



ANG

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Editorial

Revolutionary tasks during elections

Elections under the rotten ruling reactionary state and system are bogus and always fraught with anomalies and violence. They are concentrated competitions where rival elitist factions try to outdo each other in terms of strength, money and schemes to gain the upper hand in exercising puppet reactionary rule. Violence, bribery and fraud are the key elements behind victory.

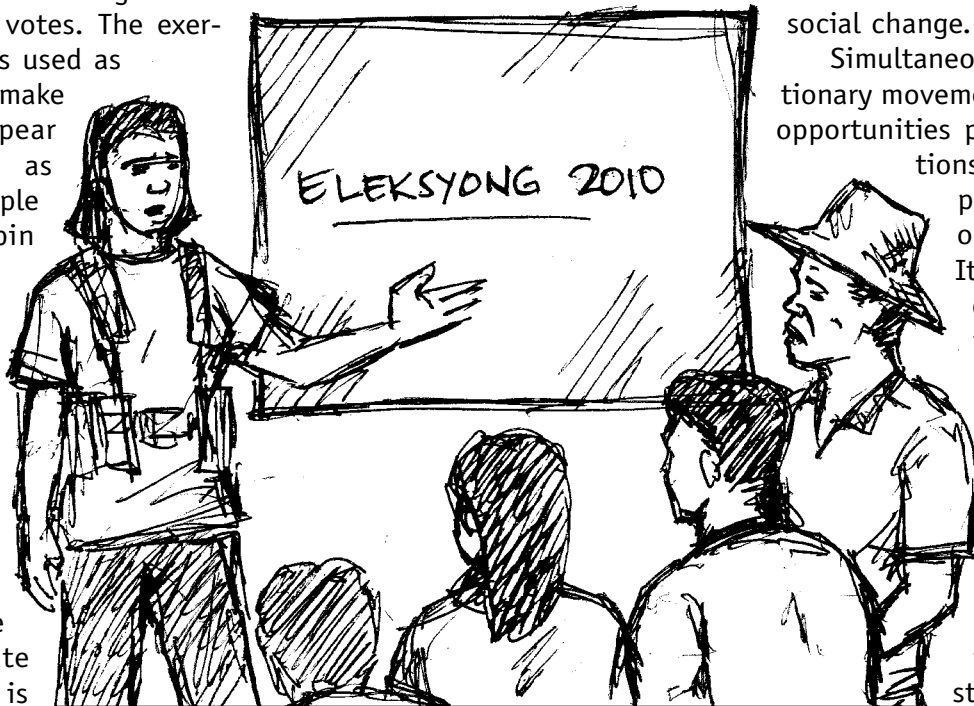
They are not genuine democratic processes and do not reflect the people's real interests. They are virtual circuses for the people's entertainment. They exploit the people's poverty and beguile them with money and other material things in order to win their votes. The exercise of suffrage is used as an adornment to make the process appear democratic. For as long as the people are made to pin their hopes on reactionary elections, the vast majority will continue participating in these exercises.

Nonetheless, to the limited extent possible under the reactionary state and system, it is

important to take advantage of reactionary elections in order to acquire concrete gains in the interest of the people and the revolutionary movement. It is the duty of the revolutionary forces to closely guide the people as they participate in reactionary elections.

The revolutionary movement applies dual tactics during reactionary elections. It is a basic task of the revolutionary movement to expose the inutility of reactionary elections and the rottenness of the system within which they exist. The revolutionary forces give stress to armed struggle as the guaranteed and primary means of seizing political power to achieve fundamental and thoroughgoing social change.

Simultaneously, the revolutionary movement also seizes the opportunities presented by elections in order to expand alliance work on various levels. It unites with candidates and parties that are ready to advance the democratic and patriotic interests and welfare of the people. As allies and progressives win seats, the people's struggles are also



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advanced inside parliament. Such opportunities are utilized by mass movements and organizations and enable them to use the resources of the reactionary state to directly benefit the people. On the other hand, contradictions among reactionaries are taken advantage of to further isolate and target the main and most rabid enemies of the people and the revolution.

Whether the alliances formed during elections are strategic or temporary, it is important even beyond the elections to continue providing political education and to organize and mobilize those who forged unities with us. Thus, the relationships that have been formed are enhanced and allies may be counted on to continue cooperating with the revolutionary movement and the people.

During reactionary elections, the revolutionary forces strive to protect the vast revolutionary areas that gain prominence and are visited by politicians. The revolutionary forces require politicians to respect and obey the laws and policies of the people's revolutionary government. Campaigning within the revolutionary areas is allowed

subject to strict conditions and controls especially with regards to the entry and movements of armed personnel. Fascists and rabid reactionaries are not allowed to spread their propaganda, conduct surveillance and foment disturbances in these areas.

The participation of progressive candidates and parties is a striking feature of the current elections. They conduct widespread campaigns to arouse, organize and mobilize the masses as a means of reaching out to millions upon millions of other people. Through this, they are able to expand their influence and organization and raise the people's capability to resist the ruling reactionary regime and the entire rotten ruling system.

This is the reason why the people are so ardent in mobilizing to support them despite the many obstacles thrown their way. In recent years, these progressive parties and candidates were able to effectively use parliament in tandem with the democratic mass movement to advance the people's national-democratic aspirations and interests despite their being a tiny minority. It therefore comes as


no surprise that rabid reactionaries have been trying tooth and nail to obstruct the efforts of progressive parties. Progressive leaders, activists and their supporters are the main targets of fascist attacks. They are also targets of systematic electoral fraud.

Poll fraud may even take on a more virulent, if sophisticated form in the face of the automated elections in May.

Thus, the people and their progressive forces must move in a more intelligent, planned, coordinated and systematic manner to address, expose and strive to frustrate both electoral fraud and fascist attacks on their ranks.

The current elections are also taking place amid the US-Arroyo regime's obstinate desire to cling to power and avoid accountability for its many grave crimes against the people. Its desperation becomes even more apparent in the face of the people's ever worsening poverty, oppression and discontent as they are bludgeoned by a most severe economic crisis and intensifying fascist attacks. The situation spurs the people even more to demand relief from their oppression and poverty and cry for significant changes in the country. It opens up opportunities for the forging of alliances with parties and candidates who are against the Arroyo clique and puppet rule and who are ready to cooperate in advancing the people's basic interests and alleviate their heavy burdens.

Parties and candidates even from the opposition who have committed serious crimes against the people must be exposed and lambasted. Those who blatantly advocate policies that trample on the people's rights and interests must be exposed, as with parties whose programs are worthless and do nothing but hoodwink the peo-

	
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ple. Parties that will further impoverish the people and attack their revolutionary movement once they gain power must be condemned.

Tactical offensives must be intensified during reactionary elections, with particular emphasis given to targeting fascist and terrorist leaders. During elections, it is important to stress even more the launching of tactical offensives against the most rabidly reactionary politicians and their armed minions, and against the biggest and most despicable plunderers, the most corrupt bureaucrats and those who owe blood debts to the people and the revolution.

Simultaneously, everyone must be ready for a whole range of possibilities, from massive electoral fraud and sabotage and the deliberate failure of elections to the imposition of emergency rule, transition rule or outright martial law as well as other dirty and violent schemes being hatched by the ruling regime. The Party and the revolutionary forces must swiftly and effectively take the lead should the growing possibility of direct and widespread people's actions materialize and should these culminate in uprisings and assertions of the people's power.

Whether the elections take place or not, and whatever the configuration will be after May 2010, the masses will continue to be plagued with discontent and the reactionaries besieged by bitter rivalries. We must be ever vigilant with every twist and turn in the situation, become even more flexible and exercise even more initiative in order to seize opportunities for the people and the revolutionary forces to prevail and gain strength. **AB**

Kontra-Daya warns against failure of elections

The people must mobilize in case of a failure in the May elections or should martial law be declared as a result. Thus declared the convenors of Kontra-Daya 2010, a broad coalition of church people, teachers, information technology experts, students, activists and others aspiring for clean and credible elections in May. Kontra-Daya's establishment was announced in Intramuros, Manila on February 17.

Among the convenors of Kontra-Daya 2010 are Fr. Jose Dizon of Solidarity Philippines, Sr. Mary John Mananzan of the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMSRP), Bishop Elmer Bolocon, Archbishop Oscar Cruz, writer and artist Bibeth Orteza, Grace Poe-Llamanzares, scientist Prof. Giovanni Tapang, Atty. Harry Roque, Henri Khan, Bettina Legarda, Fernando Gaité of COURAGE and Renato Reyes of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN).

According to Kontra-Daya, there are indications of a failure of elections, among them the current problems with the first-ever automated elections in the country and admissions from the National Power Corporation of a power shortage due to the ongoing drought.

Gloria Arroyo's lackeys like Defense Sec. Norberto

Gonzales are constantly pushing scenarios that have Gloria Arroyo serving as "transition president" should the polls fail. Senate Pres. Juan Ponce Enrile has also advanced the idea that in such an event, the new constitution states that it is the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police that will act as officers-in-charge (OIC) and choose who will serve as the country's acting president.

Reyes said that should these worst case scenarios become reality, BAYAN is ready to mobilize the people in their numbers to defeat these ignoble schemes.

Kontra Daya 2010 has launched a website (www.kontradaya.org) to enable the people to monitor election issues. It also encourages the public to send reports through kontradaya@gmail.com. **AB**



Sectors slam inflated budget

Various sectors strongly condemned the covert insertion by Gloria Arroyo and her henchmen in Congress of ₱119 billion in “unprogrammed funds” for the president and ₱64.6 billion additional pork barrel funds into the 2010 national budget.

Arroyo signed on February 10 the 2010 budget totalling ₱1.54 trillion, which was 8% higher (₱115 billion) than the 2009 budget. The figure, however, excludes the insertions. Taken all together, Arroyo actually approved a budget of ₱1.723 trillion.

The additions were done during meetings of the Bicameral Conference Committee which finalizes laws before they are submitted to Arroyo for signing. The congress-

men hoped to acquire the ₱64.6 billion additional pork barrel from the funds set aside for debt service. Arroyo vetoed the deductions made from the amount earmarked for debt service but did not disapprove the projects to be funded by the expanded pork barrel and her own discretionary funds. She said that it was up to the lawmakers to raise the needed revenues. The congresspersons plan to raise these funds through additional borrow-

ing and the imposition of new taxes—this, at a time when the people are already saddled with a heavy tax burden and a severe economic crisis.

Meanwhile, an anti-impoundment provision has been included in the approved 2010 budget, which revokes the power of the next president to control congressional pork barrel funds. Arroyo has invoked this power to favor her allies and allow them to feast off the pork barrel. On the other hand, she has withheld the pork barrels of oppositionists. Progressive congresspersons and other anti-Arroyo legislators have not received a single centavo from their pork barrel allocations since 2005. **AB**

Peasants expose two landgrabbing cases

Two landgrabbing cases in Bulacan and Leyte have once again established the inutility of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). Although the lands in question have both been subjected to CARP, this has been disregarded by the powerful landgrabbers.

Seized for so-called environmental project. For more than 30 years, 230 peasant families have been cultivating 375 hectares of rice and corn fields in Sitio Malapad, Barangay Sibul, San Miguel, Bulacan. The peasants hold Certificates of Land Ownership Awards (CLOAs) as CARP beneficiaries. However, they fear that their status as CARP beneficiaries will be disregarded because the family of Rep. Luis Villafuerte (Camarines Sur, 2nd District) is claiming ownership of these extensive agricultural lands.

According to Lingap Magsasaka, a member organization of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), the Villafuertes and their personnel have come to the area three times since April 2009.

Villafuerte called the peasants to a meeting on his first visit to Sitio Malapad. The lawmaker circulated papers to be signed, saying it was an attendance sheet. It was too late when the farmers realized that they had signed a deed of donation—meaning they

had given away for free hundreds of hectares of the land that they have been tilling to one of Green Earth Foundation’s environmental projects. Green Earth is headed by Villafuerte’s daughter Mylene and her husband James Matti.

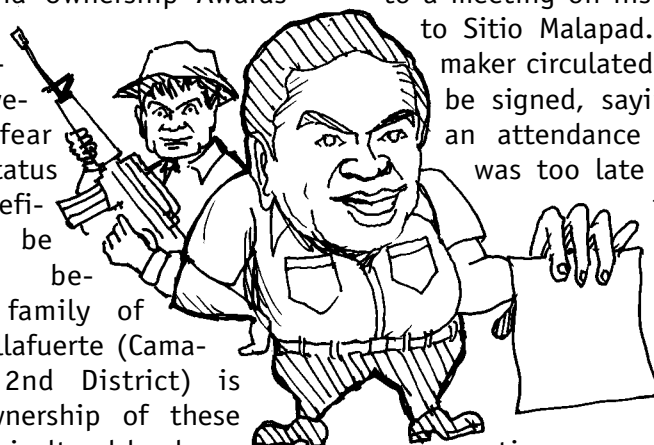
The peasants were also afraid because at the time, they were surrounded by the military personnel who accompanied Villafuerte.

When Villafuerte returned to the area, he pressed the peasants to become farm workers of Green Earth and plant bamboo and other cash crops instead of rice and corn.

During the third visit, Villafuerte’s daughter and son-in-law arrived with Scout Rangers of the Philippine Army as their companions. They surveyed the area, laid down markers, felled the giant trees and replaced them with new trees and bamboo.

The angry residents refused to appear at the meeting called by the Villafuertes.

Former judge grabs land in Leyte. Former Court of Appeals Justice Vicente “Cheng” Veloso siezed 429 hectares of agricultural



lands farmed by 144 peasant beneficiaries of CARP. The land is strategically located at the Alang-alang-San Miguel-Tacloban City tri-boundary.

The peasants have been tilling these lands since the 1930s, according to an investigation conducted by the Samahan han Gudtina Parag-uma sa Sinirangan Bisayas (SAGUPA-SB), the regional peasant organization in Eastern Visayas. In 1974, by virtue of PD 625, the land was placed under the management of the Leyte Sab-a Basin Development Authority (LS-DA). The LSDA covers 3,000 hectares in the towns of Jaro, Alang-alang, Sta. Fe, Palo, Barugo, Babatngon and San Miguel and the city of Tacloban. CARP's coverage

extends to 8,000 hectares of agricultural lands in these towns.

In 1991, the peasants of Alang-alang were awarded CLOAs but in 2001 these were cancelled by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). Former Justice Veloso entered the scene in 1997 to claim ownership of the land and secured titles for his family and relatives. He drove out the peasants using armed goons who introduced themselves as policemen. The goons trained their guns at the peasants and told them to stop planting coconut trees. Veloso's plan was to plant the area with fast-growing trees and sell them to the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR).

The case was brought before the Department of Agrarian Reform

Adjudication Board (DARAB). In 2002, DARAB issued a decision in favor of Veloso. Not only were the peasants in Alang-alang ejected, but also those in neighboring towns.

SAGUPA-SB along with KMP and the Anakpawis and Bayan Muna parties launched a fact-finding mission in October 2009. Rep. Rafael Mariano of Anakpawis, Rep. Teddy Casiño of Bayan Muna and delegates from DAR Region 8 and other government agencies held a dialogue. No evidence emerged to prove that the land was Veloso's property.

The DAR officials promised to also carry out their own investigation but nothing has happened until now. **AB**

Sectors within sugar industry oppose importation

Various sectors in the sugar industry are opposing government plans to import sugar in the face of an alleged sugar shortage in the country. The government has announced that it will import 150,000 metric tons of sugar purportedly to reduce rising sugar prices in the local market.

Among those opposed to the importation of sugar are the organizations of farm and sugar mill workers, drivers, stevedores and others employed by the sugar industry.

The provincial government of Negros Occidental has also expressed opposition. The province is the largest sugar producer in the country.

These sectors firmly agreed that the importation of sugar will be harmful to the sugar industry and to the country's economy. Owners of sugarcane plantations will no longer be enticed to invest, and the country will become dependent on imported sugar as

what happened in the case of rice. It will also ruin the livelihoods of six million peasants in the 17 provinces that plant sugarcane.

An IBON Foundation research showed that the sudden rise in sugar prices in the local market was propelled by a reduction in supply for local consumption as a result of the bulk export of 137,000 metric tons of sugar to the US in January. The bulk export makes up 86% of the 158,906 metric ton quota of the Philippines to the US for this year. Instead of exporting sugar gradually each month until the quota is filled, businessmen resorted to exporting the product in bulk to take

advantage of high sugar prices in the world market.

The bulk exports reduced supplies set aside for local consumption, sending sugar prices skyrocketing in the local market. The main beneficiaries were businessmen-cronies of the Arroyo regime from Negros, Pampanga and Tarlac.

In order to relieve the resulting shortage, the Arroyo government has ordered the tariff-free importation of 150,000 metric tons of sugar. According to Jose Maria Montinola, chair of the Victorias Milling Corp. Farmers' Multipurpose Cooperative, the government stands to lose ₱2.103 billion in import duties. The amount will be shaved off the "tax expenditure subsidy" (TES) that is allotted for social services for peasants in sugarcane plantations.

The Arroyo clique's businessmen cohorts who already made a killing from exporting sugar will now be receiving another windfall, this time from importing sugar. **AB**



Widespread support for the Morong 43

Support for 43 health workers who were illegally arrested and tortured on February 6 continues to grow. The illegal arrest by the Philippine Army 2nd Infantry Division took place at a vacation house owned by Dr. Melecia Velmonte in Morong, Rizal where the health workers were conducting a medical training for community health work. Doctor Velmonte is a consultant of the Philippine General Hospital and professor emeritus at the University of the Philippines College of Medicine.

Among those illegally arrested were doctors, nurses, midwives and community health volunteers who were training under the joint supervision of the Council for Health and Development (CHD) and the Community Medicine Development Foundation (COMMED). CHD and COMMED are both non-government organizations that provide health services and medical training to poor communities.

A battalion of soldiers from the 202nd Infantry Brigade along with local police elements carried out the raid. They used four six-by-six trucks, two armored personnel carriers and other vehicles without license plates or identification.

The warrant of arrest used in the operation was defective. The warrant was for a certain "Mario Conde" who is not known at the vacation house and in the community. The military and police planted guns, grenades, bombs and bomb-making material at the vacation house in order to make it appear that the 43 health workers are members of the New People's Army (NPA). The military insisted

that they chanced upon documents on bomb-making instead of medical training materials.

The 43 health workers are detained at Camp Capinpin, the headquarters of the 202nd Bde where they were held incommunicado for two days.

Worse, the victims were tortured and sexually harassed by the military. They were handcuffed, blindfolded and abused for 36 hours. They were not given enough food and were denied bathroom privileges. When they had to use the toilet, a soldier would pull down their underwear. There were times when the soldiers would touch the genitals of some of the women prisoners.

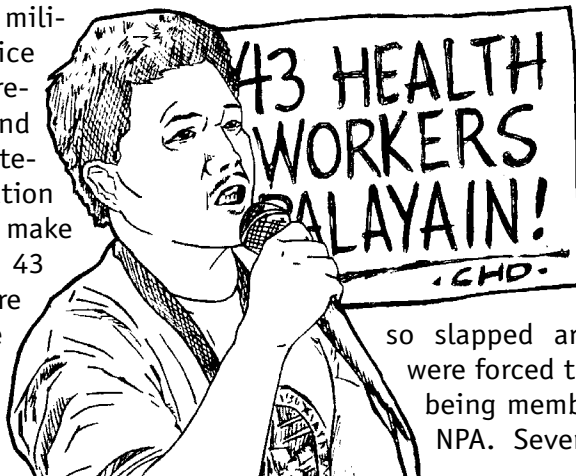
The victims were also denied sleep and were prohibited from talking to each other. They were placed in dark

victims had wounds on their wrists due to being tightly handcuffed for long periods of time. One woman victim was forced to stand in the hot sun when the military found out that she was menstruating heavily.

One of the victims, 62-year old Dr. Alex Montes was accused by the military of being a member of a so-called special unit of the NPA with a mission to kill retired Gen. Jovito Palparan. Dr. Montes was electrocuted and repeatedly whacked in the chest with a piece of wood. He was also made to stand at the edge of a cliff and beaten up to force him to admit to being an NPA member.

When the Supreme Court issued a writ of habeas corpus on February 10, the military leadership shamelessly ignored it and failed to comply with the order to present the 43 health workers in court. The military ridiculously reasoned out that it was too difficult and risky to transport the detainees from Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal to Manila because there were too many of them and there was danger that the NPA would conduct a rescue operation along the way.

Condemnation for the arrest of the 43 health workers and demands for their release continue to mount. Among those who have assailed the arrest are the United Methodist Church California-Pacific Conference, Caritas-Aotearoa, Philippine Nurses Association, UP College of Medicine, Alliance of All Health Organizations of the Nation, Alliance of Concerned Teachers, UP-Manila Student Council, medical students of the Trinity University of Asia, Philippine Solidarity Network of Aotearoa, BAYAN-USA, Migrante-Middle East and many more. Concerned by the plight of



cells and forced to listen to loud sounds of gunfire. They were also slapped around and were forced to admit to being members of the NPA. Several of the

the 43 health workers, the International Committee of the Red Cross has visited the detainees to determine their situation and look into complaints of torture.

Meanwhile, the Laguna Medical Society expressed concern that ever since the 43 health workers were arrested in Morong, nurses and health volunteers have become reluctant to join medical missions in remote areas for fear of being accused as NPA members or sympathizers.

The CHD also said that its health programs for poor communities have been derailed because of the detention of its members. The CHD was scheduled to launch a medical mission in Palawan that would have benefited 3,000 members of the Tagbanua tribe. AB

Peasant activist's release demanded

Members of various sectoral groups are demanding from the Arroyo regime the immediate release of Cirila Estrada, 49, a peasant activist illegally arrested by joint forces of the military and police in Iloilo City on February 12. Estrada was on the way to her doctor in the city when she was suddenly seized by military agents, blindfolded and forced into a van. Estrada is a member of Paghugpong sang mga Mangunguma sa Panay kag Guimaras (PAMANGGAS), an organization of peasants in Panay and Guimaras islands.

Members of KARAPATAN, Makabayan, Gabriela, BAYAN-Panay and PAMANGGAS launched a mass action on February 16 to demand Estrada's release. The next day, they trooped to the Iloilo Rehabilitation Center (IRC) where Estrada is detained in order to talk with the provincial warden about her security and safety.

Estrada was active during the Marcos dictatorship in struggling for the interests of the peasantry before becoming a volunteer of PAMANGGAS. She was in Iloilo City to buy medicine and to be seen by a doctor because of a liver ailment. She also suffers from asthma.

The activists said that Estrada's illegal arrest shows a pattern of harassment against members of progressive organizations as the election nears, such as what happened to the 43 health workers who were illegally arrested in Morong, Rizal in February and slapped with trumped-up charges. They pointed out that it was also during election time in 2007 when military operatives abducted Luisa Posa-Dominado of SELDA-Panay and Nilo Arado, chair of BAYAN-Panay and one of the nominees of the Anakpawis party.

Activists fear that the arrest of Estrada signals the start of many more attacks against progressive organizations and supporters of militant groups. AB

NDFP condemns violation of Ka Jinggoy's rights

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) negotiating panel strongly condemned the AFP's violation of the rights of Comrade Elizalde "Ka Jinggoy" Cañete under International Humanitarian Law as a wounded hors de combat.

Ka Jinggoy was apprehended after the NPA and elements of the 3rd Special Forces Battalion of the Philippine Army clashed in Barangay Sarmiento, Laak, Compostela Valley. He was wounded when he was arrested on January 30.

Ka Jinggoy was first taken to the Camp Panacan Naval Hospital before he was brought to the Davao Medical Center (DMC) to be operated on on January 31. Just three days after the operation, he was forcibly moved back to Camp Panacan Naval Hospital from the DMC. This was done without a court order and against his doctor's advice. The military disregarded the protests of his mother and sister.

Ka Jinggoy's family is worried about his condition in the military hospital. He was still trembling when he was moved due to a high fever. His stomach was still swollen and he was pale and jaundiced. He was having a hard time breathing and often requested oxygen.

The forced transfer of Ka Jinggoy which was done against the advice of the doctor who operated on him and the military's pointblank disregard for his physical condition are direct violations of his rights under International Humanitarian Law. International Humanitarian Law provides that wounded hors de combat should be given special protection and the necessary medical care and should not be maltreated in any way. The military also trampled on the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) between the GRP and NDFP.

On November 28, 2009, Ka Jinggoy's father was killed by suspected agents of the 7th Special Forces of the 25th IB. Ka Jinggoy's father was last seen talking with them before he was found dead and riddled with bullets the following day. AB



NPA offensive in Kalinga

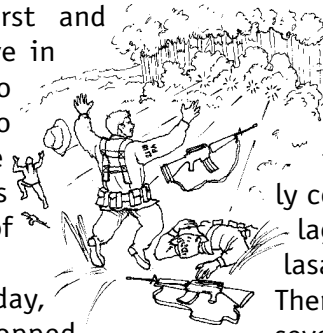
Three soldiers were killed when 21st IB troops and a unit of the Lejo Cawilan Command of the New People's Army (NPA) clashed in Mabaca, Balbalan, Kalinga at 4:20 p.m. on February 10. There were no casualties on the NPA side.

The enemy had already suffered casualties earlier when three soldiers were killed and two more were wounded in an NPA ambush on 21st IB troops in Mabaca on February 4. The next day, the 21st IB held a meeting in Sitio Kalkatan, Mabaca and threatened barangay officials that they will answer if their troops are once more attacked.

In the second encounter, the Red fighters and the AFP troops closing in were only about 30 meters apart. But due to the density of the forest, the Red fighters were

able to fire first and seize the initiative in battle. The two soldiers who were behind the first casualties fled the scene of the fighting.

The next day, soldiers chopped down trees at the peak of a mountain in preparation for a helicopter landing. At around 1:45 p.m., two Huey helicopters arrived but were unable to land because they were being sniped at by the Red fight-



ers. When they returned, they were accompanied by an MG520 helicopter that strafed and bombed the mountains for an hour. The helicopters returned three times to transport supplies and retrieve the AFP casualties.

The gunbattles took place in the midst of a huge operation that started in the first week of February. Battalion-size enemy troops are currently conducting operations in the villages of Mabaca, Poswoy, Balbalasang and Poblacion in Balbalan. There were also troops operating in several barrios of the towns of Pinukpuk, Upper Tabuk, Lubuagan and Pasil. Elements of the Cordillera People's Liberation Army and CAFGU joined the military operations in Baryo Dupag, Tabuk and Baryo Tanglag, Lubuagan. **AB**

Abduction and killing in Albay

THE National Democratic Front-Bicol vehemently condemned the series of abductions and killings of innocent civilians in Albay province by the 2nd IB and 901st Brigade.

The decomposing bodies of Ananias Cardiente Jr. and Vicente Moradillo were found in the afternoon of February 7. They were abducted on January 15 by elements of the Special Operations Team (SOT) of the 901st Brigade in Barangay Taplacon, Camalig. There were torture marks on the bodies of the victims.

Soldiers also shot and killed civilians Vergel Mapola Catubig at a fiesta in Barangay Lawinon, Pio Duran on January 30. Another civilian in Camalig town was also abducted by military men who slashed his throat and killed him. His body was found in the town of Jovellar.

These incidents are part of the terror tactics and dirty psywar which the 901st Brigade systematically uses to sow fear among the people. **AB**

Progressive groups decry harassment of activist leaders in Aklan

MEMBERS of progressive organizations in Aklan condemned the filing of a criminal case against some of its members. At a rally in front of the Municipal Trial Court in Kalibo on February 16, they lambasted the issuance of an arrest warrant against Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN)-Aklan spokesperson George Calaor and other activists as part of the Arroyo regime's harassment of its critics.

Others who were issued arrest warrants were Nenita Tugna, spokesperson of the Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap-Aklan and couple Remy and Norma Saldivia, residents of an urban poor community in Kalibo. Calaor and Tugna were not detained because they were able to post bail but the Zaldivia couple are currently in jail.

Calaor and Tugna served as negotiators between urban poor residents and policemen when a demolition order was being enforced in a community on Laserna St. in Kalibo. Calaor and company were requesting the police to comply with RA 9279 which stipulates that there must be a relocation site ready for affected residents before any demolition could take place. The residents fought back when the demolition still pushed through with the policemen tearing down the Zaldivias' house. **AB**



Tactical offensives in other regions

A military element was killed, 15 were wounded and four firearms were seized in a series of tactical offensives by the New People's Army (NPA) this February.

February 20. Two M16s and communication equipment were seized by Red fighters from a raid on the Port Barton Development Corp. in Tandan Island, San Vicente, Palawan.

February 18. Ten elements of the 903rd Brigade were wounded when they were ambushed by NPA Red fighters while aboard a military truck in Barangay Montecarmelo, Castilla, Sorsogon.

February 14. Two elements of the Citizens Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) were wounded when they were ambushed by Red fighters in Barangay Banag-banag, Sibagat, Agusan del Sur. The day before, an element of the 6th Scout Ranger Company was killed when the NPA fought with his unit in the town of Buenavista, Agusan del Norte.

February 13. A soldier of the 58th IB was wounded when Red fighters blew up a military truck in Barangay Anibongan, Lianga, Surigao del Sur.

February 8. Two policemen were wounded when they were ambushed by NPA guerrillas in Barangay Badling, Uson, Masbate. The patrol car that elements of the Philippine National Police Special Action Force were riding was hit by explosives detonated by the people's guerrillas.

February 7. A carbine, a .45 caliber pistol and two grenades were confiscated by Red fighters from a retired Philippine Army sergeant in Sitio Baliw, Barangay Payapag, Bacuag, Surigao del Norte. **AB**

NDFP, MILF terminate peace talks with the Arroyo regime

Both the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have terminated peace talks with the Arroyo regime. The NDFP and MILF said there was no hope of forging any kind of agreement in the few remaining months of the US-Arroyo regime's term. They said that they would much rather wait for the regime that will succeed the current government.

The NDFP also said that the ruling regime has never been sincere in its negotiations.

The GRP has violated almost all agreements forged with the NDFP. In the latest incident, the Arroyo regime violated an agreement to free 14 detained NDFP consultants to enable them to participate in talks scheduled in August 2009. The arrest, detention and filing of trumped-up cases against them is in violation of the JASIG which gives protection and prohibits the arrest of consultants and staff involved in the peace talks. However,

only two consultants were released, with one of them enjoying only conditional freedom. The regime eventually declared that there would be no talks unless the NDFP agrees to discuss the disarmament, disbandment and reintegration of the New People's Army (NPA) before even discussing social, economic and political reforms. This is contrary to The Hague Joint Declaration of 1992.

Of late, the Arroyo regime has even been sowing intrigues with Defense Secretary Norberto Gonzales fabricating lies on a supposed

split within the revolutionary movement between those in favor of peace talks and electoral struggle and those in favor of armed struggle. Gonzales and Annabelle Abaya of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process have also been using this intrigue as a pretext to push anew talks with local NPA commands and offer "amnesty and rehabilitation". This is but a way for high-ranking military officers to present fake surrenderees and pocket the "rehabilitation" fund.

Worse, the intrigue on factionalism within the revolutionary movement is a prelude to extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations, where the victims will be depicted as casualties of the so-called purges.

NDFP Human Rights Committee chair Fidel Agcaoili said that the Arroyo regime is not interested in peace negotiations that aim to resolve the roots of the armed conflict and bring forth social, eco-

conomic and political reform in the country.

On the side of the MILF, the Arroyo regime has repeatedly promised to grant its demand for genuine autonomy. Instead, however, the regime has constantly been offering it "enhanced autonomy"

within the narrow confines of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. This February, the Arroyo regime peace panel in talks with the MILF drafted for the third time a proposal on "enhanced autonomy".

Since it was clear that they

were going nowhere, the MILF refused to show up at the talks. The MILF said that if it was impossible to come to terms with the GRP at this time, it would be better to wait for the next regime which may be more serious regarding the talks. **AB**

Nolcom's claimed victories are fabrications

The Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) is presenting fantastic success stories to cover up its military failures and those of the Philippine Army 5th Infantry Division. This was the reaction of Ka Diego Wadagan, spokesperson of the Agustin Begnalen Command of the New People's Army (NPA-Abra), on February 9 to Nolcom and the 5th ID's boastful accounts of victories against the revolutionary movement in the Ilocos-Cordillera Region.

Col. Essel Soriano, commander of the 503rd Brigade and Lt. Col. Rogelio Migote, commander of the 50th IB bragged in the second week of February that their soldiers seized a huge NPA camp in Tubo, Abra. The soldiers of the 41st IB also supposedly discovered a cache of the NPA's firearms in Barangay Buneg in Lacub.

The NPA merely laughed off these claims. The large camp, said Wadagan, has long been abandoned. Wadagan said that the NPA does not really have any permanent camps. It is also not true that the 41st IB troops discovered a weapons stockpile because the NPA does not have an excess of firearms due to the large number of its recruits.

In truth, the military officials have just been weaving tales in order to conceal their battlefield casualties, said Wadagan. Nolcom poured in almost a division-size troop and used airplanes and helicopters of the Philippine Air Force in a massive military pursuit operation against the NPA from January 27 to February 4. Despite this show of force, up to 29 soldiers have been killed and 35 were wounded in fire-fights in the town of Malibcong, Abra alone. This is aside from the military equipment seized and destroyed in counter-attacks by NPA units in different places in the Cordillera. **AB**

Meralco overcharges by P7B

The Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) has charged its clients an excess of P7.01 billion, according to the Commission on Audit (COA). The COA said that Meralco overcharged consumers by P1.68 billion in 2004 and P5.33 billion in 2007.

The COA said that this occurred because Meralco included in the operational expenses it recovered from electric power consumers the company's expenses for several properties and equipment that were not being used to generate or distribute electricity.

Among the items which the COA deemed unrecoverable from consumers are Meralco's expenses for the construction of a creek and parking lot located one kilometer away from the Meralco offices, employee pensions and the huge perks and salaries of its executives.

This is not the first time that Meralco has overcharged its customers. In 2003, the Supreme Court ordered Meralco to return to its consumers P30 billion in overcharges because the company included its income taxes among its operational expenses.

An audit of Meralco's financial transactions was ordered by the Supreme Court after Meralco petitioned for an increase in its electricity charges in 2004.

Meralco is able to commit all these abuses because its private monopoly control has been reinforced under the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA), which has also allowed the power distribution firm to amass huge profits. EPIRA was enacted in accordance with the Arroyo regime's liberalization, deregulation and privatization policies.

Meanwhile, a power rate hike has been scheduled for March. Meralco is now conditioning the minds of the public to accept the impending escalation of power rates as a result of the ongoing drought. The lack of rainwater has lowered water levels in dams, reducing the volume of water available for the production of hydroelectric power.

Brownouts have become frequent especially in Luzon and Mindanao. Meralco has already declared that consumers should brace themselves for higher electricity charges if they want to avoid power outages. **AB**

Workers oppose shutdown of Cebu factory

More than 100 workers are opposing management plans to shut down Alta Mode Incorporated, a garments factory at the Mactan Export Processing Zone (MEPZ) II in Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu. They are scheduled to launch a protest action on February 23 to halt the closure of the factory.

Alta Mode Incorporated is a subcontractor and exporter of high-end garment brands such as Abercrombie and Fitch.

The workers filed a notice of strike at the National Conciliation and Mediation Board in Cebu City on February 11 after the company announced its closure. This was followed by a rally on February 15 by members of the Alta Mode Workers' Union because they were already being prohibited from entering MEPZ II 30 days before the actual closure of the factory. It is scheduled to close on March 15.

The company claimed that it was closing down because it was losing money. Union president Renante Palino said, however, that the real reason behind the closure is the company's refusal to address the workers' demands in pursuit of their rights and welfare.

Since the company started operating at the MPEZ II in 1999, the workers have gradually lost benefits such as 13th month pay. As a result, the workers formed a union, which the company management tried to bust.

Laguna de Bay residents launch caravan

FISHERFOLK, peasants and victims of typhoon Ondoy who live near Laguna de Bay launched their own caravan on February 9 to give support to the progressive candidates and parties who have been promoting their interests within and outside Congress.

The caravan was led by the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (PAMALAKAYA), Katipunan ng Samahang Magbubukid ng Timog Katagalugan (Kasama-TK) and the multisectoral Save Laguna Lake Movement. The caravan began in the town of Jalajala and ended at Lupang Arenda in the town of Taytay, Rizal.

Joining the mass action were ten passenger jeeps decked out with the campaign streamers of progressive senatorial candidates Satur Ocampo and Liza Maza and those of Bayan Muna, Anakpawis, Gabriela Women's Party and the Kabataan Partylist.