

Peace talks stalled anew

GRP PRESIDENT DUTERTE has threatened to have NDFP consultants arrested the moment they land in the Philippines. This came after the cancellation of the fifth round in the series of peace talks between the NDFP and GRP which was previously scheduled on May 27-June 2.

According to Jesus Dureza of the GRP, they did not attend the fifth round supposedly because of the CPP's call for the NPA to intensify tactical offensives all over the Philippines in response to the Duterte regime's imposition of Martial Law in Mindanao.

But Luis Jalandoni, senior political adviser of NDFP panel, said that the GRP withdrew because the NDFP did not agree to prioritize the ceasefire agenda.

Even during the fourth round of talks last April, the GRP was already reluctant to continue with the talks on CASER (socio-economic reforms) without first discussing the ceasefire agreement. This only pushed through when the NDFP bent over backwards to sign an agreement to agree on a ceasefire once implementing rules are agreed upon.

Dureza's declaration shows that they are only using the NPA's call for more tactical offensives as justification to withdraw from the talks. Aside from this, the GRP also gave other reasons such as intensified offensives by the NPA even prior to martial law, so-called questions of the public on the sincerity of the NDFP regarding the talks, the clarification made by the NDFP panel that they do not command the NPA,

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EDITORIAL

Firmly oppose Mindanao martial law

The entire revolutionary movement strongly condemns the imposition of martial law and the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus in Mindanao by GRP President Duterte. This has no justification. That martial law in Mindanao was imposed because of claims of rebellion and terrorism of the so-called Maute Group in Marawi City is unacceptable.

Duterte's declaration must be denounced because it gives the AFP and PNP unrestrained freedom to abuse their powers against the people. Duterte has even openly encouraged the soldiers to carry out abuses when he said he will answer for them.

Even before martial law was imposed, soldiers and police have been relentlessly abusing human rights and trampling on the people's welfare under the Duterte-Lorenzana all-out war declaration of last February against the NPA. By imposing martial law and suspending the writ

of habeas corpus in Mindanao, the military and police have become even more ruthless in using their armed power to carry out horrific repression, violence, crime and corruption.

With martial law powers, the AFP and PNP are suppressing the people's civil-democratic rights in setting up checkpoints all over and warrantless searches and arrests. Everyone is a suspect whose innocence must be proven. They directly intervene in conflicts between capitalists and workers and defend the interests of the former. They claim

even the power to censor anyone who goes against their reasoning.

When martial law was declared, the AFP became more ruthless in waging brutal operations against people suspected of supporting the armed revolution because of their active defense of their welfare. Successive aerial bombardment and strafing were carried out in Davao del Sur, Bukidnon, North Cotabato and Compostela Valley which are quite a distance from the said rebellion of the Mautes. Military officials themselves said "martial law or not", they will continue to wage operations in civilian communities which they suspect to be NPA territories.

Any plan to impose martial law nationwide must be firmly resisted. The people will determinedly oppose Duterte if he will attempt to install himself a dictator, close down civilian institutions, completely deny formal civil rights and establish open state fascist and terrorist rule.

By supporting all-out war, imposing Mindanao martial law and giving the military full powers, Duterte's claims of being a Leftist,

socialist and pro-masses erode. He is in danger of being isolated from the Filipino people. In Mindanao, soldiers and police carry Duterte's name as they occupy civilian communities, searches, arrests, taunting and repressing the workers and peasants struggling to defend their rights and welfare. In complying with the order to "flatten the hills", the AFP sticks his name on every bomb dropped which causes widespread destruction on the people's livelihood and environment and brings about intense fear among the people.

The AFP's all-out war is poisoning the atmosphere in the NDFP-GRP peace negotiations. This jeopardizes the talks especially with Duterte's demand for the NPA to declare a ceasefire before proceeding with talks and agreements on substantive socio-economic and political issues.







Duterte is giving more powers to the military. He has given more weight to his threats against the courts and other government agencies. Congress has become a mere ornament when it refused to subject

Duterte's martial law declaration to scrutiny. In the name of the "war against terror" that is now being linked to the "war against drugs", Duterte is using and brandishing military power in the entire Mindanao.

Under this, the AFP has carried out its more than half month all-out war that has resulted in widespread destruction of Marawi City and disaster on the lives and livelihood of more than 200,000 people. Despite the people's pleas, the aerial bombardment by AFP helicopters and warplanes have been ruthless against homes, buildings, roads and other civil infrastructure. Almost every resident has left. Just as in the widespread destruction of Zamboanga City in 2013, the destruction of Marawi City is expected to open large infrastructure projects. The echoes of bombs have yet to die down, and the big bourgeois compradors have already started to drool and encircle Marawi.

What started out as an offensive by the Duterte regime against the Maute Group is now rousing anger among Moro leaders because of the relentless destruction of the lives of Marawi's people. Almost all (98%) of the people of Marawi are Moros. If the complete destruction of Marawi continues, the war launched to "suppress terrorism" will be regarded by the Moro people as a war against them.

In imposing martial law and not addressing the basic question of self-determination, the Duterte regime will fail to resolve the emergence of various armed Moro groups with different aims. Historically, revolutionary, progressive and anti-imperialist groups have emerged advancing the interest of the Bangsamoro. However, there are also those who espouse a war based on religion or those who have been reduced to criminal banditry. If the Duterte regime will not rein in the AFP's bombardment, instead of suppressing the armed bandit groups, the ruthless and brutal war of the AFP will succeed in pushing

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more Moro people to take up arms and engage in war.

In unity with the Filipino and Moro people, the Party stands for the immediate end of martial law imposed by Duterte in Mindanao and for the restoration of the writ of habeas corpus. The Filipino and Moro people must also unite against all forms of terrorist attacks against civilians. While condemning armed groups which target and deliberately harm civilians, they must also strongly condemn the terrorism of the relentless war of destruction of the AFP against Marawi City. AB

"Peace....," from page 1

and the government's preference for localized peace talks.

The CPP has long clarified the revolutionary movement's stand for just and lasting peace, that this can be attained only by resolving the issues at the roots of the armed conflict. While carrying out war, the NDFP is open to peace talks to achieve concrete benefits for the people.

For more than 20 years, the advance of the NDFP-GRP talks have been tough, slow and tortuous. Of the four substantive agenda, only the CARHRIHL has been signed in

1998. The talks did not advance substantially because the succeeding regimes were only interested in pacification and surrender of the revolutionary forces.

Upon the resumption of the peace talks last year, the NDFP agreed to a reciprocal unilateral ceasefire, while the GRP promised to release all political detainees. The NDFP ceasefire lasted for almost six months, the longest in NPA history.

The CPP was pushed to terminate this on February after the GRP failed to fulfil its promise to release all political prisoners and because the AFP used the ceasefire to forward deploy its forces within the NPA guerrilla zones and bases. The GRP's response to this was Defense Sec. Lorenzana's all-out war declaration on February 7.

The present series of talks that began on August 2016 were expected to accelerate the attainment of more substantial agreements because the Duterte government exhibited more openness to the revolutionary movement and gave anti-US declarations.

After a series of informal talks, the fourth round of the series of talks were held on April 2-6. This, too, was almost blocked when Lorenzana and his AFP cohorts insisted that the NDFP first sign a "bilateral ceasefire" before going on

with the talks.

JASIG suspension

Duterte had already twice issued threats to arrest NDFP consultants. The first was on February after he ordered the all-out war. The second came this May 31.

Duterte's threat denigrates the JASIG, the agreement that protects peace talks participants from arrest throughout the duration of the peace talks until 30 days after.

However, even while peace talks are in effect, the Duterte government has ignored this several times when it arrested Ariel Arbitrario, Promencio Cortez, Ferdinand Castillo, and Rommel Salinas, and subjected other consultants to surveillance and harassment.

The government also disregards CARHRIHL by continuing to detain political prisoners, by extrajudicial killings, illegal arrests, bombings, shelling and other atrocities against the people in its military operations in the countryside and cities.

Despite the GRP's withdrawal, the NDFP shows its determination for the peace talks by offering a reciprocal unilateral ceasefire to Duterte on June 2 to enable the peace talks' resumption. But Duterte rejected this and insisted that the NDFP immediately engage in a bilateral ceasefire. AB

War in Marawi: Widespread destruction and huge damages on the people

The war ordered by Pres. Rodrigo Duterte's against the so-called Maute Group is bringing about the tremendous destruction of Marawi City and the people's lives and livelihood.

The AFP-PNP launched the war in Marawi following Duterte's imposition of martial law in the whole Mindanao last May 23 because of the supposed occupation of the city by the said group. At the time of his martial law imposition, Duterte was visiting Russia where one of his objectives was to request modern weapons purportedly to fight

groups connected to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Duterte has repeatedly linked the Maute Group to the ISIS despite previous refutations by the military and police regarding such information.

The Duterte regime poured up to 4,000 armed troops to counter the Maute Group, whose reported

number varies daily (starting at 20, to 50, 100 and which recently has already become 250-500, according to the AFP). The AFP and PNP deployed their troops from the 1st ID of the Philippine Army, the Philippine Marines, Philippine Air Force and the Philippine National Police Special Action Force. Aside from armoured personnel carriers, these employ more than 30 helicopters and planes that conduct non-stop bombardment of the city.

But more than any damage against the Maute Group, the civilians, their properties and civilian infrastructure are the ones being destroyed by the bombs. The AFP reported last June 2 that up to 188 individuals, including 30 civilians, have already died. It is made to appear that 120 of those who were killed were members of the Maute Group, although there is wide skepticism that many of these were civilians.

Since the declaration of martial law in Mindanao, the AFP has launched daily bombardment every two hours. The AFP has been adamant in claims that they have been successful with their "surgical strikes" and that no civilians were hit. This, in the face of widespread assertions by residents that it is the civilians, their homes and civilian structures which are being hit and destroyed by the AFP's bombs. No less than the city government and the Marawi Crisis Committee have called for a stop to the bombings early on in the war. Likewise, Samira Gutoc-Tomawis, a member of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, resigned from her post because of the bombings and the martial law declaration. Bombardments were suspended only when the AFP's bombs killed ten of their soldiers and wounded seven others.

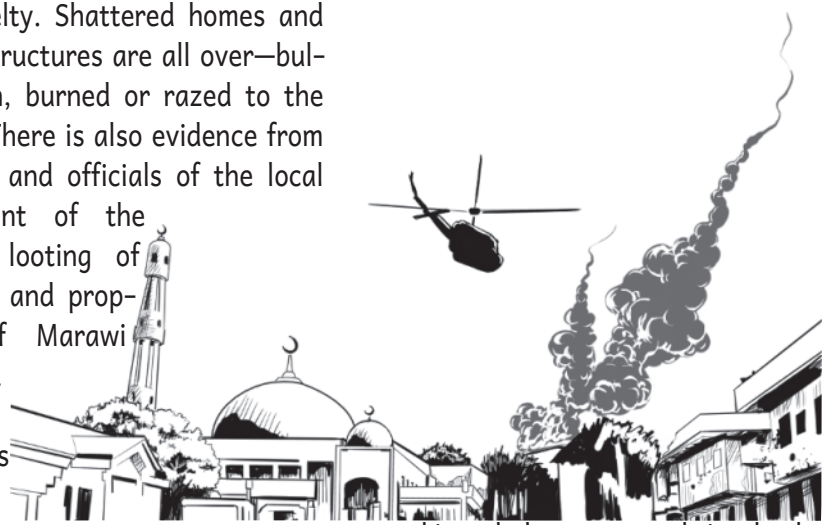
Meanwhile, ground troops of the AFP have no regard to the civilians' safety. Civilians are in danger of the AFP and PNP scouring the city's streets and residential areas. Those caught in the middle of the war are accused of being members of Maute Group and are treated

with cruelty. Shattered homes and civilian structures are all over—bullet-ridden, burned or razed to the ground. There is also evidence from residents and officials of the local government of the soldiers' looting of valuables and properties of Marawi residents.

The war has affected Marawi's whole population of more than 200,000. The city is one of the largest in terms of Moro population and is regarded as the center of Islam in Mindanao. More than 90% of the population had evacuated, while the lives of those left behind are in peril. Many of those who fled were able to take along only a few belongings. They face grave lack of food and drinking water in evacuation centers, aside from medical needs and decent habitation. The AFP has also prohibited civic organizations to distribute relief goods, and insisted that the soldiers be the ones to hand them out.

Last June 2, up to 700 evacuees have fallen ill. Most vulnerable among the victims of the war are the elderly, the sick and an estimated 55,000 children. Also affected is the education of 20,000 students, as they have no schools to go to because of the bombardment of Marawi. According to officials of Lanao del Sur provincial government, there has never been such terrible evacuation of Marawi's residents even during the 1970s.

Meanwhile, thousands of people



seeking shelter are stuck in checkpoints set up to restrain the free movement of residents who are fleeing danger. Here, the people of Marawi are subjected to intense scrutiny because of suspicion that they are members of Maute Group. Those already in evacuation centers, and even ordinary civilians, experience discrimination for being Moros.

According to the group Suara Bangsamoro, the resolution of the people's unrest in Mindanao is related to the issue of ancestral domain of the Moros and Lumads, and their long-running oppression. Likewise, the propagation of Islamophobia, which portrays Islam as a religion of violence, must be condemned. Instead, attention must be given to the damages on Moro people brought about by the war.

Also, the Moro people have the capability to resolve contradictions among their ranks. Negotiations between Moro leaders and the members of Maute Group will not prosper as long as the AFP and PNP continue with their military operations and bombardments. AB

Profiting from disaster

Just like what happened in Zamboanga City last 2013, big capitalists and bureaucrat capitalists are also the ones set to profit from the damages wrought by the AFP in the city and the people's livelihood in Marawi City.

It will be recalled that six of Zamboanga City's villages were destroyed by three weeks of siege, bombardments and shootings in September 2013 when AFP troops assaulted

members of the Moro National Liberation Front who at that time were staging a protest in the city. Among those destroyed were more than 10,000 homes and structures. Be-

cause of this, more than 120,000 residents, most of whom come from the Tausug tribe, were forced to evacuate. Following this, the people were prohibited to return to their homes and were instead thrown to far-flung relocation sites without livelihood. As of September 2016, three years later, more than 13,000 evacuees still live in evacuation cen-

ters. After the war, ₱3.5 billion was funded by the previous Aquino regime purportedly to rehabilitate the damaged communities.

Aside from the extremely slow pace of the rehabilitation projects, the program is likewise brimming with corruption.

For example, of the 25 housing projects to construct temporary and permanent homes, only nine companies were awarded contracts. The largest (₱473 million for four projects) went to the construction company of Vicente Lao, the president of Mindanao Business Council. Meanwhile, Billrey Construction was awarded six contracts amounting to ₱212 million.

Aside from this, a big chunk of the budget was allotted for the construction of the Philippine Navy's base on the coastline of Zamboanga City. The project is valued at ₱143.7 million. Likewise, ₱202 million was provided for the rehabilitation of the Joaquin Enriquez Memorial Sports Complex which the evacuees used.

Included in the funds benefitted by government agencies and their

contractors was the grant from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia amounting to \$5 million (₱223.89 million). This grant was designated for the construction of a mosque, a madrasa (Islamic school) and water system.

In Marawi City, while the AFP continues with its demolition of the city, big bourgeois compradors and foreign capitalists are already laying out plans on infrastructure in order to profit from the slated rehabilitation. Foreign consultancy companies have already assessed the city's properties and real estate. San Miguel Corporation has already declared its intention to invest in Marawi. Also, Cong. Bong Belaro has filed a resolution in Congress to provide ₱30 billion.

Meanwhile, the drafting of the rehabilitation plan is influenced by the World Bank. According to Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao officials, World Bank "experts" will take part in creating the plan for the projects to be undertaken in Marawi City. This agency will exploit the city's complete destruction in order to push for policies

in their favor. Because the Marawi people direly need aid, the World Bank will be able to impose conditions on funding which in the long run will be more damaging for the people already hit by disaster.

The matter of controlling Marawi and Lanao del Sur's abundant resources is replete with contradictions among different forces. One of the regime's projects is the expansion of plantations in Mindanao, including the ones in Lanao del Sur. Presently in the province, there are plantations of cassava, banana, palm oil and pineapple. Another point of controversy which arose from the agreement between the GRP and the MILF (from which the Maute Group once belonged) is how Lanao Lake will be utilized and benefitted from. This lake is the largest in Mindanao and the source of hydro-electric power plants in Iligan City which in turn provides 70% of the island's electricity needs. In its agreement with the GRP, the MILF allowed the Manila-based government to retain control of the said resources. AB

People oppose military rule

Various people's organizations immediately launched protests against Duterte's declaration of martial law in Mindanao last May 23.

On May 24, activists of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) held candle-lighting activities at Plaza Miranda. Anakbayan, League of Filipino Students (LFS) and the Kabataan Partylist (KPL) also lit candles at Mendiola. Similar activities were launched by Bayan-Bicol at Lapu-lapu, Legazpi City, and at Plaza Quezon, Naga City.

Youth organizations in Daraga, Albay staged protests the same day and human rights supporters held a protest mass at the Redemptorist Church in Legazpi City.

The group Suara Bangsamoro and other Lumad activists held a picket in front of Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City on May 25 to call on Duterte to stop offensive military

operations and to pull out military forces in Marawi.

Bayan-Mindoro held simultaneous candle lighting activities on May 25 in Abra de Ilog, Calintaan and San Jose towns in Occidental Mindoro, and also in Roxas town and Calapan City. Concurrently, more than 500 activists of Bayan-ST held a protest action in Cabuyao, Laguna. Rallies were launched at UP-Los Baños, Bacoor Public Market in Cavite, South Luzon State University in Lucban and Antipolo City, and at the Pinaglabanan shrine in Legazpi City in Bicol.

This was followed by a Black Friday Protest on May 26, with participants from different organizations led by Bayan and Kar-



apatan, who held a rally at Plaza Miranda. Selda, Unyon ng Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA), Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), National Union of People's Lawyers, and victims of Marcos' martial law joined the protest. Youths led by LFS, Anakbayan and KPL likewise held a rally at Mendiola. At the same time, protests were held by the Cordillera People's Alliance in Baguio City and by Bayan chapters in regional centers such as Bacolod City, Tacloban City and Iloilo City.

Mindanao bishop Cardinal Orlando Quevedo of Cotabato supported the protests by declaring “We shall condemn any abuse of martial law and as in the past will condemn it outright if it goes in the way of evil.” Progressive parties and their representatives also expressed solidarity and sympathy with the Marawi and Mindanao people.

On May 30, Mindanao activists and leaders led by Suara Bangsamoro and Kalinaw Mindanao conducted a picket at the congress grounds.

Fifty progressive Muslims and Christians under the Pilgrims for Peace, Moro-Christian People's Alliance (MCPA) and National Council of Churches in the Philippines came together for “Break the Fast at Sundown” as symbolism for unity of religions and sympathy against the occurring violence in Marawi City during the Ramadan period.

On June 1, the National Federa-

tion of Sugar Workers (NFSW) staged a rally in Bacolod City.

Overseas, Bayan-USA and Gabriela-USA condemned the martial law declaration. Irma Shauf-Bajar of Gabriela-USA said “With more military operations, women and children will be even more vulnerable to rape, harassment and other sexual abuse.”

The protesters held a second “Black Friday Protest” on June 2, when national-democratic organizations marched in Quezon City.

Meanwhile, workers and peasants in different parts of the country continued actions for their rights and welfare.

On May 21, 600 Coca-Cola workers set up a picket line to protest the company's widespread termination of workers.

On the same day, 300 families from affected communities of the Dallac Tribe in Brgy. Lucog and residents along the length of Chico

River held a caravan along Brgy. Dagupan, Bulinao and Makanyaw, then converged for the protest program at Banat, Bagumbayan, Tabuk City to assail the 52 megawatt hydroelectric power Karayan Dam project by the San Lorenzo Ruiz Builders and Developers Group (SLRB).

On May 22, more than a thousand jeepney operators, drivers and conductors under the transport group Piston assembled a protest caravan from the Elliptical Road to the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board office in East Avenue, Quezon City then held a picket at the Department of Transportation office in Mandaluyong City.

They were again protesting the “jeepney phase-out” program. Protests were also launched in Sorsogon and Cebu. Transportation was paralyzed in Iloilo, Antique and Bacolod City. AB

Martial law and human rights violations

Along with the continuing attacks by the AFP in Marawi City, air strikes, shelling and militarization also intensified in civilian communities where the AFP believes the NPA units are present, just as killings of activists and struggling people persist.

These contradict the statement of Department of National Defense Sec. Delfin Lorenzana that “martial law does not target the NPA.” AFP officials themselves, however, said that operations against the revolutionary forces will continue “whether or not there is martial law.”

Since May 24 to June 3, around 313 civilians were arrested, four were killed and nine communities bombed while thousands have evacuated due to militarization.

Under the AFP's all-out war, Mindanao was already the hotbed of human rights violations. This has worsened under Duterte's martial rule.

Mass arrests

Last May 25, Task Force Davao

and the Philippine National Police, led by Davao City police chief Sr. Supt. Alexander Tagum, launched Oplan Bulabog in Brgy. 23-C and 76-A, where 260 civilians were arrested because they could not present identification cards. They were brought to the Davao City Police Office to undergo “verification” process. Majority of those apprehended were Moros.

On the same day, at least 30 Lumad, Moro, and Christian women who participated in the “Leadership Development and Capacity Building for Gender and Ecological Justice” by the Ecumenical Women's Forum were accosted and held for more than an hour by the Marine Battalion Landing Team 6 at a checkpoint in Brgy. Domulon, Sultan

Kudarat. Their leaders were interrogated, asked to produce identification cards, and questioned on their permit to travel. The leaders were forbidden to take down notes during the said interrogation, while a soldier took pictures of the rest of the women.

Along with this, the local government of Davao City released a 30-point guideline which curtails the people's political and civil rights. The PNP Regional Office 11 also threatened to arrest leaders and organizers of rallies against the government.

The AFP also threatened to exercise their “right to censor” (censor) or restrict the right to free expression during martial law in Mindanao. This also covers social media. According to AFP spokesperson BGen. Restituto Padilla, this measure is purportedly to prevent the proliferation of fake news and to

ensure national security. He also warned that the AFP will arrest anyone who posts anything which will not help in the ongoing conflict in Marawi.

Meanwhile, two members of Unyon sa mga Mag-uuma nga Nakigbisog (UMANA) and residents of Brgy. Poblacion, Maragusan, Compostela Valley were accosted by the 66th IB last May 27. They were identified as Nestor Quintano, 51 and Remon Rodela, 25. The AFP accused them as members of the NPA but their families denied this. The two were taken to the 66th IB camp before they were surrendered to the Maragusan police station. Their families were not allowed to visit them while in the police station.

On May 29, 2017, combined elements of the 60th IB and paramilitary group Bagani illegally arrested peasant couple Kidjol Marcelo Antay Sr. and Noeme Antay in Brgy. Andap, Compostela Valley. On the same day, another couple, Otik and Maricho Catalino were arrested by the same perpetrators. Both couples were active members of Nagkahiusang Mag-uuma sa Laak (NAMULAK). According to witnesses, the couples were brought to the 60th IB camp in Doña Andrea Asuncion, Davao del Norte.

Most recently, Cesario de Rosa, a member of Kahugpong sa mga Mag-uuma sa Maco (KMAAO) was arrested last May 31 by elements of the 46th IB in Compostela Valley.

Days before the declaration of martial law in Mindanao, May 21, peasant beneficiaries from MARBAI condemned the continuing harassment by private guards of Lapanday Foods Corporation. An army vehicle was also seen not far from the plantation. MARBAI raised concerns that they may be evicted again from their land.

On May 30, solons of Anakpawis Partylist condemned the demolition of Charlito Catalan's house in Barangay Mapalacsiao, Hacienda Luisita, by a group of sugarcane

workers under the Cojuangco-Aquino clan.

Throughout the entire first week of martial law, checkpoints were put up in major cities of Mindanao and even in Tacloban City. AFP units also declared red alert status in some parts of Visayas, Luzon and cities in Metro Manila. President Duterte also warned that he may suspend the writ of habeas corpus in the Visayas.

Bombings

On May 25, a series of bombings and strafing in Moro communities was launched in sitios Pedtobawan, Campo, Apulan and Centro Salat in Barangay Salat and in Sitio Libpas in Barangay Trael, President Roxas North Cotabato, from 5:30 a.m. until 10 p.m. Not less than 240 troops of the 39th and 72nd IB led the operations. The villages of Tangkulan and Anggaan in Damulog, Bukidnon were also bombed. A 105mm howitzer cannon was mounted in Barangay Kisupaan, President Roxas, North Cotabato.

According to the residents, six bombs started to be dropped at 5:30 a.m. in Brgy. Salat. The military also strafed houses from their MG520 choppers and subsequently fired six cannons towards the community. At around 3 p.m., four more bombs were dropped, and cannons

were fired six more times at the communities. At 7 p.m., bombs were again dropped, which resulted in the death of Abdullah Mamansag, 34, a Maguindanaoan farmer, while Norhamin Dataya, Cocoy Dataya, Alex Dataya, Nasordin Maman and Nor Taligapin were wounded. They were arrested by the PNP President Roxas after being brought to the hospital. Taligapin is currently detained at President Roxas police station while Dataya is at the Municipal Social Welfare and Development. The two were slammed with trumped-up charges of illegal possession of explosives and direct assault. They also underwent inquest proceedings last May 28.

On the same day, the 39th IB went on a shooting spree with their .50 calibre machine gun, attacking homes in the neighboring barangays of Trael, Tangkulan, and Anggaan.

The AFP's relentless bombings and strafing forced the evacuation of more than 2,000 individuals from these barangays. The military also blocked and harassed organizations extending assistance to the evacuees.

Based on Karapatan-Southern Mindanao Region's report, two days after the shelling and strafing, AFP troopers torched more than 30 houses in Brgy. Salat and barangays Tangkulan and Anggaan.



Duterte's all-out war and Martial law:
May 24-June 5

3000+ evacuees	313 illegal arrests	9 bombings of communities	6 activists killed	30 homes torched
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*aside from Marawi

Bombings were also recorded in the towns of Sirawai, Zamboanga del Norte, last May 31 and Kiblawan, Davao del Sur, last May 29.

More than 150 B'laan families or 1,000 individuals also evacuated to the barangay hall of Brgy. Colon Sabac, Matanao, Davao del Sur last May 30 due to military operations of the 39th IB in their community.

Killings of activists

In Matanao, Davao del Sur, five motorcycle-riding gunmen shot Daniel Lasid, 58, member of Akma Aksasatu Matanao last May 26. Witnesses identified the suspects

as members of the 73rd IB.

The next day, May 27, Ana Marie Digaynon-Aumada was shot inside her home in Brgy. Lucod, Banganga, Davao Oriental. Two days before the incident, Digaynon-Aumada was called to the detachment by Lt. Col. Jake Obligado of the 67th IB, purportedly to "clear" her name. Digaynon-Aumada is a Mandaya and an active member of Alyansa sa mga Mag-uuma sa Sidlakang Davao (ALMASID).

Jessie Cabeza was also gunned down by members of the 46th IB in front of his house last May 31. Cabeza is a member of Hugpong sa mga Mag-uuma sa Mabini.

Last June 3 at 5 p.m., unidentified assailants killed Lito Casalla, 52, in Balayan, Batangas. Casalla was among the farmers demanding to reclaim their lands against the Asturias Chemical Industry owned by Ramon Ang.

Since the AFP's declaration of all-out war against the revolutionary movement last February, about 40 farmers, indigenous people, Moros and workers have been victims of political killings. Thousands were also forced to evacuate due to the series of military bombings in their communities, while the number of victims of threats and harassment continues to increase. **AB**

Soldiers and police violently disperse Shin Sun workers' strike

KILUSANG MAYO UNO strongly condemned the violent dispersal of workers' picket line in Shin Sun Tropical Fruit Corporation and the illegal arrest of 14 members and supporters of Shin Sun Workers Union last June 2 by combined elements of the Philippine National Police and Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Along with the military and police forces were hired scabs spraying formalin on striking workers. They were led by Sheriff Medialdea of the Regional Trial Court.

Among those accosted were Vicente Barrios, former regional chairperson of KMU-SMR and president of Nagkahiusang Mamumuo sa Suyapa Farm (SUMIFRU Packing Plant 232), Pio Salar, president of Fresmax Workers Union and Eric Noble, vice president of Shin Sun Workers Union. They are currently imprisoned at the Compostela Police Station. No cases have been filed against them as of this writing. Meanwhile, Carmelita Atamosa, 67, a supporter and relative of one of the strikers, was dragged and attacked by the police.

Days before the dispersal, workers experienced constant threat and harassment from elements of the 66th IB.

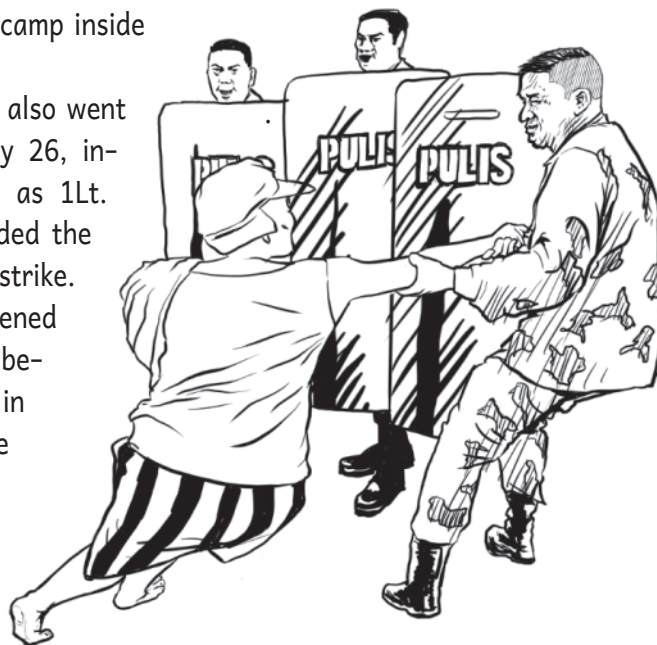
Last May 23, a union member received a text message threatening to kill union officials and KMU organizers if they continue their strike. The next day, two unidentified men stationed themselves for 15 minutes in front of the house of union leader Roland Cobrado.

On May 25, 5:40 a.m., elements of the 66th IB entered the workers' picket line and set up camp inside the compound.

Eight military men also went to the picket last May 26, including one identified as 1Lt. Serrano, and commanded the union to stop their strike. Serrano also threatened the workers of arrest because martial law is in effect. Troops of the 66th IB conducted a checkpoint on the nearby barangay road last May 30.

The soldiers stopped all passers-by and asked for their identification documents.

The strike was launched last April 6 after some 80 workers, including 34 union members, were illegally dismissed by the company in March. They had been contractual workers for more than 7 years in Shin Sun. Aside from the demand for regularization, the union also called for just wages and benefits. Today, Shin Sun workers only earn P135 a day, less than half of the legislated minimum wage rate in the region. Before the dispersal, workers already declined the Korean company's offer for separation pay and insisted to be reinstated. **AB**



Bungkalan activities launched in ST

THREE BUNGKALAN ACTIVITIES or collective farming were launched by farmers in Southern Tagalog this May in haciendas and lands seized from them by big landlords.

Dubbed "balik-saka" (to till again), these were carried out in Hacienda Gancayco in Catanauan, Quezon from May 26, in Almeda lands in Mamburao, Occidental Mindoro on May 28 and Kapdula lands in Dasmariñas City, Cavite on May 30.

The lands tilled by the farmers included 32 hectares in Hacienda Gancayco in Brgy. San Antonio Pala which is part of the 196-hectare land arrogated by the landlord Santiago Gancayco III. The farmers confronted the Gancayco's guards and set up camp within the farm to watch for and defend against any schemes the guards

may contrive. On June 4, peasants held a province-wide caravan led by PIGLAS-Quezon in support of the "bungkalan" and to declare their desire to likewise reclaim the lands that have been taken from them in the "hacienda belt."

Aside from Hacienda Gancayco, haciendas of the Puyat, Uy and Matias can also be found in this area.

Meanwhile, private guards of the JAKA company harassed farmers tilling lands in Kapdula on June 4. Company goons wrecked the farmers' watch-huts and pathways and set up their own huts and tents in the place. Farmers took possession of the 155-hectare land in Brgy. Sampaloc II which was taken by JAKA, owned by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile's family.

The many times Duterte threatened martial law

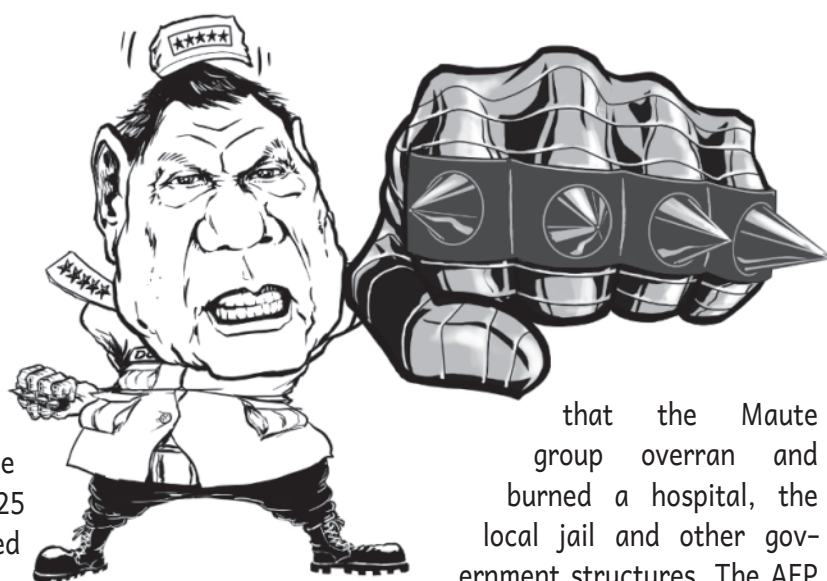
Even when he was just a candidate, GRP Pres. Rodrigo Duterte declared he will be a "dictator against the forces of evil" if elected to office. From August 4, 2016 to March this year, he mentioned his declaration or non-declaration 25 times, often in front of the troops of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

The few times he was confronted by the media, he called a martial law declaration "stupid" and "useless." But in many instances, his objection stems from the political crisis it would create. When Duterte finally declared martial law on May 23, Justice Sec. Vitaliano Aguirre clarified that this was not an "overreaction" or a "surprise decision." Duterte and high military officials have been talking and discussing it for months. This was confirmed by Sec. Delfin Lorenzana of the Department of National Defense.

It was already midnight on May 23 when Duterte officials announced the imposition of the 60-day martial law in Mindanao. The writ of habeas corpus was also suspended in Proclamation 216 which was made public on May 25. He jus-

tified the declaration with the then-ongoing skirmish in Marawi City which started after AFP troops raided a house where Isnilon Hapilon, leader of the bandit group Abu Sayyaf, was supposedly hiding and the subsequent armed operations the Maute group supposedly mounted to defend him.

Together with his propagandists in social media, AFP spokespersons and congress allies, Duterte wrapped the martial law declaration and initial implementation in a thick fog of disinformation and fake news. In his arrival speech, he mentioned the beheading of a police chief and burning of a hospital as reasons for the declaration. This was immediately proven false the next day when members of the media interviewed the said chief. Marawi's mayor also belied Duterte's claim



that the Maute group overran and burned a hospital, the local jail and other government structures. The AFP then locked down Marawi City and nearby Iligan City, controlling the flow of information to and from these cities.

Upon the start of martial law in Mindanao, Duterte also threatened to impose martial law up to Luzon.

Congress deliberately violated its own processes when it refused to hold a joint session between the lower house and the senate on the excuse that it had no intention to revoke the declaration.

Preparations for martial law

Duterte first threatened martial law after the Supreme Court objected to his publicizing a list of judges supposedly involved in illegal drugs. On September 2016, he put the entire country under the "state of lawless violence" after a bomb exploded in a market in Davao City. He ordered the lockdown of the city

and put up checkpoints across the country. He started mentioning the Maute group's "terrorism" and linked this to his "anti-drug war" by declaring that the group was "paid" by big drug lords to create trouble in Davao City. He also threatened to suspend the writ of habeas corpus.

On November 18, when he allowed the hero's burial of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos in the Libingan ng mga Bayani amidst widespread objections, he was full of praises for the dictator and his policies.

There was a period (December-February) when he changed his tune and declared he will never declare martial law despite provocations by people "from Manila," including Sen. Panfilo Lacson. He said that people in power will only use martial law to perpetuate themselves in power and he had no intention of prolonging his term. Also, this will only create a constitutional crisis, as he is fully aware that the Supreme Court will not readily bow to his wishes, unlike Congress.

Despite all his protestations, he

declared that the 1987 constitution "destroyed" Marcos' constitution as it institutionalized various anti-martial law measures and limited presidential powers. These include the 60-day limit and the right of any individual to question it in court. If the courts issue a counter-opinion, he said he will not heed it and will make all decisions by himself. He will push for the removal of such provisions if the charter change pushes through, he said.

In March, in front of Mindanao mayors and other local officials, Duterte's threats took a more strident tone, linking a possible declaration to his "anti-drug war," as well to his claims to "terrorism," and its possible destruction to civilians, government structures and schools.

Even then, he already warned that his martial law will be "harsh," similar to the Marcos dictatorship's Arrest, Search and Seizure Order or ASSO. It was during this time when two schools in the Moro area were bombed. It was also during this time that he linked the Maute group to the Abu Sayyaf, drug lords and

ISIS. He also claimed that the group was running shabu laboratories in Marawi City.

All-out war and martial law

Even before he declared martial law, Duterte already gave the military full swing when he declared an "all-out war" against the revolutionary movement in February. He used the New People's Army's termination of its unilateral ceasefire to suspend peace talks between the GRP and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, harass and arrest NDFP consultants and unleash an intensified campaign against civilian communities in different parts of the country.

In March, he ordered the military to "flatten the hills" which spurred bombings and shelling of civilian communities. There have been 27 AFP bombings so far, majority around or inside communities where armed encounters between AFP troops and NPA units occurred. These have resulted in the destruction of livelihood and the environment, and have caused grave trauma among the residents. AB

Duterte courts Russian support for martial law

DUTERTE WAS IN Russia on May 23 when he declared martial law in Mindanao. In his audience with Russia's President Putin the next day, he entreated for loans to buy Russian weapons to aid the on-going war against the Maute group in Marawi.

In his speech, Duterte mentioned his intention of purchasing arms from Russia several times for the AFP to utilize in crushing "terrorists". In particular, he repeatedly declared his desire to buy "precision-guided" bombs.

Among the agreements signed by the Duterte and the Russian government concern "defense assistance". Although details have yet to be bared, this is expected to boost the Duterte government's confidence in its Mindanao martial law implementation.

If Russian arms support pushes through, this will worsen the destruction of military operations on the livelihood of the masses, such as that presently being done in Marawi City's center. Russian arms will worsen military attacks and abuses on Moro and non-Moro communities, especially those of ordinary farmers.

Duterte brought along 200 big businessmen and members of his cabinet in his Russian visit. Aside from defense agreements, nine other agreements were signed

regarding intelligence data sharing, assistance on the fields of agriculture, commerce, culture, transportation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

While Duterte's request for arms purchase are yet to be approved, Russian military exercises and warship visits in the Philippines are to be expected. This is within the framework of the Russian objective to strengthen its presence in Asia, particularly in the South China Sea, under its "Turn to East" policy.

Criticism to Duterte's foreign trips is mounting. Even his erstwhile supporter, Pres. Fidel V. Ramos has called these 'junkets' or useless and expensive trips. Pictures show Duterte's officials and relatives enjoying themselves during his official visit to Russia.

A few days before Duterte left for Russia, (May 18-22) new US-"donated" firearms arrived at the Clark Air Base under its Counterterrorism Train and Equip Program. These included 300 M4 carbines, 200 Glock 21 pistols, four M134D Gattling-style machine guns, and 100 M203 grenade launcher.

These were turned-over to the Philippines in formal ceremonies on June 5. The AFP immediately declared that they will use the firearms in their attacks against Marawi. AB

Anti-people tax reform

While all eyes were focused on the imposition of martial law, Duterte's congressional allies rushed the passage of the tax reform bill that imposed additional taxes on the Filipino people.

With a vote of 246 in favor, 9 against and 1 abstention, the Tax Reform Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN or House Bill 5636) that restructured income taxes and created new taxes sailed through the house. Duterte's technocrats used the palliative income tax exemption for a section of the working class to deodorize the bill and push the implementation of heavy new taxes.

The TRAIN's main objective is to generate revenue for the Duterte regime's infrastructure program. This is done through the rapid and widespread imposition of value-added taxes (VAT) on previously exempted products and services and excise taxes on petroleum products. The Department of Finance (DoF) boasts that this will generate up to P600 billion new revenues by 2019. The largest part (P200 billion) will come from new taxes on petroleum products, followed by the expansion of the VAT (P164.4 billion).

These revenues will come directly out of the people's pockets. Amid massive unemployment, depressed wages, landlessness and lack of opportunities, this will worsen the people's poverty. Like the VAT which broadened the tax base, the TRAIN's success depends on how wide and fast the state can squeeze revenues from the largest possible number of people. People who earn minimum wages or less, as well as peasants, the petitbourgeoisie and other sectors who will not benefit from the proposed tax exemptions will suffer the brunt of these taxes. Even those who will benefit from the tax exemptions will still pay additional taxes due to the higher prices these taxes will generate.

Additional taxes mean higher prices

Petroleum products, particularly LPG and diesel, will carry an excise tax of ₱6/liter spread out in three years starting January 2018. In the past, prices of these products rise more frequently than most. The previous excise taxes it carried were removed when these were covered by the expanded-VAT. As such, the new excise taxes are imposed over and above the 12% VAT per liter. At the same time, an excise tax of ₱10/liter will be imposed on sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs).

These additional taxes will greatly increase the people's daily expenses. According to some studies, taxes on petroleum products will push food and beverages prices by up to 6%. Based on average prices early this year, pork prices will increase by up to P10/kilo, rice and sugar by P2/kilo, fish by P7/kilo and sliced bread by P2/loaf. Soft drink prices will increase from P6 to P10/bottle.

Excise taxes on LPG will directly hit the consumers (₱33/tank on the first year, P22/tank on the second and P11 on the third year). Jeepney fares can rise by up to ₱0.70 and bus fares by ₱1.25. Meanwhile, VAT will be imposed on properties rented out at ₱10,000/month, adding rent of ₱14,000/year. According to Anakpawis Partylist calculations, additional expenses due to higher prices of goods and services resulting from new taxes on petroleum products, SSB and VAT on housing can reach up to ₱30,000/year.

The same products and services eat up most (84%) of the ordinary workers' and employees' incomes. For the bottom 30% per capita income group (2015), food and beverages made up 60% of their monthly expenses, followed by house rent (7.7%), combined expenses on electricity, water, gas and other fuel (7.2%), various services and goods (4.9%) and transportation (4.5%).

Even the DoF cannot deny that prices of goods and services will rise due to the TRAIN though they try to downplay this. To counter its ill-effects, the department recommended a ₱48-billion fund for the most affected families which they called the Social Benefit Fund. For bus and jeepney drivers affected by higher diesel prices, there will be a Pantawid Pasada Program wherein they will be given "cash cards" that

ADDITIONAL EXPENSES			
per year due to the TAX REFORM BILL			
Sample Commodities	Price Increase	in a week	within a year
 LPG	33		396
 RICE	2/kl	x 6 kl =12	612
 SUGAR	2/kl	x 1 kl =2	102
 PORK	10/kl	x 2 kl =20	1,050
 FISH	7/kl	x 2 kl =14	714
 RENT	1,200		14,400
 ELECTRICITY	1.5/kwh	300	3,600
 FARE	0.7		1,500
Tax exemption due to restructuring			20,000
Additional expenses of tax-exempted			9,828.80

Data from the offices of Rep. Zarate of Bayan Muna and Sen. Angara

will exempt them from the new taxes. But at the same time, they will be made to accept the government's Jeepney Modernization Program requiring them to replace Euro 2-standard engines with Euro 4 since these supposedly burn less fuel. The government will also distribute Social Benefits Cards with a P300 monthly subsidy for the poorest families.

Deceptive tax exemptions

It is only correct that workers earning a little over the minimum be exempt from paying income taxes. Even so, majority of the workers will

NPA-NCMR launches consecutive tactical offensives

FIVE HIGH-POWERED firearms were confiscated by the New People's Army-North Central Mindanao Region (NPA-NCMR) from two tactical offensives launched within a week. Last May 20, an NPA unit successfully raided the 26th IB and CAFGU's detachment in Brgy. Binicalan, San Luis, Agusan del Sur. The offensive was carried out at around 3:40 early in the morning. An M14 armalite and a Garand rifle were confiscated by the Red fighters. The NPA burned the enemy camp afterwards.

Last May 27, at 7:25 a.m., the NPA-Mt. Kitanglad Subregional Command ambushed a unit of the 1st Special Forces Battalion and elements of the Civilian Active Auxiliary in Sitio Intabas, Brgy. La Fortuna, Impasug-ong, Bukidnon. Seized from the ambush were one M16 rifle and two Garand rifles, as well as six military packs. The enemy suffered two casualties.

not benefit from this exemption for the simple reason that incomes of around 16.3 million workers who are paid the minimum or less are already tax-exempt. Only 6.7 million workers who earn around ₱19,000/month will be covered by this exemption. According to Anakpawis Partylist, those earning ₱400,000 should even be covered. If living wage standards are applied, a six-member family needs at least ₱30,000/month or ₱400,000/year to live decently. Under the bill, income earners of more than ₱250,000 up to ₱400,000/year will still pay 20% or ₱30,000 in taxes.

In addition, higher prices will not only eat up the amount freed by the exemption, those exempted will still end up paying more. Families with ₱20,000 tax exemptions will still shell out ₱10,000/year, excluding additional VAT on health insurance and other workers' benefits.

Meanwhile, those earning more than ₱1 million will pay more taxes but only for the first year. On the second year, income taxes of those earning ₱1 million up to ₱5 million will pay less ₱92,700 up to ₱260,000. Income taxes are ex-

pected to decline on the following years as the DoF restructures income and corporate tax categories for 'simplification' purposes.

Corporate tax structure is among those subject to 'simplification' which means bringing down rates from 32% to 20%. Big corporations in the country will pay less taxes of up to ₱34.8 billion. Other property taxes will be reduced from 20% to 6% and taxes on dollar and peso accounts from 20% to 10%. Holders will pay less taxes of up to ₱3.5 billion and ₱1 billion respectively.

In the midst of all this, big local and foreign companies continue to enjoy tax exemptions and other incentives. According to the DoF, the government fails to collect around ₱50 billion worth of personal income taxes of the richest individuals and another ₱50 billion from 'special tax packages' granted to big corporations. These include companies operating inside export-processing zones which pay only a third of what companies outside these zones shell out. These calculations exclude the amount lost through tax evasion and companies' non-remittance of VAT collection. AB

Worsening commercialization of education

The burden of the rising cost of education aggravated when the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) allowed 268 private higher education institutions to increase tuition and other school fees this coming school year. Average tuition increases doubled from last year's P43.49 to P86.68 per unit. Increases in Other School Fees also doubled from P115.58 to P243.00.

Metro Manila saw the highest increase averaging an additional ₱2,100/semester for ordinary students, while Region 3 saw the highest increases in Other School Fees (OSF) with an average ₱974.26 increase. Over the years, tuition and other school fees have surged. From 2010-2015, regular school fees doubled from ₱30,000-

50,000 to ₱60,000-100,000.

Commercialization of education in the Philippines is worsening more than ever. This has been reinforced through the decades by different laws and policies of the reactionary state. From the Education Act of 1982 to the K-12 program which started in 2011, these policies have served to commodify education,

tighten the control of private capitalists, and diminish public education.

This includes the Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE) which started in 1989. The government allotted public funds to pay for the matriculation of students in private schools, which in essence serves to augment the profit of private schools. In the same year, the STFAP (Socialized Tuition and Financial Assistance Program) was implemented in the University of the Philippines which was used to justify the tuition increase from ₱90/unit to ₱300/unit to boost the university's profit. Under STFAP, tuition fees rose to ₱1,500 per unit in 2014. Furthermore, the Higher Education Modernization Act of 1997 was enacted which subjected the State Universities and Colleges (SUC) to privatization.

Under the 2017 Duterte administration budget, ₱8.3-B were allocated supposedly for 1.4 million students in 114 SUCs to benefit from "free tuition." However, the SUCs still collect tuition and the OSF collection remains deregulated. It appears that it intends to implement the same "Socialized Tuition Scheme" in UP nationwide to increase the tuition for the students who "can afford to pay" while those who need subsidy are made to pass through a difficult process of proving that they are in need of aid. With these policies, the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education to be signed by Duterte is meaningless.

There is no difference in the condition of the basic and secondary levels. Even though the "Free Secondary Education" was enacted in 1988, it did not solve the increasing number of out-of-school youth in the 7-24 age range. From 3 million in 1989, it rose to 3.8 million in 1994 and ballooned to 12.3 mil-

lion in 2008. In the DepEd's 2012 data, of 100 Grade 1 students, only 66 will finish Grade 6, 58 will enter high school, and only 43 will graduate. Among high school graduates, only 23 will continue to college and 14 will graduate.

Under K-12 program, of the 3.9 million Grade 10 graduates, 2.49 million failed to enter Senior High School (SHS) because of additional expenses of ₱100,000. Furthermore, only 48% of public schools offer SHS. The number of high school drop-outs will increase with the DepEd's approval of tuition increases of 1,013 private schools. It even doubled the budget for SHS "voucher system" (subsidy for students from public schools who will enrol in private schools) from ₱12-B to ₱24-B.

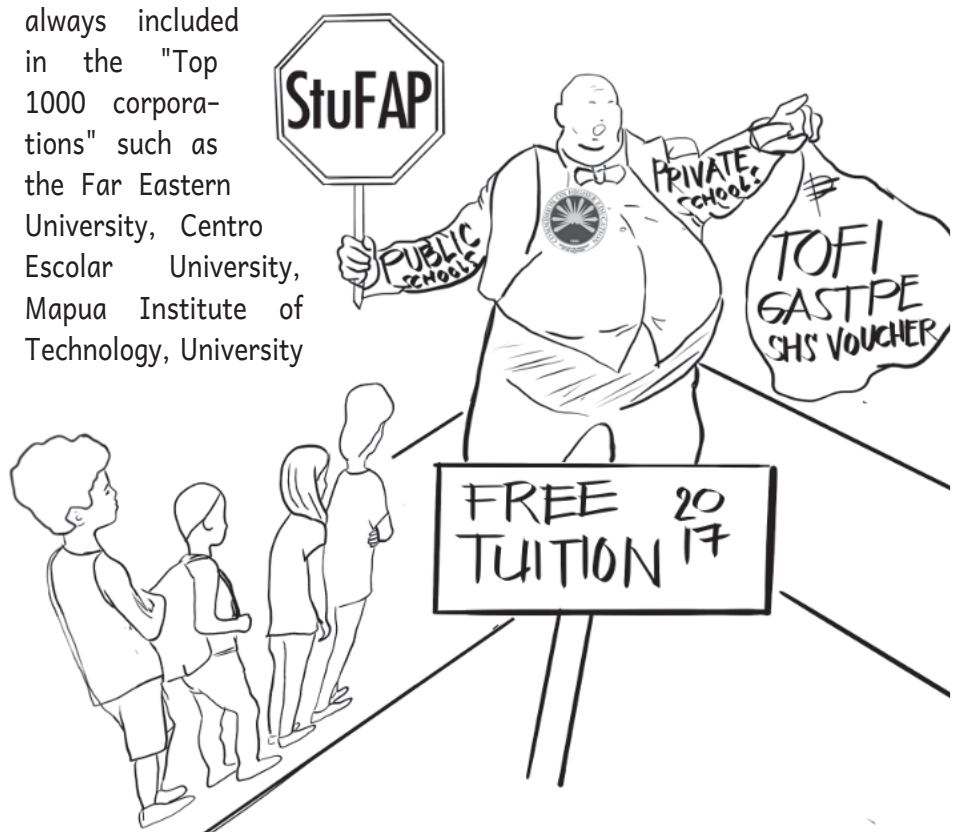
Only the big capitalists will benefit from this. For example, the Ayala and Pearson Affordable Education Center or APEC schools received an initial amount of P500 million from the government to subsidize students entering SHS even if it failed to meet the DepEd regulations (it has no land owned to build schools).

The big private universities are always included in the "Top 1000 corporations" such as the Far Eastern University, Centro Escolar University, Mapua Institute of Technology, University

of the East, and Manila Central University which are owned by the country's big capitalists. Both "non-profit" universities, UST and DLSU, increased their net profits from 2010-2015, 38% (₱941M-1.3B) and 92% (₱381.9M-734M), respectively.

The worsening commercialization continues under the Duterte regime. His promises of free education and scrapping of K-12 remain unfulfilled. Like all the past regimes, he is focused on strengthening the neoliberal policies in education to respond to global capital needs for cheap labor.

The problems in the educational system deepens as the crisis of the ruling social system aggravates. As the number of out-of-school youth rises, shortage of facilities and teachers remain unsolved, and the upsurge of fees continues, the colonial, commercialized and repressive character of the educational system becomes starker. This is why the call of the youth for nationalist, scientific, and mass-oriented education continues along with the call to advance the national-democratic aspirations of the people.



8th Congress of the CNL in its 45th year

The Christians for National Liberation (CNL) successfully held their 8th national congress last April 24-26 in a guerrilla zone. The theme was "Persevere in attaining greater heights of the National Democratic Revolution with Socialist Perspective. Intensify the participation of the sector in the people's armed revolutionary struggle!"

Congress delegates came from different parts of the country. Around 26% came from the national chapter, 19 % from Luzon, 16% from Visayas, and 39% from Mindanao.

CNL held their last congress last 2003. "Everyone was filled with joy and enthusiasm," Ka Dion, the newly elected national chairperson said, because 14 years had passed since the last congress.

There had been many achievements in CNL's past 14 years. It had expanded and launched local, provincial and regional congresses in 11 regions. As a revolutionary and patriotic organization of Christians from the churches of Catholics, Protestants and their sects, it had mobilized church people to fight against violence and state re-

pression. They had shared the struggles of peasants and workers. They have also contributed in advancing the armed struggle in the countryside.

The congress was made possible due to comrades' efforts. The 3 days of congress were full of lessons and challenges. Sharing of the revolutionary situation and the Party's program became the congress' highlight. Sharing of experiences and situation of regions' previous years were also full of vigour. CNL's direction became ever clearer. The CNL's experiences nationwide were summed up into 10 trends. Experiences were evaluated and lessons drawn out to guide the organization's next advance. Revisions in the consti-

tution and other documents were also ratified. After this, the delegates united and plans were presented to advance their work. Elections for the new leadership followed.

After the election, their fervent desire in remoulding and upholding principles for the advancement of the revolution and to surpass its achievements were reinvigorated upon their renewal of CNL's vow.

On the culmination of the congress, they celebrated the 45th anniversary of the CNL. In the midst of the flags of the CPP, CNL and NDFP allied organizations, tribute was given to heroic martyrs who have lived selflessly and sacrificed their lives for a just society. They were full of determination to battle conservatism, overcome weaknesses, review basic principles in waging the national democratic revolution, and offering one's self to others and for the country. AB