



EDITORIAL

## Defend the masses against fascist attacks

**H**undreds of fascist soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) recently invaded and imposed martial law on remote villages and communities in Himamaylan City, Negros Occidental. At least 18,000 farmers, farm-workers and ordinary people were forced to flee their homes due to the relentless AFP shelling and strafing near their communities, and the ransacking, beating and threats by soldiers against civilians. People were forced to evacuate as the military imposed a "no man's land" policy where anyone left behind would be considered target of AFP shooting.

The AFP's rampage in Himamaylan follows a series of encounters with a unit of the New People's Army (NPA) in a remote village where six fascist soldiers were killed. The AFP's brutality is retaliation against the masses in the area who they consider as supporters of the people's army, an act that violates international humanitarian law.

The relentless terrorist attacks against the masses in Negros, behind the veil of "community support

programs," is part of the heightening attacks against civilians in various parts of the country, such as Samar, Davao, Masbate, Mindoro, Cagayan and other islands and provinces. It forms an intensification of the five-year offensive of the AFP and the Philippine National Police (PNP) nationwide, under the National Task Force (NTF)-Elcac.

AFP operations focus on suppressing the revolutionary armed resistance of the NPA who are the most ardent defenders of the

masses' interest and struggle against feudal and other forms of exploitation and oppression. However, the essence and objective of the AFP and the PNP's attacks against civilians is to crush all forms of mass resistance. It serves the aims of big landlords and interests of big bourgeois compradors and bureaucrat capitalists involved in the expansion of mines, plantations and in destructive and anti-people infrastructure projects.

Hundreds of barangays in different parts of the country are currently placed under military hamlet. Peasants and the poor are virtual prisoners in their villages: a blockade is imposed on food purchase and commerce, work on their fields and swidden farms are restricted, camps or barracks in the middle or near their villages are

established, even as civilian structures such as schools, clinics, barangay halls are turned into barracks.

Everyday, the peasant masses in villages occupied by the AFP and PNP face state terrorism and its brutal tactics. The fascist-terrorists want to spare plant fear and anxiety in the hearts of the masses, break their spirit, shatter their unity, and crush their determination to defend their interests.

However, by intensifying the suppression of the peasant masses and rural poor, the AFP only deepen the people's grievances deepen and stoke their anger against fascist soldiers and the rotten ruling system. A great majority of them real-

ize the need to strengthen their determination and to unite and act to defend their interests and welfare.

The peasant masses and rural communities need the support of the entire people in their fight against the fascist attacks of the terrorist AFP and PNP. Every effort must be carried out to expose and criticize every violation of the AFP and PNP against human rights and international humanitarian law. Fight the disinformation and fake news being spread by the AFP and PNP to obscure its fascism and human rights abuses.

It is the responsibility of all democratic forces, human rights defenders, especially classes and

sectors in the cities, to defend the welfare of the peasant masses against state terrorism in all possible fields of struggle. They must exert efforts to link arms with people even in the remote areas of the countryside.

The suffering of the peasant masses and the poor in military-occupied villages must be brought to the attention of the broad masses of the people in factories and offices, schools, churches, in mass media and social media, Filipino migrants and the international community. The people must bring together their voice against fascist attacks and martial law in the countryside, and support the demand of the masses to drive away the armed military and police forces in their communities.

Expand and strengthen the various forms anti-fascist united front. Demand justice for all victims of massacres, murder, torture, illegal arrests, beatings and other abuse of people's rights, as well as war crimes, against revolutionaries who are unarmed, hors de combat or civilians.

Fascists' monsters must be made to pay dearly for their blood debts. The NPA must do everything it can to find, hunt down and punish military officials who mastermind the killings, as well as their mercenaries and minions. The NPA should firmly defend the masses in the guerrilla zones while expanding their territory and mass support in new areas.

The struggle against all forms of oppression and exploitation, the grabbing of land and environmental destruction should be advanced in an all-round way. Antifeudal struggles must be strengthened and expanded to lower land rent, raise the wages of farm workers and attain fair farmgate prices.

Above all, the NPA and the peasant masses should work together to advance widespread struggle for genuine land reform as the principal demand for national democratic change.



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# AFP attacks against civilians in Himamaylan

At least 500 troops of 303rd IBde and police have laid siege on the villages of Himamaylan City in Negros Oriental beginning the night of October 5. They subjected several villages of Himamaylan City to nearly 10 days of lockdown. They evacuated approximately 18,000 residents (or 16% of the total population) and curtailed their movement and economic activity.

Six soldiers were killed in an ambush by the NPA-South Central Negros against 94th IB troops combing Sitio Sig-Ang, Barangay Carabalan in the city on October 6. Another clash erupted on October 8 in Sitio Malangsa where the military admitted that two of its soldiers were killed and six injured.

The AFP used these encounters to justify intensified militarization in the area. It poured the troops from the 94th IB, 62nd IB, 16th Scout Ranger Company, and Special Action Forces in the city, with helicopters, drones, spotter planes and cannon in a massive operation.

The military shelled Barangay Carabalan, in particular Sitio Sig-ang, and Barangay Mahalang from October 6 to October 8. Residents recorded eight rounds of shelling that hit sugarcane fields, rivers used as source of water and nearby forests.

The military concentrated fire on Barangay Carabalan where they long to build a detachment. Since October

6, they cordoned off sitios Sig-ang and Medel despite the fact that the NPA unit had already withdrawn from the area. Seven farm workers were arrested, imprisoned for three days and subjected to severe torture and interrogation. Pablo Abela Jr, Lito Abela, Angelo Abela, Alpredo Abela, Homer Liarsing, Angelo Alejo and Hendro Alejo were bruised and wounded when they were sent home by the military.

The military claimed that NPA-Negros spokesman Ka Juanito Magbanua was killed in an encounter in Sitio Medel. It also reported as an "encounter" the 94th IB's indiscriminate firing at 15 homes of the Ituman-Maghat-Bukidnon tribe in Purok Maliko-Lico, Sitio Cunalom in the same village on October 12.

Soldiers controlled the movement of residents. They put up many checkpoints where people were required to present documents in order to pass through. Residents were driven from their homes and detained in evacuation centers. They

were prohibited from talking to the local media.

At the height of the operation, the military entered and ransacked numerous homes they suspect as NPA supporters. The soldiers even killed some farm animals. The evacuees were allowed to return to their villages on October 15 upon their insistence.

The 94th IB has long been conducting combat operations in Himamaylan to pave the way for the entry of destructive mining and logging operations and other infrastructure projects, one of which is the Ilog-Hinabangan River Basin Project. Its mountains are abundant in minerals that are targeted by mining companies. These projects are firmly being opposed by local residents.

## Expanding focus of militarization

The troops also poured troops in the areas adjacent to Himamaylan. An estimated 200-300 soldiers of the 62nd IB are operating the boundaries of the mountainous parts of Canlaon, Guihulngan, Moises Padilla and Vallehermoso.

The military started its focused operations on October 10 after a 30-man unit of the 62nd IB surrounded the home of Plesing Menosa home in Barangay Calupaan, Vallehermoso. The Menosa family suffered grave trauma as a result.

In Barangay Hilaitan and Hibayo in Guihulngan, soldiers forcibly entered and search the homes of people. The soldiers brought with them pictures of people accused of being the members of the people's army.

In Moises Padilla, soldiers fired at Merlinda Benero's home in Sitio Tagbak, Barangay Macagahay on October 13. They stole five chickens of the Benero family.

In response, the people's army launched an operation on October 12 against the 62nd IB in Sitio Mapun-as, Barangay Guba, Vallehermoso. One soldier was killed. **AB**

## **Ka Juanito Magbanua: Voice of Negros, hero of the people**

THE COMMUNIST PARTY of the Philippines paid tribute to the murdered spokesperson of the New People's Army (NPA)-Negros Ka Juanito Magbanua (Romeo Nanta). Ka Juanito devoted 25 years of his life to the Filipino people's aspiration for national and social liberation.

The military killed Ka Juanito while in custody in violation of international humanitarian law. He was arrested on October 10 pm in Sitio Medel, Barangay Carabalan, Himamaylan City and possibly tortured. Ka Juanito was in the community due to some ailments. There is no truth to military's claim that an encounter took place.

As the NPA spokesman in Negros, and one of the leading cadres on party in the island, he tirelessly upheld the interests of the sugarcane farm workers and peasant masses in the island's haciendas. He effectively represented the NPA and the Party in his many media interviews.

# Intense exploitation in the dying garments industry

Retrenchments in the garments sector did not start and will not end with the recent firing of 4,000 workers in the Mactan Export Processing Zone (MEPZ). More people will lose their jobs, warned businessmen of the Confederation of Wearable Exporters of the Philippines (CONWEP). The group pointed to the weak global demand for new garments. Although it claimed that many factory closures are "temporary," workers' retrenchments are permanent.

This year alone, 3.5% to 4.0% (10,800) of the 270,000 workers in export processing zones producing "wearables" (clothing, bags, shoes and equipment) were fired by companies, according to CONWEP. This might reach 8% to 10% or 27,000 workers if global market conditions do not improve. They produce clothing for brands such as Adidas, Under Armour, Lululemon and more. More than 80% of their manufactures are exported to the US.

## Long-dying industry

In 2019, the Bureau of Investments set up a plan for the garments and textile industry that aimed accelerate factory production to become the world's 10th biggest garments exporter by 2026. Such was an impossible ambition especially with the subsector's continuous downtrend since the 1990s because of its reliance on imported material.

The Covid-19 pandemic underscored the inherent weakness of garments manufacturing. Orders from countries with strict lockdowns nosedived up to 40%. It was hit hard by restrictions which led to scarcity of imported material, export limitations of finished products and high costs of transportation. Immediately during the first four months of the pandemic, more than 20,000 workers lost their jobs.

Companies in the sector took advantage of the situation to further exploit the labor power of Filipino workers. They cut down operations to reduce costs by removing up to 30% of their work forces, suppressing and reducing wages, reducing

work hours, non-payment of benefits such as 13th month pay, forced leave and work-from-home arrangements.

Amid "economic recovery," company retrenchments and restructuring continue unabated. The Foreign Buyers Association of the Philippines in March boasted that the country's garments exports will double in 2022 based on orders it received. The group's "recovery" estimates is based on the subsector's ₱1.052 billion worth of products exported in 2021. (This is contrary to its initial estimate of ₱600 million losses for the year.) In September alone, the government announced that nine multinational garment companies are interested to operate in the country.

## Slave-like wages and conditions

Garment companies cite "decline in demand" to justify continuous retrenchments, suppressing low wages and further squeezing workers. In the case of the MEPZ workers, workers were fired summarily and arbitrarily. No one got an explanation or basis for their retrenchment. Worse, they got news that contractuales were immediately hired to replace them.

After firing a quarter of the labor force, quotas for remaining workers were immediately raised. Those who could not cope were forced to go on vacation. This made workers realize that the retrenchments were not really caused by the "decrease in orders," but rather to further squeeze their labor-power.

Companies have been firmly opposing workers' union organizing



even before the pandemic. Thus, they are deprived of their right to collectively bargain, to air legitimate grievances and to assert better working conditions. Workers who did not sign their terminal notices and filed for illegal dismissal have no recourse. They also have no claims in the event that the companies re-hire workers.

## Dead textile industry

Garment companies have long cited difficulties in importing material as reason for firing workers and shutting down factories. They say that large companies have moved to countries with local textile production and large production capacities such as Vietnam, India and Thailand.

In fact, the local textile industry, which is the backbone in clothing manufacturing, has long been dead. The textile industry last had the capacity to supply local manufacturing in the 1950s to 1960s.

Its decline started 1970s after the dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr ordered the industry to turn from manufacturing for local production to manufacturing for export. Without state support, the industry declined and factories eventually shutdown. The industry was finally killed off by textile import liberalization which started in the early 1980s. Ultimately, all that will left of the industry is small-scale handweaving and backward looms that process local fibers such as piña and abaca, and a few textile factories producing for export. These have no linkages with garments industry which is completely dependent on imported textiles and other materials. AB

# Hunger stalks food producers

To peasants and fisherfolks, Marcos' declaration to make "nutritious food" affordable to every Filipino is all but an empty promise. Not only has he done nothing, his neoliberal policies are worsening the state of hunger of food producers.

Filipino farmers and fisherfolks are among the more than 828 million people worldwide who suffered hunger in 2021, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. Despite the yearly promises of past governments to provide support to the agricultural sector and the nutrition programs, the Philippines remained on the FAO list of 63 countries with the largest number of people who are undernourished.

The state has provided no support amid rising costs of agricultural production. According to Amihan, the total cost planting rice during

the last cycle was ₱53,000 in Nueva Ecija. This is due primarily to high prices of fertilizer reaching ₱16,400 for Urea and Triple 14. They said climate change-related disasters such as typhoons have aggravated the farmers' situation.

Threats and intimidation against those who fight for their land rights worsen the peasants' suffering. In almost all parts of the country, farmers are victims of red-tagging, illegal arrests and detention, extrajudicial killings and various forms of human rights violations. Many of these cases do not reach the media and town centers. **AB**



**100 days of the Marcos regime.** Democratic groups staged protests in Mendiola, Manila in front of Malacañang to condemn the failures of Ferdinand Marcos Jr in his first 100 days on October 8. They censured the Marcoses for their lavish lifestyle amid the grave sufferings of Filipinos.

**Protest at Regent Foods.** Workers of Regent Food held a picket at its factory on October 17 to protest the company's refusal to reinstate workers retrenched in 2019 and to pay their back wages.

**#HustisyaSahod.** Workers from the Kilusang Mayo Uno in Metro Manila and Cebu joined the Global Day of Decent Work on October 7. They called Marcos Jr, who has done nothing to address their clamor for just wage increases, deaf and stingy.

**#ZeroEvictions.** Urban poor residents under the Alyansa Kontra Demoisyon (Alliance Against Demolitions) and the Pinagkaisang Lakas ng Mamamayan (Unified Strength of the People) held a picket at the National Housing Authority to denounce the demolition of their communities. Among those who attended are residents from Payatas, Holy Spirit, Tatalon, Commonwealth, New East and Don Mariano in Quezon City.

## 2nd IB elements kill 2 Masbate civilians

THE 2ND IB killed Carlito Ainit in Sitio Mabuhay, Barangay Mabini, Palanas, Masbate on October 8. Soldiers and police officers surrounded and open fired at his home. Ahina was with his children inside the house during the incident. His daughter was hit in the leg.

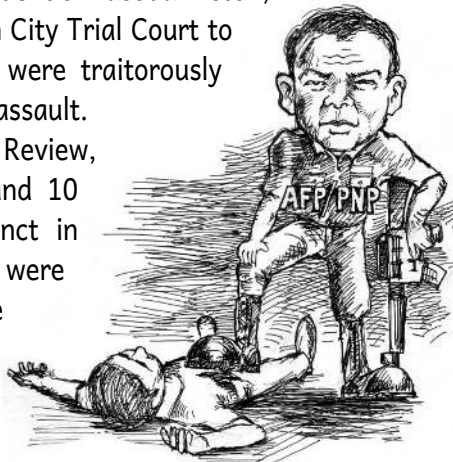
Ahina was a former NPA member who has been inactive for a year. He was killed after refusing to cooperate with soldiers in their fight against the NPA and the masses.

Norvil Generoso Pepito, a resident of Barangay Mambog, Dimasalang, died in the hands of the 2nd IB inside its camp in Barangay Paguihaman, Uson, Masbate on October 12.

The 2nd IB called Pepito to their camp to interrogate him over allegations that he was involved in an armed action by the NPA. Pepito was tortured and abused from October 10 to 12. He was still alive when his wife and their village captain rushed him to the hospital but was declared dead on arrival.

**Illegal arrest.** The PNP treacherously arrested Kara Taggaoa of the Kilusang May Uno and Larry Valbuena, president of Pasoda-Piston, on October 10. The two were in Quezon City Trial Court to post bail on another case when they were traitorously arrested on a separate charge of direct assault.

**Coercion.** Police brought Felizardo Review, a farmer-peasant leader in Quezon and 10 other individuals, to the police precinct in Tiaong, Quezon on October 20. They were blocked along the road to Tiaong while traveling to Quezon City to attend a dialogue at the Department of Agriculture.



# 90%

of families under the obsolete and failed 4Ps program have not graduated from poverty despite having been allotted more than ₱500 billion funds over the past 13 years.

Source: Commission on Audit

# 12% VAT

tax on most basic commodities which the Makabayan bloc wants removed to give people reprieve amid hardships.

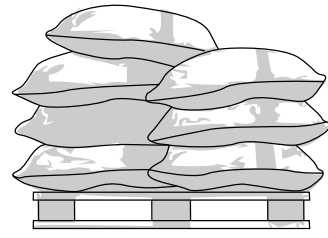
Earlier, they asserted to remove VAT in petroleum products.

# October 21, 1972

the then newly established US-Marcos dictatorship issued PD 27, the fake and anti-peasant land reform which excluded big landlords from land distribution.

# #RemullaResign

demand for the resignation of Crispin Remulla as Department of Justice secretary after his 38-year old son was caught smuggling ₱1.3 million worth of marijuana.



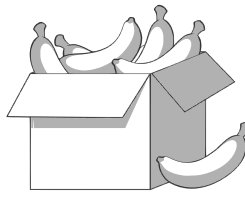
the country's rice imports by September (3 million metric tons) is

# 7.6% higher

compared to the entire imports (2.8 M MT) last 2021, amid calls of peasant to strengthen local production, not importation.

# 36%

Philippine share of China's banana market, down from 80% in the last five years, after China imposed a 30% tariff on the Philippines, while imported bananas from Latin America remain tariff-free.



# ₱500

real value of ₱570 minimum wage in the NCR due to the skyrocketing prices of commodities, especially food.

# ₱1,119 per day

cost of living in September 2022, twice the minimum wage in NCR.

Source: Ibon Foundation

# 66

**countries representing the majority of the people of the world pushed to reopen peace negotiations and forge a ceasefire to end the war in Ukraine.** The US, its allies in the NATO and the puppet Zelensky regime rejected this.

# SIM Card Registration Law, additional fascist instrument

The repressive SIM (subscriber identity module) card registration bill was enacted after Ferdinand Marcos Jr signed it last October 10. Starting December, SIM card buyers will be required to provide the state and private telecommunications companies their personal details. The said law, known as Republic Act 11934, is Marcos' first enacted bill.

Under the law, all SIM card buyers must provide their name, complete details of their residence, date of birth and gender which will be identified with the SIM number they purchased. They will also be required to present an ID with a picture or documentation of their identity. Sellers who do not follow the process will be fined.

The law was railroaded despite left and right opposition of cyber-crime experts, internet privacy advocates and democratic groups. The forced registration of all SIM card users comprise "unauthorized state surveillance," the groups said. Weak data and information security protection leaves a huge potential for leakage of personal details.

Opponents of the bill point out that the lack of evidence that SIM registration helps in the fighting cybercrimes. Global System for Mobile Communications, an organization of 750 mobile operators in the world, said there is no evidence from 155 countries implementing mandatory SIM card registration that it is effective against crimes.

## Surveillance state machinery

This law forms part of the reactionary state's efforts to build a machinery of a surveillance state to conduct largescale and systematic surveillance of its population. It will facilitate the identification of an individual's particular location, monitoring and hindering private



communications and profiling (judging individuals based solely on some information). These violate an individual's right to privacy and anonymity and impedes their freedom of expression. These rights are guaranteed even by the reactionary constitution.

The law grants state armed forces and reactionary agencies encompassing powers to prevent people from promoting their interests and well-being.

The law took advantage of the masses' anger over text scamming, phishing and identity theft as pretext to hide its anti-democratic and anti-

*Continued at page 8*

## Aid comes to militarized Aklan community

A 2-DAY HUMANITARIAN mission was conducted by Bayan, the Philippine Peasant Movement and Pamalakaya-Aklan to help a fishermen's community in Barangay Cawayan, New Washington, Aklan on October 12-13. It aimed to determine the condition of residents amid ongoing threats, harassment and militarization in the area.

For three months now, military operations have been conducted in the village behind the veil of the 301st IBde's Civil Military Operations Competency Enhancement Training (CMO-CET). Soldiers occupied barangay halls and conducted house-to-house interrogations without legal basis, and forced members of legal mass organizations to "surrender" as members or supporters of the revolutionary armed movement.

## NPA ambushes notorious AFP units

UNITS OF THE New People's Army (NPA) launched three ambushes in three provinces in recent weeks. The NPA targeted the most brutal and most important notorious units of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in their respective area.

In Surigao del Sur, three were killed and one was injured among the operating troops of the Charlie Company of the 75th IB when Red fighters ambushed them in Barangay Mahaba, Marihatag on October 6. Soldiers were aboard three motorcycles when they were ambushed at around 7:35 a.m. The NPA fighters fired at them from around seven meters.

In Masbate, an NPA unit ambushed members of the CAFGU traveling along the border of Barangay Mambog and Buenaflor in Dimasalang on October 7. One soldier was killed and another injured. They were aboard a motorcycle and were returning home from a 15-day guard duty at the 2nd IB detachment in Barangay Miabas, Palanas.

In Albay, the NPA ambushed a 16-man unit of the 49th IB in Barangay Bagacay, Jovellar on October 3. Seven soldiers were killed in the ambush. Four were confirmed to have been killed immediately during the clash. The next day, another body was found at the scene of the incident while two were seriously injured.

# Dividing Maguindanao will intensify crisis

Despite reported irregularities in the September 17 Maguindanao plebiscite, the Commission on Elections declared the proposal to divide the province into Maguindanao del Norte and Maguindanao del Sur as "ratified by the people." Local bureaucrats and influential clans consider this the start of the fulfillment of their "beautiful dreams" for the province. But for the majority of the people, peace and solutions to their suffering remain evasive.

Maguindanao, located in south central Mindanao, is one of the biggest provinces in the country. The 288,000-hectare Liguasan Marsh, said to have oil and natural gas worth \$580 billion, is found here. It also has the widest concentration of wetlands in the country. Rich fishing grounds and broad rice and corn fields can be found here. It is a center of biodiversity hosting endemic birds and a variety of animals and plants.

In 2020, the province's population was 1,342,179. Majority are Maguindanao Moros and Iranun. There is also a large Lumad population of Tedurays, Lambiangans and Dulangan Manobos. The Tedurays

are concentrated largely in two towns in the northwest of the Daguma Range. Other Lumad groups also have large numbers in 39 barangays in nine municipalities.

Maguindanao is one of the poorest provinces in the entire Philippines according to 2021 data. This is despite the fact that some of the richest and most powerful dynasties involved in political rivalries live here. They violently clash employing their armed groups. They have long ruled the province under which people have suffered due to severe corruption and unabated violence.

The great majority of the people in the province are farmers. Their primary problem is landlessness and

the excessive oppression and exploitation of wealthy clans controlling vast lands. They experience violent attacks and relentless land-grabbing.

They are the most vulnerable victims of the AFP's "counter-terrorism" and bombing campaigns. They are often caught in the middle of armed conflicts (rido) between rival clans or groups. These have caused widespread dislocation of their communities and livelihoods. People suffer from severe poverty and hunger while many young people are unable to attend schools or are forced to stop studying.

## Poverty and dislocation will intensify

Dividing Maguindanao aims to manipulate the boundaries to accommodate the interests of rival political dynasties. The Sinsuat family controls the area that will now be known as Maguindanao del Norte. On the other hand, the Mangudadatus' kingdom will now be Maguindanao del Sur. The government hopes that in this form of political accommodation, the conflicts between powerful clans will be resolved. Both parties will now have all the opportunity to impose control over their territory.

In dividing the province, no law or program was set forth for the benefit of its residents. Instead, the exploitation and oppression by the dynasties who monopolize power will surely intensify. Bureaucrat exploitation and corruption will certainly worsen.

Attacks against Lumad communities by landlords who are in power are set to intensify to grab their land and natural resources. Widespread militarization is anticipated behind the veil of "defending" the Lumad and Moro against "terrorism." Behind this is the interests of foreign companies and their local bureaucrat partners in commercial wood plantations, agribusiness and mining.

*From page 7*

people agenda. It deceived the people into surrendering their rights and protected privileges.

In implementing this law, the interests of the poor will also be trampled on, especially those in remote areas, who do not have access to the internet and lack the paperwork or valid ID.

### Widespread opposition

The SIM card registration law was delayed by several years due to strong opposition by technology experts and workers, lawyers, digital rights advocates and democratic organizations. Some provisions were removed, including required registration for social media accounts. However, the law remains a major threat against state critics and ordinary people expressing disgust against the government.

Expect major chaos in the im-

plementation of the SIM card registration. Many have no valid ID or paperwork required for registration. Many will be affected by widespread deactivation (cessation of services to old SIMs.) Social media accounts and business and bank transactions, and money transactions inside and outside the country using cellphones or personal wifis will surely be disrupted.

Once the law is enforced, sales of telecommunication companies is expected to contract. These companies will shoulder the burden of protecting the database containing their clients' personal information. Even agency officials tasked by the state to store personal information are not convinced that they have the capacity to protect the privacy of data collected from registered SIM cards.

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# Modern Family Code: Protecting every Cuban

Cuba's new family code is unique. The country considers it as the most inclusive, progressive and revolutionary code worldwide. It ensures further recognition of the rights of women, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender), children, adults, and people with disabilities. The code was amended in relation to the ratification of a new Cuban Constitution in 2019.

On the day of the referendum last September 25, Cubans voted in favor of the amended Code. Of the total number of registered voters in Cuba and outside the country, 74.01% participated in the democratic process. Of the more than 5.89 million counted ballots, 3.94 million or nearly 66.87% voted in its favor.

The process of formulation, consultation, inclusion of amendments prior the referendum lasted 14 months. Unlike in other countries, Cuba ensured that the code is reflective of the people's views and practicable. To improve the document, the state conducted a massive education campaign and consultation. It held 79,000 mass meetings attended by 6.49 million individuals. The government received at least 430,000 suggestions from them.



Various associations and mass organizations celebrated this success. According to Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel, the state "owes" this to millions of Cubans who have long waited for such a law. "From this day on, our country will be better (because of it)," he said.

## Protecting the rights of every Cuban

The new 63-page Code has 11 titles, 474 articles, five transitional provisions and 44 final provisions.

It recognizes the equal right of anyone to marriage and adoption, regardless of their sexual orientation. It ensures the right of anyone to build a family without discrimination. The law also introduces prenuptial agreements and assisted reproduction.

The country formally recognized the right of expanded and non-traditional family structures, including the rights of grandparents, step parents and surrogates.

The law promotes the equal sharing of domestic responsibilities between couples. It extends labor rights to those who care full-time for children, elderly or people with disabilities and thus entitles

them to wages or other forms of compensation.

The law adopted the punishment of domestic violence. Family violence can be verbal, physical, psychological, moral, sexual, economic or patrimonial, negligence and neglect, whether by action or omission, direct or indirect.

The law promotes a comprehensive policy to address gender-based violence. It establishes the right of a family life to be free from violence; that values love, affection, solidarity and responsibility.

The code forbids child marriage. Violating parties will face severe punishment. The code made it clear that parents would no longer have "authority," rather "responsibility" to their children. Parents should also respect the "dignity and physical and mental integrity of children and adolescents." Maturing children should also be granted greater autonomy over their own lives.

The law has provisions that guarantee the protection of the elderly to avoid social exclusion. Likewise, it ensures that people with disabilities enjoy the care they need. It will establish institutions that will care for them and ensure their integration with their families and society.

The law established the office of the family ombudsman, an institution assigned to protect, guarantee, and enforce these when the rights of vulnerable sectors are violated within the family.