



EDITORIAL:

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Read on page 2

On Duterte's 80th birthday, Filipinos call for justice for EJK victims (p. 2)

Hegseth's Manila visit to escalate war agenda vs. China (p. 3)

Marcos Jr. hit for relentless oil price hikes (p. 4)

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The worsening economic crisis, growing misery of the people, and sharpening infighting among factions of the Philippine ruling class have created the most favorable conditions for the advance of the national democratic revolution.

Poverty and hunger are reaching record levels. In December 2024, 63% of Filipino families—approximately 17.4 million households—considered themselves poor, up from 16.3 million in September 2024. This marks the highest self-rated poverty level in 21 years. Hunger continues to stalk millions, with 27% of families experiencing involuntary hunger in the first quarter of 2025—the highest since the pandemic began. These figures are not mere statistics; they represent the daily torment of the masses abandoned by a state that only serves the ruling class.

All the while, wages remain stagnant as the prices of rice, fuel, and other basic goods skyrocket. The minimum wage in many regions is far below the family living wage (Php1,200 or USD20.85), with inflation eating away at whatever measly increases workers receive. This economic hardship pushes even more Filipinos into informal, low-paying jobs, or forces them to leave the country in search of survival. Meanwhile, the government boasts of “economic growth” that only benefits foreign investors, big landlords, and business tycoons. Every payday, the Filipino worker is robbed twice—by inflation and by the ruling class parasites.

As the masses suffer, the ruling elite bicker over power. The contradiction between the Marcos Jr. clique and the Duterte camp has intensified, but make no mistake—they are two faces of the same rotten system. Both perpetuate the same brutal counterinsurgency program. Both are complicit in the killing of activists, unionists, NDFP peace consultants, and revolutionaries. From Duterte’s bloody reign to Marcos Jr.’s continuing red-tagging and militarization and bombings in the countryside, the war against the people persists.

This infighting is a scramble among thieves for dominance over a decaying system. While they attack each other in the halls of power, they remain united in repressing the people’s resistance. To maintain their hold, both camps scramble to project a false image of being “pro-people.” Marcos Jr. flaunts token aid programs and infrastructure projects while Duterte posture with nationalist rhetoric. These theatrics are meant only to deceive the masses.

But the people are not fooled. In the countryside, the people’s army continues to grow. In the cities, the youth, workers, and urban poor are rising in protest. More and more are realizing that real change will not come from the ballot box or elite maneuverings, but from collective struggle. The conditions are ripe. The people are ready. The revolutionary movement must seize this moment to advance on all fronts. The crisis beckons on the toiling Filipino masses like a call to arms. And the people are answering it. 

On Duterte’s 80th birthday, Filipinos call for justice for EJK victims

On March 28, the 80th birthday of former Philippine Rodrigo Duterte, Filipinos at home and abroad came out to the streets to welcome his imprisonment and trial in the International Criminal Court (ICC) at the Hague, in the Netherlands.

In the Philippines, thousands demonstrated in Manila and other major cities calling for justice for the victims of Duterte’s bloody drug war. Members of the Rise Up for Life and for Rights—an organization of families of victims of extrajudicial killings under former president Rodrigo Duterte’s so-called drug war—gathered on March 28, to join the protest in Manila coinciding with his birthday.

Since Duterte’s arrest on March 11, families of the victims were filled with hope because of the probability that Duterte will now be held accountable for his brutal crimes against their family members.

In the Netherlands, an alliance that seeks to organize efforts to prosecute people linked to the alleged abuses in his administration’s war on drugs was launched during Duterte’s birthday.

The Duterte Panagutin Europe Network, composed of anti-Duterte individuals and organizations based in the continent, gathered in The Hague and lit candles to mourn the thousands of victims of alleged extrajudicial killings.

On the other hand, followers of Duterte, in their desperate effort to conjure an illusion that majority of Filipinos are against the arrest and trial of their idol in the ICC, launched a campaign in the Philippines and other countries to demonstrate that they are against the ICC jurisdiction of Duterte’s case and that he should be returned home.

But the real sentiment of the Filipino people is reflected in a series of surveys in the Philippines.

In December 2023 the Social Weather Station (SWS) poll showed most




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Filipinos supported an ICC probe into drug-related killings during the Duterte administration.

Results of the poll conducted last December 10 to 14, 2024 showed that 55% of adult Filipinos are in favor of the government cooperating with the probe into alleged crimes against humanity committed during the previous administration's anti-illegal drugs campaign.

Another SWS survey conducted last Feb. 15 to 19, 2025 showed that most Filipinos believe former president Rodrigo Duterte should be held accountable for his bloody war on drugs. The poll showed 51 percent of respondents agreed that Duterte should be held accountable for drug war killings.

In a related development, on April 1, 2025, the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines (ICHRP) strongly condemns the harassment and threats perpetrated against the families of victims of Rodrigo Duterte's war on the poor.

Families of the victims have reported that since Duterte was arrested by the ICC on March 11, their members have received death threats, while online hate speech against them has spiked. These are clearly funded and supported by the Duterte camp in an attempt to silence and intimidate the victims to not testify as witnesses or cooperate with the ICC. 

Hegseth's Manila visit to escalate war agenda vs. China

The visit to Manila last March 28 of US President Trump's Defense Secretary Hegseth was meant to advance US imperialism's wars of aggression agenda in the Indo-Pacific region and is specifically directed against its imperialist rival China. Hegseth has announced that the U.S. and the Philippines have come together to work toward reestablishing military deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region.

In a statement, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) denounced this US "deterrence strategy" calling it nothing more than a plan to deploy more and more American troops, naval ships and other war equipment in the Philippines, Japan, South Korea and other countries, and is geared towards heightening US war preparations and provocations in the Asia-Pacific region with the US strategic goal of "containing" the growth of its imperialist rival China.

"Military deterrence is a policy that the US has repeatedly invoked in the past to justify the forward deployment of its military forces. Instead of preventing wars, this policy has instead invariably increased the possibility of armed conflict, as its actions are perceived by US rivals as aggressive and hostile. The most recent example is Ukraine, where the aggressive push to bring Ukraine into the NATO, and the presence and deployment of US military advisers, trainers and missile systems along the country's eastern border provoked Russia to carry out a military assault on Ukraine in 2022," the CPP emphasized.

To advance this "deterrence" strategy, the US will help "modernize" the Philippines' armed forces, promising initially a \$500 million Foreign Military Financing package, the sale of 20 F-16 fighter jets worth \$5.58bn to Philippines, the continued training of Filipino soldiers and conducting non-stop military exercises under the so-called Balikatan war games and prepositioning war matériel at EDCA sites, providing military aid for aerial bombing and the brutal counterinsurgency.

According to news reports, this year's war games will take place primarily on Luzon and Palawan and at several sites covered under the




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2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, which allows the U.S. to build facilities and store supplies and equipment at nine areas in the Philippines. The games, according to reports, will begin at Camp Aguinaldo in Manila and feature air- and missile-defense training at the Naval Education Training and Doctrine Command near Subic Bay. The U.S. and Philippine navies, along with Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force, will conduct a joint sail outside Philippine territorial waters along the coast of Luzon, April 26-29. On April 28, U.S. and Philippine forces will hold a live-fire drill on Palawan, simulating a counterattack on a hostile landing force.

Also, during these exercises, the US will deploy the NMESIS (Navy Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System) anti-ship missile system, which is capable of firing missiles to a distance of 185 kilometers and unmanned surface vehicles that can be used for a range of purposes for the US Navy.

The Typhon missile system was deployed last year during the war exercises and has since been stationed in a undisclosed US military site in the country. Hegseth has also proposed the deployment of another second mid-range Typhon Missile System battery to the Philippines.

In a similar statement, the NDFP International Office stressed that Hegseth's push for the "modernization" of the Armed Forces of the Philippines aims to transform the AFP into an auxiliary force of the US military in the event of an all-out war with China. While the maritime dispute with China remains fundamentally a territorial and resource issue and could be resolved through dialogue, the NDFP Office said, it pales in comparison to the pervasive US control over Philippine economy, culture, politics and military which poses a far more insidious threat. "Hegseth's plans to deepen security ties with the Philippine reactionary government not only further entrenches US control over the country's defense but also further implicates the US in Marcos Jr.'s ongoing war crimes, including indiscriminate bombings and military attacks on civilian communities under the guise of 'counterinsurgency' operations," the NDFP Int'l Office stated.

The CPP and the NDFP have both called on the Filipino people to demand the immediate dismantling of all US military bases and facilities, the pull-out of American military troops, the abrogation of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and other unequal military agreements and an end to military aid to the repressive Marcos regime. 

Marcos Jr. hit for relentless oil price hikes



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The Marcos Jr regime has been criticized by progressive forces for relentless oil price increases and the decline of the economy for the poor since the beginning of this year. Ang Bayan Ngayon, on March 30, 2025, reported that Bayan Muna Partylist 2nd Nominee Carlos Zarate expressed disappointment in the regime's slow response to the continuous rise in oil prices.

From 7 January to 30 March this year, the net increase in gasoline prices this year has reached Php3.25, following five price hikes: by P1 on 7 January, P0.80 on January 14, P1.65 on 21 January, P0.80 on 18 February and P0.70 on 25 February. There were only two price decreases: P0.90 on 11 February and P1.70 on 11 March.

During the same period, the net increase in diesel prices has also exceeded Php3 per liter, while kerosene prices have risen by Php0.30 per liter.

Zarate said the Department of Energy (DOE) seemingly acts as a mere "spokesperson" for oil companies. It has

failed to fulfill its role of "regulating" prices to protect the public's interest.

"The continuous rise in oil prices without immediate action from the government highlights a lack of governance and protection for the people," Zarate stated. He added that this is an additional burden on Filipinos, especially those in the transportation sector as well as ordinary consumers and commuters.

IBON Foundation, a research non-government organization, in February, 2025, in an assessment submitted to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, calls on the Philippine government to respond with concrete policy shifts.

The government's performative accountability gives the appearance of diligence and it data dumps to conceal the lack of meaningful, long-term improvements. Yet its quantitative and reporting camouflage cannot erase the worsening situation of workers, farmers, informals and other poor communities.

Plotting the country's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita growth against poverty data shows that rapid economic growth since the 2000s has not really translated into reduced poverty. The Philippines is a textbook case of exclusionary growth. Wealth is concentrated at the top, while poverty and precarious living conditions persist or even worsen for the majority. Ibon adds, "The country needs transformative reforms that address poverty, inequality, and workers' rights – not token measures for show." 