban in South Cotabato, criticized.

Three thousand individuals protested in South Cotabato last May 19 against the Sangguniang Panlalawigan's decision to lift the 12-year ban on the destructive open-pit mining in the province. The decision was prompted by the Duterte regime and Sagittarius Mining Inc. so that operations of the \$6-billion Tampakan Copper-Gold Mine project can commence. For the residents, environmental groups and the church, supposed income for indigenous groups from the project cannot compensate the environmental destruction and possible cultural disruption of the B'laan and Manobo the project could cause.

## NPA ambushes soldiers securing destructive logging in Sultan Kudarat

THE NEW PEOPLE'S Army (NPA)-Sultan Kudarat ambushed 57th IB soliders aboard a 6x6 truck in Purok Dulangan, Km 18, Barangay Salangsang, Lebak last May 14. The said military unit serves as guards to the destructive logging operations of the D.M. Consunji Inc.

Three soldiers were killed in action while four others were wounded. The Lumad Dulangan-Manobo ang Moro masses celebrated the successful offensive against the 57th IB. Lumad residents have long endured the threats, harassment and forced

surrender campaign of the military.

In Surigao del Sure, a solider of the 3rd Special Forces Battalion was killed in a sniping operatuon of Red fighters last May 3 in Diatagon, Lianga. The said enemy unit was in the middle of combat operations when fired upon by the NPA. AB

## Filipinos in Australia shout:

**Marcos not welcome!** Activists and "kakampinks" welcomed Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s secret vacation last May 16 in Victoria One Building in Melbourne, Australia with protests. According to them, "tax evaders are not welcome here!" They criticized the return of the Marcoses in power and said that the dictator's family is not welcome in Australia.

# How the AFP cancels democracy

Outright campaigning by personnel of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in favor of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. as president were reported in various parts of the country during the recently concluded elections. Military generals are agog over the return to power of the Marcos family which in the past gave them broad powers and the license to attack with impunity.

If the AFP was satiated under Duterte's tyranny, they are set to be further indulged by Marcos Jr. with monstrous powers over the people's money and the nation's politics.

## Bursting with funds and position

The AFP, together with the Philippine Constabulary (police) which it led, served as the pillar of Marcos Sr.'s martial law. On Marcos Sr.'s orders, they arbitrarily arrested and detained people who went against the government or were suspected as subversives.

To make the AFP serve as a solid foundation to his rule, Marcos Sr. increased its manpower from 60,000 in 1972 to 250,000 in a short period of three years. The dictator poured funds from ₱880 million in 1972 to ₱4 billion in 1976. Among Southeast Asian countries, military spending under the Marcos dictatorship was the largest from 1971 to 1980 despite the Philippines having the lowest increase rate in the gross national product during the same period.

Despite Marcos Sr.'s ouster, the military maintained its power in the succeeding regimes. Not less than 15 Marcos generals were appointed in

the Corazon Aquino government. During his presidency, former PC chief Gen. Fidel V. Ramos enacted the AFP "modernization" providing for allocation of billions of pesos. This was expanded further under the Aquino II regime with funds of more than \$40 billion until 2028.

From the outset, the gargantuan military funds serve as generals' milking cow. This year, the military and police's combined budget is more than ₱470 billion, constituting 9.4% of the national budget, more than the budget allocation for public health. There are more soldiers than health workers.

It was also under martial law that the AFP gained vast powers in running the government. Beyond their primary task of defending the country's sovereignty, AFP officials became managers of industries related to the military and public corporations, and even as representatives in foreign relations.

Contrary to the principle of civilian supremacy, generals have been eroding democracy and over the past decades have dominated government. They have been influencing key decisions and policies of the govern-

ment, holding sensitive positions in the bureaucracy, and playing a role in the change of power from one regime to the next.

## Favorite generals

In monopolizing power, Marcos Sr. trusted only his inner circle of generals from Ilocos which included Gen. Fabian Ver and General Ramos.

Every president since have pampered their own favored group of generals who held wide influence despite retirement. Under Rodrigo Duterte, the military and police gained the greatest powers. In 2017, Duterte outrightly declared that he will appoint former officials to his cabinet to "complete his junta" and "become managers" of government in order to appease them and dissuade them from mounting a coup d'etat. These generals control Duterte's government through the National Task Force-Elcac.

Like Marcos Sr., Duterte appointed a number of military and police officers. More than 70 held positions in national agencies, apart from the hundreds of former soldiers and police assigned in regional or provincial agencies, or elected to local government. Meanwhile, the so-called Davao Generals were assigned to key positions in different parts of the country.

The Duterte regime is the most militarized in the country's history. It outdid the Marcos Sr. regime, who, despite his dictatorship, maintained a semblance of civilian rule by appointing non-military personnel with experience and expertise in the fields of education, labor, agriculture and others.

Whether during the Marcos Sr. dictatorship or under Duterte, favorite generals were pampered leading to factions of politically ambitious generals. There is deepening distrust among rank-and-file officers and the emerging patriotic and democratic elements.

## Guerrillas bomb radar in Turkey

THE TIKKO (WORKERS and Peasants Liberation Army of Turkey), armed forces of the TKP-ML (Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist-Leninist), bombed an enemy camp of the Turkish Republic fascist forces in the Mennax region, Til Temir on the morning of May 17. According to reports from the TKP-ML, the attack hit a radar inside the camp.

The armed action coincided with the 49th death anniversary of their founder Ibrahim Kaypakkaya. According to the group, the best way to commemorate the martyrdom of their leader is through active and determined struggle in all fronts against the fascist Turkish Republic.

The TK-ML celebrated their 50th founding anniversary last April 21. On the occasion of their anniversary, the group affirmed their unity to advance their armed struggle.

AB

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— IN — SHORT

# 63.5%

debt-to-GDP ratio of the country. This is more than the 60% standard for countries like the Philippines, as this indicates the country's capacity to pay.

Source: Bureau of Treasury

# 20.1 MILLION OR 43%

of Filipino workers in March belonged to the "informal sector" where there is no job security, wages are low or labor is unpaid.

Source: Ibon Foundation

# ₱452 billion

in taxes are siphoned by the state from oil imports from September 2019 to October 2021. In addition, it has collected ₱29.81 billion in excise taxes during the same period.

Source: Department of Finance

# 845

local candidates, mostly hailing from incumbent dynasties, ran unopposed in the 2022 elections. They needed just one vote to win.

# ₱33

measly wage-increase granted in NCR, and ₱55 to ₱110 in Western Visayas. The amount is not enough amid rising prices of fuel, food and other commodities.

Source: Kilusang Mayo Uno



“Fear history because it leaves no secrets unrevealed.”

adage by Gregorio de Jesus (Lakambini), a member and soldier of the Kataas-taasang Kagalang-galangang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan (KKK), and wife of Andres Bonifacio. She was born on May 9, 1875.

## #NeverAgain Bundle

a set of 5 children's books containing stories of martial law which was red-tagged by the NTF-Elcac and the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency purportedly because it supposedly "radicalizes" the young.



# GOTA GO GAMA

movement that ousted Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahina Rajapaksa last May 9. He and his brother Gotabaya "Gota" Rajapaksa, president, are being made to resign due to their failed response to the economic crisis and pandemic.

# Capitalizing on migrant workers' remittances

The Philippine economy has long relied on migrant workers' remittances. This was evident during the pandemic where the funds they sent to their families buoyed millions who lost their jobs and incomes. In 2020, remittances reached \$29.903 billion (₱1.49 trillion)—bigger than other sources of external funding such as direct foreign investments, tourism and call center revenues. From 2000, remittances have comprised around 10% of the Philippines' gross domestic product.

Filipino migrants' remittances slowed only by 0.8% during the height of the pandemic in 2020. This was despite the fact that 600,000 migrant workers lost their jobs and millions more were temporarily unemployed due to restrictions. Many migrants further tightened their belts to continue sending money to the Philippines. There were reports that US-based migrants sent even their state financial aid. In 2021, overall remittances bounced back to ₱34 billion.

## Cuts on remittances

On top of all their other sacrifices, Filipino migrants are subjected to more hardships by high remittance costs or cuts by banks and institutions through which they send

their money. American banks, which process up to 40% of Filipino remittances, squeeze the most profits.

According to reports from the Asian Development Bank last February, money transfer companies charge an average of 8.8% or \$17.6 (₱915.20 base on the exchange rate of \$1=₱52) for every \$200 (₱10,400) sent by migrant Filipinos. This was higher than the international average of 6.4% and 5.9% in the Asia and Pacific regions. Filipino migrants send an average of \$300-\$500 every month, which is around half of their wages.

Meanwhile, banks charge up to 10% or more for their financial services (both in physical banking and mobile banking.) In addition, these arbitrarily impose "hidden charges,"

including a foreign exchange rate charge which is based on market speculation.

Majority of global remittances (70%) are made in a cash-to-cash basis where money is deposited abroad and is received as local money in the country. The number of migrants using "mobile money" through telecom services like GCash is lowest due to limited infrastructure and know-how. This is despite the fact that mobile money charges are lowest per transaction.

Banks and institutions rake in at least \$2.56 billion (₱135.2 billion) during the height of the pandemic in 2020. This is higher than the ₱100 billion aid that the Duterte regime rolled out that year.

## Profiting from remittances

Among the companies which profit from migrant workers' remittances are US companies Western Union and MoneyGram. In the Philippines, most remittances flow through Lucio Tan's Philippine National Bank and the Sy family's Banco de Oro.

In 2017, the Duterte regime cashed in on the remittance business when it established the Overseas Filipino Bank (OFBank) through Executive Order 44. Migrante International called it a "bankpira" (a play on the words bank and vampire) as it will "suck out" their remittances. Aside from transmitting funds, the bank offers payment services for the Social Service System, OWWA, Philhealth, Pag-ibig and others for a fee per transaction.

In addition, migrants object to the OFBank as this will only strengthen the labor export policy of Filipino workers. This will not address the issue of forced migration. "Its main objective is to make the system of extracting profits from the Filipino migrants' hard-earned wages easier and more thorough," they said. AB

## AFP-PNP illegally arrests 2 farmers

Two farmers were arrested in their residences on planted evidence during the election period. Elements from the 61st IB, Iloilo Provincial Intelligence Unit and PNP-Leon arrested Victoria Tumabiao in Barangay Jimog-Gines, Leon, Iloilo last May 9, election day. Tumbiao is a pollwatcher for the Anakpawis party list and a leader of the Leon United Peasant Association.

Danila Hapa, a resident of Sitio Parad, Barangay Fabrica, Barcelona, Sorsogon was arrested for illegal possession of firearms last May 4 by the PNP-Barcelona and 31st IB. Hapa is the 12th victim of evidence tampering in Sorsogon.

**Killing.** Elements of the 67th IB shot to death Lolong Magalanes at Sitio Mamparasan, Barangay San Roque, Bislig City, Surigao del Sur last May 6. Magal-

anes, since April, has been harassed by intelligence elements and was accused to be in contact with and a supporter of the New People's Army.

**Arson.** 31st IB troops ransacked and torched Adelfa Quiñones' house last May 13 in Barangay San Pascual, Casiguran, Sorsogon. Soldiers also threatened Henry Fusana with retaliation if they had been attacked by a unit of the people's army in the area. AB



# The oppressed condition of tuna fishing workers

No fixed working hours, backbreaking work lasting 24 hours. This is how workers on large ships in General Santos City described the working conditions in purse seiner or *onay* operations.

*Onay* is commercial fishing operations that employ large nets to catch fish where ships sail in distant oceans for more than half a year.

*Onay* operations produce the largest catch of tuna. In 2020, it caught 152,867 metric tons (MT) or 60% of the total 254,779.32 MT of tuna that landed in the city. Of the total *onay* catch, 44.5% come mainly from the Moro Gulf, Sarangani Bay and Sulu Sea, while 55.5% come from the mid-seas, specifically in the Western and South Pacific, and the oceans of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. Skipjacks and yellowfin are the main catches in *onay* operations. The bulk is processed by tuna canners in General Santos City.

In recent years, *payaws* (floating devices designed to attract fish)

are being used widely by ships to increase the catch. This has led to the depletion of young fish and endangered marine animals that often are caught with the tuna. Often, large-scale *onays* are also involved in illegal and unreported fishing.

Most of the *onays* in General Santos are small and medium-sized. There are 1,690 vessels employing 15,500 workers. There are also 16 large-scale and 18 “superseiners” (jumbo) in operations owned by local and foreign companies. They operate 230 vessels and employ more than 2,000 workers.

RD Fishing Group operates the largest *onay* in the city. It is owned by the Rivera family, who also own



RD Pawnshop and more than 40 other businesses. They are also one of the political rulers in General Santos, where Ronnel Rivera has served as mayor for the past nine years. (He was replaced in the recent elections by his ally Lor Pacquiao, Manny Pacquiao's sister in law.)

## Slavery and Exploitation

Of the total 17,500 *onay* workers, it is estimated that only around 30% are city residents. Most come from the various coastal provinces of Mindanao and the islands of the

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## US military aid is prolonging the war in Ukraine

The US and its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are intensifying and prolonging their proxy war against Russia by pouring in billions upon billions of dollars worth of weapons and military support to Ukraine. Emboldened by the military aid, the Ukrainian government has refused peace talks with Russia to negotiate ending the war.

Last May 10, the US congress approved a \$40 billion package of military aid for its puppet Zelensky government in Ukraine. Overall, the Biden government has poured \$54 billion to Ukraine since March. This is bigger by \$6 billion than the total US military and economic aid across the world in 2019.

The new tranche will be used to buy drones, thousands upon thousands of anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles, grenade launchers,

rifles, pistols and grenades. This will also go to purchasing millions of bullets and grenades, body armor and helmets. Most of these are produced by Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, as well as by the BAE system in UK.

The increasing amount of US and NATO military aid clearly exposes the proxy war in Ukraine against Russia. This is part of the shift of US policy: from declarations of "aiding Ukraine," recent

statements by US officials now declare that their aid seeks to "destroy Russia's military strength."

The US collaborates with the United Kingdom in supporting Ukraine. They are work together to push other countries to provide Ukraine with military support. Germany has sent tanks in violation of its policy against sending weapons to war-torn areas.

The US has long instigated Russia using Ukraine. Since 2014, the US has allotted an annual \$300 million worth of military aid to Ukraine to arm and train the Ukrainian armed forces, which include the fascist Azov Battalion. **AB**

Visayas. Onay workers usually stay at sea for 6-7 months. They are only allowed to land after six months to compute working hours and collect their wages. It means long-term separation from from their families and exposure to volatile and harsh weather conditions and ocean hazards.

During times that seafarers are at sea and receive no pay, their families are forced to borrow money from onay owners. They are typically charged at 10% interest which is automatically deducted from the

wages of the sailors. There are cases where debt-strapped family members are enslaved by the onay owner.

The income of an onay depends on the amount of fish caught. The method of setting it is arbitrary, from weighing and calculating the value. Payment for loans invested in the operation will be deducted on the sales. Usually, only 14% of onay's net income goes to workers as wages while 86% is the "clean" income that accrue to the operator.

Wages of seafarers barely

meet the set minimum wage in the region. Little is left of it after paying off what their families debts.

Seafarers have no unions. They do not have health benefits and insurance, even though their jobs are high-risk. Minors are openly employed despite this being prohibited long before. Illegal fishing in foreign waters also continues even though seafarers get caught and detained in Indonesia and other countries every year. Often those caught are abandoned by their employer or by the company they work for. AB