

EDITORIAL

# Advance the militant economic and political mass struggles

The suffering of the Filipino people under the US-Marcos regime continues to worsen, following the sharp deterioration of their lives in the past years. This is due to further unrestrained oppression and exploitation of the Philippines by profit-driven foreign monopoly capitalist companies and banks, and power-hungry imperialist governments and military forces.

US imperialism continues to erode the veneer of Philippine economic and political independence. In connivance with the local ruling bourgeoisie compradors and big landlords, and the bureaucrat-capitalist and fascist state of the ruling Marcos clique, it is taking all the wealth and advantage it can squeeze from the country.

Recent decades have taught us how the repeated promises that pro-imperialist neoliberal policies of liberalization, deregulation and privatization will bring “development” are all hollow. These have brought nothing to the Filipino masses but widespread unemployment, low wages, land grabbing, plunder of the country’s wealth and environmental destruction.

We have also clearly seen that American soldiers who frequently dock and set up headquarters inside the camps of the Armed Forces of the Philippines

(AFP) do so not to defend the interests of Filipinos or the Philippines. Rather, these foreign troops promote the US’s own economic interests in the Philippines and geopolitical interests in the Asia-Pacific region. US “military advisers” to the fascist and anti-peace counterinsurgency serve as arms dealers. The US now uses the Philippines as a large military base to increasingly provoke war against its imperialist rival China.

Philippine independence will continue to be eroded, US imperialist power will further dominate, the country will be dragged into imperialist wars, the crisis of the ruling system will worsen, the suffering and hardships of the people will aggravate, the US-Marcos regime’s fascist crimes will intensify until the Filipino people, their united front of democratic and patriotic forces, and the revolutionary armed forces are able to change the conditions and direction of the country.

Intensifying imperialist oppression and exploitation and the people’s widespread suffering generate



favorable conditions to arouse and mobilize the people in great numbers. It is now urgent for the Party to unite the Filipino people and lead them to march along the path of militant mass struggles.

The masses of the people needs to earnestly and militantly resist the US-Marcos regime's measures that go against their national and democratic interests, and promote their immediate demands and long-term calls for national democracy.

The organized ranks of workers, peasants, youth and various progressive and democratic sectors must be consolidated and expanded to gather the people's determination and strength. Unions and other forms of organizations should be built in the biggest number of facto-



ries, communities, schools and other areas. Raise the people's political consciousness and strengthen their determination to defend their interests.

Build the broadest united front against state terrorism and bureaucrat capitalism to expose, isolate, criticize and oppose the puppet, fascist, inept and oppressive Marcos regime. Exert all-out effort to expose and oppose the martial law-type repression and oppression of civil and political rights, especially in the countryside, behind the veil of the military and police's counterinsurgency war, that has no other purpose but to paralyze and suppress the democratic mass struggles.

Build formal and informal alliances against "chacha" and the Maharlika Investment Fund, and other schemes of the ruling Marcos-Duterte ruling clique to monopolize power and plunder the people's money. Push for the call to continue the investigation, trial and punishment of Duterte and his cohorts for their crimes against humanity during their brutal counterinsurgency war and sham "drug war." Broad unity must also be built to demand the Marcoses to return their stolen wealth and be punished for their

crimes against the people.

Strengthen the militant economic mass struggles for urgent wage increases for workers, employees and farm workers, lower prices of oil and other commodities, as well as land rent and loan interest, higher fair farmgate prices, bigger funding for free health and educational services, an end to land grabbing, a stop to plunderous operations that destroy the environment and which cause widespread flooding and economic destruction.




The people should manifest their outrage through militant protest actions in the streets and plazas. The people's economic struggles should sharply expose, link and resist the neoliberal policies dictates of foreign imperialists.

Strengthen the patriotic movement to combat US military intervention in the Philippines, and counter the US strategy to draw the country into its war provocations against China. Expose the role of the US military and capitalist companies in the push to increase the counterinsurgency budget for buying surplus US weapons. Expose the monopoly capitalist system and crisis behind increasing rivalries and threats of war among powerful imperialist nations.

Party cadres and activists should take action to reach the broad masses, and unite them under the call to salvage the Philippines and the Filipino people from crisis by attaining genuine liberation of the country from the reign of foreign imperialist powers and the treacherous ruling classes. Use all means to arouse and mobilize the people including producing leaflets, newspapers, books, pamphlets, poems, plays and other creative works.

A few drops in the ocean are not enough. A widespread propaganda and political movement among the masses must be generated as a strong wave that will change the country's course and bring the revolution to a new stage of growth.

AB

 <p>Vol LIV No. 4   February 21, 2023</p> <p>Ang Bayan is published in Pilipino, Bisaya, Iloko, Hiligaynon, Waray, English and Spanish. Ang Bayan welcomes contributions in the form of articles and news items. Readers are encouraged to send feedback and recommendations for improving our newspaper.</p>	<h2 style="text-decoration: underline;">Contents</h2> <p><b>Editorial:</b> Advance the militant economic and political mass struggles 1</p> <p>Inconcealable poverty in Negros 3</p> <p>Pests in onion farms 3</p> <p>Sugar workers put up with bitter coffee 4</p> <p>9th ID murders 17-year old 5</p> <p>Protests 5</p> <p>In short 6</p> <p>Waging war for liberation is just 7</p> <p>NPA blasts 49th IB in Albay 7</p> <p>75 batches of youth complete BPC 8</p> <p>State forces violate IHL 8</p> <p>US embargo worsens quake destruction in Syria 9</p>
<p>Ang Bayan is published fortnightly by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines</p>	
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# Inconcealable poverty in Negros

**B**echay, a housewife in District 1 in Negros Occidental, spent ₱600 for her January electric bill, from ₱300 in months prior. Prices of onion, cabbage, dried fish and sugar also doubled compared to last year. The 320-gram package of Bear-brand also rose from ₱106 to ₱130.

This is contrary to claims of the Department of Trade and Industry that processed food prices "didn't move" in the past six months. This also contradicts the agency's claims that prices of 70 basic products rose only starting February 8, and only by ₱0.45 to ₱7.00.

Bacolod City residents RJ, a construction worker, Daki, a researcher, and Karmelita, a street vendor, also expressed grievances against rising electricity and water charges and food prices. "Electricity and water charges really rose sharply," Karmelita said. "Budgeting for rice, viand, and fare every day is very difficult."

Last January, inflation in Bacolod City hit 12.1%, while rising to 10.3% in its mother region (Region VI). This is the second month that the region recorded the highest rates in the country. Housing, electricity, water, fuel

and others rose the fastest (15.1%), followed by transportation (14%). Food inflation also remained high (11%).

Within 10 months, inflation steadily rose in the region, from 3.3% in February 2022 to 10.5% in December 2022. During this periods, local officials did nothing to bring relief to Negrosanons. In chorus with Marcos Jr's economic officials, they downplayed the impact of high fees and drop in the income of ordinary people.

## More suffering

The long-term low wages of families in the region is now even more insufficient. In the case of Juvy who has six children, whatever she does to budget her husband's ₱130-₱150, it cannot make up for the needed ₱450 daily. Funds from the 4Ps do not fill the deficiency. To keep up, she borrows from "lending" or microfinance

agencies. These bury them deeper in debt because of the high interest rates these charge.

The families of Dailyn, Jonel and Hermegildo, farm workers of Kabankalan, Negros Occidental, borrow money from employers, aside from lending agencies. Their ₱200-₱250 daily earnings is grossly insufficient to cover their ₱400-₱500 daily needs. To pay for it, they work longer hours in wider sugarfields.

Calamities and military operations in their area are additional burden to farm workers. These cause difficulties as they are restricted from working in their fields. There are families who have yet to recover from the destruction caused by Typhoon Odette in December 2021.

## Not even a peso

Wage increases were last ordered in the region on June 2022. Not all employers complied. "Not a peso was given," according Bacolod and Kabankalan residents. The wages of Bechay's husband, a sugarcane cutter, rose by ₱100, a very small amount compared to price increases.

The minimum for non-agricultural workers was set at ₱450/day, and ₱410 for agricultural workers in the region. In reality, however, daily wages start at ₱200. People in the informal sector like Karmelita earn only around ₱100 a day.

Based on computations by the Ibon Foundation, the region's living wage stood at ₱981 in January, while that for the National Capital Region stood at ₱1,163. Due to inflation, the real value of the ₱450 minimum wage in Western Visayas is only ₱363.

In the face of this, Negrosanons call for the immediate lowering of commodity prices. "Bring down electricity and water charges, and raise wages!" according to the Bacolod residents.

"More jobs," said Bechay. For those in Kabankalan, having their own land to till and production subsidies is the solution. AB

Correspondence

## Pests in onion farms

**O**nion harvest season has started in Bongabon, Nueva Ecija. Armyworms had also begun ravaging onion farms. Farmers are forced to spray pesticides every night to exterminate these destructive worms. They spend more than ₱100,000 per hectare to exterminate the armyworms. They have no choice, lest they allow the onions to melt in one night of attack.

But there is something worse than armyworms. Farmers are rushing to harvest onions before March knowing they will be shortchanged by low farmgate prices. Even now, onion market prices had already dropped due to the influx of imported onions. About 6,000 tons of imported onions arrived in January. The farmgate price of red onion is at ₱180-₱200 per kilo, while white onions are only around ₱100-120 per kilo. The Department of Agriculture said that it is expecting that onion prices will go down to ₱50. What will happen to Pedro the farmer?

While farmers are affected by armyworms and the influx of imported onions, middlemen-usurers in farms are making a killing. The "pasama" or samak system is widespread. The merchant pays for all the costs of production which then will be taken from the gross income. The net income will be divided between the merchant and the farmer. Worse, the merchant sets the price of the produce and all the instruments used for production. The middleman monopolizes the huge part of the harvest while farmers' conditions worsen.

# Batangas sugar workers put up with bitter coffee

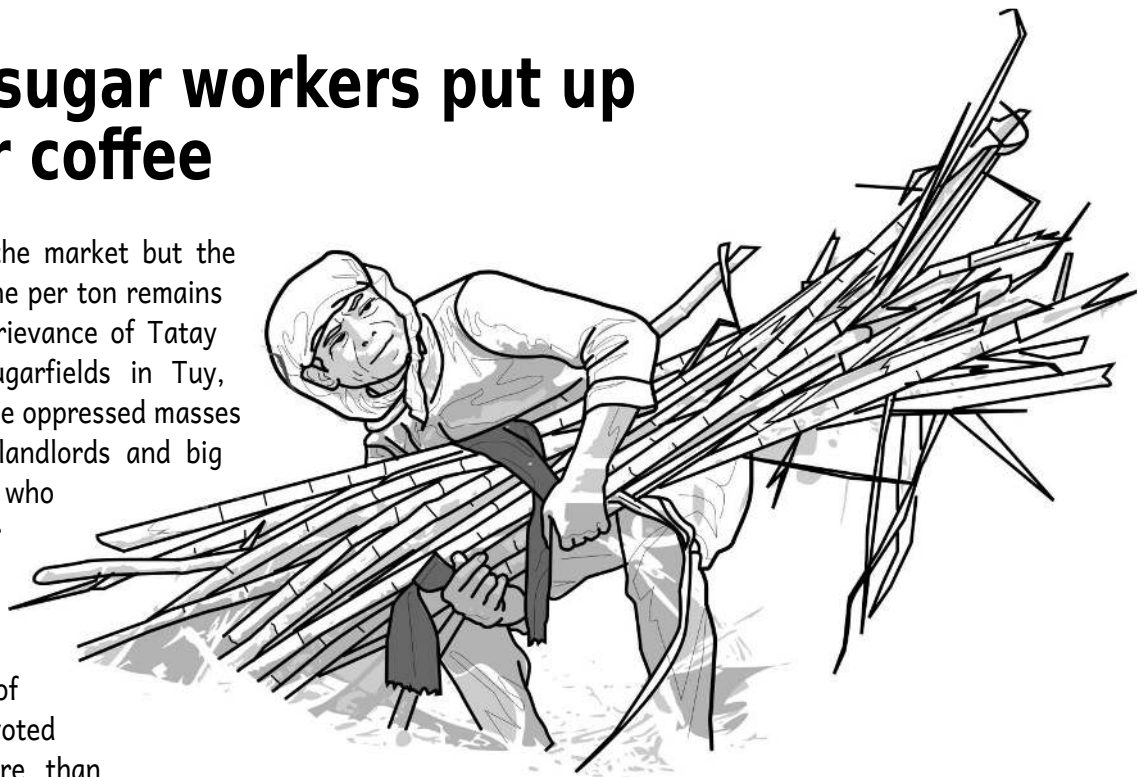
Sugar prices rise in the market but the price of the sugarcane per ton remains the same. Such is the grievance of Tatay Torres, a worker in sugarfields in Tuy, Batangas. He is among the oppressed masses being squeezed dry by landlords and big bourgeois compradors who control and live on sugar industry profits.

In Batangas, approximately 60,000 hectares of agricultural land are devoted to sugarcane, with more than 26,000 hectares concentrated in 16 landlord families. Small farmers who own or mortgage their land typically have only 1-3 hectares.

Feudal and semifeudal exploitation persist from manual sugarcane land preparation, planting up to the sugar centrals. The tenant system exists in the form of 50-50 share in production costs between farmers and landlords, or where the farmer shoulders all production costs. Peasants are forbidden from planting other food crops in the sugarcane fields.

Landlords and big merchants practice gross fraud to earn bigger profits. They change the rates after sugarcane is harvested, rig the weighing scales in the sugar mills, and manipulate sugar prices. They raise the costs of transportation, milling and loan interests. Driven by greed, they even withhold the molasses traditionally given to families of sugarcane farmers and workers.

Sugarcane cutters like Tatay Torres are employed by landlords or planters only once a year. Their work covers cutting, loading and piling the sugarcane in the truck. Usually, a group is composed of 12-15 people. They can finish one hectare of land in a week. They can



reap 15 to 30 tons of sugarcane per hectare.

The sugar centrals where cut sugarcane are brought control the prices. For a long time, there were two centrals in Batangas: the Central Azucarera de Don Pedro (CADP) in Barangay Lumbangan, Nasugbu; and the Batangas Sugar Central, Inc. (BSCI) in Barangay Caloocan, Balayan. The bourgeois comprador Roxases own the CADP and the Dolor family owns the BSCI. Sugarcane farmers are confronted with the problem of the recent closure of the CADP because BSCI can only process 4,500 metric tons (MT), compared 12,000 MT per day of CADP. The closure will affect 4,584 farmers.

The central currently purchases sugar at ₱250 per ton. With a maximum yield of 30 tons per hectare, a 12-person group of sugarcane workers can earn ₱7,500 or ₱625 each. From this, ₱20 per person will be deducted as payment fee for the group leader (*kabo*). The group leader typically works with the group. Thus, the sugarcane workers normally earn around ₱605, while the *kabo* earns ₱845 for every hectare.

With the small income, they work doubly hard covering wider and more fields to earn more income

for their families. They also have to pay the money they borrowed to provide for themselves and their families. Usually, they can only bring home ₱300 or less per hectare of net income. With the fall of sugar prices due to flooding of imported sugar, wages of sugarcane workers are further pulled down. To cover their lack of income, Tatay Torres and other family members work other jobs.

Tatay Torres is usually left with almost nothing and will try to squeeze his small earnings to buy basic needs. He could not even afford to buy sugar. "I could no longer finish my coffee. It's bitter," laments Tatay Torres. "All sugar-based food today, even bread, are so expensive."

Tatay Torres calls on the millers to raise sugarcane prices per ton. "People know how high sugar prices are! Sugar prices go up, but sugarcane prices remain low."

Tatay Torres is confident that if sugarcane workers like him, along with small land-owners and those who have mortgaged their land will unite, they could fight for fair prices of sugarcane. "If no one brings sugarcane, the mills won't earn a profit!" Tatay said. AB

# 9th ID murders 17-year old from minority group

Soldiers of the 9th ID shot and killed 17-year old civilian Argie Salvador in Sitio Sapang Bato, Barangay Canapawan, Labo, Camarines Norte on February 11 at 1:40 p.m.

Major General Adonis Bajao of the 9th ID claims that Salvador died in an encounter between its troops and the New People's Army (NPA).

Salvador is an indigenous Manide from Tanauwan, Capalonga. He was collecting honey when soldiers saw and killed him. He is registered with the Department of Labor and Employment's TUPAD program.

Meanwhile in Santa Elena town, seven suspected state agents forcefully entered the house of Tino Manalo on February 4 in Barangay Don Tomas. They also entered the residence of Jun Barsibal and Johnny Caig on February 5. They are being accused of being supporters of the people's army.

**Abduction.** In Oriental Min-

doro, forces of the 203rd Brigade abducted G. Elyon, a resident of Sitio Sinariri, Barangay Panaytayan, Mansalay on February 6. He was on his way to buy coffee when soldiers abducted him. He was abducted by 10 soldiers who failed to present any warrant or explanation of the arrest in front of residents.

**Fake encounter.** To sow terror and fear in communities, military units staged fake encounters in Quezon and Negros Oriental.

On the first week of February, the 85th IB staged a fake encounter in Barangay Butanguiad, San Francisco, Quezon. This disrupted the people's livelihood as well as classes of students in the barangays of the said town.

The 11th IB's claim of an encounter at Sitio Tuyopan, Barangay Talalak, Santa Catalina, Negros Oriental on February 4 is also a lie. According to the local NPA command, there was no NPA unit in the area during that time. After this, soldiers mauled peasant Randy Iran.

**Arrest.** In Sorsogon, police arrested on trumped-up charges siblings Ramises and William Hubilla, sons of Sorsogon's martyred revolutionary leader Andres Hubilla (Ka Magno). Ramises was arrested on February 8 in Barangay North Poblacion, Juban while William was arrested the following day in Barangay Central, Casiguran. They were charged with several counts of murder and frustrated murder. Ramises was earlier forced to "surrender" to the military in 2018 for allegedly being part of the revolutionary movement. AB



**Wage increase, not fare increase.** Labor groups trooped to the MRT station in North Avenue, Quezon City on February 17 to protest the planned ₱2-₱14 fare increase per ride in the MRT and LRT. The protest was staged while the Department of Transportation held a public hearing.

**March against rice liberalization.** Peasant groups staged pickets in Metro Manila, Iloilo and Bicol on February 14 to demand the repeal of the Rice Liberalization Law which was enacted on the same day in 2019. They said the law has failed to bring down the prices of rice, instead has harmed the livelihood of peasants and local agriculture.

**March against Kaliwa Dam.** Around 300 indigenous Dumagat-Remontados are on a 9-day march from General Nakar, Quezon to Metro Manila to demand the Marcos regime to immediately halt boring in Sierra Madre which is part of the Kaliwa Dam construction. They started marching on February 15. They would walk approximately 150 kilometers.

**First Day Rage.** Students of UP mounted mass actions on the first day of classes in the university on February 13 in defense of academic freedom and against the MROTC and militarization of campuses.

**Black Hearts Day.** Health workers gathered in front of the Department of Health on February 14 to demand an end to contractualization, provision of allowance and salary increases. Teachers also staged a protest at the Department of Education in Pasig City to call for salary increase.

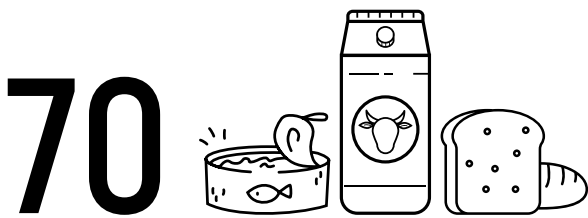
**Stop lay-offs in Nexperia.** Nexperia Philippines Inc. Workers Union called to defend the jobs of 495 workers who will be terminated due to the closure of the company's Sensors Department. Of the workers to be terminated, 375 are union members, 80 contractuales and 40 professionals.

**Fight for contractuales' rights.** Workers of Universal Robina Corporation staged a picket in front of the DOLE-7 office in Cebu on February 17. They called on the NLRC-7th Division to rule in their favor with regard the petition they filed against the company's illegal termination of 293 contractuales in 2022. The protest was led by Hugpong sa mga Mamumuong Nagkahiusa-URC.

**People's barricade in Palawan.** Palaweños and environmental organizations erected a people's barricade in Brooke's Point starting February 18 to stop mining operations of Ipilan Nickel Corporation. They said that the company is operating without a mayor's permit.

**↑ 8.7%** inflation rate in January,

far from estimates of state economists that inflation will slow down after the holidays in 2022.

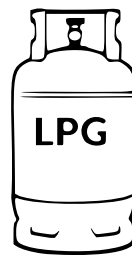


**70** basic products that the DTI authorized to **increase prices** by up to **10%**, including **bread, milk** and **canned goods**.

This was a result of the increase in production costs of manufacturers such as flour, egg and others.

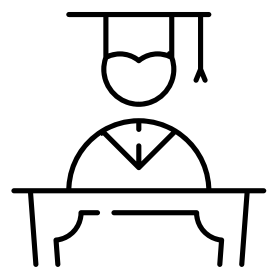
**₱11.20/kilo**

or **₱123.20 per 11-kilo tank** added to **LPG prices** last **February**.



The increase was a result of the rise in demand in China, where the Philippines imports almost its entire supply of refined fuel.

**ONLY 10%**



of senior high school students are getting employed after graduation.

This highlights the failure of the **K-12** program which promised to "prepare" students for immediate employment.

**2 in 3**



**public school** buildings need repairs amid a shortage of **91,000 classrooms**.

Despite this, DepEd is planning to construct only 6,000 classrooms in 2023 or 6.5% of the total needed.



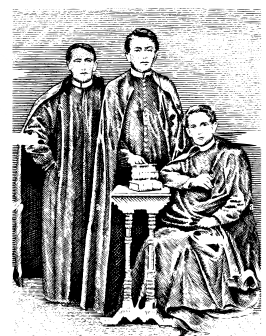
is the **9th** country Marcos "visited" in 8 months, together with 150 officials and businessmen.

Like in his other trips, he brought nothing home but promised investments and additional debt.

**51 years old**



on February 17, **Christians for National Liberation**, an allied organization of the NDFP representing church workers and the religious.



**151 years**

since the martyrdom of priests **Mariano Gomez, José Burgos, and Jacinto Zamora**, known as the Gomburza, who were **executed** by Spanish colonialists on February 17, 1872 for subversion.

# Waging war for liberation is just

In conjunction with the February 8 celebration of Comrade Jose Maria Sison's birth anniversary, progressives held a forum where they discussed the legal standing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), New People's Army (NPA) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) based on international and domestic laws and agreements. In the forum, Atty. Edre Olalia of the National Union of People's Lawyers discussed the legal opinion why national liberation movement forces in the Philippines should not be labelled terrorists.

In addition, the groups asserted that the arbitrary and erroneous "terrorist" designation of the CPP, NPA and the NDFP is a big obstacle to peace and should be removed. They also called for the removal from the list of 19 supposed members of the CPP Central Committee, including consultant Luis Jalandoni, organizations allied to the NDFP, and six other civilians. They also demand the delisting of Dr. Natividad Castro, who was designated as a terrorist last December 7, 2022.

## National liberation movement

The tactic of "terrorist" tagging by states opposing liberation movements across the world is not new, according to Atty. Olalia. After the 9-11 incident in the US, states weaponized laws to brandish "anti-terrorism," designate liberation movements as "terrorists" and dismiss their legitimate struggles.

This is contrary to a number of international agreements and declarations covering the rights of people to advance their national liberation

movements, including the right to bear arms. This includes the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Peoples, also known as the Algiers Charter which was ratified on July 4, 1976 in Algeria. This document was used as the fundamental basis of the Permanent People's Tribunal, which tries cases of state-perpetrated crimes and violations of human rights.

The Algiers Charter declared the right of the people to freely determine their political status against foreign interference. It also said that every people has the right to break free from any colonial or foreign domination, whether, directly or indirectly.

In the Philippines, the CPP leads the fight against foreign imperialist domination, domestic feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism. It established the NPA to advance armed struggle to free the nation from these problems. It ultimately aims to achieve the people's aspirations for genuine freedom and democracy.

Even the reactionary court of the Philippines recognized the legitimacy of the liberation movement in the



country. On September 21, 2022, the Manila Regional Trial Court junked the "terrorist proscription" case against the CPP and NPA by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP). In its 135-page decision, the court said the CPP and NPA should be more properly categorized as rebels, or rebels with a cause—the national democratic cause. According to Judge Marlo Magdoza-Malagar, the judge who issued the said decision, the CPP's program is a "reasonable aspiration in any civilized society."

## Adherence to the international humanitarian law

The CPP and NPA's adherence to the international humanitarian law (IHL) solidifies the legitimacy of its armed resistance. In principle, its armed forces direct its attacks, not against civilians, but against legitimate military targets of the state which the GRP represents. This is stated in the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law or CARHRIHL, signed by both the NDFP and GRP in 1998. The orientation of liberation movements is a far from the characteristics of terrorists who aim to sow fear, terror and attack civilians.

Should there be mistakes or violations of principles and standards in the conduct of war, the CPP and NPA are willing to investigate, admit and take responsibility, make amends and impose internal sanctions on individuals or units involved, on top of its accountability in the IHL and CARHRIHL. In addition, the NPA strictly implements iron discipline among its commanders and fighters. Every fighter follows the "Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points of Attention" of the people's army. **AB**

## NPA blasts 49th IB in Albay

A LIEUTENANT and two other soldiers were killed after the New People's Army (NPA)-Albay blasted a command detonated explosive against operating troops of the 49th IB in Barangay Ramay, Oas on February 15. One of those killed was 2Lt. Nico Malcampo. Red fighter Eric Veraquit (Ka Nene) was martyred on the said action.

Two soldiers of the 31st IB buying supplies in a local market were ambushed by Red partisans in Barangay Cotmon, Camalig in Albay at around 7:20 a.m. on February 20. The two were part of a unit serving as security detail to the infrastructure project of Centerways Construction in Barangay Sulong, Camalig. A calibre .45 was seized from them.

Meanwhile, a soldier was killed in a sniping operation of the NPA-South Central Negros against 94th IB troopers in Barangay Santol, Binalbagan, Negros Occidental on February 16.

## 75 batches of youth complete BPC

More than a hundred years since Lenin wrote the words "Without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement," youth cadres and members of the Party continue to perseveringly study and apply Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. They firmly wield the revolutionary theory as a weapon especially during the most challenging times.

In the history of the youth movement, the scourge of modern revisionism, the attacks of the fascist dictatorship, and the neoliberal onslaught did not deter youth cadres from wielding revolutionary theory and sharpening it through revolutionary practice. That is why the pandemic and the militarist lockdown did not prevent the youth from studying.

Proof of this are the 75 batches of Basic Party Course (BPC) among the youth in Metro Manila during the pandemic. Hundreds completed the course and were galvanized by the Party's basic principles and stand. They are part of the next generation of cadres who will lead the Party in the future.

A batch was conducted to allow Party members coming from the petty bourgeoisie who were aroused and mobilized during the

lockdown to complete the BPC. Most were students, a few stopped schooling due to the difficulties caused by the blended learning, while some were already working.

According to Ka Allie, the deputy secretary for education of the Party unit who conducted the BPC, the study aimed to "steel the Party members' ideology, train new cadres, and achieve thorough consolidation of comrades." Before the BPC was held, Ka Allie's unit implemented a program for continuing study within their collective. Their study covered the basic principles of the Party, discipline and rules of the New People's Army, and the different aspects of the people's democratic revolution.

Before the study began, Ka Budang, one of the students, confided not knowing what to expect from the BPC. Ka Clem, another student,

was afraid of not fully understanding the contents of the long study. Ka Dex meanwhile expressed intentions of learning the history of the Party, the people's army and the united front, and deepen understanding of imperialism.

Even though the students came from different backgrounds and had various expectations, the BPC discussion became lively as students and instructors learned from one another. Their drive to learn and desire to improve their contribution to the revolution heightened. Ka Budang related how they were so agitated, they rose from their seats and raised their voices, when they learned and computed the rate of exploitation.

For Ka Allie, the continuing education of Party members was key to the successful completion of the BPC. "This is very important in clarifying the tasks of every individual, in being comradesly, and looking back at the revolution's significance," he/she said.

*Continued on page 9*

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## AFP kills *hors de combat* fighters in Negros; abducts NDFP consultant in Bukidnon

Consecutive cases of violations by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) of international humanitarian law were reported the past weeks.

Soldiers of the 94th IB summarily killed two *hors de combat* fighters and a civilian peasant on February 5 in Barangay Oringao, Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental. Soldiers claim that the three were killed in an encounter.

Red fighter Arjen Mahinay (Ka Nonong) was recuperating after a stroke in a house in Sitio Mugni in the said barangay. He was with medic Junjun Callet (Ka Roben) when soldiers took them at around 4 p.m. of February 4. Soldiers also ab-

ducted peasant Jomarie Calumba who was at that time in the same sitio.

In Bukidnon, AFP forces abducted National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) Ariel Badiang in Manolo Fortich on February 6. Badiang's family asked the public for help to locate his whereabouts and be visited. He has yet to be surfaced as of present.

Meanwhile, illegally arrested NDFP consultant Ruben Saluta, his wife Presentacion Saluta and com-

panion Yvonne Losario remain in prison.

In Cagayan, police arrested wounded Orion Yoshida after an alleged encounter between a 5th ID unit and the NPA at Sitio Nangbagayan, Barangay Santa Margarita, Baggao on February 13. He is charged with trumped-up cases of frustrated murder, violation of the Anti-Terrorism Law and illegal possession of firearms and explosives. He is deprived of visitation rights from his lawyer, relatives and human rights groups. Yoshida is a former student of the De La Salle University (DLSU). AB



# US embargo worsens quake destruction in Syria

Communist parties, progressive organizations and humanitarian institutions firmly condemned US imperialism for its false humanitarianism after Syria and Turkey were hit with a series of earthquakes. On the first days, the US and its European allies poured assistance to Turkey, while outrightly neglecting the destruction in Syria. Worse, the US refused to lift the sanctions and economic embargo it imposed which prevented humanitarian organizations to immediately provide assistance and rescue teams to the country.

Territories in southern Turkey and northern Syria were hit with successive deadly 7.8 and 7.5 magnitude-strong earthquakes on February 6. The destruction was extensive in the most affected areas because the earthquakes were strong and shallow, and because most of the buildings and houses in the affected region were not designed to withstand earthquakes.

In the face of left and right condemnation, the US was forced to

suspend some of its sanctions on February 10, but only for 180 days.

## Deadly sanctions

Syrian officials called the suspension of select restrictions as hypocritical and face-saving, and no different from the earlier pretensions of the US. Instead, they said, the US should lift all brutal and unilateral sanctions which has caused misery to the Syrian people.

Even experts of the United Nations

(UN) concurred that the suspension of a few sanctions is not enough. In a unity statement on February 10, they called for the lifting of all crippling sanctions to make way for the unimpeded de-

livery of humanitarian aid, as well as material and machinery to help the whole of Syria to recover.

Among others, UN institutions face difficulty in gathering sufficient food and other supplies due to what it called "over-compliance" or extreme compliance with US restrictions and "derisking" or avoiding possible punishment or fines that the US might impose on them.

In November 2022, UN Special Rapporteur Alena Douhan reported that the sanctions maintain and exacerbate the destruction and trauma of the people caused by the US proxy war in the country during the past 12 years. Even before the earthquake, 90% of Syrians are mired in poverty. Food, water services, electricity, housing, firewood, transportation and health are limited. Douhan said that there is no justification to the violation of the Syrian people's fundamental human rights.

## International solidarity

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) declared an indefinite unilateral ceasefire on February 9. "We have decided to not conduct any operation as long as the Turkish state does not attack," said party leader Cemil Bayik. The ceasefire will last "until the pain of our people is relieved and their wounds are healed." The Turkish state has not reciprocated the declaration.

Meanwhile, Russia, China and Cuba immediately extended help, medicine and rescue teams to Turkey and Syria. Mexico and countries in Latin America such as Brazil, Venezuela, El Salvador and Colombia did the same. Even Lebanon and Palestine, which are enduring extreme crisis, sent their personnel to directly help in excavating those buried in Syria.

Of the US allies, only Italy extended direct help to Syria. It was forced to land its airplanes carrying aid in Lebanon because of US restrictions.



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Students review lessons of the BPC days and weeks after the study. They carry with them the lessons they learned. They used them as guide when integrating with the basic masses, in arousing others, in holding more discussions, and in doing away and correcting their bourgeois and petty bourgeois weaknesses.

Ka Budang realized that it's never correct nor enough for a petty bourgeois to save only oneself from the violence of the semicolonial and semifudal soci-

ety. Thus, at the end of the BPC, Ka Budang posed the question: "What use is dreaming for material wealth if you continue to live in an exploitative society that has no justice? What use is comfort when it means closing your eyes to corruption, poverty, and exploitation?"

After completing the BPC, the students' determination to continue fighting was steered. "The BPC really helped me. In truth, it was one of the reasons why I decided to work full time for the revolution," Ka Budang said.