

## Cycle of Fascist Violence Under Marcos Jr.

**T**HE MARCOS REGIME confirmed in the first quarter of 2023 that it is deadset on perpetuating the same anti-people political and economic policies and human rights violations committed by its predecessors. From extrajudicial killings to illegal or arbitrary arrests and forced or fake surrenders, there is nothing to differentiate Marcos Jr. from those who have come before him.

He has shamelessly allowed impunity to continue under his watch, and like his predecessors, has literally allowed perpetrators to get away with murder.

**Double-talk justice.** On January 16, 2023, just seven days before a high-level tripartite mission from the International Labor Organization (ILO) was to arrive in the Philippines to look into trade union-related rights violations, and barely three months after Marcos Jr.'s equally brazen-faced Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla vowed before international rights bodies to deliver "real justice in real time," a panel of prosecutors under Secretary Remulla's department dismissed the murder complaint against the 17 policemen involved in the killing of Emmanuel "Ka Manny" Asuncion, the National Executive Vice President of Organized Labor Association in Line Industries and Agriculture (OLALIA), an affiliate of the Kilusang Mayo Uno.

Asuncion was killed in a police raid on March 7, 2021 at the satellite office of the Workers' Assistance Center in Cavite, after a court in Manila issued numerous search warrants containing false allegations that Asuncion and 21 other activists and peasants from the Southern Tagalog region were gunrunners and communists. Nine activists, including Asuncion, were murdered in what would now be referred to in the Philippines as the Bloody Sunday killings.

One travesty was not enough: another panel of prosecutors from the DOJ likewise threw out the murder complaint against 17 policemen accused of killing activist couple Ariel and Ana Mariz Evangelista in their home



MAYDAY MULTIMEDIA

in Nasugbu, Batangas during the same Bloody Sunday incident. The decision, made public only on March 31, 2023 had been issued as far back as December 5, 2022. In October 2022, the Commission on Human Rights in Region IV issued the results of its own investigation, which concluded the opposite: that no firefight had transpired in the house where the Evangelista couple were killed, and that they were likely summarily executed.

In both the Asuncion and Evangelista decisions, the DOJ prosecutors presented the ridiculous situation of a crime having been committed, but with not a single perpetrator found among the several state agents who were present at the scene when the crime was being carried out.

With these dismal precedents, none of the six other victims of the Bloody Sunday massacre, nor any other victim of extrajudicial killing, for that matter, can expect justice under the Marcos Jr. regime.

Still, if Marcos Jr. is a chip off the old Marcos Sr. when it comes to fascist repression, he may yet surpass the puppet presidents before him, as he unleashes policies designed to further tighten the US imperialist stranglehold over the country.

**Selling Philippine sovereignty.** On February 2, 2023, less than three months after Ferdinand Marcos Jr. affirmed the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) which would allow the US to maintain quasi-bases within AFP facilities, the Department of National Defense (DND) announced that four additional locations for these quasi-bases had been designated, on top of the five locations designated in 2016. The four new locations are Balabac Island in Palawan; Camp Melchor Dela Cruz in Gamu, Isabela; Lal-lo Airport in Cagayan; and Camilo Osias Naval Base in Sta. Ana, Cagayan.

Marcos Jr. received \$100 million in additional military aid in exchange for his acquiescence to the EDCA deal.

It is no coincidence that soon after, the DND announced that preparations were underway for the biggest Balikatan military exercise to be held in the country's history, involving some 12,000 US troops and 5,600 Philippine troops. Conducted from April 11 to 28, 2023 in Palawan, Antique and parts of Northern Luzon, Balikatan 2023 was meant to enhance "interoperability" between the US and Philippine armed forces to fight common enemies in a "shared and contested battlespace"—such commonality actually dictated by American strategic interests in the "shared and contested battlespace" of the Asia-Pacific region.

Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s obsequiousness to US dictates is clearly inimical to the Filipino people's interests as it provokes hostility and drags the country closer to

being involved in armed conflicts with China and other challengers to US dominance in the Asia-Pacific.

Meanwhile, on March 6, 2023 with a vote of 301-6, the rubberstamp Congress approved a resolution calling for a constitutional convention that would obliterate the last remaining economic provisions protecting the country's national patrimony. The proposed charter change would do away with limitations to foreign ownership and prohibitions on foreign ownership of land, the media and educational institutions, among others. This, after Filipino producers denounced the government's knee-jerk resort to importation (or the dumping of foreign products in the local markets) to resolve shortages and high prices, instead of nurturing local agriculture and industry. The proposed amendments to the constitution's economic provisions could only further weaken the country's already fragile agriculture and manufacturing base, and deepen the economic hardships being suffered by the people.

Charter change would also likely remove political provisions from the 1987 constitution, such as restrictions on the declaration of martial law, the ban on political dynasties, term limits for elected officials and the ban on foreign bases and nuclear weapons. The Senate's lukewarm response so far to the House's charter change resolution prompted talks of a possible coup d'état in the Senate leadership—an indication that despite Marcos Jr.'s attempts to distance himself from Cha-cha, it actually was at the heart of his agenda to fully and formally restore Marcosian-style rule.

## Human rights violations under Marcos Jr. from January to March 2023

### Legalizing State Terrorism

The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 has likewise been used to arbitrarily designate as "terrorist" certain individuals who have been red-tagged for their involvement in pro-people projects branded by State authorities as "communist-inspired." Such designation subjects a person to possible criminal prosecution, including forfeiture of assets and property, and restrictions on liberty such as the right to travel, among others.

**In Metro Manila.** On January 29, 2023, Dr. Natividad "Doc Naty" Castro, a community health worker and a former human rights worker of Karapatan, was designated as a "terrorist individual" by the Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC). The ATC claimed there was probable cause for Dr. Castro's designation, alleging her "active and continuous role in attaining the CPP-NPA-NDF's mission and objectives" by holding key positions in these organizations, including being the executive director of the Community Based



**Dr. Natividad Castro**

Health Program (CBHP) which the ATC claimed had links to the CPP-NPA-NDFP.

Karapatan has slammed the arbitrary and baseless terrorist designation of Doc Naty, saying that "With impoverished areas in the countryside in dire need of medical services, health professionals like Doc Naty who have chosen not to join the diaspora of doctors and nurses going abroad, should be hailed instead of being persecuted; and pro-poor programs like the CBHP should be supported instead of being red-tagged."

**In Iligan City.** In a related development, Angelie Magdua, a former cashier of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP) was convicted by the Iligan City RTC Branch 1 on



March 16 after a plea bargaining agreement of being guilty of violating Section 7 but not Section 8 of Republic Act 10168 otherwise known as the Terrorism Financing Prevention and Suppression Act. Magdua's plea bargain of being an accessory to the crime of financing terrorism had a penalty two degrees lower than that of a principal offender.

Government prosecutors made much of Magdua's conviction, with no mention at all of the fact that it was the result of a plea bargain, meaning there was no trial to speak of, and therefore, no judicial scrutiny and no cross-examination of State witnesses by defense lawyers. With the DOJ wary that its witnesses' credibility would crumble if they were subjected to the defense's cross-examination, the DOJ kept touting Magdua's plea bargain conviction as the template for other cases dealing with terrorist financing.

### Extrajudicial killings

Military troops perpetrated ten extrajudicial killings in the first two months of this year, with five of the victims from the counter-insurgency-battered island of Negros. Two victims were hors de combat members of the New People's Army (NPA) who were summarily killed by soldiers in violation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

**In Negros Occidental.** According to news reports and reports of Karapatan's chapter in Negros Island, on February 4, 2023, combined elements of the 94<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army (IBPA), the Philippine National Police Regional Mobile Force Battalion in Western Visayas and the PNP 2<sup>nd</sup> Negros Occidental Provincial Mobile Force swooped down on Sitio Mugni, Barangay Oringao, Kabankalan City and arrested **Arjen "Ka Nonong" Mahinay**, a New People's Army (NPA) hors de combat who had suffered a stroke and was on medical leave, and his companion, NPA medic **Junjun "Ka Roben" Callet**. The soldiers also accosted farmer **Jomarie Calumba**, a resident of the barangay. They dragged Jomarie, then hit him on the head. Later, in a news article, the 94<sup>th</sup> IBPA declared that there were three NPA casualties in an alleged armed encounter with members of the NPA, one of them Jomarie Calumba. The latter's family was shocked at the news, with Calumba's son-in-law attesting that Jomarie was never a member of the NPA, did not own any firearms, and in fact, was in his farm with his carabao when he was taken by soldiers.

The month before, at around 8 p.m. of January 8, 2023, elements of the 94<sup>th</sup> IBPA arrived in Sitio Cunalom, Barangay Carabalan, Himamaylan City looking for **Jose Gonzales**, a local resident. The soldiers, who pretended at first to be NPA guerrillas, did not find Gonzales at his home. When they returned at around midnight, they arrested Gonzales. After a while, Gonzalez's daughter heard gunshots. On the morning of January 9, the 94<sup>th</sup> IBPA paraded Gonzales's body as a supposed NPA member killed in an alleged gunbattle.

**In Negros Oriental.** On January 10, elements of the 62<sup>nd</sup> IBPA arrested farmer **Orlando Fat** in Sitio Banderahan, Barangay Trinidad, Guihulngan City. They later falsely

TABLE 1

### Violations of Civil & Political Rights under the Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Government (July 2022 to March 2023)

Violation	Number of victims
Extrajudicial Killing	27
Frustrated Extrajudicial Killing	22
Enforced Disappearance	4
Torture	11
Illegal Arrest without Detention	187
Illegal Arrest and Detention	56
Illegal Search and Seizure	507
Physical Assault and Injury	15
Demolition	12,000
Violation of Domicile	513
Destruction of Property	414
Divestment of Property	94
Forced Evacuation	10,589
Threat/Harassment/Intimidation	747,345
Indiscriminate Firing	4,034
Bombing	1,900
Forced/Fake Surrender	544

declared that he was an NPA member killed in an armed encounter.

**In Surigao del Sur.** At around 8 a.m. of January 24, 2023, farmer **Danny Malinao** and four other farmers were harvesting their vegetable crops in Sitio Emerald, Barangay Diatagon, Lianga town when they were peppered with bullets by elements of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Scout Forces Bn led by Army Captain Agoña. Malinao was killed on the spot while his companions were able to run to safety.

Their barangay was also the site of a massacre on June 15, 2021, when soldiers from the same unit killed Manobo civilians Willy Rodriguez, Lenie Rivas and 12-year-old Angel Rivas.

**In Masbate.** At around 12:00 noon of February 7, 2023, **Diosdado Arcipe**, a resident of Barangay Buenasuerte, Mobo town went out of their house to tend to their carabao. At around 5 p.m., his wife Emmy heard a loud shot from where her husband was and began to look for him, but he was nowhere to be found. Family members later found Diosdado's slippers around a kilometer away from where he had left their carabao. The day after, Diosdado's lifeless body was found lying face down in a grassy area in the adjacent village of Malibas in Palanas town. He had a gunshot wound to the abdomen, and bruises on his neck, indicating he had been strangled.

Arcipe had been a victim of red-tagging. In May 2021, CAFGU elements under the 22<sup>nd</sup> IBPA came to his house

but failed to find Arcipe, who was then working in another town. The paramilitaries accused him of being an NPA member and told Arcipe's wife that he should surrender.

**In Sultan Kudarat.** At around 7:30 p.m. on February 7, 2023, **Nasyon Gantangan**, a farmer, was with three other civilians in Sitio 27, Barangay Sangay, Kalamansig town traversing the road to the next village where they planned to hunt wild snakes and animals. Soldiers from the 37<sup>th</sup> IBPA chanced upon the farmers who had their flashlights tied to their heads, and fired at them. Gantangan was killed, while his companion Epin Dasol, was wounded. Their two other companions, Waldo Lunon and Verano Matilak were unhurt. The survivors said that Gantangan even shouted that they were civilians, but the soldiers kept on firing, practically cutting Gantangan's body in half with the force of their gunshots. The soldiers later planted an M14 rifle and a carbine near his body to justify their false claims that Gantangan was an NPA member who died in an armed encounter with AFP troops.

**In Camarines Norte.** At 1:40 p.m. of February 11, 2023, seventeen-year-old **Arjie Salvador** was shot and killed by operating troops from the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division of the Philippine Army (IDPA) while he was in a forested area in Sitio Sapang Bato, Barangay Canapawan, Labo town to hunt birds. Maj. Gen. Adonis Bajao, 9<sup>th</sup> IDPA chief, later claimed that Salvador had been killed in a minute-long encounter with the NPA. In an even more incredible twist, the soldier who had killed Salvador claimed that he managed to grab Salvador's firearm and used this to shoot the victim.

**In Albay.** At around 8:30 p.m. of February 20, 2023, two unnamed state agents forced their way into **Vernon Bonggat's** house in Barangay Tablon, Oas town and shot him dead. At the time of the killing, the 49<sup>th</sup> IBPA was conducting military operations, with one section stationed just one kilometer away from Bonggat's house. The Philippine Army had intensified its operations in the area after a firefight with the NPA on February 15 in Barangay Ramay of the same town.

**In Samar.** Only in April 2023 were the details surfaced on the August 2022 brutal torture and massacre of NDFP consultants **Benito Tiamzon, Wilma Austria-Tiamzon and their eight companions** (collectively known as the Catbalogan 10). The news was published and sent to mass media broadsheets after a confirmed investigation was conducted by the Communist Party of the Philippines on the massacre. The Tiamzons and their companions, who were all unarmed, were reportedly intercepted aboard two vehicles at around noon of August 21, 2022 in Catbalogan City, Samar. From the published reports of the CPP, there were witnesses who had seen that the victims' faces and bodies were smashed, apparently beaten with hard objects. Others had gunshot wounds. In the early morning of August 22, their lifeless bodies were then reportedly loaded on a motorboat filled with explosives that was tugged from Catbalogan midway towards Taranganan island before it



**Benito and Wilma Tiamzon**

was detonated, in an apparent effort to conceal the torture marks on the victims' bodies. The AFP later claimed that a mid-sea firefight and explosion had occurred that day, with the military able to retrieve only eight bodies from the water. Curiously, it was a Facebook page associated with defense and security alerts that claimed only hours later that Benito and Wilma Tiamzon had died in the explosion.

The Catbalogan 10, a case of abduction, torture and massacre was a barbaric and savage war crime committed by the Philippine military.

## Enforced Disappearances and Abduction

Two persons have been involuntarily disappeared by state agents of the Marcos Jr. regime, from January to March 2023.



**Ariel Badiang**

PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION WEB CENTRAL

**In Bukidnon.** National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) consultant **Ariel Badiang** was abducted reportedly by elements of the AFP's Eastern Command in Manolo Fortich town on February 6, 2023. Both the police and the military denied having him in custody. Efforts by his family and other concerned groups to ascertain his whereabouts have been unsuccessful as of this writing.

**In Negros Occidental.** At around 5 p.m. of March 16, 2023, peasant organizer **Leonardo Sermona Jr.**, a resident of Sitio Palayan, Barangay Cabadiangan, Himamaylan City was able to send a text message to his friends that he had been arrested. It was the last they heard from him. Sermona was last seen in Barangay Bi-Ao, Binalbagan, Negros Occidental. For years, he had been a victim of red-tagging by the 94<sup>th</sup> IBPA. For his safety and that of his family, Sermona decided to live elsewhere beginning this year, as soldiers had been going to his house almost daily to harass him.

**In Cebu City.** Perhaps one of the most notorious cases to emerge in the first quarter of 2023 was the abduction in a public place in broad daylight of Cebu-based activists **Armand Dayoha** and **Dyan Gumanao**. On January 10, Dyan, regional coordinator of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) in Central Visayas and her fiancé Armand, coordinator of the Alliance of Health Workers (AHW) in Cebu were abducted by armed men who introduced themselves as police officers, as their ship docked at Pier 6 in Cebu City. The two had just come from a visit to relatives in Mindanao.



**Armand Dayoha and Dyan Gumanao**

PHILIPPINE COLLEGIAN

Armand and Dyan's families and friends were alarmed when the two failed to reach their residences in Cebu City and could not be contacted several hours after their arrival. During their search, Armand and Dyan's relatives were given the runaround when they sought the help of authorities. Several individuals and groups, including University of the Philippines officials and human rights organizations, then sought the public's support for any information on the couple's whereabouts.

On the afternoon of January 15, a video posted online by a bystander showed the two victims being forced into a vehicle by a group of armed men. A ship liner crew worker, a man in coast guard uniform, and a port security guard just stood by, watching. The video, which went viral, proved that Armand and Dyan were indeed abducted, a fact that the police denied.

After illegally detaining, threatening and interrogating them for five days, Armand and Dyan's abductors dropped

**TABLE 2**

**Victims of Extrajudicial Killing & Enforced Disappearance under the Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Government**

By Region (July 2022 to March 2023)

Region	Extrajudicial Killing	Enforced Disappearance
Central Luzon		2
Southern Tagalog	3	
Bicol	12	
Western Visayas	4	1
Central Visayas	6	
Northern Mindanao		1
Caraga	1	
SoCSKSargen	1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Female</i>	3	2
<i>Rights Defender</i>	1	2

**TABLE 3**

**Victims of Extrajudicial Killing & Enforced Disappearance under the Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Government**

By Sector (July 2022 to March 2023)

Sector	Extrajudicial Killing	Enforced Disappearance
Government Employee	1	
Indigenous People	2	
Peasant	27	2
Teacher	1	
Minor	3	

**TABLE 4**

**Victims of Extrajudicial Killing & Enforced Disappearance under the Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Government**

By Affiliation (July 2022 to March 2023)

Affiliation	Extrajudicial Killing	Enforced Disappearance
Anakpawis		1
GWP		1
KMP	1	
NDFP	1	1

them off at a resort later that afternoon. On January 16, a group that included members of Dyan and Armand's families picked them up at the resort.

Prior to their abduction, Armand and Dyan had been victims of red-tagging, threats and surveillance. Dyan, in



particular, was viciously red-tagged by authorities after she was arrested in June 2020 for joining a rally protesting the passage in Congress of the Anti-Terrorism Act.

### Illegal or Arbitrary Arrests

Karapatan documented up to 22 cases where individuals were arbitrarily taken into custody or “invited” for questioning and held in police headquarters or military camps for extended periods.

**In Negros Occidental.** On February 2, 2023, elements of the 79<sup>th</sup> IBPA chanced upon farmers **Rex Lumayno** and **Eric Opinggo** who were on their way to their farm to tend to their work animals. The troopers brought them to an undisclosed place, held them from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. and threatened to behead them.

**In Ilocos Norte.** On February 3, 2023, **Renier Baging**, a resident of Sitio Sinidangan, Barangay Adams in Adams town and president of the Alyansa dagiti Mannalon iti Ilocos Norte (AMIN), was summoned by Police Capt. Rogeline Ibe of the Adams Municipal Police Station. From 1:00 p.m. to

5:00 p.m., Baging and AMIN were red-tagged by Captain Ibe, who described the peasant organization as a leftist group. He also tried to intimidate Baging by showing him a picture of himself at a Peasant Month commemoration in Vintar town in October 2020. Ibe tried to entice Baging into admitting membership in a leftist group and “clearing himself” because in exchange, he would be receiving “a lot of livelihood assistance, such as goats and pigs.” Baging refused Ibe’s offer. After photographing him, Baging was told to return to the police precinct if he changed his mind.

Later that month, on February 26, AMIN auditor **Glizebeth Dalo** received a call from a former activist who had surrendered to the government, and who told her that NICA personnel had been asking around about her. The surrenderee said that right after an AMIN activity in Cacafean, Marcos town where AMIN distributed fingerlings to the barangay, he was pulled aside by the NICA personnel and told that Dalo was the only one left still active and trusted by “the organization” (without clarifying what organization they were referring to).

### Filing of Trumped-Up Charges, Illegal Arrest and Detention

Up to 17 individuals were arbitrarily arrested on trumped-up charges.

**In Baguio City.** On January 30, 2023, a composite team of police and military elements arrested **Jennifer Awingan** at her home in Barangay Pinsao Proper, Baguio City. Awingan, a researcher with the Cordillera People’s Alliance (CPA) and a former student leader, was served a warrant on trumped-up charges of rebellion. Also named in the warrant were CPA Regional Council member and abduction survivor **Steve Tauli**, CPA Chairperson **Windel Bolinget**, *Northern Dispatch* correspondent **Niño Oconer**, peasant leader **Lourdes Jimenez**, and development workers **Sarah Abellon** and **Florence Kang**. For most of the Northern Luzon-7, as they would be collectively called, this was but the latest in a string of red-tagging and other attacks by the State to vilify them and discredit their pro-people advocacies. They are currently free on bail as they fight to have the trumped-up charges against them dismissed.



**Jennifer Awingan**

**TABLE 5**

#### Political Prisoners (as of March 31, 2023)

Region of Detention	Total No. of Political Prisoners	Women	NDFP Consultants	Arrested Under Marcos Jr.
Cordillera	5	0	0	1
Ilocos	6	1	0	2
Cagayan Valley	21	7	0	2
Central Luzon	12	4	0	2
Southern Tagalog	62	12	1	3
National Capital Region	104	21	9	1
Bikol	46	8	0	10
Western Visayas	90	23	1	10
Central Visayas	85	7	0	2
Eastern Visayas	32	6	1	0
Western Mindanao Region	11	5	0	0
Northern Mindanao Region	105	22	2	0
Southern Mindanao Region	56	8	0	2
Socsksargen	41	7	0	3
Caraga	93	22	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>40</b>
<i>Sick</i>	90			
<i>Elderly</i>	72			
<i>Arrested as Minor</i>	5			

**In General Santos City.** At 8:10 p.m. of January 29, 2023, retired National Democratic Front of the Philippines consultant **Ruben Saluta**, his wife **Presentacion Saluta**, and their companion **Yvonne Losaria** were arrested by elements of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) Regional Field Unit 12 and the General Santos City Police Office in a house at Phase 5, Doña Soledad, Barangay Labangal. Police claimed they recovered from the trio high-powered firearms that included three M16 rifles, an M14 rifle, a carbine, various types of ammunition, a fragmentation grenade, mobile phones, laptop computers, and “subversive documents” – allegations vehemently denied by the three.



**Ruben and Presentacion Saluta**

According to reports, the warrants served on Ruben and Presentacion Saluta were rehashed from a past order. The Saluta couple were arrested with four others in March 2015 where they faced trumped-up charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives. In August 2016, Ruben Saluta was released on bail to join the formal peacetalks between the NDFP and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP). In June 2018, their 2015 case was dismissed. Presentacion Saluta, who still had a pending case for rebellion, was acquitted in 2019 and released. Both Ruben, 75 years old, and Presentacion, 63, suffer from various illnesses.

**In Rizal.** Elements of the 404<sup>th</sup> Regional Mobile Force Battalion IVA of the PNP arrested **Paulino Bernal** on January 5, 2023 at a resthouse in Barangay Pinugay, Baras, Rizal where he worked as a cook and security guard. The arresting team showed him and his co-workers a warrant in the name of “Antonio Pule,” insisting that the name was Bernal’s. As Bernal was being led away by the police, a co-worker shouted that he was a legitimate employee at the resthouse. Bernal faces a trumped-up case of frustrated homicide before a court in Infanta, Quezon.



**Paulino Bernal**

**In Negros Occidental.** On January 7, 2023, combined elements of the 79<sup>th</sup> IBPA, PNP 6<sup>th</sup> Special Battalion, Special Action Force-Calatrava, Regional Mobile Force Battalion

6, 1<sup>st</sup> Negros Occidental Provincial Mobile Force and the Calatrava Municipal Police Station arrested **Felix Tecson Susas Jr.**, his wife **Jalen Carillo Susas** and **Cheryl Catalogo**, a member of Teatro Obrero, at Sitio Pinamaktinan, Barangay Cambayobo, Calatrava town. Felix was served warrants for a string of trumped-up cases ranging from theft to murder. He, his wife Jalen, and their companion Cheryl Catalogo face bogus charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives.



**Felix Tecson Susas Jr. Jalen Carillo Susas Cheryl Catalogo**

On February 3, 2023, **Remark Kisan**, a resident of Barangay Carabalan, Himamaylan City was arrested in Barangay Tan-awan, Kabankalan City by elements of the PNP after he was accused of being a courier for the NPA. He was later served warrants for trumped-up cases of murder and attempted murder. He is currently held at the Binalbagan District Jail.

**In Cebu.** At 3 p.m. of January 20, 2023, policemen in civilian clothes arrested NGO worker **Benjamin Alivio** at his house in Barangay Agbanga, Asturias town for the murder of a CAFGU element in 1988.

In August 1988, Alivio was falsely accused and tortured by elements of the 66<sup>th</sup> IBPA into admitting the killing of CAFGU member Jacinto Rojo. He was released three months later for lack of evidence. After his release, he worked in a farm where he raised pigs, did contour and vermi farming and milked cows. Since 2000, he has worked at the Batang Pinangga, an NGO catering to abandoned, abused and neglected children. The 1988 murder case against Alivio and at least four others was suddenly revived on January 10, 2023.

**In Rizal.** At 12:30 a.m. of March 7, 2023, about 30 armed men who claimed to be from the 80<sup>th</sup> IBPA, PNP-Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) broke into the house of **Arnel Bueza**, a barangay tanod and resident of Sitio Tibagan Extension, Barangay Dolores, Taytay town to arrest him. Bueza, a former community organizer affiliated with Anakpawis Partylist, was handcuffed, forced into a vehicle with no plate number and brought to the CIDG Provincial Field Unit in Padilla, Antipolo City. He faces trumped-up cases of attempted homicide and violation of the Anti-Terrorism Act before a court in Sorsogon, even if he had been living and working in Taytay since his grade school days.



As of March 31, 2023, there were 769 political prisoners nationwide, 40 of them arrested under the Marcos Jr. regime. Up to 90 of the political prisoners are sickly and 72 are elderly.

## Forced evacuations, endangerment of civilians

Civilians bear the brunt of intensified counter-insurgency operations, and are often endangered through indiscriminate bombings and strafing. They are dislocated economically as they are forced to evacuate and leave their crops and farm animals untended for long periods. Karapatan documented a total of 1,430 civilians victimized by forced evacuations and 1,025 victims of indiscriminate firing in the first quarter of 2023.

**In Negros Occidental.** On January 18, 2023, at least **530 residents from 113 households in Malipayon and Tabon-Tabon, Barangay San Jose, Sipalay City** were forced to evacuate to Binulig Elementary School in San Jose where they stayed until January 20. The residents left their homes as soldiers from the 15<sup>th</sup> IBPA conducted military operations in Barangay Camalanda-an, Cauayan town and had clashed with the NPA twice on the day of the evacuation.

On March 1, in Sitio Cabagnaan, Barangay Carabalan, Himamaylan City, elements of the 94<sup>th</sup> IBPA strafed the house of **Albascion Onopre** and **Rhoda Garnica** and damaged it, in violation of International Humanitarian Law. The soldiers vented their frustration at the peasants' hut after an encounter with the NPA in the same sitio. The frightened owners ran to save their lives and were forced to leave Barangay Carabalan. Up to a **hundred families from Sitio Panagbaan, Florete, Cabalungan and Daat** evacuated to the village center, where the military closely watched their every move. According to the residents, the soldiers would taunt them by saying *"Nga kung sin-o ang isog dira, paguwa!"* (Whoever's brave enough, come out!), or *"Ubuson pamatay ang mga pumuluyo!"* (We'll finish off everyone who lives here!).

**In Cagayan province.** On February 2, 2023, attack helicopters deployed by the 501<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade conducted aerial bombings in upland rice and corn farms of Sitio Birao, Barangay Hacienda Intal in Baggao town, triggering the evacuation of at least **150 families from Sitios Reggay, Birao, Krosing, Marus and Patina.** The evacuees, whose movements were restricted by the military, were economically dislocated since the bombings were conducted at the height of farming activities, such as the side-dressing and spraying of their crops.

**In Kalinga.** Since dawn of March 5, 2023, soldiers indiscriminately bombed and shelled areas close to the mountains of Barangay Gawa-an in Balbalan town. The Philippine government, a signatory to several International Humanitarian Law protocols guaranteeing the safety and security of civilians in the conduct of the

counter-insurgency war, had no reaction to the gunfire and bombings that were conducted too close to civilian residences and the residents' production areas.

Aside from possible civilian casualties, the residents were worried that their cows and carabaos could be hit and their crops destroyed. Nine farmers from Sitios Uta and Codcodwe who were supposed to check on their carabaos, and seven others who were supposed to rescue the first group of farmers were reportedly held by the military for almost seven hours at Sitio Pinalaw before being released. According to the soldiers, the bombings were conducted to clear the area of the NPA.



150 pamilya nagbakwit dahil sa indiscriminate aerial bombing at shelling ng 5ID at TOG2-PAF sa Brgy. Hacienda Intal, Baggao, Cagayan.

## ITIGIL ANG PAMBOBOMBA SA CAGAYAN!



ALTERMIDYA

**Stop bombings in Balbalan, Kalinga now!**

Since the dawn of March 5, indigenous communities in Gawa-an reported sightings of fighter jets, and bombings of their surrounding mountains. Reports say that one can hear the explosions as far as Tabuk and Limos.

**Kalipunan ng Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas | 03-15-23**

KATRIBU



## Red-tagging, Threats, Harassment and Intimidation

As documented by Karapatan, by far the most prevalent form of human rights violation, victimizing as many as 389,448 individuals in the first quarter of 2023 alone, was red-tagging, usually accompanied by harassment and intimidation.

Leaders and members of progressive or pro-people organizations were vilified and badgered into disaffiliating from their organizations, while others were discouraged from joining organizations of their choice. These organizations, duly recognized and accredited by the government, were likewise red-tagged and even banned from holding assemblies, a violation of the constitutional right to freedom of association and to peaceably assemble. Government intelligence agencies and the NTF-ELCAC went on overdrive, profiling, surveilling, cajoling and threatening their victims into repudiating their organizations and signing “surrender forms.”

**In Quezon City.** On January 2, 2023, **Bonifacio Ilagan**, progressive playwright, martial law survivor and spokesperson of the Coalition Against the Return of the Marcoses and Martial Law (CARMMA), received a sinister call on his cellphone from a man who claimed to be a “kumander” of a unit supposedly tasked to “wipe out communists.” The man told Ilagan to desist from his activities. “He said he ‘knew enough of me and still had some respect for me’ but he and his unit were just waiting for ‘the final order from the higher-ups,’ and they would surely get me and I should not ask for mercy; it was going to be futile, because I had already been warned,” recounted Ilagan. He filed a report of the incident with the police, recounting that the person who threatened him was probably a State agent, having the same modus operandi of other surveillance operatives of military authorities.

**In Benguet.** Kabataan Partylist, League of Filipino Students (LFS), Anakbayan, College Editors Guild of the Philippines (CEGP), Student Christian Movement of the Philippines (SCMP), National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP), Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan), Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU), Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), Gabriela, Kadamay and Karapatan were red-tagged during an assembly called by the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) attended by around 200 students of Benguet State University in La Trinidad on January 13, 2023. The presenters from NICA mocked activists and called them “terrorists.” They dismissed the danger of red-tagging, claiming that the danger activists felt was “imaginary.”

**In Nueva Vizcaya.** Between January 18 and February 9, 2023, up to 11 policemen and members of the NTF-ELCAC in Region 2 repeatedly went to the house of **Rona Bugtong** in Bayombong. Bugtong was a volunteer teacher of Arapaap, a youth organization providing free tutorials



**Bonifacio Ilagan**

CARMMA

and alternative classes to community children amid the pandemic. Arapaap also advocates changes in the country’s educational framework. The group of policemen and NTF-ELCAC members branded Arapaap as a front organization of the CPP-NPA-NDF. Because of these repeated visits, Bugtong and her father went to the provincial capitol to talk with the authorities. Bugtong was given a document to sign, stating that she would no longer affiliate with an organization connected to the CPP-NPA-NDF and that she would cooperate in preventing others from being recruited. She refused to sign the document and asserted that its contents were all false. Bugtong and her father later went to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to report the harassment.

**In Isabela.** On January 30, 2023, a police officer from the Santiago City PNP went to the house of **Cris Sudaria**, currently the chairperson of Arapaap in Isabela, who resided in Barangay Luna, Santiago City. Sudaria was then in school, so the policeman talked to his mother, and told

her to “tell off your son, because one day, you might just find him dead.” The policeman also told Sudaria’s mother that her son should delete his “anti-government” posts on Facebook, and that Project Arapaap was a CPP-NPA front.

**In Metro Manila.** On February 3, 2023, Sgt. Jean Claude Bajaro of the 59<sup>th</sup> IBPA and Marvie Rafols, a rebel surrenderee, filed a case at the Department of Justice (DOJ) against **Agaton Bautista** and **Ruperta “Peti” Enriquez** for violation of Republic Act No. 9851 or the Philippine Act on Crimes Against International Humanitarian Law, Genocide, and Other Crimes Against Humanity. Bautista is the chairperson of Samahang Magbubukid sa Batangas (SAMBAT), while Enriquez is a staff of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP). Rafols claimed that Bautista and Enriquez recruited her to the NPA when she was 17 years old and still a minor, allegations denied by the couple. Bautista and Enriquez, both long-time peasant and human rights advocates, had been repeatedly harassed and red-tagged by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the PNP.

**In Bohol.** On February 5, 2023, elements of the Bohol Provincial Police Office posted **Maria Ira Pamat’s** mugshots on local radio station DYTR, identifying her as “the #4 top most wanted personality of the CTG (Communist Terrorist Group).”

Last December, Pamat, the executive director of the Women’s Development Center (WDC), which assists women in crisis, was informed that trumped-up charges had been filed against her for seven counts of frustrated homicide at a court in Bilar town and that a warrant had been issued for her arrest. Also named in the warrant was WDC staff **Raquel Autida**. Neither of them received subpoenas during the preliminary investigation stage and were denied the right to submit evidence that would prove their innocence. The two women had to post bail – a total of Php 504,000 for their temporary liberty.

On February 1, Pamat posted bail as part of the court requirements, she had to be formally booked, and her mugshots taken. On February 5, however, her mugshots and identification as an alleged “CTG personality” were aired over DYTR following a malicious spot report by the Bohol Provincial Police Office that she had been arrested. With Ira Pamat tagged a “terrorist,” she is now vulnerable to being charged under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA).

**In Bulacan.** Between 2:30 and 3:00 p.m. of February 6, 2023, men claiming to be from “military intelligence” showed **Annaliza Loren** a video of her daughter **Chaela** speaking at a gathering. Annaliza manages a store at Purok 5, Barangay Lugam, Malolos City, while her daughter, a journalism student at Bulacan State University, chairs STAND, a student political party of the school. The men from “military intelligence” told Annaliza to cooperate and help them convince her daughter to “come back to the government fold.”



**Chaela Loren**

THE COMMUNIQUE (BULSU)

On February 11, Karapatan informed the Commission on Human Rights Region III of the incident involving Chaela Loren and on February 15, Mrs. Loren and Chaela filed their sworn statements and complaints at the CHR regional office in San Fernando, Pampanga.

Chaela Loren continues to experience surveillance after February 6, while her mother continues to receive phone calls from military men asking for the whereabouts of her daughter. Mrs. Loren, confused about the accusation of the military men against her daughter, continues to defend Chaela before the military men, firmly believing that her daughter is not doing anything illegal.

**In Batangas.** On February 22, 2023, **Nasanciano Roxas**, president of Pagkakaisa ng mga Manggagawa sa Tubuhan (PAMATU), was approached in Barangay Reparo, Nasugbu by a man claiming to be from the Southern Luzon Command of the AFP who told him that they had received complaints about PAMATU and asked him for a masterlist of members. Roxas replied that PAMATU was duly registered with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and any complaints should be addressed to the accrediting authority.

Nasugbu mayor Antonio Barcelon also issued a letter addressed to all barangays, banning PAMATU from holding meetings even within private premises. Roxas decried the order, saying that PAMATU is accredited by the Batangas provincial government as a civil society organization involved in drafting the province’s community development plan.

PAMATU held dialogues twice with the 59<sup>th</sup> IBPA in October 2022, where the latter kept on linking the organization to the CPP, simply because PAMATU related with the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas.

The month after, on the morning of March 13, seven elements of the 59<sup>th</sup> IBPA led by Sergeant Granpil went to the house of **Rosalinda Cruz**, president of the Maligaya Homeowners Association (MHA) in Barangay San Isidro Sur, Sto. Tomas, Batangas. With Cruz were four other officers of their organization, namely **Danilo Lait**, **Marilyn Maralit**, **Ricky Macabuhay** and **Marilyn Miranda**. Upon reaching Cruz’s house, the soldiers immediately took a picture of her, without her consent, to intimidate her.



The soldiers also asked her for a roster of the residents and their demands, to which Cruz responded that they had already held a dialogue with their city mayor and had given him a Community Development Plan detailing the residents' proposed alternatives to the demolition of their community to give way to the construction of the Malvar-Sto. Tomas Diversion Road. The soldiers tried to convince the MHA officers to accept the proposed relocation site, which the residents' deemed to be too expensive.

Cruz said the soldiers tried to intimidate them and to gather intelligence information. She feared that they might experience human rights violations like other residents of Batangas and the rest of Southern Tagalog. She also feared that the 59<sup>th</sup> IBPA might create an issue against them or accuse them of committing a deed that they were not responsible for.

At least 30 members of the Sitio Maligaya Homeowners' Association signed a letter of complaint to the 59<sup>th</sup> IBPA and to the local government, demanding the pullout of the soldiers from their barangay.

**In Rizal.** From March 2 to March 21, 2023, elements of the PNP in Baras town led by Captain Abcede repeatedly harassed construction worker **Roberto Marquez** and his family at their home in Sitio Sumilang, Barangay San Jose, Antipolo. The policemen were looking for a certain Gennalyn Ajeda or "Elena, a widow" and a "Jomar", who the Marquez family were allegedly harboring.

On one visit, Abcede reportedly gave a piece of paper where his name and cellphone number were written, to Marquez's 14-year-old daughter and told her that her father had better call the number. Abcede made the threat that he knew the school of Marquez's daughter and what time she left for home. On another occasion, Captain Abcede tried to give Marquez a basic phone with a SIM card and PhP 500, and told him to use it for their communication, but Marquez refused. Marquez's daughter took the cellphone out of fear. Abcede told Marquez that they knew his every move and that he had better cooperate and tell them what he knew. Marquez reported that riders in two motorcycles surveilled him at the dam construction site where he worked. There were also motorcycle riders that stalked his wife's workplace. At their home, a green Adventurer van and a white Fortuner van were often parked nearby. On one occasion, the driver of the green Adventurer drove near Marquez's motorcycle and broke its side mirror.

Marquez has filed blotter reports with the barangay regarding these incidents. To date, the family still experiences harassment.

**In Isabela.** Fifteen others survived attempts on their lives, including **eight farmers from Mount Tappaw, Purok 1, Barangay Anonang, Cordon, Isabela** who were fired upon by elements of the private army of Golden Summit Mining Corp. (GSMC) on January 11, 2023. It was the third time since July 2022 that the GSMC guards tried to kill the

group of farmers who till a 100-hectare area being claimed by GSMC as a grazing area but which, residents fear, would be mined for gold. The GSMC is notorious for its illegal gold mining operations in Mount Tappaw and failure to pay wages to hundreds of miners in its employ.

In December 2022, the mining company's armed guards destroyed a seedling nursery built by the local residents for reforestation and food production. The guards likewise hacked down banana and coconut trees and corn fields while holding the farmers at gunpoint. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), local government unit and PNP have so far proven inutile in protecting the farmers.

**In Cagayan Valley.** On March 3, 2023, elements of NICA Region 1, 17<sup>th</sup> IBPA, 202<sup>nd</sup> Maneuver Company Regional Mobile Force Battalion 2 and Youth for Peace-Cagayan conducted a "Campus Peace Symposium" attended by around 1,400 students of the Cagayan State University in Piat, where progressive youth organizations LFS, Kabataan Partylist, CEGP, SCMP and NUSP were wrongly tagged as affiliates of the CPP-NPA. The NICA prohibited the students from joining these youth organizations, and warned them that these groups have the hidden agenda of recruiting their members to join the NPA and "become terrorists."



PHILIPPINE COLLEGIAN

**In Panay.** On March 4, 2023, elements of the PNP in Estancia and the NTF-ELCAC spoke before Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) cadets at the main campus of the Northern Iloilo State University in Estancia town to red-tag the LFS, CEGP, SCMP, NUJP, Courage, Kadamay, KMU, KMP and Karapatan, which were all branded as "CTG front organizations."

**In Nueva Ecija.** Karapatan-Central Luzon paralegal **Jose Marti Santos**, one of the 83 victims of illegal arrest and trumped-up charges of the Tinang bungkalan incident of June 9, 2022, was harassed from March 6 to March 8 at the Central Luzon State University. On these dates, three acquaintances of Santos tried to convince him on different occasions that he should disclose his activities to a "friend", implying that these activities were illegal. Santos refused.

At first, his acquaintances refused to disclose the “friend’s” name, but later he was identified as a certain Bricks Bautista from the Intelligence Service of the AFP (ISAFP)-Tarlac.

**In Isabela.** On March 11, 2023, elements of NICA and the 205<sup>th</sup> Maneuver Company RMFB2 conducted a forum for the students of the National Service Training Program (NSTP) at the University of La Salette in Santiago City. At the forum, a speaker from NICA who claimed to be a former NPA member warned and prohibited the students from joining the LFS, Kabataan Partylist, CEGP, SCMP, NUSP and Project Arapaap, saying these were affiliated with the CPP-NPA. The students were made to swear an oath not to join these youth organizations.

**In Tarlac.** On March 23, 2023, armed men who identified themselves as from the military visited the residence of **Abegail Bucad** in Barangay Tinang, Concepcion town. Bucad is secretary-general of Malayang Kilusang Samahan ng mga Magsasaka ng Tinang (MAKISAMA-Tinang), an organization of original and legitimate agrarian reform beneficiaries of a 200-hectare piece of land in the said barangay. Their claim to the land was being challenged by a bogus cooperative created by Concepcion town mayor Noel Villanueva and his family.

The men who visited Bucad were from the same group of military troopers that had been occupying Barangay Tinang since November 2022. The military men claimed that they wanted to help MAKISAMA-Tinang without specifying what kind of assistance they were offering. Bucad explained that the land dispute they were facing was under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and not the AFP. The soldiers accused Bucad of receiving NPA members into her home and asked her if she had already become an NPA member herself. Bucad recalled that even if the soldier who said this was smiling, she felt cold terror because being accused of having joined the NPA was not a laughing matter.

At 12:50 a.m. of March 26, NTF-ELCAC personnel visited the house of **Jerica Bondoc** in Zone 3B Maliwalo, Tarlac City. Bondoc is a student at the Central Luzon State University and a member of Kabataang Tarlakenyo para sa Bayan. The state agents proceeded to ask Bondoc questions about her school and her course, when she noticed that their conversation was being recorded on video. She became alarmed when a man with the NTF-ELCAC group showed her an old ID of *The Blaze*, the official college publication of Tarlac State University, with the man saying that he also used to be a writer during the time of a certain “Joyce.” Bondoc was then shown a picture of “Joyce” and Pia Montalban, Karapatan’s regional coordinator. The state agents told Bondoc’s parents that their daughter was arrested in Tinang, Concepcion, Tarlac in June 2022 and was keeping company with the wrong people.

“Joyce” is Joyce Ann Neponcio of Alyansang Magbubukid ng Gitnang Luzon. She, Pia Montalban and Jerica Bondoc were among the 83 victims of illegal arrests and trumped-up



**Farmers of Hacienda Tinang in Capas, Tarlac**

SENTRA

charges (“Tinang 83”) after they joined a group of farmers in their peaceful *bungkalan* (land cultivation) activity on June 9, 2022 in Tinang, Concepcion, Tarlac.

Two days after the incident involving Jerica Bondoc, **Mariel Lacadin**, a student, fellow member of Kabataang Tarlakenyo para sa Bayan, resident of Zone 3B, Maliwalo, Tarlac City, and also one of the “Tinang 83,” was asked by their barangay secretary to go to the barangay hall for a conversation. Lacadin instead asked the barangay secretary to come into their house where they could talk. The barangay secretary answered that he needed to call his “companions.” When he took a long time coming, Lacadin’s mother decided to investigate. The barangay secretary changed his tune, saying Mrs. Lacadin’s daughter had some classmates waiting for her at the barangay hall. Mrs. Lacadin replied that her daughter’s classmates could easily call her up and go directly to their house to see her, leaving the barangay secretary at a loss for words.

**In Bondoc Peninsula.** On January 31 and February 1, 2023, a 16-member humanitarian mission led by Karapatan was subjected to a series of threats and harassments by the 85<sup>th</sup> IBPA in Catanauan and Mulanay towns in Quezon. The humanitarian mission was in the Bondoc Peninsula to assist families of slain NPA members who had asked help from them so they could claim the bodies of their loved ones who had reportedly been killed in a firefight in San Francisco town.

The two vehicles of the mission were impounded in Catanauan town for alleged violations of Land Transportation Office regulations. The drivers of the vehicles were also interrogated and the mission members were asked their names. The stranded mission members were forced to spend the night in Catanauan where military agents tailed them to the place where they stayed. On February 1, the mission tried to resume traveling but were held at a checkpoint near the Polytechnic University of the Philippines campus in Mulanay town. Meanwhile, the drivers who went to Catanauan to retrieve the impounded vehicles were confronted by the LTO chief, who tried to force them to admit that their passengers were NPA members. They were likewise threatened that they would be charged with more violations and be permanently banned from traveling to Quezon.



**In Rizal.** On March 12, 2023, residents of Kasiglahan Village in Rodriguez, Rizal were called by the village officials to gather at the Ynares Multi-Purpose Building for the government’s supposed free housing program. When they were already at the area, a document was passed around stating that they were members of the New People’s Army surrendering to the government. The residents were forced to sign the document with the heading “Katunayan ng Pagkakaisa” or “Proof of Unity,” bearing the words “*dating sumusuporta sa CPP-NPA-NDF*” (former supporters of the CPP-NPA-NDF) and “*hindi kailanman sumuporta, susuporta sa CPP-NPA-NDF*” (have never supported or will

never support the CPP-NPA-NDF). They then attended the mass oath-taking/mass surrender ceremony conducted by the Municipal Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (MTF-ELCAC).

During this first quarter of 2023, Karapatan documented 393 civilians victimized by the forced and fake surrender schemes of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC). Civilians were often deceived into joining assemblies with false promises of financial, livelihood or housing assistance, and where such assemblies later turned out to be “surrender ceremonies.”

## People rising amid the repression

Despite the heavy burden of repression, the people continue to denounce the growing terror of the Marcos Jr. regime, its shameless impunity and the militarist tightening of the imperialist stranglehold over the country. Mass campaigns, mobilizations and other protest activities happen every day, explicating the issues of militarism and imperialist bullying.

**Demand to remove terrorist designation, resume peace talks.** On February 9, 2023, activist groups marched to the Department of Justice (DOJ) to demand the removal of the government’s designation of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) as a terrorist organization and to resume peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).

On the occasion of the late NDFP chief political consultant Jose Maria Sison’s 84<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary, some 40 national and regional organizations said that the government’s terrorist designation of the CPP, NDFP and NPA is “arbitrary and erroneous” and that the government should instead seriously enter peace negotiations to address the roots of the armed conflict. The groups also decried the violations done by the Anti-Terrorism Council on the basic civil and political rights of NDFP peace consultants, political prisoners, and other peace advocates in the absence of negotiations.

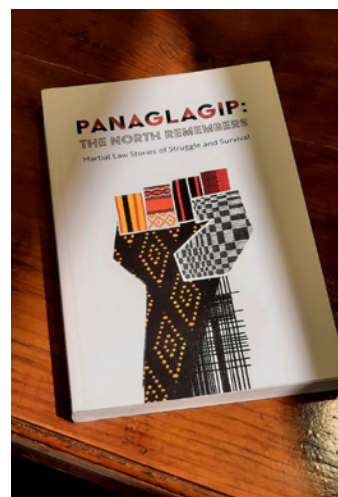
The Marcos Jr. regime is the first post-EDSA regime that has not undertaken peace negotiations with the NDFP.

**Panaglagip.** On February 22, 2023, human rights defenders joined Northern Luzon activists at the Bantayog ng mga Bayani to launch *Panaglagip (The North Remembers)*, an anthology of narratives, articles, poems, artwork, and testimonies of activists and ordinary people who fought against the Marcos Martial Law in Northern Luzon. Eyewitness accounts and testimonies of the direct experiences of the cruelty of Marcos Martial Law were brought to mind as stories of struggle and survival of ordinary people who fought against oppression.



**“Oras de Peligro.”** The movie directed by Joel Lamangan and scripted by Bonifacio Ilagan and Eric Ramos premiered on February 23, 2023. It used the frantic days leading to the ouster of Marcos from Malacañang as backdrop to the tragic story of a poor family whose driver breadwinner was killed by policemen’s bullets. The wife realized that she had to fight to get justice, and her epiphany juxtaposed with scenes showing the mass of people at EDSA finding strength in collective action to storm a palace

once thought to be impregnable, and to topple a dictator once thought to be invincible.





**EDSA Uprising Commemoration.**

On February 25, 2023, thousands gathered at the EDSA Shrine to assail the looming signs of martial rule under Marcos Jr. amid the incessant impunity under his watch that kept fascist thugs openly unbound. The protesters chanted that there was no difference between Marcos Jr. and his tyrannical predecessor Rodrigo Duterte. Karapatan in a statement said, “Despite his attempts to rehabilitate his family’s image, Bongbong Marcos’ inutility as president, his onerous economic policies, his waste and misuse of public funds, his puppetry to US and Chinese interests, and his perpetuation of his father’s fascist policies cause the Filipino people to remember the dark days of dictatorship and urge them to continue waging resistance.”



MIGRANTE PHILIPPINES

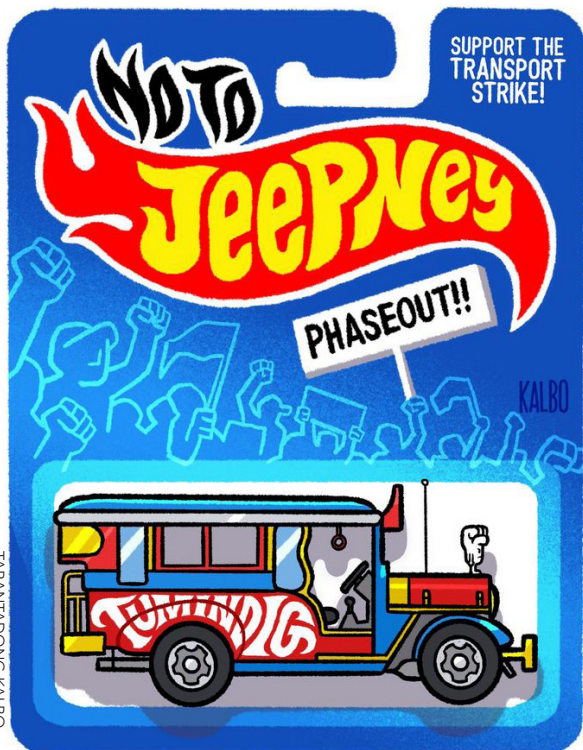
**Nationwide transport strike vs. jeepney phaseout.**

The Manibela transport group, with a 40,000-strong membership nationwide, spearheaded a successful jeepney strike from March 6 to 7, 2023 to protest the government jeepney modernization program, which was a euphemism for jeepney phaseout. Aptly demonstrating the effectiveness of collective action, Manibela was later joined by transport group Piston, and supported by other people’s organizations and consumers’ groups. The mobilization achieved almost a 100% transportation paralysis in Metro Manila. Government media belittled the strike, with

Vice President and education secretary Sara Duterte even vilifying the protest action as “communist-inspired.” By the end of the second day, Malacañang was anxious for a compromise. Manibela had announced a weeklong transport strike from March 6 to 10, but after a midnight dialogue held at the palace, the organizers agreed to lift the strike after the second day when Malacañang agreed to extend the deadline for the jeepney phaseout from June 30 to December 31, 2023, and use the intervening period to review the program.

Under the so-called jeepney modernization program, all jeepneys, whether road-worthy or not, will be impounded after the deadline. In an obvious money-making scheme for unscrupulous middlemen, jeepney drivers and operators are required to form transport cooperatives to purchase “modern jeepneys” or air-conditioned mini-buses imported from China costing up to PhP 1.6 million each, with the government offering a mere PhP 200,000 to subsidize the cost of each jeepney. The phaseout scheme will bury drivers and operators in debt, while lining the pockets of the middlemen-importers. Meanwhile, transport groups that have already implemented the program complain about how easily the “modern jeepneys” are breaking down, and the scarcity of spare parts for their repair.

**International Working Women’s Day.** On March 8, 2023, International Working Women’s Day, protesters bewailed the onerous economic and political policies enforced by the Marcos Jr. regime that doubly exploit and oppress women. To dramatize this, Women Workers United, a coalition of different women workers’ groups, held a dialogue at the Department of Labor and Employment to demand higher wages and decent jobs for women as the kick-off for the bigger rally at the Liwasang Bonifacio. The protesters later marched to Mendiola to bring their grievances as close as possible to the gates of Malacañang.





**Release women political prisoners.** On March 16, 2023, women's rights advocates from Tanggol Bayi, Defend Peasant Women, GABRIELA, Amihan National Federation of Peasant Women, and Citizens Rights Watch Network held a prayer offering at the National Cathedral of Iglesia Filipina Independiente along Taft Avenue. They later proceeded to the Department of Justice to call for the immediate release of women political prisoners, especially the sick and elderly. They submitted a letter of appeal to DOJ Secretary Jesus Remulla signed by families of women political prisoners and women's rights advocates.



TANGGOL BAYI

**“Mariposa, Hindi Posas.”** On February 5, 2023, an exhibit of visual art and literary works by women political prisoners led by Adora Faye de Vera was held at the KRI8 Gallery and Art Space in Jaro, Iloilo City. The exhibit narrated the lives of political prisoners Lenilyn Jaynos, Victoria Tumabiao, Maricel Restituta, Nena Fernando and Adora Faye de Vera. “Mariposa Hindi Posas (Butterflies and not Handcuffs)” conveyed the message that human beings, especially those like Adora Faye and other women political prisoners who led vibrant lives of service to the people should be free instead of being imprisoned. The exhibit also featured the works of Madhu, Rei Sollesta, Sheila Molato, Pam Reyes, Faith Rubinos, Micah Maramag and Roselle Perez.



ILOILO ART LIFE

## Support from International Human Rights Bodies

**High-Level Tripartite Mission slams red-tagging, impunity.** The International Labor Organizations's High-Level Tripartite Mission (HLTM) was held from January 23 to 26, 2023 in response to requests from workers' organizations in the Philippines to look into grave violations of trade union-related rights. While the HLTM made the astute observation that despite the repeated claims of the Philippine government that it did not have a policy of red-tagging, this was contradicted by broad statements made by Philippine government agencies that the HLTM delegates met with – these agencies repeatedly linked workers and their unions to the CPP.

The HLTM underscored that “the practice of red-tagging should stop and any suspicion of criminal acts should be brought before appropriate judicial bodies with assurances of due process and respect for the presumption of innocence.” The HLTM called for the full investigation of the outstanding cases of extrajudicial killings against trade union leaders and members, with the aim of identifying, prosecuting and punishing the perpetrators and those who directed or authorized these killings and “bring an end once and for all to the climate of impunity.”

The international community will have its eyes on what tangible actions the Philippine government will be taking on these recommendations, as the latter is expected to give a report before the 2023 International Labor Conference on June 5, 2023.



NAFLU-KMU

**ICC denies government's motion to suspend drug war investigation.** On January 26, 2023, the International Criminal Court's Pre-Trial Chamber authorized the reopening of an investigation into former Pres. Rodrigo Duterte's bloody war on drugs after these were suspended in November 2021 as the Philippine government claimed that it was undertaking its own investigations. A preliminary examination of Duterte's anti-drug war had begun in early 2019, prompting Duterte's withdrawal of the country's membership in the ICC to evade accountability. This did not exempt Duterte and other implementers of the sham drug war from being investigated for the killing of drug suspects from November 2011 to March 2019, while the Philippines was still an ICC member.

On March 28, 2023, the ICC's appeals chamber rejected the Philippine government's motion to suspend investigations while the court would hear its appeal against the resumption of the probe, saying the government failed to provide "any (persuasive) reasons and arguments in support" of its request for a suspension.

Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s arrogant reaction to disengage from any further communication with the ICC indicates that he has no intentions of exacting justice and accountability from the perpetrators. In fact, he has kept the same policies and the same climate of impunity that has led Duterte and his minions to get away with murder. Marcos Jr.'s deplorable attitude impels the need for international rights mechanisms such as the ICC to step in.

**Fourth UPR report on the continuing rights violations in the Philippines.** On March 27, 2023, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) adopted the fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR) report on the Philippines' human rights record. The report highlighted views and recommendations on unresolved human rights violations, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, illegal detention, torture and other forms of human rights violations, including attacks on journalists and human rights defenders.

All throughout the UPR process, the government put up a façade and claimed to uphold human rights in the country. It brazenly tried to cover up its accountability not just for violating the civil and political rights (CPR) of tens of thousands of victims, but also for failing to promote the economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) of tens of millions of Filipinos.



The Marcos Jr. administration accepted 215 recommendations but adamantly refused to support many critical recommendations regarding the corrections needed on the human rights situation. The government spurned dozens of important recommendations to end extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, illegal detention, torture, red-tagging, and attacks on media freedom; to protect journalists and human rights defenders; to review the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), Anti-Terrorism Law and other abusive mechanisms and revise these; and to conduct thorough and impartial investigations towards accountability and ending impunity.

The Philippine government's response nakedly exposed the country's lack of serious instruments for ensuring justice for victims and preventing additional violations.

## The call of this first quarter close

Amid this increasingly hostile environment, human rights defenders and civil society groups continue working tirelessly to document and expose human rights violations, while thriving with the rest of the Filipino people to create a society where human rights are respected and protected for all.

