



EDITORIAL:

## **Enforced Disappearances, Tools of Terror**

Read on page 2

Protesters condemn G7 hypocrisy and warmongering (p. 2)

‘Parasitic AFP sucks dry public funds’, says CPP (p. 3)

Labor groups denounce signing of Maharlika Investment Fund (p. 4)

## EDITORIAL:

# Enforced Disappearances, Tools of Terror


The last week of May marks the International Week of the Disappeared – an important period for families grieving loved ones they have lost, but with no cadaver to prove their death, nor a grave to mark where they were laid to rest.

Enforced disappearance is still very much a reality in the Philippines especially in the context of the current Marcos Jr fascist regime. Recall that the number of desaparecidos in the country peaked during the Marcos Sr. dictatorship when some 2,300 civilians were reported missing. At least 206 activists were forcibly disappeared during the nine-year rule of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, 29 in the time of Benigno Aquino III and 20 under Rodrigo Duterte. Barely a year has passed since Marcos Jr fraudulently grabbed power, at least 21 people have already been reported missing including the recent disappearance of Rogelio Posadas, a consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

The highest number of NDFP consultants who fell victim to enforced disappearances were recorded during the US-Arroyo regime. When the regime ended the peace negotiations, 11 consultants and their companions and relatives were abducted and no longer surfaced.

The violent abduction and enforced disappearance of members of the revolutionary movement is a distinctive mark of fascist rulers. More than anything else it is a tool of terror unleashed by reactionary state forces to quell dissent amid the insoluble crisis brought about by a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society, and further degenerated by the US-Marcos regime. In every enforced disappearance, regimes always deny their involvement in the crime to deny victims justice, due process and rights accorded them. These violations are perpetrated in the context of broader attacks on civilians and their communities which is considered a crime against humanity.

Other tools at the reactionary state's disposal are wanton killings, intimidation, and harassment. These cases are typically resulting from unbridled military abuse and fascism in areas coveted by big businesses and neoliberal projects such as in the case of Camarines Norte where human rights violations have increased recently due to at least three foreign-owned projects that are scheduled for construction.

In many cases however, members of the revolutionary movement are the primary target as demonstrated in the murder of NDF consultant, artist, and poet Ericson Acosta in December last year. And despite Marcos Jr. claiming that its military priority has shifted to territorial defense, all evidence points to the use of the state's armed power against the revolutionary movement. But those in power forget that no amount of violence will suppress the spirit of struggle of the Filipino people. The butchers can only kill, maim, and abduct, but the revolutionary struggle remains vibrant in the hearts of the oppressed and exploited. So long as the objective conditions of poverty and exploitation remain, the fertile soil of revolutionary change is ours for the reaping. 

# Protesters condemn G7 hypocrisy and warmongering

Hundreds marched the streets of Hiroshima City on 19 May to protest against the Group of 7 (G7) which held its summit in Japan. Protesters gathered in the Peace Memorial Park, carrying slogans “No to War-themed Conference!” and “G7 is the cause of war!” The demonstrations were part of the International Day of Action Against the G7 held in several countries on 18-20 May 2023.

The International People's Front (IPF) and the International League of Struggle (ILPS) participated in the actions. More than 24,000 police were deployed to guard the leaders of G7 in attendance.

In the Philippines, activists from ILPS-Philippines, Bayan and other progressive organizations held a picket after a forum which discussed the history of US imperialism, its role in armed conflicts today and people's resistance against militarism.

G7 is composed of US, France, United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Canada, Japan, and the European Union. According to ILPS, the G7's main agenda is to “intensify the US proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and strengthening war provocation against China.”

“While the Summit pays lip service to a ‘free and open world’ based on the rule of law, it was the US and its allies who make their own rules. While there are calls for disarmament, the G7 is on a war path,” added ILPS in a statement.

The latest report from the Costs of War Project at Brown University shows that the post-9/11 US-led War *(continued next page...)*





image: philippinerevolution.nu

(continued from page 2...) on Terror may have caused at least 4.5 million deaths in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen.

The Resist US-Led War Movement declared that “G7’s role is crucial in the war strategy pushed by the US, including the expansion of military bases, nuclear arms, agreements on military training, and new bilateral and trilateral military agreements.”

Within the G7, differences are merely papered over. As they cannot completely decouple from China, they just agree on “de-risking” their China relations. In fact, the China led BRICS group of countries has already overtaken the G7 in terms of global GDP.

The EU’s ‘Global Gateway’ and the G7’s own ‘Build Back Better World’ (B3W) competing funding schemes never took off. China’s trade with the EU and the US has dwindled by as much a third in the past months. On the other hand, China’s trade with partners in the Belt and Road Initiative is growing as well as with China’s Overseas Direct Investment (ODI)

ILPS called on the peoples of the world to remain ever vigilant against the US and G7 war provocations. It believes that people can stop the wars by fighting back imperialism. ▲

## ‘Parasitic AFP sucks dry public funds,’ says CPP

“Like leeches, the huge fascist machinery of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) sucks dry the people’s funds...to cover the pension of its butcher elements after their ‘service’”, says the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in its 21 May 2023 issue of the Ang Bayan, its official news organ.

According to the CPP, all members of the military establishment, combatants and non-combatants alike, do not contribute a single centavo to their pension funds which come direct from the national treasury. This pension fund is in addition to the maintenance costs of active elements which constitute the biggest share in the budget of the Department of National Defense. In contrast, salaries of public and private employees are deducted for their contribution to the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) and Social Security System (SSS), respectively. Furthermore, the soldiers, whose retirement age is nine years earlier than other government employees, do not pay taxes for their pensions.

The CPP says that the needed pension ballooned several times as an aftermath of the former Duterte regime’s doubling of the base pay of the military and police. Now, the lowest official (2nd Lieutenant) receives a net salary of 43,829 Philippine pesos a month, much more than the 30,742 pesos net entry salary of nurses and 23,465 pesos for teachers. (continued next page...)

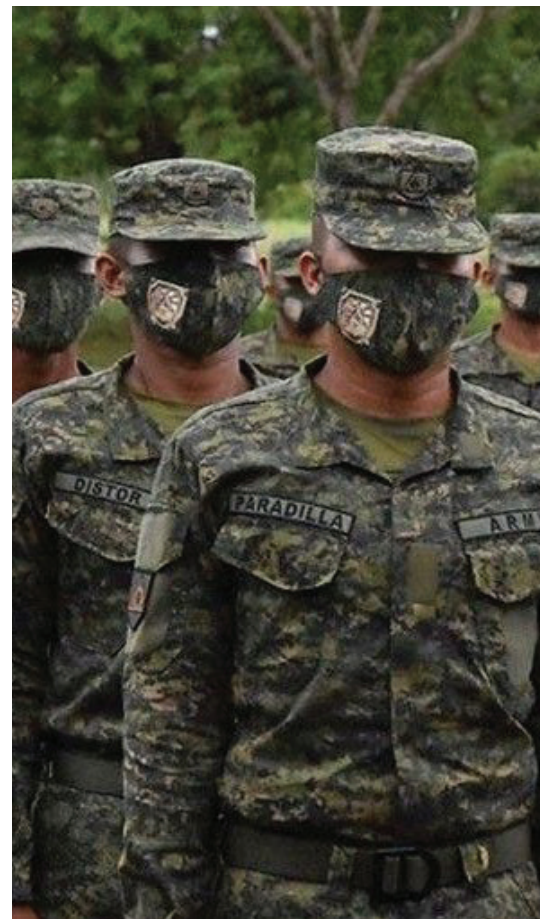



image: philippinerevolution.nu

(continued from page 2...) A new soldier recruit, trained for six months, gets 29,668 pesos. In contrast, a worker's regular wage stands at 8,902 pesos.

The CPP avers that officials of the reactionary state admit that the increasing pension funds of the AFP is unsustainable. 9.6 trillion pesos is needed in the next 20 years for the uniformed personnel's pension. According to the Department of Finance, the state will need to borrow an additional 3.43 trillion pesos up to 2030, 25% higher than the current level. The agency suggests deducting 5-9% from the personnel's salary for their pension fund. The agency also wants to remove the automatic promotion to a rank higher of retirees and add a year to its retirement age.

The CPP concludes, "Members of the AFP threatened to vehemently oppose the proposed reforms to the military's pension funds. Retired generals, who are not covered by the proposal, were first to oppose this. Instead of contributing, they want an increase to their pension from 85% to 90% of their base pay. This does not yet include the bribe given to retired generals after their stint in the 'pasalubong' system and the anomalous military contracts which their private companies and controlled criminal syndicates monopolize." 

## Labor groups denounce signing of Maharlika Investment Fund



image: philippinerevolution.nu

Thirteen labor groups signed a statement on 25 May 2023, expressing deep concern over the haste with which President Marcos Jr. wanted the Maharlika Investment Fund (MIF) bill to be enacted into law. They called on the Senate not to rush the approval of the bill which the President recently certified as urgent.

"With widespread corruption in government, it is but right to express fears over this proposal. We thus urge the Senate not to rush the approval of the MIF as it involves hundreds of billions of public funds," the labor organizations said in their joint statement.

They expressed apprehension that even government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCC's) that provide social services to the people like the Government Service Insurance System, Social Security System and

Pag-ibig funds, would be made to invest in the MIF. This would put the people's contribution at risk.

Establishing an MIF, they said, would require taking away billions of pesos from government institutions involved in helping farmers, medium-scale and micro enterprises, education, public health care and COVID response.

The MIF was a proposal filed by seven lawmakers, in the House of Representatives last November 2022. The initiators of the project included Martin Romualdez, the first cousin of the President, and Sando Marcos, the President's son.

The House Bill proposed the creation of a sovereign wealth fund for the Philippines. The idea was supposed to have been inspired by South Korea's own sovereign wealth fund. The fund, if established, would be managed by the Maharlika Investments Corporation.

Lawmakers from the Makabayan bloc at the House of Representatives sounded the warning on the bill, saying that provisions in the bill put the pension funds at risk. In a press conference, Rep. Arlene Brosas (Gabriela Women's Party) also hit the provisions in the Senate MIF bill allowing foreigners to sit on the board of Maharlika Investment Corp., which will have control over the controversial investment fund.

Rep. France Castro (ACT Teachers) also expressed concern over a provision allowing the government to have access to at least P125 billion worth of preferred shares. Castro said this could be prone to "money laundering" due to the discretionary powers given to the Board of Directors.

"This opens the wealth fund to corruption, money laundering and ill-gotten wealth," Castro said. 