



## EDITORIAL

# Repression and deception to mark Marcos II regime

**A**lthough Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has yet to sit on his stolen throne, the dagger of fascist repression and deception is already unsheathed, auguring six years of darkness facing the Filipino people.

Over the past few weeks, the people's democratic rights to free expression and peaceably redress their grievances and protests were sustainedly threatened and assaulted. At least three street mass actions were violently dispersed by police using truncheons and water cannons. These brought back bitter memories of repression during the period of the fascist Marcos dictatorship during which people were outrightly prohibited from assembling and speaking out.

In justifying their violent dispersal, police officials insisted that the rallies formed part of "destabilization." Demonstrators are denounced as "illegal" and the youth

rallyists as "victims of provocation." People's voices repudiating the return of the Marcoses to power and expressing protests against widespread fraud in the past elections are being drowned.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) is using the Marcos-era Batas Pambansa 880 to impose limits on the people's rights to mount street demonstrations. The PNP has openly declared an anti-democratic policy and laid out the policy under the Marcos II regime.

By suppressing street rallies, PNP officials are showing off to Marcos Jr. to prove their readiness to serve the wishes of the dictator's son in the same way that they

served as wardens who keep check on whoever raises their voices or takes action against corruption, plunder and repression under martial law.

Congruent with the cruel suppression of democratic rights, it is foreseeable that deception and covering-up the Marcoses' crimes will be heightened on the pretext of "debating history" and giving them the "chance to air their side." The Marcoses will use their political power and vast government resources to flood and overwhelm mass media, social media, education and culture with the Marcos-style distortion of history and truth.

Through various means, the mass media is prevented from performing their work of reporting the truth instead of returning to their martial law role as mere mouth-

pieces of Marcos and his officials. Marcos' officials want to give more space to their social media promoters ("vloggers") to drown and cast media aside. Critical reporters and broadcasters, as well as academics and experts, are being denied the opportunity to ask questions and dig for information, are mocked and sneered or brazenly threatened.

The term "unity" is being distorted to make everyone kneel before the Marcoses, buy the loyalty of judges, politicians and big business, silence or railroad dissenters, in order to dominate all aspects of politics and society. The Marcoses now have full control of the Senate and Congress. It is not far that the Supreme Court will soon follow.

The elements of political repression and deception are quickly being

laid out to build Marcos' reign of absolute control over the state and society. This power will surely be used by the Marcoses to secure their interests including their \$10-billion illegally acquired wealth, bank deposits, jewelry, mansions, expensive paintings and works of art, unpaid taxes, and to completely evade culpability for the thousands killed, tortured and oppressed during the dark years of martial law.

The resort to tyrannical repression and deception now characterizes the class rule of the neocolonial state of the bourgeois compradors and big landlords. Amid the global and domestic crisis, the ruling clique becomes even more rapacious in its desire to monopolize the diminishing benefits of their collusion with foreign big banks and corporations.

It favors the ruling clique to use absolute power to ram down national sovereignty, siphon all the country's wealth and take away everything from the people. The surplus capital being held by US, Japanese and Chinese banks are being used to force countries into indebtedness on the pretext of "development" to buy their commodities and services.


After Duterte recently signed the new neoliberal laws, American companies in mining and plantations are rushing to get in, especially in Mindanao. In line with this is the intensified campaign of suppression against the peasant masses and minority people to drive them away and take away their land. The pro-Marcos big bourgeoisie and bureaucrat capitalists will surely benefit from big government contracts for infrastructure, control of public utilities and others.

While some big bourgeois compradors and bureaucrat capitalists become billionaires, majority of the people wallow in poverty and hunger, low wages, widespread unemployment and lack of income. Their sufferings worsen everyday as the crisis of the ruling semicolonial and semifeudal system deepens.

To the Filipino people, especially the workers and toiling masses, Marcos Jr.'s absolute rule will lead to their democratic rights being taken away, and shutting various avenues for free expression. They are being forced by the situation to further unite and act collectively to express their grievances and defend their interests and welfare. The progressive and patriotic classes and sectors must undertake efforts to build across the country a broadest united front of all democratic forces to isolate the absolute reign of Marcos II.

At the same time, the revolutionary armed struggle in the countryside must be strengthened. As in the past, the New People's Army will serve as an invincible fort of people's resistance against fascist tyranny. **AB**



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# The Marcos family's full restoration to power

The Marcoses have fully returned to power as Ferdinand Marcos Jr. was proclaimed as the 17th president of the reactionary government of the Republic of the Philippines last May 25. At the same time, the Dutertes have perpetuated their rule with Sara Duterte's victory as vice president.

The Marcoses flaunted their power steal when the whole family climbed the rostrum in front of the Congress' joint session, led by their matriarch Imelda, who should have been imprisoned.

Majority of the members of Congress, dominated by political dynasties, applauded this "historical" event. The Makabayan bloc was the only group which expressed extreme anger by shouting their nay vote and walking out of the halls during the proclamation.

The Communist Party of the Philippines called the celebrations of the Marcoses as a "big insult to the collective memory of the Filipino people" who revolted and drove them away. Outside Congress, the event spurred the anger of many and the call to imprison Imelda, who was convicted in November 2018 with 77 years of imprisonment for seven counts of graft, reverberated.

## Tyrant and technocrat's government

As expected, Marcos Jr. rewarded his minions and allies with cabinet positions. This included clans which benefited under his father's dictatorial rule.

To ensure the continuing waves of disinformation and control the narrative, Victor Rodriguez, his long time chief of staff and spokesperson during the campaign season, was appointed as Executive Secretary. He appointed Rose Beatrice Cruz-Angeles, a vlogger who ran his troll farms which were utilized to revise history, as Press Secretary.

Sara Duterte will serve as secretary of the Department of Education while her spokesperson Christina Garcia-Frasco will occupy the Department of Tourism. Broadcaster Erwin Tulfo (brother of senator-elect Raffy Tulfo and former Tourism Secretary Wanda Tulfo-Teo) will serve



as secretary for the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Neoliberal technocrats left his "economic team" untouched and were further perpetuated. This is composed of Benjamin Diokno as Department of Finance secretary, Felipe Medalla as Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas governor, Alfredo Pascual in the Department of Trade and Industry, and Arsenio Balisacan in the National Economic and Development Authority.

Meanwhile, he appointed Jesus Crispin Remulla, son of Juanito Remulla Sr. who was one of Marcos Sr.'s rabid minions, as Department of Justice secretary. Remulla had earned the ire of the people after he red-tagged attendees of a Leni-Kiko rally in Cavite.

Another daughter of a Marcos minion was appointed in the Department of Migrant Workers. Susan Ople, daughter of former Minister of Labor Blas Ople who was head propagandist of the "Bagong Lipunan," was handpicked. Former Manila Rep. Zenaida Angping, another loyalist, will head the Presidential Management Staff.

Meanwhile, police violently dispersed the march of progressive groups from the Commission on Human Rights to the Congress on the day of the proclamation.

Rallyists were waterbombed and clubbed which wounded 14. Since the evening of May 24, police were stationed in the area. The violent dispersal earned widespread condemnation.

## NPA-Sultan Kudarat ambushes 37th IB

A unit of the New People's Army (NPA)-Sultan Kudarat ambushed soldiers of the 37th IB along the national highway near Sitio Babangkaw, Barangay Paril, Kalamansig, Sultan Kudarat last May 31. Five soldiers were killed while seven others were wounded. The armed offensive disrupted the 37th IB's combat operations in Palimbang town.

Meanwhile, residents of Barangay Kibohol, Palimbang rejoiced over the NPA's campaign against large-scale logging in South Daguma. In an operation last June 1, Red fighters successfully stopped an illegal logging operation in Sitio Manga and accosted two operators. The group was led by a certain Mondragon Digandang who is in connivance with illegal logging operations of D.M. Consunji Incorporated (DMCI).

Red fighters explained to them the need to defend the ancestral land and care for the environment. The two committed to stop their illegal operations and cooperation with the DMCI.

In Lanao del Sur, an NPA unit fired at an operating unit of the 34th IB in the mountain area of Maguing town last May 25. Two soldiers were killed while three were wounded.

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## Bombing and militarization force hundreds of families to evacuate in Maguindanao, Lanao and Ifugao

Hundreds of families in towns of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur and Ifugao evacuated after a series of bombing and militarization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in their communities last May 23.

More than 600 families of Datu Salibu town, Maguindanao were forced to evacuate after the AFP rained bombs on Barangay Ganta. Soldiers claim they targeted a "group of terrorists."

According to residents of Datu Salibu, they were startled when two FA-50 fighter jets and two MG-520 attack helicopters dropped bombs at around 7 o'clock in the morning. Soldiers also used 105 mm Howitzers positioned in a military camp.

Residents were dismayed as the incident coincided with their commemoration of the Marawi City siege last 2017.

In Ifugao, 122 families or more than 500 individuals evacuated in Barangay Namal, Asipulo amid widespread military operations of the 54th IB after a reported encounter with the New People's Army.

The local government unit pro-

hibited residents to return to their communities, gravely affecting their livelihood.

In Lanao del Sur, the AFP shelled a mountainous part of Maguing town 21 times last May 21 from 2 a.m. until the afternoon. They shelled the area again last May 28 firing seven times. The livelihood of Moro residents were gravely affected by the shelling.

On May 19, the AFP strafed a mountainous part of Jabonga, Agusan del Norte using a Black Hawk helicopter. Civilian communities were terrorized by the incident.

Last May 26, operating soldiers of the 62nd IB destroyed a corn field and stole a chicken of farmers in Barangay Quintin Remo, Moises Padilla, Negros Occidental.

The said town has been militarized since May 12 along with nearby towns of Isabela and La Castellana in Negros Occidental and



Guihulngan City, Vallehermoso and Canlaon City in Negros Oriental.

**Arrest.** Police arrested Sorsogon peasant leaders Percival Dellomas and Darwin Guelas in a checkpoint along the boundary of Sorsogon and Albay last May 28.

Dellomas is a leader of the Samahang Magbubukid sa Sorsogon while Guelas is a regional council member of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas-Bicol. Dellomas was charged with violation of the Anti-Terrorism Act while Guelas with trumped-up charges of murder.

Last June 2, Jhen Estiller, a member of the Amihan-Bicol was arrested in Barangay Pinontingan, Gubat, Sorsogon and was filed with trumped-up of charges of murder.

## Workers receive measly wage increase

After several years, the Duterte regime finally increased workers' wages across the country. Daily wages were raised in majority of the regions from ₱15 to ₱110.

This will be implemented in two to three tranches in the next two to three years. Most increases will begin this June. Despite the increase, this is still a far cry from a livable wage.

On the other hand, workers' wages in Region IV-B will remain at ₱329.

Workers, led by the Kilusang Mayo Uno (May First Movement or K MU), continue to demand for a ₱750 national minimum wage. They trooped to Congress last May 23 to

push for the legislation of their demand and call for a control to the spiraling prices of oil and basic commodities. Police forces blocked the protest.

Last May 24, members of the K MU-Southern Mindanao Region protested in front of the DOLE-XI Regional Office to reiterate their demand for a national minimum wage.

A similar protest dubbed as Flores de Endo was held in Calamba, Laguna last May 31.

Region	Wage increase
Region I	₱60-₱90
Region II	₱50-₱75
Region III	₱40
Region IV-A	₱47-₱97
Region IV-B	₱35
Region V	₱55
Region VI	₱55-₱110
Region X	₱15-₱22
Region XI	₱31
Region XII	₱32
Region XIII	₱30
NCR	₱33
Cordillera	₱50-₱60

## The Marcopper Tragedy, legacy of the Marcos Sr. dictatorship

The decision of the Regional Trial Court of Marinduque last May 16 ordering the Marcopper Mining Corporation to pay up to ₱10 million in damages for the 1993 mine spill, can be regarded as a victory. However, no amount of money can fix the repeated and long-term destruction wrought by the mining company on the people of Marinduque.

The court decision arose from the complaint by 30 individuals over the company's damaged dam which caused flooding and damage to the livelihood of residents of two villages in Mogpog, Marinduque. This was followed by the bigger tragedy following the destruction of the company's mine tailings dam in March 24, 1996, which resulted in at least 200 million tons of poisonous chemicals spilling into the Boac River. This incident, considered as one of the worst in the country's history, has long-term effects on the lives and livelihood of Marinduqueños.

The tragedies caused by Marcopper are among the legacies of the

Marcos dictatorship which people continue to suffer from. The company was established in 1969 using funds from the Asian Development Bank which then owned 40%. In 1975, Ferdinand Marcos Sr. allowed the company to throw waste into the Calancan Bay despite strong resistance of the island's residents. Through his cronies, the dictator controlled 49% of the corporation. Using state power, he suppressed the people's condemnation and resistance against the mine. He suspended environmental regulations despite the clear damage that it will bring to nearby communities.

For more details, read the complete article in <https://cpp.ph>. AB

## Protests in South Cotabato against open-pit mining intensify

Amid the intensified protests launched by residents of South Cotabato, Gov. Reynaldo Tamayo Jr. vetoed last June 3 the earlier resolution of the provincial council allowing the resumption of destructive open-pit mining in the province. In his statement the following day, he expressed that the resolution was rushed and that there were questionable provisions in it.

The governor sees no reason why the ban should be lifted because "it has long served to protect the people of South Cotabato."

However, he recognized that the ban on open-pit mining is "ultra vires" or beyond the provincial government's authority since a national policy exists allowing this. The said policy (Executive Order 130) was issued by Rodrigo Duterte last April 2021. Therefore, he also admitted that the veto will not affect the plan of Sagittarius Mines Inc. to continue operations, considered to be

the most destructive open-pit mining operations in the province.

The veto was praised by environmentalists, religious and various sectors. They also called on the provincial council to recognize the decision and respect the opposition of thousands of citizens of South Cotabato. Leon Dulce of Kalikasan PNE added that the local government should reject permits allowing open-pit mining in the area.

The diocese of Marbel also joined the protest and pledged to remain vigilant. AB



**Bicol Steel Trading workers hold boycott protest.** Workers of Bicol Steel Tower Trading Corporation gathered in front of their office in Diversion Road, Naga City last May 30-31 to slam the company's unfair labor policies and low wages. The company sells steel bars used for construction.

**#NeverAgain in Cebu and Iloilo.** Last May 21, survivors and family members of martyrs of martial law organized a program inside the Redeptorist Compound in Cebu City to commemorate the atrocities committed during the dictatorship of Marcos Sr. They ended the program with a candle-lighting and prayer for all victims of state-sponsored violence.

In Iloilo City, progressive groups marched against tyranny, disinformation and distortion of history to the Iloilo Provincial Capitol. Before the event, May 20, the National Union of Students of the Philippines-Panay formed the Kabataan Against the Return of Marcos-Duterte Alliance.

**Youth and workers protest in Laguna.** Youth Defy Marcos and Duterte-Southern Tagalog launched Protesta de Mayo from May 20 until 27 in Carabao Park, University of the Philippines-Los Baños. They aim to oppose the proclamation of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. as the 17th president of the country.

Meanwhile, last June 4, workers, riders, drivers and sorters of J&T Express held a protest and defended their picket against police dispersal. They held their strike to condemn low wages, illegal retrenchment and union busting, lack of benefits and occupational safety. They also opposed the illegal termination of the president of the United Rank and File Employees of the J&T Express in Cabuyao.

# The Villars wallow in a sea of profits

**A**round 60,000 households and businesses in Angeles City since May 14 poured their anger over the poor service of PrimeWater Infrastructure Corporation. For more than a week, residents of 22 of the city's 33 barangays suffered from lack of water in their areas. If ever the taps flow, water either comes in trickles or is dirty. PrimeWater is owned by billionaire Manny Villar.

The rotten service is a return to the almost daily suffering of consumers in November 2020. Even then, they pointed out the worsening conditions of water services since PrimeWater and Angeles City Water District took over under a joint venture agreement (JVA) which privatized public services.

The grievances in Angeles City are similar to those of consumers and employees in many other water districts which are under PrimeWater's control. In Caraga, water district managers said that the

contracts are grossly disadvantageous and burdensome to the public because operations, maintenance, billing and collection for water services are handed over to PrimeWater.

The PrimeWater contracts are among those which gave Manny Villar millions upon millions of profit, in addition to real estate and housing businesses. Under Rodrigo Duterte's rule, he yearly accumulated large amounts of profits and now is the country's richest billionaire.

## Scooping millions of pesos from government

Water districts are losing revenues annually in the towns and cities of Mabalacat, San Fernando, Floridablanca, Guagua and Lubao, all in Pampanga. In 2020, they incurred an average ₱24.42 million in losses. This began when PrimeWater took over the public water distribution agencies from 2016-2018.

On the other hand, PrimeWater has been scooping profits. In the City of San Fernando alone, the company earned an annual average of ₱6.8 million in 2017-2020.

In the neighboring province, the Tarlac City Water District lost ₱33 million since entering into a JVA in 2019. In Bulacan, the Marilao Water District lost ₱50 million in the first year alone.

In 2021, the Commission on Audit reported PrimeWater's violations of contracts with at least 38 water districts across the archipelago. Among these are the failure to disclose the profit sharing details and lack of plans to improve and ensure the supply of water.

PrimeWater likewise did not pay franchise taxes, including the required amount of bond to the water district. Furthermore, the company failed to put in capital for the improvement of utilities, and left the water district to take these on.

Meanwhile, ordinary consumers are squeezed despite the insufficient, rotten and expensive services. It has been commonplace in PrimeWater franchises to raise prices without public consultations. Fees collected from consumers shot up by an average of 300%. Also, water district employees are being fired in numbers to be replaced with personnel without benefits. Thus, the successful struggle of Bacolod City Water District (Baciwa) employees in August 2021 against the illegal termination of 60 unionists, brought a glimmer of hope.

## Campaign against inter-imperialist war launched

**L**ed by the International League of Peoples' Struggles (ILPS) and organizations under the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, the International Anti-war Campaign was launched last May 21 through a protest action in front of the US Embassy in Manila. The program was violently dispersed by police who arrested Lloyd Manango, vice president of League of Filipino Students, and Kathy Yamzon of Defend Jobs-Philippines. Their lawyers secured their release after being detained for five hours.

The campaign aims to expose and criticize US warmongering, its western imperialist allies and corporate media. The ILPS said that the massive disinformation skewed to the interests of global militarism undermines peoples' struggles for the right to self-determination against war, occupation and other forms of imperialist intervention.

The ILPS also condemned the inter-imperialist rivalry between US-NATO and Russia which has led to gross violence and misery to the people of Ukraine. The ILPS further stated, "More wars of this kind will break out as US imperialism resorts to global militarism and war to secure profits and buffer the impacts of the current economic crisis."

In Southeast Asia, the group pointed that US hegemony is anchored on US military dominance in the Philippines, serving as base for the defense of its strategic interests in the region. The US was one of the first foreign governments to recognize Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s election "victory."

The event was simultaneously held in time for Biden's visit to Asia-Pacific countries from May 20 to May 24.

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# Renewed land grabbing in oil palm plantations

**A**warding individual land titles in oil palm plantations in Agusan del Sur has been on the swing these past months. This is in line with the World Bank's Support to Parcelization of Lands for Individual Titling or SPLIT program touted as an implementation of a "genuine land reform." In reality, this is a way to hasten the sale of parcelized lands which were once under collective titles and run by cooperatives. This is also a way for old and new palm oil companies to regain control of large tracks of land.

The SPLIT program covers 51,000 hectares in Agusan del Sur, once owned by NDC-Guthrie Plantations, Inc., a Malaysian company which operated and was favored by the dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr. After land was "distributed" in 1995, the beneficiaries continued to toil for the plantation, which was then placed under cooperatives organized to serve as "partners" of the Filipinas Palm Oil Plantation Inc. (FPPI) and Agusan Plantation Inc. (API)— plantations which took over the palm oil industry from the

NDC-Guthrie. The said companies are the two biggest palm oil companies in the country. They control the trade and processing of oil palm in the entire Caraga region (Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte and Surigao del Sur).

For a long time, beneficiaries of the fake land reform received a measly ₱3,000 dividend every three months. This is why many welcomed the individual titling of their 3-hectare land parcels.

However, the awarding of individual titles is in tandem with the planned expansion of oil palm plantations in the region. In 2020, the Duterte regime approved the petition of Eastern Petroleum Group of Companies, an American company, to operate 50,000 hectares in the next few years, and eventually, 200,000 hectares of oil palm plantations in Caraga. This means the company will control all existing and future oil palm lands. Presently, 25,828 hectares of land are planted with oil palm in the region.

## Fake land reform

The SPLIT program is actually a continuation of the fake land reform program which has further plunged peasants into poverty and subjected them to intense militarization. In 2015 and 2017, the Department of Agriculture awarded 1,300 hectares of "excess land" under the FPPI and API to 334 farmer beneficiaries.

Since the land was part of the plantation, it was already planted with oil palm.

To force the farmers to sell



their land, the company refused to buy their harvests, or if ever, at the lowest price of ₱2 per kilo. Because of this, fruit bunches are left to rot. The company also collected a 20% amortization on the peasant's income. They make it appear that the funds are to be used to improve peasant conditions.

Maneuvers to drive away the peasants from their land went hand in hand with the sabotage of their livelihood. In tandem with the 75th IB and criminal paramilitary groups, illegal arrests, detentions, intimidation and repression run rampant. Peasants are maliciously tagged as New People's Army members and are forced to "surrender". These are topped with extrajudicial killings. The latest victim, Junjun Notarte, 42, was shot and killed by state agents last May 18 in Barangay Manat, Trento, Agusan del Sur. Notarte was awarded land by the DAR and has been actively fighting API's renewed landgrabbing.

As a result of the relentless harassment, palm oil companies steadily reconcentrate distributed lands. The API, for instance, has taken over 709 hectares of the 900 hectares from individual peasant owners. Out of the 204 original beneficiaries, only 78 remain remain owners. Farmers in the FPPI, on the other hand, have been fighting off the company's attempts to drive them away from their farms.

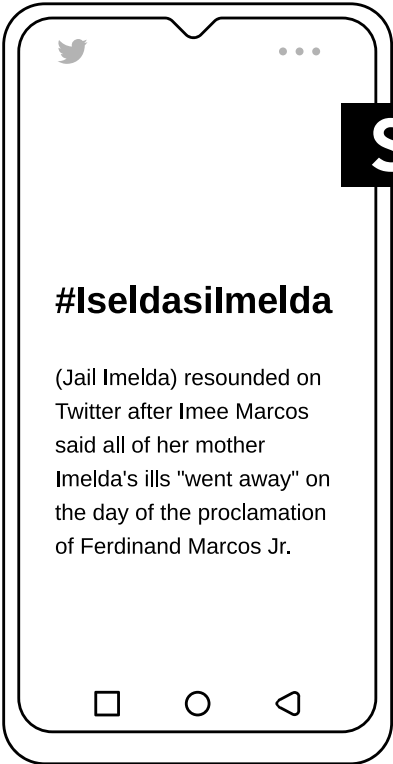
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## Favors are flooding

Manny Villar is one of the most favored oligarchs since funding the presidential run of Rodrigo Duterte in 2016. Aside from assigning Villars to key government positions, PrimeWater JVAs are among the juicy contracts rewarded by Duterte to his sponsor.

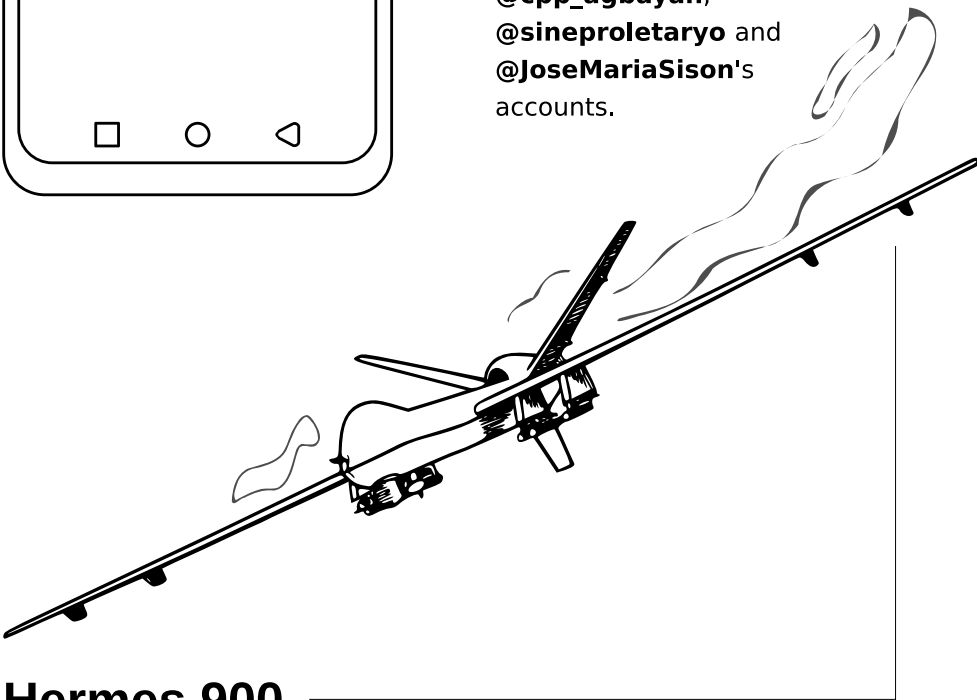
Since 2016, PrimeWater aggressively took over water districts. From just around 70 during the end of 2019, Villar now controls around 124 water districts in towns and cities in the whole country in 2021. This amounts to almost 1/4 of more or less 500 water districts in the Philippines.

Now that the Villar family has bolstered its political power which threatens the remaining water districts, consumers such as those in Angeles City, and the employees as in Baciwa, are drawing their line of defense. **AB**



## SUSPENDED

The CPP's Twitter account **@prwc\_info** was arbitrarily suspended last June 3. This forms part of efforts to silence anti-imperialist voices on social media. Suspended on the same day were **@cpp\_agbayan**, **@sineproletaryo** and **@JoseMariaSison's** accounts.



## Hermes 900

drone crashed in the mountain forest area of **Bukidnon** last May 28. The drone is manufactured by Elbit Systems, a military company in Israel, that makes profits by abusing the human rights of Palestinians, migrants and minority people around the world.

## Real wages dropped by 4%

during the 6-year term of Duterte as a result of non-stop increase in the price of commodities.

## 23%

of the ₱616 billion borrowed by the Duterte regime went to Covid-19 pandemic response programs. **The purpose of up to 51% cannot be determined, while 26% went to programs that have nothing to do with the pandemic.**



## 96

incidents of school shooting in the US this 2022 which resulted in 40 killed and injury to 78 individuals, mostly students. The most recent shooting incident was in Uvalde, Texas where 17 children and 2 teachers were killed.

Source: Everytown for Gun Safety

# 1 million

fall into the crevices of extreme poverty every 33 hours while

# 1 new billionaire

emerged every 30 hours during the height of the pandemic. As a result, inequality further worsened amid rising prices of food and fuel.

Source: Oxfam International, 2022

# \$35 BILLION

profits made by the 5 biggest oil companies in the first quarter of this year, 300% more than during the same period last year. They took advantage of the war in Ukraine to artificially raise prices of crude oil around the world.

Source: Center for American Progress, May 2022



# The bitter situation of tuna handliners

A tuna handliner must possess high levels of skill and patience in order to catch a large and quality tuna. The tuna must be handled extra carefully as its price goes down if its meat is bruised or damaged. If they have no or few catch, they go home with empty pockets.

This is the situation of workers in handline fishing of tuna in General Santos City. Although there are more advanced and quicker methods, traditional handlining is considered the best and careful method for catching select types of yellowfin tuna.

Handliners are concentrated in the city's tuna industry. There are 3,500 vessels involving 71,000 fishermen. Among the biggest handlining operators are individuals and companies which also own purse seiner units.

In 2020, handliner products reached 59,618 metric tons (MT) or 23.4% of the total 254,779.32 MT docked in the city. The bulk of this are high quality fresh, cold or iced fish (42,445 MT) and smoked products (3,420 MT). These are valued at \$136.5 million or ₱7 billion.

## Exploitation, indebtedness and oppression

There are two kinds of handliners. There are the *palaran* who fish

in municipal waters within 15 kilometers from shore. They use small-engined boats and can only stay asea for one night.

Then there are the *pamariles* who use large pumpboats or fishing vessels and can sail to the Philippine southern seas and beyond the country's territories. These tug along smaller boats (*kawa-kawa*) for handlining, and supported by larger vessels (*pakura*). These are manned with eight to 20 seafarers, depending on the size of the boat. These can last 10 days to three months asea.

Bilateral agreements on international fishing do not cover handlining operations. Because of the diminishing volume of fish in the country's seas, *pamariles* fishers are forced to take chances in the seas of Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Palau and Fiji. Other than the dangers of rough seas, they also face threats of pirates and other criminal elements which they might encounter at sea.



They also lack safety equipment and training for using these, often resulting in accidents involving deaths and serious injuries.

Overall, handliners are employed under the *cabo* system, although illegal under the law. There are no formal terms of employment. They are not treated as employees by their bosses, rather, "co-investors" and their wages vary every voyage. This is despite the fact that they have been working for more than 10 years under one particular operator.

They do not receive minimum wages or benefits with operators reasoning that the the volume of their catch, and their earnings are not fixed. A sharing system ("*nil-ima*") is often implemented with workers receiving 20% of the overall income. The entire cost of production is taken from the overall income. The balance (usually around 50%) are "clean profits" that go to the boat operator and owner. Often, it is also the boat owner and operator who buy the tuna catch and sell it at very high prices in the market.

Because their income is not enough, fisherfolk often borrow money from their operators, stores, or local loan sharks. Prices of commodities are jacked up by 20%. Because wages are grossly inadequate, they are forced to get an "advanced" or initial payment, further pulling down their income.

In the case of the *palarans*, businessmen pull down the prices of their tuna catch. They claim that high petroleum prices are the cause of high tuna prices but do not actually increase the buying price from fishermen.

## Boycott of the 9th Summit of the Americas

A NUMBER OF Latin American and Caribbean countries said their leaders will not be attending the upcoming 9th Summit of the Americas this June 6-10 set to be hosted by the Biden government in Los Angeles City.

The Caribbean Community had earlier said in the first week of May that if any American country will be excluded from the summit, its 14 member nations will likely skip the event. Biden had said that he will not invite Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

In a leaders' summit last May 27 of ALBA-TCP (the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America-Peoples' Trade Treaty), Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, Cuba's president, pointed out that it is important for Latin American and Caribbean countries to strengthen a "firm voice, work together and coordinate" to defend and develop sovereignties of their nations.

The Biden government hosted the summit in attempt to tame neighbouring countries which are moving towards its rival country, China. **AB**