

CPP/NPA terminates unilateral ceasefire

IN A VIDEO message last February 1, New People's Army (NPA) spokesperson Ka Oris announced the joint decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NPA's National Operations Command to terminate the unilateral ceasefire declaration on the same day. After giving notice to the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP), the ceasefire will effectively expire on February 10, 11:59 p.m.

According to Ka Oris, the leadership of the revolutionary movement decided to terminate the ceasefire since, "first, the Duterte regime failed to comply with its promise to free all political prisoners 160 days after it was first brought up in August. Second, the GRP treacherously took advantage of the CPP/NPA ceasefire to encroach on the territories of the people's democratic government."

Even as the CPP and the NPA end their unilateral ceasefire, both continue to support the NDFP-GRP peace negotiations. However, the revolutionary movement opposes the use of the ceasefire "for pacification and to demand a long and indefinite ceasefire without concrete benefits to the people

...to be continued on p. 3



EDITORIAL

Attain just peace through negotiations and people's war

The Party joins the Filipino people in rejecting the February 4 declaration of GRP President Rodrigo Duterte that he will terminate peace negotiations between the GRP and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

Not having received any formal notice of termination from the GRP, however, we consider the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations as standing. We continue to look forward to scheduled talks on February 22-24 and April 2-6.

The Party assails Duterte's threats to order the cancellation of passports of NDFP negotiators and consultants as well as their rearrest and detention without bail. If carried out, these shall be considered as gross acts of treachery and grave violations of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG). The JASIG was reaffirmed by the Duterte regime and the NDFP just a few months ago. It guarantees non-reprisal against each other's peace personnel.

Duterte's impetuous pronouncements to end the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations came a day after ending the GRP's declaration of unilateral ceasefire against the NPA. His decision was made clearly without judicious consideration of the advice of his peace panel, and coming at the heels of a successful third round of peace talks in Rome, Italy just over a week ago. He asserts that peace negotiations will no longer be resumed unless there is "compelling reason" to do so.

It is dismaying that Duterte is showing interest in peace negotiations with the NDFP only as long as it can be used as a tool for pacification to compel the revolutionary forces to accept a prolonged ceasefire that is not only without sub-

stantial gain or benefit for the people, but also detrimental to the people as it gives the reactionary state armed forces impunity in carrying out abuses against the people in the countryside.

In declaring his intention to pull out from the GRP-NDFP negotiations, Duterte echoed the exaggerated anger of the AFP over the outbreak of successive armed skirmishes between the New People's Army and the AFP resulting in the death of six AFP troops since the end of January.

He glosses over the fact that it was he and the AFP hierarchy that has ordered the forward deployment of armed troops in the guerrilla zones and bases of the NPA to occupy barrios in the guise of "peace and order", "delivery of social services" and other pretexts,



and to sow fear and intimidation among the people and carry out armed offensive operations despite the reciprocal declarations of unilateral ceasefire.

AFP strike operations have intensified over the past few weeks leading to the January 23 attack on an NPA encampment in Makilala, and the January 26 assault on an NPA camp in Matalam, both in North Cotabato. The relentless AFP offensives have made the unilateral declaration for an interim ceasefire untenable. In response, the NPA has heightened its active defense maneuvers over the past days to defend the interests and welfare of people. The announcement by the Party and NPA last February 1 terminating the ceasefire declaration was made with more than sufficient forewarning since two months ago.

In wanting to end peace negotiations, Duterte said he could not agree to releasing all political prisoners. He makes the absurd claim that the release of all political

prisoners is equivalent to a "surrender" of the GRP. He disregards the basic fact that they have been charged with trumped up cases and are victims of flagrant injustice.

Over the past months, Duterte has adamantly refused to release all political prisoners through a presidential amnesty proclamation, contrary to his promise and obligation of the GRP.


It appears that the biggest stumbling block to the release of political prisoners is the AFP. In declaring he will not release all political prisoners, Duterte says he must also listen to the military, even if this means turning a deaf ear to the people's cry for justice. It has become quite clear that Duterte, who relies on the support of the AFP for his political survival, now favors the military and police more than the people.

The Filipino people demand a just and lasting peace by resolving the outstanding socio-economic problems, especially widespread landlessness and landgrabbing in the countryside, as well as chronic unemployment, low wages, lack of job security and myriad problems besetting the workers, peasants and other basic sectors.

Peace-loving sectors, organizations and personalities must firmly oppose the precipitate decision of GRP President Duterte to end the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations.

The offices of the NDFP negotiating panel shall remain open to continue to explore the possibility of reopening peace negotiations with the Duterte government, both on the CASER as well as on the matter of a bilateral ceasefire simultaneous with release of political prisoners.




The Filipino people must intensify both their armed and non-armed struggles against all forms of oppression and exploitation. They must vigorously carry forward the national democratic revolution in order to lay down the conditions for a just and lasting peace. AB



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and the revolutionary movement."

The NPA's National Operations Command ordered all NPA units and commands, including people's militias and self-defense units to "carry out active defense to counter, defeat and punish enemy AFP, PNP, CAFGU units patrolling guerrilla zones, units which occupy barangays and communities, including those which launch offensive operations in the guise of anti-drugs and anti-crime, which violate human rights and the spirit of the reciprocal ceasefire" before the ceasefire effectively expires.

"In the eventual termination of the unilateral ceasefire, all NPA territorial and unit commands are ordered to take the full initiative in carrying out military campaigns and tactical offensives against the AFP, PNP, the various paramilitary units and death squads of the Duterte government, as well as armed, abusive and exploitative businesses and other armed groups and syndicates," he added.

The announcement was followed by Ka Oris answering questions from the media through the Philippine Revolution Web Central social media accounts.

In response, Duterte also terminated the GRP's unilateral ceasefire on February 3, a day after announcing that he will "not imitate" the CPP/NPA announcement. He ordered all AFP soldiers to "go back to camps, clean their rifles and get ready to fight." On February 3, the AFP leadership held a press conference and promised to "hit them (NPA) hard."

AB

Panels hold successful third round of peace talks

Despite Pres. Duterte's declaration last February 4 that he is terminating the peace talks between the GRP and NDFP, the revolutionary movement remains open to its continuation. Among the reasons is the success of the third round of talks held in Rome, Italy last January 26 and important points of agreement achieved therein.

According to the Joint Statement at the close of the third round of talks, the Reciprocal Working Committee on SER has discussed the first four sections of the CASER draft. They have also started discussing agrarian reform and rural development, where the committees agreed in principle to the free land distribution to peasants as part of the CASER framework.

Randall Echanis, NDFP RWC-SER spokesperson, even expressed that they expect the draft to be ready for signing within this year. The panels had also exchanged drafts for the agreement on political and constitutional reforms.

Among the achievements of the talks was the signing of the Supplemental Guidelines for the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) and of the ground rules for the conduct of the meetings of the reciprocal working committees on SER. These documents will help in the acceleration of the operationalization of the CARHRIHL, which was signed by both Parties in 1998.

Once implemented, the Supplemental Guidelines will allow the JMC to conduct joint investigations regarding both parties' compliance with the CARHRIHL.

Investigations could finally be conducted on the thousands of cases filed with the JMC since 2004. For every case against the NDFP, there have been four cases filed against the GRP.

Many of the cases against the GRP involve extrajudicial killings, involuntary disappearances, illegal de-

tentions and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law as a consequence of military operations conducted by state security forces.

The NDFP reiterated the matter of GRP violations to CARHRIHL, including the non-observance of the

Hernandez doctrine which prohibits the filing of criminal cases against persons who are pursuing a political belief, the burial

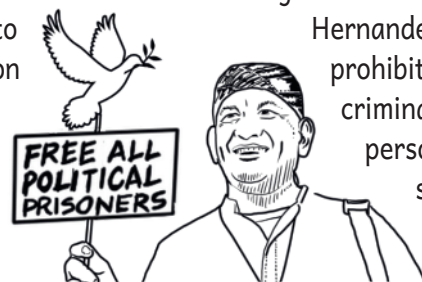
of the late dictator Marcos at

the Libingan ng mga Bayani, the military's use of schools, barangay halls, and other civilian structures in communities, and the issue of due process related to the government's anti-drug war.

The NDFP also reasserted that the release of almost 400 political prisoners is an issue of compliance to CARHRIHL. In his opening remarks, NDFP panel chief Fidel Agcaoili said, "the promise given in August 2016 in order to secure the indefinite extension of the unilateral ceasefire of the revolutionary movement has not materialized to date."

The government committed to work with the defense lawyers to expeditiously process the release of all political prisoners, starting with 200 qualified political prisoners so that they will benefit from the peace talks process.

The failure to release political prisoners was one of the reasons for the CPP and NPA's termination of the unilateral ceasefire effective February 10, although they are still willing to suspend the termination if



the GRP fulfils its obligations.

But on February 3, Duterte declared that he is withdrawing his ceasefire declaration and ordering the AFP to conduct all-out operations. Following this, he exasperatedly declared that he was disengaging from the talks, and stressed that he will not release the political prisoners because he supposedly has to contend with the sentiments of the AFP elements .

However, the NDFP is still willing to engage in peace talks. According to Fidel Agcaoili, "the NDFP is still hoping that the peace talks will proceed as agreed and the CASER will still be ready for approval by both parties near the end of 2017."

The panels are slated to meet again in Utrecht, The Netherlands, on February 20-22 to discuss the govern-

ment proposal for a bilateral ceasefire and other matters pertaining to the CARHRIHL's implementation. It has also been agreed upon to hold the fourth round of talks on April 2-6 in Oslo, Norway. The GRP has yet to present its written notice of terminating the peace talks to the NDFP panel and the Third Party Facilitator before this is finally terminated.

Meanwhile, Reynante Malcampo, 41 years old, was already sickly by the time he was released from the Compostela Valley Provincial Rehabilitation Center, Tagum City. It was only after five years that he was acquitted by the courts from trumped-up criminal charges of illegal possession of explosives. He was not released through Pres. Duterte's amnesty but through human rights advocates' own efforts. AB

NPA launches active defense from January

More than 18 armed actions were launched by various units of the New People's Army (NPA) throughout the country following the directive of the National Operations Command to carry out active defense to protect the welfare of the people and the revolutionary forces.

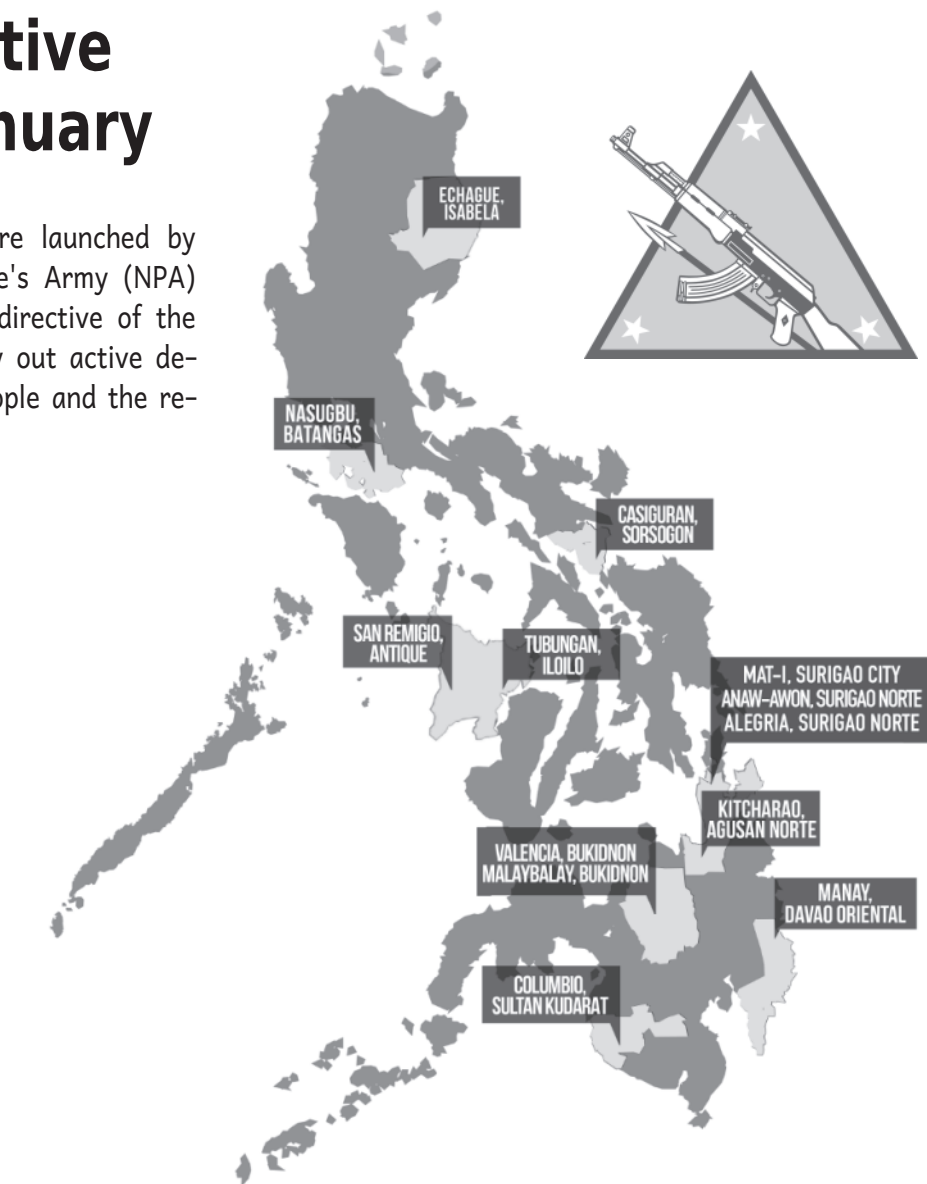
Isabela. A unit of the NPA-South Isabela (Benito Tesorio Command) successfully ambushed two elements of the 86th IB in Echague town on January 30.

In a statement by Victor Servidores of the NPA-Cagayan Valley, the two were part of AFP troops who were persistently carrying out intelligence operations in the provinces of Cagayan and Isabela.

Military units are blatantly using relief and rehabilitation operations and anti-drug campaigns as pretext to disguise AFP intelligence and combat operations in territories of the democratic people's government.

Batangas. A few hours after the NPA's declaration of the ceasefire termination, the NPA-Batangas (Eduardo Dagli Command) harassed a detachment of the Philippine Air Force on February 1 in Sitio Buntog, Barangay Bulihan, Nasugbu.

Sorsogon. NPA-Sorsogon (Celso Minguez Command) ambushed a 31st IB patrol in Trese Martires, Casiguran, on February 6. Two sol-



diers were wounded. Reactionary troops immediately swooped on the place, causing the evacuation of several families.

Southern Panay. Two successive military actions were carried out on February 1 by the NPA-Southern Panay (Napoleon Tumagtang Command) against 82nd IB and 3rd ID troops and launching military operations in Barangay Boloc, Tu-

bugan, Iloilo and Barangay Osorio III, San Remigio, Antique.

This military action was in response to the people's demand to punish the AFP elements creating disturbance in their community.

In the NPA-NTC's statement, the 82nd IB and 3rd ID PA have been involved in indiscriminate firing at villagers' homes and coercing the people to sign papers consenting to

the AFP's encampment in their community.

North Central Mindanao Region. Red fighters carried out harassment operations on January 30, against troops of the 8th IB who were encamped at the SIDAMCO building in Barangay Concepcion, Valencia City, Bukidnon.

While encamped, the 8th IB organized the DDSM or Duterte Drug Squad Movement led by the military intelligence battalion, which, according to them, are against drugs but targeting progressive community leaders in reality.

Every night, they investigate peasant leaders and force them to admit that they know the whereabouts of the NPA camp, NPA leaders and supporters.

AFP troops are also involved in the proliferation of pornographic shows, gambling and drunkenness in the community.

Alan Juanito, NPA-NCMR spokesperson, belied the declaration of Capt. Joe Patrick Martinez of the 4th ID that the AFP unit was carrying out relief operations for flood victims of Valencia City. According to him, there was no evacuation center in said barrio and there were likewise no evacuations during the floods.

Meanwhile, three elements of the 8th IB were flagged down by an NPA unit in Sitio Kalib, Barangay

Kibalabag, Malaybalay City on February 1. The three soldiers were killed in the ensuing encounter and Red fighters confiscated three calibre .45 pistols from them.

Northeastern Mindanao Region. On January 29, the NPA-NEMR captured and declared prisoners of war 30th IB element PFC Edwin Salan in Barangay Boudlingin, Alegria, Surigao del Norte. Salan is one of the 18 elements of the 30th IB on combat operations in the area.

The following day, January 30, Red fighters carried out harassment operations against 29th IB troops in barangays San Isidro, Mahayahay and Hinimbangan, in Kitcharao, Agusan del Norte and 75th IB troops on "peace and development" operations in Sitio Brazil, Barangay Mat-i, Surigao City. Three AFP soldiers were wounded.

On the same day, another NPA unit carried out harassment operations on the 36th IB which was launching COPD operations in Barangay Magtangali, Anawawon, Surigao Norte.

Southern Mindanao Region. Rigoberto Sanchez, NPA-Southern Mindanao Region spokesperson, condemned the AFP statement that soldiers were implementing anti-crime operations in Brgy. Lambog, Manay, Davao Oriental.

According to Sanchez, as in the failed AFP operation in Barangay Makilala and Matalam, North Cotabato, the NPA-Comval-Davao East Coast Subregional Command successfully foiled renewed attacks of the 67th IB on February 1, 12:30 noon. Failing to inflict damage on the NPA, fascist AFP soldiers killed two farmers from Barangay Del Pilar.

As early as January 31, combat troops of the 67th IB have been deployed in barangays Kayawan, Del Pilar and Kapasnan, Manay town. The following day, several villagers were subjected to interrogation and forced to reveal the whereabouts of the Red fighters.

Around noon, an encounter occurred between four AFP columns and an NPA unit in the area. The Red fighters were able to maneuver well, killing 2Lt. Victor Alejo, and seriously wounding another AFP element in the firefight.

Hundreds of Lumad families and farmers have evacuated from their community because of the 67th IB's encampment.

Far South Mindanao Region. Two elements of the 39th IB were captured and declared prisoners of war by Red fighters in Telefas, Columbio, Sultan Kudarat on February 2. They were identified as Sgt. Solaiman Calucop and Pfc Samuel Garay. AB

GRP illegally arrests consultant

THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT, human rights groups and peace supporters strongly condemn Ariel Arbitrario and two of his staff's illegal arrest by combined forces of the military and police.

Arbitrario and his companions were flagged down at a checkpoint in Sirawan, Toril, Davao City around 9 a.m. on February 6. He was freed on bail last August 18, 2016 to participate as a consultant to NDFP-GRP peacetalks. He was present during the three rounds of talks.

His arrest is the first after Duterte announced the GRP's termination of the peacetalks. Concurrently, he also ordered the cancellation of the consultants' passports and told them to return to jail as they are "criminals." He also ordered the military to put them under

surveillance and ensure that their locations are known. He also called the CPP, NPA and even the NDFP as terrorist organizations.

All 17 consultants are already in the Philippines and they are not in hiding, the NDFP said in a statement in February 6. They can't be arbitrarily arrested because they are protected by the JASIG (Joint Agreement on Security and Immunity Guarantees). A termination requires 30 days to take effect after a written notice is served. AB

US refuses to take Sison and CPP off terror list

THIS FEBRUARY 2, the US refused to take Prof. Jose Maria Sison and the Communist Party of the Philippines off its terror list. This, after the Government of the Philippines (GRP) formally asked the US to strike him off the list. This measure was jointly agreed upon by the NDFP and GRP during the third round of peace talks in Rome, Italy last January.

According to the joint statement issued by the NDFP and GRP negotiating panels, there is no reason why Sison and the CPP should remain within the list since its umbrella organization, the National Democratic Front, is engaged in peace talks with the Philippine government. This is contrary to the qualification of terrorists, said GRP panel chief Silvestre Bello. Sison and the CPP were included in the terror list upon the recommendation of the then Arroyo regime. Bello also headed that previous GRP panel.

Instead of responding positively, the US took advantage of the situation to chide the Philippines on its "wrong steps" with regard to its handling of the South China Sea, referring to the Duterte regime's silence on China's reported stockpiling of weapons in disputed shoals and islands.

In related news, arms sold by the US in line with its "war against terror" already arrived in the Philippines, among these are 400 grenade launchers, 85 M40A5 sniper rifles and an RQ-11B Raven unmanned aerial vehicle system with three drones.

NPA punitive actions in Batangas and Bukidnon

THREE PUNITIVE ACTIONS were implemented by units of the New People's Army in Batangas and Bukidnon against the oppressive big bourgeois comprador companies.

Batangas. Forty-two firearms, including 14 M-16s and 20 shotguns, thousands of magazines, ammunition and communication equipment were confiscated by the NPA in two successive raid and punitive actions on the Selective Security Agency and 3-I Security Agency on January 29, 6:30-7:45 p.m. in Barangay Papaya, Nasugbu town.

Red fighters from the NPA-Batangas (Eduardo Dagli Command) led the disarming of guards who served as goons of Henry Sy against the farmers of Hacienda Looc. Meanwhile, the NPA ensured that no guards nor employees of the said company were injured. This action was part of the punitive action against Henry Sy and his guards who are employed in the violent and widespread landgrabbing in Hacienda Looc. Among their cases were the indiscriminate repeated destruction of the farmer's plants, burning of huts and charcoal furnaces, confiscation of crops and blocking the farmers from tilling their land.

In Sitio Convento, Barangay Looc, Sitio Bangkal and Sitio Cueba, Barangay Bulihan, the guards repeatedly placed the farmers at gunpoint. The latter are also involved in blocking fisherfolk from staying and fishing along the coasts of Hamilo Cove and areas covered by Henry Sy's "development" in Barangay Calayo and Barangay Papaya.

Bukidnon. Ka Alan Juanito, spokesperson of NPA-North Central Mindanao Region, reported the paralyzation of the Del Monte multinational fruit corporation's backhoe and bulldozer by a team of NPA's Mt. Kitanglad Subregional Command on February 1.

Concurrent to this, the NPA-South Central Bukidnon Subregional Command burned a dump truck owned by the Macabaya family in Libertad, Quezon.

The Macabaya family is notorious for landgrabbing and insufficient wages for workers in their sugarcane fields. It is also accountable for demolishing 100 homes in Brgy. Salawagan, Quezon. AB

7 extrajudicial killings recorded under Oplan Kapayapaan

Just a month shy from the start of the year, at least seven peasant leaders and activists in Negros and Mindanao have already been killed for actively defending their rights to land.

Wencislao Paquiao, Jovani Paungtalan, Iver Mulasi, Alexander "Sander" Ceballos of Negros and Veronico "Nico" Lapsay Delamante, Emelito "Tatay Intik" Rotimas, and Renato Anglao from Mindanao were the first victims of the newly-de-

clared Oplan Kapayapaan, the new campaign of suppression of the Duterte regime.

Negros. Paquiao, 48, member of the San Benito Farmers Association-KMP was killed on January 25 at around 9 in the morning. Five bul-

lets hit him on the head, causing his immediate death. Another farmer, Rebeco Pabuaya, was hit but survived. They were then participating in a planting activity in a farm lot in Barangay San Benito, Calatrava.

On January 20, masked elements of the RPA working as armed goons of Mayor Nehemias dela Cruz shot and killed Ceballos, 54, a

peasant leader of the National Federation of Sugarcane Workers (NFSW), at around 8 p.m. in his house in Barangay Pandan Silos, Murcia, Negros Occidental. He was felled by three bullets.

Mulasi, chairman of the Nieves Agro Cooperative of Don Salvador Benedicto, Negros Occidental, was shot to death on January 16 in front of his house in Barangay Pandanon Silos in Murcia, a municipality adjoining Don Salvador Benedicto. Jovani Paguntalan was shot to death on January 2.

The land that Paquiao and other farmers were tilling had previously been sold by a certain Agustilo Hullesa through the voluntary offer to sell. But this was redistributed by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) on February 2014 to dummy beneficiaries working under Hullesa. The farmers filed a case against the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).

Ceballos was one of the leaders of the successful NFSW struggle to recover the land grabbed by Mayor Dela Cruz, a landlord politician of Salvador Benedicto, Negros Occidental. Since January 13 and 14, he had received death threats from a certain Jigger Costan, Mayor Dela Cruz's bodyguard. Ceballos' son Ariel had narrowly survived a previous shooting on July 17, 2015.

The killings were strongly con-

demned by the NFSW, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) and Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) in Negros that launched a series of marches and a protest-funeral from January 22, the 30th anniversary of the Mendiola Massacre, and at the funeral memorial for Ceballos on February 1 at the Murcia municipal cemetery.

According to Fidel Agcaoili, chief NDFP negotiator, "Ceballos' killing is but the latest case of landlord violence against peasants who have taken initiatives to assert their right to have land to till in the face of the failure of successive government agrarian reform programs." This demonstrates the need for "sweeping reforms in the Philippine countryside to dismantle landlord power, resolve the peasantry's hunger for land and end rural oppression and exploitation."

Mindanao. Men aboard a motorcycle shot Delamente, 27, leader of a Mamanwa tribe, around 12:20 noon on January 20, in Punta Naga, Brgy. Caagdianao, Claver, Surigao del Norte. He had been provincial coordinator of the Katribu Party since 2010 and an active member of Kahugpungan sa Lumadnong mga Organisasyon (KASALO)-Caraga. A child was hit during the shooting, and is still in the hospital as of this writing. The shooting occurred near a military detachment.

Delamente is known for leading the struggle against large-scale nickel mining in their ancestral land. Last December, they filed charges against Rep. Prospero Pichay of Surigao del Sur, owner of Claver Mineral Development Corp. which was forcibly evicting the Lumad-Mamanwa from his mining concessions.

On February 6, Emelito "Tatay Intik" Rotimas, chairperson of Purok 6, Barangay Lapu-lapu, Maco, Compostela Valley, was shot by two motorcycle-riding men around 11:45 a.m. outside the Community Technical College of Southeastern Mindanao Incorporated (CTCSM). The shooting occurred while he was talking to some students of the CTCSM.

On February 3, the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines-NMR reported the killing of Renato Anglao, a Lumad involved in the struggle against corporate plantations encroaching on their ancestral land.

More than 26,000 victims of human rights violations have been recorded by Karapatan since Duterte came to power as president. Among these are 18 extrajudicial killings, 14 attempted extrajudicial killings, 397 illegal arrests, 7,841 cases of military occupation of community structures, and 14,659 cases of threats, intimidation and harassment. AB

NDFP condemns AFP's treacherous anti-NPA operations

THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC Front of the Philippines (NDFP) condemned the AFP's attacks on two NPA camps in North Cotabato in January 21 and 26. These were part of the reasons why the NPA was not able to sustain its unilateral ceasefire.

The attack against an NPA unit in Makilala in January 21 was a serious breach of the AFP's own ceasefire, the NDFP said. The third round of peace negotiations in Rome, Italy were then set to open the next day.

According to the Regional Operations Command of the NPA-Southern Mindanao, around 5:00 a.m. on the said day, troops from the 39th IB arrived at Sitio Concepcion, Brgy. Kisante and launched combat operations towards Sitio Lokatong in Brgy. Biangan where

an NPA unit was encamped. The Red fighters carried out evasive maneuvers but army operations continued and at around 5:00 p.m., an armed skirmish ensued. Eight soldiers were killed while a Red fighter was martyred. The place is far from the town center so the army's presence meant they were in pursuit of the NPA even while the reciprocal unilateral ceasefires were in place.

In fact, the 39th IB has been on a rampage through North Cotabato communities since August, the NPA-SMR said. A week after Duterte declared his ceasefire, the AFP sent "peace and development" teams which encamped in barangay halls, health centers and schools in Kidapawan City and in the towns of Pres. Roxas, Magpet and Arakan. It continued to mobilize its troops and paramilitaries in various forms of combat operations

which resulted in extrajudicial killings and harassments. Among the human rights violations are the killing of civilians Rita and Norberto Gascon on September 13 and Rolan Malignan on November 22. On December 6, several families from Magpet evacuated due to intense militarization.

On January 26, combined forces from the 71st IB,

CAFGU and PNP Special Action Force assaulted another NPA camp in Sitio Emilda, Brgy. Taguranao, Matalam. At around 6:00 a.m, 50 soldiers attacked the NPA camp located three kilometers away from the nearest barrio. All Red fighters safely withdrew while three soldiers were killed in the battle that lasted for 45 minutes. A hundred soldiers were sent to Matalam that day. AB

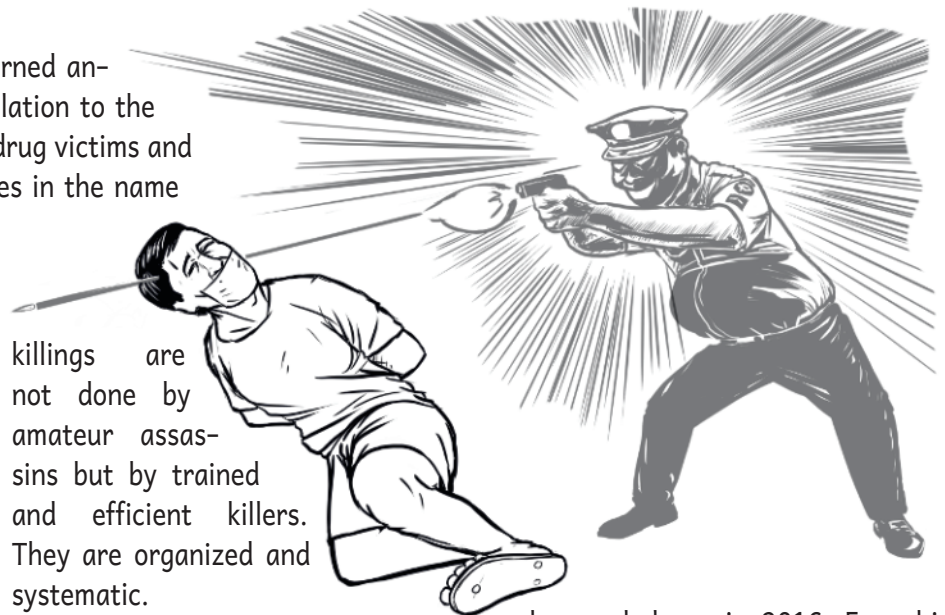
Duterte's criminal Oplan Tokhang

This January, the Duterte regime earned another round of recriminations in relation to the large number of extrajudicial killings of drug victims and the disclosure of police criminal activities in the name of Oplan Tokhang.

The latest of these is the police killing of the Korean businessman Jee Ick-Joo inside the premises of the Philippine National Police (PNP) headquarters in Camp Crame. Due to this, Duterte and PNP chief Ronald de la Rosa were forced to temporarily suspend Oplan Tokhang and pretend to investigate police personnel involved in the extortion and killing.

The Communist Party of the Philippines has made its stand clear against the regime's "war against drugs" since August 2016. In the next six months, its anti-poor and anti-democratic character has been proven in the brutal and indiscriminate killings during police operations where, incredibly, the victims allegedly fought back or attempted to escape. Most of the victims come from poor communities in cities and barrios and have been subjected to intense pressure to "surrender" and be listed. In time, the criminal and anti-people character of the anti-drug campaign became more evident based on the following reasons:

1) According to PNP statistics, an average of 30 drug-related killings occur each day. More than 7,000 have been killed in the last seven months but the PNP denies that police are responsible for more than half of the killings. According to them, only 2,500 died under their operations. The others are perpetrated by drug syndicates. Nevertheless, it is apparent that these



killings are not done by amateur assassins but by trained and efficient killers. They are organized and systematic.

The existence of a national death squad ran by the police, if not directly populated by police personnel to help with the killings, is indisputable. According to an investigation, police are paid by the "headquarters" for every suspect they kill. Police also pay a network of assassins that serve to ramp up the number of killings. There have been numerous reports where the police have been exposed as protectors of drug syndicates.

2) To justify the massive killings, Duterte repeatedly overstates the number of drug victims, treating them as criminals who need elimination. Seventy percent of all his speeches carry on this vein and is echoed by his stooges in the PNP. Even his secretary in the Department of Justice states that those who are involved in drugs are not part of humanity, so they don't have rights.

Nevertheless, his data do not jive with his own government's statistics. According to the Philippine Dangerous Drugs Board, there were only 1.8 million (2.3% of the population), and not three million,

who used drugs in 2016. Even his statement that drug addicts have "destroyed minds" and their numbers will increase in the next five years is not supported by studies. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, only 12% of drug users graduate into serious addicts.

3) Duterte gave the "war against drugs" to the PNP, an agency widely infiltrated by criminal syndicates. The PNP is known for its inutility, corruption, widespread human rights violations and involvement in major crimes. In the last decade alone, police have been involved in numerous high profile cases of killings, kidnappings and other crimes related to illegal drug syndicates. It has been repeatedly proven that not only a few scalawags or rotten individuals are involved. Its inherently reactionary and criminal character will not be wiped clean by any amount of Duterte's shaming of a few high officials.

4) At the onset of the campaign, it was already clear that Duterte was using the campaign to consol-

idate his hold on the police and military. This is apparent in his push to use the "war" to insist on authoritarianism and to propagate the possibility of a martial rule. This was carried out with offering higher wages and other bribes to officials and personnel.

5) On the national level, Duterte came out with various "lists" to put pressure on his political enemies. As expected, senate and congressional investigations have come to nothing. Not a case has been filed against those he accused of involvement in the grand network of narco-politics. Until

NUMBER KILLED IN THE ANTI-DRUG WAR

7,025 from July 2016 to January 2017

2,503 killed in police operations

3,603 under investigation

now, Duterte's "naming" of other high officials involved in drugs remains a threat.

WHILE EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS and criminality rise, Duterte's all-out support and defense of the PNP has become intolerable for the

people. As time goes by, his incessant description of the drug problem, defense of this own campaign and attacks on all of his detractors, has become tiresome. These are all empty bravado, as evident in his reversal and admission that the PNP is "rotten to the core." AB

Workers launch protests to demand justice for HTI victims

Workers of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) demanded justice for the victims of the February 1 fire at the House Technology Industries (HTI) in Cavite at a protest action in front of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) office on February 3.

Concurrent with the national protest against contractualization and for a national minimum wage, protesters demanded to hold the HTI management, the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) and DOLE responsible for their negligence of health and safety standards which resulted in the death and injury of the company's workers.

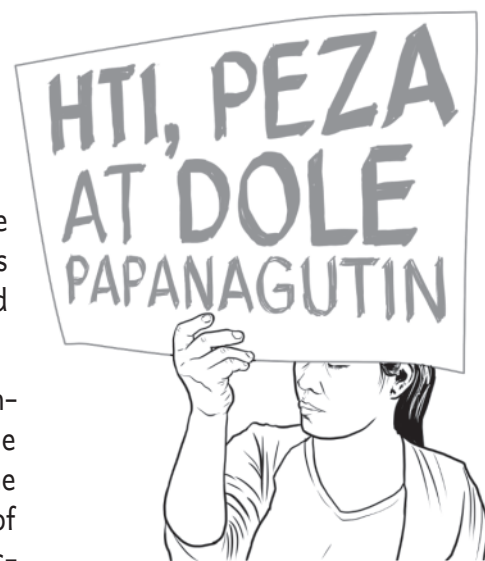
More than 100 workers have been reported injured and hospitalized. A number are in critical condition, and there have been deaths. But there are no clear reports from the PEZA or the Cavite local government regarding the real number of deaths. Media personnel were not allowed near the ongoing fire. Gov. Remulla continued to report that there were no deaths and the only notices coming from the management were reassurances that HTI will pay the workers. However, some residents and the Workers Assistance Center in Rosario, Cavite were reporting deaths at the time of the fire.

KMU, Gabriela Women's Party

and other labor institutions conducted a fact finding mission at the Cavite Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) on February 2, but many of the interviewed workers were hesitant in giving information for fear that the company would not pay them damages if they told the truth. According to Joms Salvador of Gabriela, "certain interests are trying to suppress information, like reports of workers killed by the fire and through suffocation."

In the afternoon, the Kilusan ng Manggagawang Kababaihan (KMK) led a noise barrage at the Welcome Rotunda. According to Avic Villanueva of KMK, women are greatly affected by the lack of safety standards at the CEPZ because they comprise 80% of its labor force. This was followed by candle-lighting activity by KMU workers.

The HTI is a Japanese firm manufacturing prefabricated housing materials, with 6,000-7,000 workers and employees, in a seven-hectare facility within the CEPZA or labor enclave at Rosario and Gen.



Trias. This is one of the factories the government protects in its neoliberal policy of attracting and prioritizing foreign investments in the country, to the point of risking the lives of workers.

Under the Special Economic Zone Act of 1995, factories within the enclaves are not required to follow Philippine laws regarding the health and safety of workers. In almost 300 enclaves in the whole country, foreign corporations are free to conduct business untaxed for eight years. After this tax holiday, they are required to pay only 5% of their income to the national government, while continuing to enjoy tax exemptions from port tariffs, import-export, foreign personnel, and others.

Despite the immense corporate profit and privilege, the usual annual workers' wages in the enclaves

are the second lowest, next only to Vietnam's and far lower than that of China and India.

According to Elmer Labog of the KMU, "like majority of today's workers, HTI workers are mostly contractuels, their wages are way below living standards and are deprived of their right to unionize and

to collectively bargain. These are neoliberal attacks against workers that the Duterte administration failed to address. Worse, his economic managers are even promoting these gross anti-worker policies."

After the program at DOLE, the rallyists marched to Mendiola to

hold the Duterte regime accountable for its failed promise to end contractualization and listen to the demands for national daily minimum wage of ₱750 for private sector workers and ₱16,000 monthly for public sector employees. Similar protests were held in Cebu, Negros and other places in the country. **AB**

Farmers hold campout in Davao City

THOUSANDS OF FARMERS gathered in Davao City last January 24-27 to demand calamity aid and other concrete solutions to their problems.

The Farmers' Campout for Food, Land and Justice was participated in by 5,000 farmers and national minority people from Compostela Valley, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur and Davao Oriental. They asked for immediate aid of 15,000 cavans of rice (more or less 940,000 kilos), and production subsidy for farm implements, seed, and other inputs.

The farmers of Compostela Valley demanded a ₱1/kilo increase in prices of banana products from the present ₱4/ kilo. These are sold by middlemen at ₱8/kilo in the market. More than 30,000 families have lost their homes and livelihood to floods.

Among the protesters were peasants from the Madaum Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Association Incorporated (MARBAI) who were evicted by the Lapanday Food Corporations (See *Ang Bayan*, December 21, 2016) and those from the Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology (CFCST). The peasants from CFCST are asserting their right to more than 4,611 hectares of school reservation site that they have been tilling since 1967. Aside from MARBAI, two other cooperatives—the Hijo Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Cooperative-B (HARBCO-B) and the Guhusnong Mag-uuma Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Inc. (GMARBAI)—are demanding that Lapanday return the land to the rightful beneficiaries.

HARBCO-B has 372 farmer beneficiaries and are demanding the return of 260 hectares while GMARBAI is asking for the return of 116

hectares of land from Lapanday.

These are adjacent to the 136-hectare land already being retaken by MARBAI.

Lapanday grabbed more than 1,000 hectares of land earmarked for land reform under the Certificate of Land Ownership Award (CLOA) which the cooperative holds.

Members of KMP, *Unyon ng mga Magsasaka sa Agrikultura* and land reform advocates picketed in front of the Lapanday offices in Makati and Davao City to protest the land-grabbing.

DAR Secretary Rafael 'Ka Paeng' Mariano and officials of DAR Region 12 held a dialog with the protesters in Rizal Park at the third day of the campout.

During the campout's last day, the farmers marched and held a rally in front of the Eastmincom, AFP headquarters in Panacan, Davao City.

The two provinces and four towns of Davao region have been under a state of calamity due to continuous rains and floods. According to initial government assessments, at least ₱7.42 million have been damaged in Davao del Norte. DAR-Davao initial data also show that floods damaged 2,320 hectares of land in five municipalities, with banana plantations hardest hit at ₱4.17 million worth.

According to government statistics, 11 of the country's poorest 20 provinces are in Mindanao. The regions in this island are also the most militarized in the Philippines. **AB**

Congress hearing disrupted by teachers' protest

TEACHERS BELONGING TO the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) launched a protest action within the halls of Congress against the tax reform system proposed by the Department of Finance (DOF) last February 1. While the congress committee was holding a hearing on the proposal, they unfolded placards and chanted slogans till they were stopped by the congress sergeants-at-arms. Some teachers had to be bodily carried out of the hall.

According to ACT Teachers Party-List Rep. Antonio Tinio, the proposed excise tax on petroleum products will be borne by low-income and poor families. Gabriela Women's Party's Emmi De Jesus, chair of the House Committee on Poverty Alleviation, agreed, saying the proposed tax reform package is "deceptive and anti-poor," because the supposed reduction in personal income tax "is just a smokescreen for a tax tsunami directed against poor Filipinos."

"DOF's tax reform bundle will ultimately hurt poor Filipino families as it will increase existing taxes on several basic commodities and lift tax exemptions on goods and services directly and indirectly accessed by the poor. The reduction in personal income tax is just a sweetener," Rep. De Jesus said.

The proposal seeks to lower

the personal income tax rate from 32% to 25%, but the revenues will be recouped by new excise taxes on money remittance transactions, petroleum products, low-cost and socialized housing, transportation fares, power transmissions, and other services.

The poor's daily expenses will rise, while tax rates on corporate profiles, interest income earned on peso

deposits and investments and on property-related transactions will be drastically cut. "It becomes clear that the ultimate beneficiaries of the proposed tax reform are wealthy families and businesses in the country," de Jesus said. According to her, the issue will be raised in the series of protest actions in the run-up to March 8. AB

Rallies across the country

Samar holds peace rally

At least 1,000 farmers held a rally in front of the Samar Provincial Capitol on January 26 to demand the withdrawal of AFP troops encamped within communities in the province.

According to peasant leaders from Hinabangan, Pinabacdao, Basey and Calbiga, troops of the 8th ID never left their villages and continued to harass the peasants despite their vaunted ceasefire. Farmers are coerced to attend "meetings" wherein AFP troops boast that they are no longer implementing Oplan Bayanihan, but Oplan Kapayapaan.

Participants also reported that in a certain "medical mission" earlier this month, an illiterate peasant was issued a prescription by an army doctor, but when he had someone else read it for him, written there was "you are hiding a rifle in your possession."

At the rally, peasants led by Kapunungan han Gudti nga Parag-uma ha Weste han Samar (KAPAWA or Unity of Small Peasants in Western Samar) and People Surge-Western Samar Provincial Formation of also declared their continuing support for the NDFP-GRP peace talks.

Meanwhile, public elementary and high school teachers from different places in Eastern Visayas converged in Samar on February 3 to join the national protest action under the Alliance of Concerned Teachers that demanded wage increase. The teachers also decried the snail-paced financial aid to the victims of super-typhoon Yolanda, the delayed Performance Based Bonus, and the anti-teacher declarations of Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno.

Protest actions also continued in different places across the country.

Metro Manila. On February 3, activists led by Bayan marched from T.M. Kalaw St. to the US embassy to protest US Pres. Trump's anti-immigrant policies. The protest action was timed to mark the anniversary of the Philippine-American War on February 4.

On February 2, farmers led by KMP, UMA and Anakpawis Party picketed the office of the Philippine Coconut Authority to demand the immediate return of the P75 billion coco levy fund to small coconut workers, not its privatization or

management by a new government corporation.

Mindoro. Fisherfolk's protest actions on February 1 successfully stopped new demolition attempts in Rizal and San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, on the land unjustly claimed by Annaliza Pojas-Lopez.

Cordillera. Some 300 delegates from various Cordillera provinces held a peace assembly on December 29, 2016, as part of the national peace assembly called by the CPP. Featured in this assembly were calls for just peace, support for the NDFP-GRP peace talks, and withdrawal of AFP troops from minority peoples' communities. The assembly also highlighted the minority people's struggle for self-determination through the Cordillera Peoples' Democratic Front (CPDF). AB

Drivers protest against jeepney phase-out

MORE THAN 500 public jeepney operators and drivers held a street protest in Baguio City on January 21 against the Department of Transportation's (DOTr) deceptive jeepney modernization scheme.

The said program, which was made in 2015 by the Aquino regime, is scheduled to phase-out the currently operating jeepneys and replace them with electric jeepneys (e-jeepney). An e-jeepney costs around ₱8 million each, an amount too steep for operators and drivers.

"This is not an improvement but additional burden to jeepney drivers and operators. What will happen to small jeepney operators who cannot afford to buy and maintain e-jeepneys?" asked Carlito Wayas, PISTON group's national vice president.

At a rally at Igorot Park in Baguio City, PISTON president George San Mateo declared that the phase-out is included in the proposed Emergency Traffic Powers Bill, which will give the president emergency powers in matters of street traffic. This bill will facilitate the government's planned Fleet Management Program, wherein jeepney franchises and units will be controlled by big businessmen, financiers, and government officials.

San Mateo added that e-jeepneys cannot negotiate the steep inclines, descent and sharp curves of Cordillera's interior roads. This has been proven in a test run in Baguio City in the past, where road undulations were even milder.

PISTON also supported the jeepney strike under STOP and GO on February 6.