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Marcos Jr.'s Intensifying War on the People and the Deepening Grip of US Imperialism

On April 19, 2026, ten guerrillas of the New People's Army (NPA) and nine civilians were massacred by troops of the 79th Infantry Battalion of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (IBPA) in Barangay Salamanca, Toboso, Negros Occidental.

The gruesome incident bore all signs of a war crime. A drone footage of Roger Fabillar, an NPA leader who was purportedly captured alive, which circulated online contradicting the AFP's official line that he was killed in action.

In violation of international humanitarian law (IHL), the military used disproportionate and excessive force, failed to undertake measures to avoid or minimize deaths, did not take steps to distinguish armed combatants from unarmed civilians, imposed a day-long media black-out and issued suspiciously conflicting reports on the places of incidence and the number of recovered firearms. The AFP was obviously intent on taking control of the narrative in order to cover up one of the Marcos Jr. regime's most horrific war crimes to date.

The massacre of the Negros 19 soon dominated the news and galvanized outrage against the intensified military operations in the countryside. On May 21, 2026, the results of a National Fact-Finding and Solidarity Mission (NFFSM) joined by more than a hundred individuals representing various organizations confirmed earlier reports that nine of the 19 massacre victims were civilians. Residents also recounted indiscriminate firing, forced evacuations, drone surveillance, harassment, and restrictions on their livelihoods imposed by state forces before and after the April 19 massacre.

The NFFSM delegates assailed the AFP for dismissing the reports of harassment and intimidation in the affected communities and relying on "certifications" from local officials to claim there were supposedly no complaints from residents. They likewise condemned the AFP's gloating statements of its "victory" and its public release of unfiltered photos of the victims' mangled and decomposing bodies, calling it dehumanizing and deeply insensitive to the victims and their families.

Worse, the AFP sought to contaminate the crime scene by deliberately allowing many of the casualties to remain immersed in pond water, then drawing the bodies out, posing and laying them side by side with firearms.

On top of the desecration and mishandling of the bodies of casualties, authorities also made it difficult for the grieving relatives to identify the remains of their loved ones properly before retrieving them, leading to the botched transport of a body that later turned out to be someone else's.

Bombarded with scathing criticism for brutalizing the dead, the AFP alongside the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) later shifted gear by feigning sympathy with the victims and their families. They sought to gloss over the long smoldering oppression and exploitation in the Negros countryside that have drawn scores of activists to live among the masses to deepen their grasp of their conditions and help organize peasants and farm workers.

The NTF-ELCAC took the lead in gaslighting the CPP-NPA and even activist groups, blaming them for all the atrocities and failures of the system that the AFP has been known to defend and preserve. Marcos Jr.'s minions in the military and the NTF-ELCAC were operating on one absurd and delusional premise, that everything in the Philippines was supposedly fine and the only problem left is the CPP-NPA and its "front organizations." The task force's attempt to portray Negros as a "model of peace and development" came out as a stupendous lie amid worsening socio-economic conditions in the island, which has also been described as a microcosm of the whole country.

In statements that were recycled scripts of red-tagging, fear-mongering and victim-blaming, state forces also harped anew about "terror grooming," even enlisting the help of a group of hacienderos to add to their cacophony. Alarming, the hacienderos called for the violation of academic freedom and freedom of expression and association in the educational sector by "regulating" the academe to stem "terror grooming." This actually meant desensitizing the youth to social ills and curbing their capacity for critical thought and discernment.

Yet, the NTF-ELCAC and its ilk could not conceal the reality that close to a third of Negrenses live in grinding poverty, according to IBON Foundation. Land remains concentrated, and sugar mono-cropping keeps farmworkers seasonal, underpaid and vulnerable. Amid this dire reality, collective farming efforts have consistently been met with violence.

On October 20, 2018, nine sugar farmers of Hacienda Nene, Barangay Bulanon, Sagay City who were resting in their hut after their first day of "bungkalan" or collective land cultivation, were killed by armed men in what is now infamously known as the Sagay Massacre.

Further back, in the 1980s, hunger and poverty stalked the majority of Negrenses, who were reeling from the collapse

of the sugar industry. They rose in protest against the Marcos Sr. dictatorship that had close ties to the despotic landlords and politicians reigning over the island. At least 20 people were killed in what is now known as the Escalante Massacre on September 20, 1985, when a combined force of military, police and paramilitary forces unleashed machine gun fire against thousands of protesters marking the 13th anniversary of the martial law declaration in Escalante town, Negros Occidental.

Almost 41 years later, Escalante's neighboring town of Toboso became the site of the massacre of ten NPA hors de combat and nine civilians.

Sagay, Escalante and Toboso, where all these massacres were perpetrated, are in northern Negros, where the island's biggest haciendas can be found, where poverty and hunger are at their worst, and where people's resistance is often at its most intense. The whole of Negros has long been a powder keg, from the time of Marcos Sr. to that of his son. Under Marcos Jr., half of the peasant victims of extrajudicial killing come from Negros.



Launching of the Justice for Negros 19 Campaign Network

It is against this backdrop that a campaign network was established to support the families of the 19 victims of the Toboso massacre. The Justice for Negros 19 Campaign Network seeks to sustain public attention on the case, support the victims' families, and demand accountability from state security forces responsible for the killings. The network also aims to counter disinformation surrounding the incident and highlight the continuing human rights situation in Negros.

Among the convenors of the network are UP Diliman Student Council Chairperson Joaquin Buenaflor, UP College of Media and Communication Dean Diosa Labiste, Atty. Jojo Lacanilao, Prof. Aurelio Agcaoili, Prof. Sol Iglesias, Prof. Danilo Reyes, Fr. Ritche Salgado, UCCP Bishop Juliet Aguilar,

UCCP Rev. Glofie Baluntong, Defend Negros convenor Matty Miguel, Bonifacio Ilagan, Jewel Maranan, Tarantadong Kalbo, Altermidya and KARAPATAN. (Please go to the section on extrajudicial killings for a more detailed account of the Negros 19 massacre).

The massacre of the Negros 19 indelibly marks Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s identity as a war criminal and his brutal regime as a rank violator of international humanitarian law.

Tightening imperialist stranglehold amid Marcos Jr.'s worsening puppetry

With the massacre of the Negros 19, public awareness has sharpened over the role played by US counter-insurgency doctrine in the escalating militarization of the Philippine countryside.

US imperialism's role in the intensification of militarization-related violence was brought to the fore with the US Embassy issuing a travel advisory discouraging US citizens from traveling to "conflict areas" in the Philippines after two Filipino-American activists ended up among the casualties in Toboso. The advisory also warned Americans against "affiliating with terrorist or insurgent groups," with alarming claims that "some nongovernmental organizations have affiliations with the NPA and other violent groups."

The advisory showed not only US support for local red- and terror-tagging forays. The US is actually the main global proponent of red- and terror-tagging, and it is, in fact, US counter-insurgency doctrine that actually forms the basis for all of the NTF-ELCAC's actions against progressives and other dissenters. It provides the sinister principles behind the Marcos Jr. regime's brutal war against the CPP-NPA and its perceived supporters. The US Embassy alert pointedly disregarded the principle of distinction under IHL, which states that parties to a conflict must at all times distinguish between combatants and civilians. Instead, the US Embassy propped up the AFP line that "anyone in proximity of NPA elements is at grave risk of arrest, injury or even death," deliberately blurring the line between combatants and civilians. This dangerous mindset of conflating armed resistance with militant protest has already cost the lives and liberty of so many activists, dissenters and political opponents of the ruling regime.

The US has actually been providing intelligence support, military assistance, weapons and continuous training on counter-insurgency tactics and counter-terrorism to the AFP through the Balikatan series and other war games and to enhance the level of interoperability between the AFP and the US military, meaning their ability to launch joint or coordinated operations, not only against China but also versus irregular or guerrilla warfare, the type being waged by the New People's Army. Even the location of EDCA sites in the country has reportedly been chosen not just to

better confront China but to enable American soldiers to quickly provide assistance to the AFP in its local counter-insurgency operations.



The latest Balikatan war games were conducted from April 20 to May 8, 2026 and involved more than 17,000 soldiers from the US, Philippines, Japan, Australia, Canada, France, and New Zealand. The "highlight" of the war games was the secret launching on May 6, 2026 of a Tomahawk missile from the Tacloban City Airport towards a target in Laur, Nueva Ecija, an area 530 kilometers away. The missile launch from a civilian facility in Leyte towards a civilian community in Nueva Ecija underscored the fact that the US military no longer just operates from the EDCA sites. It now has the whole Philippines at its disposal in the US' continuing provocations against China.



Tomahawk missile launched from the Tacloban City airport

Launched from the Philippines, Tomahawk missiles, which have a range of 1,000 to 1,200 kilometers, can reach targets in the South China Sea, southern China and even parts of Russia. By allowing such, the Marcos Jr. regime is projecting the Philippines as a launching pad of missile strikes against China (and potentially, Russia) and gambling with the lives, safety and security of the Filipino people.

The Tomahawk, a long-range missile deployed in sea-based land attacks, was last used

by the US in Operation Epic Fury, its war of aggression against Iran, and was responsible for the deaths of 155 civilians, including 73 children, during a missile strike on a school in Minab, southern Iran on February 28, 2026.

In a related development, **residents of Sitio Mainit, Barangay Balogo, Pasacao, Camarines Sur** were forced to evacuate on June 18, 2026 when live fire exercises were conducted by the AFP and the Australian Armed Forces under the KASANGGA Exercises. The exercises, which involved the use of heavy weapons and live ammunition, not only endangered the lives of residents, but disrupted their livelihoods and normalized the militarization of civilian communities, according to Defend Bicol Stop the Attacks Network. The anti-militarization network also condemned the use of civilian communities as launching pads to advance the hegemonistic interests of the US.

Further confirming the US' role as the arch enemy of progressive people's movements worldwide, Donald Trump's state secretary Marco Rubio has declared a global offensive against what the US calls "Radical Left terrorism," unleashing a campaign that will legitimize all the more the weaponization of counter-terrorism laws and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law against anti-imperialist and anti-fascist activists, human rights defenders, civil society organizations and people's movements, including in the Philippines. In March 2026, the Trump administration announced its preparation for an international summit which will convene government representatives from more than 60 countries, calling it a Ministerial on the Resurgence of Political Terrorism.

But it is not only in counter-insurgency that US imperialism wields its evil hand. It has been the source of neoliberal policy impositions that have worsened poverty in the Philippines, and systematically degraded the working people's hard-won gains in terms of wages, working conditions and the right to organize and wage collective action.

Being the chief US imperialist puppet that he is, Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has persistently refused to do away with policies such as the Value Added Tax that have inflated the prices of goods and services, eroding the purchasing power of the poor and middle classes. He has also refused to accede to demands for a nationally legislated living wage to enable the working people to better cope with inflationary spirals. He also refuses to impose a billionaire's tax even if despite the dire economic crisis, the incomes of the country's wealthiest families have continued to rise, further widening the gap between the richest and the poorest sections of society.

According to IBON Foundation, 62% of Filipinos belong to families earning below ₱22,000 month. Said IBON, the

Marcos Jr. regime's current path of underdevelopment has been generating wealth for the few at the cost of high prices, joblessness and worsening poverty for the majority.

The Philippines is a basket case even among its Southeast Asian neighbors. IBON said the Philippines had the slowest growth of 2.76%, behind Thailand at 2.84%, Malaysia at 5.4%, Indonesia at 5.6%, Singapore at 6% and Vietnam at 7.8%.

The country also had the highest unemployment rate among the economies cited at 4.8%, compared with Indonesia's 4.7%, Malaysia's 3%, Vietnam's 2.2%, Singapore's 2% and Thailand's 1%. Philippine inflation hit 6.4% in June, the third-highest in the region after Laos at 7.4% and Cambodia at 7.2%.

Instead of abandoning the US imperialist-imposed "growth model" that has condemned the country to backwardness and impoverished the vast majority of Filipinos for decades, Marcos Jr. continues his penchant for tangential measures like oil and transport subsidies and other dole-outs made available to only a small portion of the population. At most, these ayuda provide momentary relief to some, and have not provided long-term solutions to the people's hardships.



But perhaps among the most alarming developments in the Philippine economic scene in recent months is Marcos Jr.'s decision to join the Trump regime's Pax Silica initiative, a grand scheme to build a global supply chain for technologies crucial to the era of artificial intelligence, including semiconductors, advanced computing and rare earth elements, and break China's lead in this area.

In April 2026, Marcos Jr. pledged 1,620 hectares in New Clark City, Tarlac to serve as a Pax Silica Hub, conjuring visions of job creation and technology transfer and describing the venture as the wave of the future for the Philippine economy. This land is to form part of the 4,000-hectare Luzon Economic Corridor (LEC) stretching from Subic Bay all the way to Clark, Metro Manila and Batangas.

But apart from the labor needed to construct the facilities within the hub, there will not be much job creation expected

as the US intends to hand over most of the operations to American experts and technicians. As for technology transfer, this will remain a pipe dream because historically, foreign companies have jealously guarded their control over technology and there is little reason to believe that Pax Silica will be breaking this trend.

Completely omitted in the Marcos Jr. regime's grandiose pronouncements are the impending displacement of thousands of local farmers and Aeta tribespeople from the land targeted for Pax Silica, the exacerbation of the country's already serious water and power crisis in order to give way to the hub's enormous needs for water and electricity, the intensification of mineral extraction and the overall ecological disruption that all of this will entail.

There is likewise serious concern over the fact that Pax Silica in the Philippines will actually manufacture parts for US armaments, ushering the country into the US' global weapons supply chain and marking it as a potential military target for the US' enemies.

With Marcos Jr. already ceding parts of its military bases as EDCA sites and making Filipino soldiers available as cannon fodder in a potential shooting war with China, his conversion of a sizable chunk of the country's territory into a weapons manufacturing hub for the US is inexorably turning the Philippines into a major cog in US imperialism's military machine.

The vastness of the territory involved in Pax Silica, however, and the extent of destruction expected to impact the people, the environment and the country's natural resources also point to the scale of people's resistance that could potentially ensue.

Already, local residents of Tarlac, where most of the Pax Silica hub will be located, are expressing their opposition to this dreaded imperialist-driven initiative. As resistance to Pax Silica intensifies, Marcos Jr.'s fevered promotion of this project will translate to rabid suppression of people's protests and wide-scale violations of human rights.

Marcos Jr.: A bane to the struggle for justice and accountability

It is Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s puppetry that is behind his lackadaisical handling of the impeachment and trial of Vice Pres. Sara Duterte, marking him as one of the stumbling blocks to the people's demand for accountability.

Amid the rising clamor for Sara Duterte's impeachment in 2025, Marcos Jr. infamously dissuaded congressmen from pushing through with it in deference to US concerns that the impeachment process endangered the stability of the ruling system and the US' vested economic and political interests in the country. Marcos Jr. was also loathe to go full throttle with impeaching Sara Duterte and putting her on trial for corruption because ongoing investigations have



been unearthing evidence that are pointing to Marcos Jr. as the entity mainly responsible for the corruption scandal. It is Malacañang's authorship of the national budget which contains "allocables" and allows for budgetary insertions, Confidential and Intelligence Funds and other pork barrel items in disguise that has enabled the corrupt to rake in kickbacks and makes Marcos Jr. the mafia king of bureaucratic corruption, with the biggest take of all.

On top of all this lucre, Marcos Jr. has also succeeded in recouping all of his family's ill-gotten wealth sequestered by the government and tied in litigation. On June 2, 2026, the Sandiganbayan threw out a forfeiture case against the Marcoses involving P50 billion in ill-gotten wealth. The dismissed case, which dates back to 1991, is the last pending ill-gotten wealth case against the Marcoses.

Sara Duterte's announcement that she would be gunning for the presidency in 2028, however, gave the Marcos clique a renewed sense of urgency to go through another run at impeaching her and putting her on trial, as an electoral victory for Sara Duterte would spell doom for the Marcos clique. With more evidence of his top role in the apex of corruption, Marcos Jr. has seemingly been willing to sacrifice a few from his inner circle, including his first cousin, former House Speaker Martin Romualdez, in order to deflect public attention from his own culpability.

A disturbing development has emerged, however, as Marcos Jr. reinstated in government two of his former cabinet officials previously removed from their posts for being linked to corruption. Marcos Jr. is maintaining a dangerous balancing act of assuaging public anger over corruption versus pulling the reins on accountability as an act of self-preservation. It remains to be seen whether Romualdez, even if arrested and put on trial, will actually be convicted of corruption and serve time or eventually be acquitted and re-welcomed to the fold like Marcos' cabinet officials.

Marcos Jr.'s dictator-father made the same calculation in the 1980s when he gave in to the public's clamor to put his loyal henchman Fabian Ver on trial for the assassination of Benigno Aquino Jr. Ver was later acquitted after an

eight-month trial, with the foot soldiers who did his bidding taking the fall for him and Marcos Sr.

The Marcos Jr. regime's tacit cooperation with the International Criminal Court (ICC) regarding Rodrigo Duterte's trial for crimes against humanity, which is scheduled for November 2026, may likewise be put in jeopardy as the regime may follow the baton of its US imperialist master, which has announced plans to sabotage and abolish the ICC for "interfering" in its wars of aggression worldwide. The US has been notorious for perpetrating war crimes in its quest for global hegemony and has given unflinching support to genocidal regimes like Israel, whose political and economic interests align with the US.

Should the Marcos Jr. regime stop cooperating with the ICC at the behest of the US, this will spell a major disruption in the quest for accountability, especially now that the ICC has already issued an arrest warrant for Sen. Ronald "Bato" dela Rosa, Rodrigo Duterte's former police chief, for his role in drawing up and implementing the former regime's programmed annihilation of tens of thousands of drug suspects. There have also been reports that arrest warrants will also be issued against other Duterte henchmen, who, like dela Rosa, may never be apprehended, jailed or put on trial should local police forces be ordered to stand down.

For Marcos Jr., his own interests synchronize with those of Duterte when the latter bolted the ICC. Marcos Jr. fears that he himself may be put on trial by the ICC as a war criminal, given his already sordid human rights record and the worsening violations of international humanitarian law under his watch.

Even Marcos Jr.'s much vaunted "bloodless" anti-drug campaign is far from bloodless, with more than a thousand drug-related killings reported since Marcos Jr. took over in July 2022, according to the Third World Studies Dahas Project. Seventy-four of the killings occurred from April to June 2026.

As expected, Marcos Jr. has maintained that he has no intentions of rejoining the ICC.

Ever shrinking civic space

The Marcos Jr. regime continues to weaponize the Terrorism Financing Prevention and Suppression Act of 2012 (TFPSA) and the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 (ATA) to persecute dissenters.

The year 2026 marks the sixth year of the ATA and the 14th year of the TFPSA. For years, the twin terror laws have served as legal weapons for unjust arrests, prolonged detention, bank account freezes and other forms of political repression, threatening the people's fundamental rights and freedoms. In tandem with these twin terror laws are anti-people policies patterned against US counter-insurgency doctrines and the use of the so-called global war on terror to further



justify repression, militarization and the suppression of grassroots people's movements.

To date, at least 256 activists, mass leaders and ordinary folk have become victims of the twin terror laws. They are either charged under the ATA and the TFPSA, or arbitrarily designated as terrorists by the Anti-Terrorism Council. Twenty-five of them remain imprisoned, including community journalist Frenchie Mae Cumpio, development workers Marielle Domequil and Emilio Gabales, and church worker Aldeem Yañez.

Meanwhile, 37 individuals, including National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) consultants and leaders of people's organizations, have been arbitrarily designated as terrorists. Among them are Cordillera indigenous people's leaders Windel Bolinget, Sarah Alikes, Jennifer Awingan, and Steve Tauli. Two of those designated, Norman Ortiz and Lee Sudario, are among the victims of enforced disappearance under Marcos Jr. They remain missing since they were reported abducted on September 29, 2023.

In 2025, trumped-up cases of financing terrorism were filed against six Cagayan Valley activists—Jackie Valencia, former KARAPATAN National Council member; Isabelo Adviento, regional coordinator and former fourth nominee of Anakpawis Partylist; Cita Managuelod, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas National Council member; Agnes Mesina, Makabayan-Cagayan Valley regional coordinator;

Walter Villegas, Kabataan Partylist regional coordinator; and Deo Montesclaros, environmental activist and journalist.

The same year, former and current staff of the Negros-based Paghidaet sa Kauswagan Development Group Inc. (PDG), Federico Salvilla and Perla Pavillar, together with Human Rights Advocates in Negros (HRAN) member Felipe Gelle, were likewise charged with terrorism financing.



Leaders of Cordillera People's Alliance after the filing of petition for certiorari challenging their arbitrary terrorist designation.

More recently, a Baguio court denied the petition for certiorari filed by Cordillera People's Alliance leaders Windel Bolinget, Sarah Alikes, Jennifer Awingan, and Stephen Tauli, who challenged their arbitrary terrorist designation and raised constitutional questions against the Anti-Terrorism Act. Proof of the arbitrariness of the terrorism-related charges that have been filed against activists are the several cases dismissed by the courts and prosecutors.

On May 15, 2026, a Cebu court dismissed the terrorism financing case against 27 directors and staff of CERNET (Community Empowerment Resource Network, Inc.). The dismissal of the CERNET 27 case was another victory for organizations serving marginalized communities. Earlier, a similar TFPSA case had been dismissed against the Leyte Center for Development Inc. (LCDe), prompting KARAPATAN to say that "The NTF-ELCAC and its legal task force must be condemned for existing to intimidate development workers, disrupt humanitarian and community-based programs and cripple organizations serving the poor."

In both cases, Alma Gabin, a paid witness, who claimed to be a rebel-turned-military asset, provided perjured testimonies in behalf of the prosecution.

In another win for human rights defenders, the Professional Regulations Commission (PRC) found rabid red-tagger and pro-Duterte talking head Lorraine Badoy-Partosa guilty of unethical and unprofessional conduct in May 2026 and suspended her medical license for six months. The case stemmed from complaints filed in 2022 by healthcare

workers after Badoy-Partosa made public statements linking members of the Alliance of Health Workers (AHW) and community physician Dr. Maria Natividad Castro to communist organizations.

It was the fourth time that she has been castigated by courts and bodies with quasi-judicial functions for red-tagging.

In March 2023, the Ombudsman found Badoy-Partosa, who was then undersecretary of the NTF-ELCAC, and former NTF-ELCAC spokesperson Antonio Parlade Jr. guilty of conduct prejudicial to the service and reprimanded them following a complaint by the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL). The two had red-tagged the NUPL for holding seminars and education drives to educate the public about their rights during the COVID 19 lockdown—activities which the Ombudsman said did not constitute communist propaganda.

In February 2024, Badoy-Partosa was found guilty by the Supreme Court of indirect contempt and ordered to pay a fine of ₱30,000 after she threatened Mandaluyong Regional Trial Court Judge Marlo Magdoza-Malagar and made scathing remarks against her online for dismissing the government's proscription case that sought to declare the CPP-NPA as terrorist organizations.

In December 2024, broadcast journalist Atom Araullo was awarded ₱2.08 million in damages by a Quezon City court after Badoy-Partosa and her fellow red-tagger Jeffrey Celiz red-tagged Araullo and his family. The broadcaster and his mother, Dr. Carol P. Araullo, chair emerita of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN), have been the subjects of a red-tagging spree by Badoy-Partosa and Celiz since 2022 in their show *Laban Kasama ng Bayan* over Sonshine Media Network International (SMNI).



Frenchie Mae Cumpio and Marielle Domequil

Meanwhile, a resolution in April 2026 by the 3rd Division of the Court of Appeals affirmed its earlier ruling in October 2025 stating that there is no factual and legal basis to forfeit the funds seized from Frenchie Mae Cumpio and Marielle Domequil who were facing a civil forfeiture case over cash intended for development projects seized during their arrest. The CA said that the testimonies of

Table 1

Violation of Civil & Political Rights Under the Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Government (July 2022 To June 2026)

Violations	No. of Victims
Extrajudicial killing	147
Frustrated Extrajudicial Killing	87
Enforced Disappearance	16
Torture	53
Illegal Arrest without Detention	321
Illegal Arrest and Detention	571
Illegal Search and Seizure	1,112
Physical Assault and Injury	530
Demolition	23,328
Violation of Domicile	958
Destruction of Properties	1,415
Divestment of Property	173
Forced Evacuation	49,459
Threat/Harassment/Intimidation	11,302,433
Indiscriminate Firing	70,028
Bombing	59,284
Forced/Fake Surrender	580
Use of Civilians in Police and/or Military Operations as Guides and/or Shield	523
Use of Schools, Medical, Religious and Other Public Places for Military Purpose	13,695
Restriction or Violent Dispersal of Mass Actions, Public Assemblies and Gatherings	6,862

alleged witnesses, who are purported rebel surrenderees, are uncorroborated and unsupported by independent and unbiased evidence. The CA's affirmation strengthens the assertion that Cumpio and Domequil were unjustly and wrongfully convicted of violations under the TFPSC. The whole case of the NTF-ELCAC and the AMLC against Cumpio and Domequil was concocted based on lies by paid hacks and mercenaries of the military.

Despite their legal setbacks, the Marcos Jr. regime continues to weaponize terror laws and related policies to threaten, harass and intimidate dissenters, and to brandish these twin evils to create a chilling effect on social discourse and further shrink the civic space.

Lately, the Marcos Jr. regime has also focused on suppressing the public's freedom to express themselves online in the guise of quelling "fake news". House Bill No. 9465 or the Digital Media Anti-False Information Act sponsored by Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s scion Rep. Sandro Marcos ostensibly grants broad powers to the State to penalize "false" or "misleading" information, but actually strengthens the

State's power of censorship, making it an even more serious threat to dissent and critical reporting.

Like the Anti-Terrorism Act that has very broad definitions of acts that constitute terrorism, HB 9456 likewise resorts to vague definitions of what constitutes "disinformation," "malicious intent," and "serious threat to national security," allowing the State to arbitrarily censor online content and penalize perceived violators.

Compounding arbitrary enforcement are the harsh penalties called for by HB 9465, including imprisonment of six to 12 years and the imposition of heavy fines on individuals. This will result in a chilling effect on independent and investigative journalists and political activists publishing materials online, or even on ordinary citizens posting content that is inconsistent with the official State narrative.

In another disturbing development, the House of Representatives approved on third reading on June 3, 2026, House Bill No. 8389 or the Anti-Political Dynasty Bill, a watered down bill that will only further entrench political dynasties instead of putting an end to them.

Drafted as the House of Representatives' version of an enabling law to fulfill the 1987 Constitution's ban on political dynasties, HB 8389 is a largely cosmetic measure that only prohibits family members of incumbent officials up to the second degree of consanguinity from seeking public office. It is silent on the use by political families of substitute or allied candidates, partylist groups or other political fronts to retain control over national, regional and/or local governments. The bill also does not call for the creation of any independent body that can investigate, adjudicate possible violations and impose serious sanctions.

The evils of electoral fraud, corruption, warlordism and patronage politics which have been firmly entrenched at every level of government through the system of political dynasties will be further entrenched with this joke of a bill.

Meanwhile, Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s pursuit of prestigious international posts in an effort to launder his image has backfired. Despite years of fevered campaigning that cost the government at least ₱20.7 million, Marcos Jr. lost his bid to secure a non-permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council during voting in June 2026. This, and his chairship of this year's ASEAN Ministerial Forum, are nothing but window-dressing that fail miserably at rescuing Marcos Jr. from his status as an international pariah due to his filthy human rights record and shameless puppetry to US imperialism.

Violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the second quarter of 2026

The massacre of the Negros 19. Out of the six massacres perpetrated under the Marcos Jr. regime, the case of the Negros 19 stands out for the number of civilian victims

and the brazenness of the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law that attended it. Following is the account of the massacre and the circumstances that surrounded it as culled from the documentation of the fact-finding mission:

Before dawn on April 19, 2026, residents of Sitio Sinugmawan in Barangay Salamanca, Toboso, Negros Occidental were jolted awake by gunfire. According to accounts gathered from residents, military presence in the area had been building for months, intensifying in the days before the operation. Witnesses described armed men in civilian clothing appearing in the community as early as 2025, soldiers interrogating farmers at gunpoint, drones hovering overhead, and dozens of troops positioned around homes the night of April 18. By the early hours of April 19, the day of the massacre, residents say roughly 30 soldiers had encircled the sitio, searching at least 24 houses without consent, holding families at gunpoint, and demanding information about the NPA. Children were questioned, an elderly woman was accused of harboring rebels just because her house was made of concrete, and one family endured days of soldiers camping on their property afterward.

The initial clash, by residents' accounts, broke out in Sitio Sinugmawan at around 3:00 to 4:00 a.m. The site of the next clash was a fishpond in Sitio Plarinding, while the NPA likely waded through waist-deep mud that slowed their escape and likely soaked their weapons. Soldiers, positioned on higher ground with an unobstructed line of sight and reportedly aided by drone surveillance, pursued them. Gunfire erupted around 9:00 a.m. and continued intermittently into the afternoon. By the time the military operation ended, 19 people were dead.

The AFP publicly maintained that all 19 were armed combatants killed in a legitimate 12-hour firefight, crediting the operation with eliminating Northern Negros Front commander Roger Fabillar and dealing a significant blow to the insurgency. The Communist Party of the Philippines acknowledged that only 10 of the dead were NPA fighters, naming them individually, while identifying the remaining nine as unarmed civilians: student leader Alyssa Alano, peasant advocates Maureen Santuyo and Errol Wendel, community journalist RJ Nichole Ledesma, local farmer Roel Sabillo, two Filipino-American activists—Lyle Prijoles and Kai Sorem—and two minors, 15-year old “Melissa” and 17-year old “Ron.”

Families of the two minors and other victims have publicly and consistently rejected any suggestion that their relatives were combatants, and residents interviewed during the fact-finding mission said they were visitors who helped with farming and community organizing.

Forensic examination has added weight to these accounts. A preliminary autopsy conducted by forensic pathologist Dr. Raquel Fortun on five of the victims found multiple

gunshot wounds, including wounds inflicted from behind, raising serious doubts about the military's narrative of a sustained, mutual firefight. One victim sustained a leg wound that was not immediately fatal. Investigators concluded she bled to death without receiving medical treatment—a detail fact-finders have flagged as a potential violation of the duty to treat the wounded rather than kill them. Drone footage that briefly circulated online before being taken down reportedly showed Fabillar still alive in the water, unarmed and seemingly incapacitated, shortly before his death. More than 800 residents from over 160 households fled their homes in fear, some sheltering in evacuation centers for days.

The handling of the bodies themselves became its own scandal: corpses were left in advancing states of decomposition before retrieval, transported without proper identification tags, and in at least one documented case, an entire body was mis-identified and released to the wrong family.

Victims' families, journalists' groups, peasant organizations, and international human rights bodies have since called the operation a clear case of use of indiscriminate force—one that failed to distinguish combatants from civilians - and of lethal force against individuals who, fleeing through mud and surrounded by superior firepower, posed no continuing threat.

The Philippine Commission on Human Rights has opened a formal investigation, autopsy findings remain under review, and other families are now seeking exhumations of their own relatives' remains.

KARAPATAN also documented the following cases of extrajudicial killings and frustrated EJKs in the second quarter of 2026.

In Negros Oriental. NPA fighter Dino “Ka Yulo” Pane, 45, was captured, tortured, and shot dead on April 23, 2026 at 6:00 in the morning in Sitio Nabuluan, Barangay Bucalan, Canlaon City, while he was resting in a community member's home because he was suffering from pneumonia, running a high fever, and was physically weak. Pane had no capacity to resist the fascist 62nd IBPA at that time. The military also planted an M16 rifle, a bandolier and ammunition beside Pane to serve as false evidence and to cover up the staged encounter and their failed military operation.

In Masbate. Raul Tolingin, 57, an NPA hors de combat, died while under military custody on May 13, 2026 due to complications arising from injuries he sustained in what witnesses and rights advocates described as a “fake encounter” in Barangay Miabas, Palanas town.

Tolingin had reportedly long been suffering from serious illnesses, including diabetes and rheumatism, and had difficulty walking. In the early morning of May 10, 2026, soldiers from the 2nd IBPA indiscriminately fired at the house where he was staying, later declaring the incident in the



Raul Tolingin, captured alive and died under military custody.

media as an “encounter.” Tolingin sustained a gunshot wound to the thigh and was taken alive by the military to a hospital.

Upon learning of the incident, Tolingin’s family searched for him, but the military allegedly refused to disclose his whereabouts and condition. It was only on the night of May 12, when his condition had already severely deteriorated, that relatives were able to locate him at the Masbate Provincial Hospital.

In Northern Samar. On the morning of June 13, 2026, soldiers from the 43rd IBPA opened fire on **Olid Yanay**, a young farmer, while he was in Barangay Caputoan, Las Navas town. The soldiers also discharged three M203 grenades. Olid’s family has a history with the military, as his father, uncle, and cousins have previously been targeted due to suspected connections with the NPA. The soldiers later claimed they engaged in a firefight with the NPA and falsely accused Olid’s father, Dandan, of shooting at them, a claim the NPA denied in a statement. Notably, one soldier recognized Olid as a civilian during the encounter, yet the shooting continued. Olid managed to escape and hide. Following the incident, soldiers interrogated Dandan’s siblings. When one of their children shared the harassment on social media, the public WiFi in Barangay Paco was cut off as an act of retaliation.

In Bukidnon. In Sitio Mahayag, Barangay St. Peter, Malaybalay, trigger-happy troopers of the 88th IBPA shot at an indigenous couple at 10 a.m. of June 15, 2026, killing the Lumad woman and wounding her husband. **Nenita Buscada and her husband** had been gathering firewood to sell to earn money for their child’s school needs. The soldiers claimed that they shot at the couple after seeing them armed with an M14 rifle with a scope.

They later said that the alleged firearm was a .22 cal rifle. It turned out that all the couple were carrying was firewood. The local tribe to which the couple belonged is demanding a fair, transparent and independent investigation of the shooting, which the Philippine Army alleges is a case of mistaken identity.



Nenita Buscada

Enforced disappearances

Enforced disappearances continue despite the existence of a law since 2012 that defines it as a crime and provides



harsh penalties for perpetrators. The law has failed to penetrate the thick veil of impunity that has shielded perpetrators of this state-sponsored crime. The persistent scourge of enforced disappearances became evident

Table 2

Victims of Extrajudicial Killing & Enforced Disappearance Under the Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Government (July 2022 TO June 2026)

Region	Extrajudicial Killing	Enforced Disappearance
Cordillera Administrative Region	1	
Central Luzon	1	4
Southern Tagalog	10	5
Bicol	38	2
Western Visayas	4	
Negros	62	3
Central Visayas	2	
Eastern Visayas	17	
Northern Mindanao	4	2
Caraga	3	
SoCSKSargen	5	
Total	147	16
Female	25	4
Rights Defender	16	5

anew with the commemoration of the anniversaries of the forcible disappearances of activist Jonas Burgos on April 28, 2007, and of indigenous people's advocates Dexter Capuyan and Bazoo de Jesus who went missing on the same date 16 years later.

The other victims are Elgene Mungcal and Ma. Elena Pamposa who disappeared in Tarlac on July 3, 2022, just three days into Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s rule; NDFP consultant Ariel Badiang who was last seen in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon on February 6, 2023; habal-habal drivers Renel delos Santos and Denald Mialen and their passenger Lyn Grace Martullinas who were abducted in Negros Occidental on April 19, 2023; Gene Roz Jamil "Bazoo" De Jesus and Bontoc-Ibaloi-Kankanaey Dexter Capuyan, two indigenous peoples' rights defenders, who were last seen on April 28, 2023 in Taytay, Rizal; farmers Norman Ortiz and Lee Sudario who were taken by men in military uniform from a barangay in Nueva Ecija on September 29, 2023; fisherfolk organizer Mariano Jolongbayan who went missing on November 17, 2023 in Batangas; trade unionist William Lariosa, who was abducted by soldiers in Bukidnon on April 10, 2025; long-time activists Felix Salaveria Jr. and James Jazmines who disappeared on August 23 and 28, respectively, in Tabaco, Albay; Bicolano youth Gerald Gestole, who was seized in San Pedro, Laguna on November 17, 2024; and NDFP-Cagayan staff Scarlet Lyne Gayo, who was last seen in Cavite in December 2025 while on medical leave.

Table 3

Victims of Extrajudicial Killing & Enforced Disappearance Under the Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Government (July 2022 TO June 2026)

Sector	Extrajudicial Killing	Enforced Disappearance
Environmentalist	1	
Fisherfolk		1
Government Employee	2	
Indigenous People	7	1
Peasant	108	7
Teacher	1	
Worker	3	1
Youth and Student	8	3
Cultural Worker	1	
Moro	2	
Transport	4	2
Health	1	
Minor	10	
Other		1

Meanwhile, on the 20th year of the abduction and enforced disappearance of University of the Philippines students Sherlyn Cadapan and Karen Empeño, families of the disappeared and human rights lawyers exposed disturbing news that former Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan had reportedly been transferred to the Philippine Military Academy in Baguio City from the New Bilibid Prison (NBP) where he is supposed to be serving a sentence of reclusion perpetua for the kidnapping and illegal detention of Sherlyn and Karen. The NBP immediately denied the transfer. Days later, flustered NBP authorities presented Palparan to the parents of Sherlyn and Karen, their lawyer and a number of human rights workers during an unannounced visit to the NBP on June 25, 2026. The visitors remained incredulous, however, as Palparan seemed over-prepared and arrived wearing the uniform of prisoners at the Maximum Security Compound, despite the NBP admitting that he was being held at the Minimum Security Compound allegedly due to threats to his security.

Torture

Fifty-three (53) cases of torture have been documented under the Marcos Jr. regime, and 233 under the Duterte regime. Among the latest victims is Charlize "Ceeka" Garzon, a cultural activist arrested on March 29, 2026 in Mindoro island, who reported that she was subjected by

Table 4

Victims of Extrajudicial Killing & Enforced Disappearance Under the Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Government (July 2022 TO June 2026)

Affiliation	Extrajudicial Killing	Enforced Disappearance
Anakbayan	1	
League of Filipino Students	1	
Anakpawis	4	2
Gabriela Women's Party		1
Katribu		1
KMP	6	
KMU	2	1
NDFP	5	2
Altermidya	1	
Others	1	



Charlize "Ceeka" Garzon

her military captors to physical and mental torture while being interrogated and under solitary confinement.

Human rights groups in the Philippines marked the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture on June 26, 2026, emphasizing that even political prisoners who had not reported suffering physical torture upon arrest nonetheless undergo tremendous psychological and mental anguish throughout their

prolonged and arbitrary detention. The inhumane prison conditions and restrictions imposed on political prisoners inflict physical and psychological suffering on individuals who have committed no crime other than asserting and defending people's rights.

The global day of solidarity for torture victims coincided with the United Nations review of its Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Rights groups took the occasion to denounce the role of anti-terrorism laws in the Philippines in suppressing dissent, endangering human rights defenders and laying the groundwork for worse rights violations, including torture, degrading treatment, and political imprisonment. These violations are done with impunity, despite the Philippines' accession to the United Nations Convention Against Torture in 1986, its ratification of the Optional Protocol in 2012, and the enactment of the Anti-Torture Act in 2009.

At Congress, KARAPATAN provided inputs during deliberations on June 24, 2026 on a bill calling for the creation of a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) against torture, in compliance with the Philippines' obligations under the United Nations Convention Against Torture and its Optional Protocol. KARAPATAN said the creation of such a mechanism is long overdue, since despite the Philippines' accession to the Convention in 1986, the Optional Protocol in 2012, and the enactment of the Anti-Torture Act in 2009, torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment continue to be reported, while accountability remains elusive.

Succeeding the previously filed House Bills 3047, 6662, and 6666, the draft substitute bill contains strong provisions that uphold the principles of independence, transparency, unrestricted access, and effective monitoring of places where persons are deprived of liberty. The bill grants the NPM essential powers to conduct unannounced visits, access information, interview detainees privately, and make recommendations that authorities are obliged to consider and act upon.

Previously, on April 21, 2026, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) also conducted consultations with various

civil society organizations, including KARAPATAN, to gather inputs for the upcoming review in May 2026 of the Philippines' compliance with the UN Convention Against Torture to which it is a signatory. Despite accession to international anti-torture treaties and protocols, however, Philippine regimes have been loathe to fulfill their duties and responsibilities in this regard. For instance, a report written by the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture after its visit to the Philippines in December 2023 has not been publicized because of the Marcos Jr. regime's refusal to grant permission. The UN subcommittee conducted unannounced visits to detention facilities, confidential interviews with detainees and prisoners and meetings with government officials and civil society representatives. Human rights groups have urged that the report be made public in the interest of transparency, accountability and the continued monitoring of the Philippine government's compliance with the UN Convention Against Torture.

Demolitions, illegal arrests and detention, arson

There have been 892 victims of illegal arrests, and 571 of them also suffered unjust detention under Marcos Jr. Following are the cases documented by KARAPATAN in the second quarter of 2026.

In Negros Occidental. Union organizer **Julie Ann Balora** reported that at around 6:00 p.m. of April 22, 2026, she and fellow unionists **Glenmar Bacusmo**, **Danny Boy Baguio**, and **Judy Caramihan** were traveling south from Victorias City in a rented van. After about 20 minutes on the circumferential road in Barangay Matabang, Talisay City, an unmarked van blocked their path. More vehicles arrived and surrounded them. Then, armed men opened the side door, ordered them to get out, and told them to raise their hands. Once outside, they were forced to kneel with their heads down.

The driver questioned the legality of the search and arrest, but no one responded. Balora saw an operative place two bags, one gray, inside the vehicle. Later, they were told the bags contained firearms and grenades, which Balora denied were hers. After about an hour, they were taken to the Talisay police station, where they were photographed, fingerprinted, and interrogated without counsel.

In the morning of May 4, 2026, in Cauayan town, troops of the 47th IBPA arbitrarily arrested peasant Jose Jefford Escamilla, following an alleged clash between soldiers and the NPA. The soldiers seized Escamilla merely because he was allegedly in the vicinity of a pre-dawn firefight. He was interrogated for hours without the presence of counsel and was released at 8:30 p.m. when the military sheepishly admitted that he had no connection to the NPA.

In Baguio City. On June 18, 2026, at around 8 a.m., a joint team of police and intelligence officers arrested **Romeo Ammogawen** aka Jeffrey Acosta, alleged by the military and



Julie Ann Balora

police to be a high-ranking and high-value target. He was seized at a construction site in Barangay Camp 7, Baguio City. The arresting team included personnel from the Regional Mobile Force Battalion 15, Regional Intelligence Division of PRO CAR, the Directorate for Intelligence, Police Station 8, City Intelligence Unit of the Baguio City Police Office, Provincial Intelligence Unit of the Kalinga Police Provincial Office, National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA-CAR), City Intelligence Team Baguio City, and Regional Intelligence Unit 14. According to Ammogawen's account, he was approached by eight plainclothes officers and two uniformed policemen. No warrant of arrest was presented to him. He also stated that he had over ₱60,000 with him, earnings from construction work and remittances from his partner. The police claimed that they did not find any money during the arrest. Ammogawen was brought to the



Jose Jefford Escamilla

Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) facility in Bulanao, Tabuk City, Kalinga on June 23. He faces trumped-up charges of four counts of murder, 14 counts of attempted murder, two counts frustrated murder, one count of destructive arson and one count of robbery with violence and intimidation of persons.

In Quezon. On June 19, 2026, farmer **Anthony Biñas**, a native of Lopez town, was arrested by a combined team from the PNP-Lopez and the 85th IBPA. He was charged with a trumped-up case of attempted murder. After his arrest, a Quick Response Team (QRT) led by Tanggol-Quezon spent days searching for him. The team traveled back and forth between Lucena City, Lopez, and Gumaca towns because the PNP-Lopez kept giving unclear and conflicting information, at one point claiming Biñas was no longer in their custody. On June 28, the team finally located Biñas at the Quezon District Jail in Pagbilao town but they were unable to speak with him directly due to quarantine protocols inside the jail.

In Aklan. On April 15, 2026, at least 40 families in a community on Calachuchi Road, Barangay Andagao, Kalibo town woke up to find their neighborhood surrounded by metal sheets. A man named Jesus Daroy, who claims to own the land, had the area fenced off—blocking pathways and trapping residents inside, including elderly people, pregnant women, and children. No court order was shown, and no permit from the local government was obtained. Daroy relied only on a barangay certification.

The barangay captain defended the fencing, saying it went through the proper process and that Daroy had given residents time to leave—first until end of 2025, then extended to March 2026. She added that Daroy even offered to sell the land to residents or donate a portion for a road.

However, BAYAN-Aklan condemned the action, saying that surrounding poor families with metal sheets—without notice, consultation, or a court order—is harassment and intimidation, not a proper legal process. The group said this is not just an administrative matter but a human rights issue.

By April 17, some residents had already begun demolishing their own homes. Lawyers from the Integrated Bar of the Philippines visited the community on April 16 to consult with residents and assess the situation.

BAYAN-Aklan is calling on the Kalibo local government to dismantle the fence, reopen the blocked pathways, and protect the rights and dignity of the affected families.



Police and persons arrested under DILG's Safer Cities Program.

In Metro Manila. Authorities admitted to arresting up to 77,315 individuals from urban poor communities for violations of city and municipal ordinances from March 30 to April 5, 2026 and another 75,492 from April 6 to 13, 2026 under the Department of Interior and Local Government's Safer Cities Program. Rights groups feared that the mass arrests under the Safer Cities Program could easily graduate to Oplan Sauron-type operations that are ostensibly anti-criminality operations but are actually counter-insurgency operations targeting activists who are later arrested or killed and falsely portrayed as NPA.

The mass arrests eventually petered out after scathing criticisms from human rights groups that said that the program was anti-poor and the arrests illegal and meant to divert the people's attention from burning social issues like the US attack on Iran that has spurred a grave economic crisis worldwide.

Attacks on the urban poor were not confined to the mass arrests. Violent demolitions were reported in the second quarter of 2026 in Purok 6B, Barangay Bambang, Los Baños, Laguna; Panday Creekside, Palincon-lipas, Taguig City; and against the ambulant vendors at the Iloilo Terminal Market, triggering an even bigger livelihood crisis among them amid the ongoing energy crunch.

In Davao City. On April 29, 2026, the Davao City government sent a demolition team to Bankerohan Public Market, leading to a violent clash with vendors. Labor group KMU-Southern Mindanao condemned the operation, calling it cruel and heartless.



“Redevelopment project” in Bankerohan Public Market, Davao City.

Despite paying fees, the city government never provided the vendors with proper, permanent stalls. Then, without warning, consultation, or offering any alternative, the city sent in demolition teams to remove them and take away their only source of income.

KMU is demanding that the city immediately stop all demolitions of market vendors without prior consultation and relocation, hold the demolition team accountable, and compensate those who were harmed and displaced.

Along NIA Road, Barangay Pinyahan, Quezon City, an urban poor community was cruelly demolished on April 9, 2026 and seven residents arrested for resisting the demolition. At the time of the demolition, the residents had not even recovered from large fires of suspicious origin that had just gutted the sprawling slum on March 6, 2026 and again, on April 30. The March 6 fire razed the houses of up to 4,000 families. The fires and the subsequent demolition are believed to have been set to drive away residents to give way to the construction of government projects in the area.

On the morning of April 15, 2026, police dispersed more than **2,000 urban poor residents** from Quezon City, Caloocan City, and Bulacan who had set up a protest camp outside



A backhoe demolishes the remaining structures in the fire-gutted community in Brgy. Pinyahan, Quezon City.

the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) national office in Batasan Hills, Quezon City starting April 13. They were led by Kadamay and Partido Lakas ng Masa urban poor committee, and they came to demand compensation for the damage caused by three typhoons—Crising, Dante and Emong—that hit the country in July 2025, nearly a year ago.

The protesters said the DSWD has done nothing meaningful for the victims. Instead of taking responsibility, the agency allegedly passed the burden back to the affected communities, asking them to prepare their own masterlists—a task that should have been done by the government. Kadamay accused DSWD of deliberately dragging its feet and repeatedly questioning the very crises that poor communities face every day.

Suspected police intelligence agents arrived and began photographing participants without consent. When Kadamay confronted them, the agents ran away—but pointed their guns at the protesters as they fled. Additional PNP-SWAT forces were also deployed to the area, with at least three police squads present.

This was not the first time these communities had raised their demands. They had already stormed the DSWD in August 2025 and again in January 2026—but were still ignored.

The protest camp continued, with the urban poor demanding not just disaster aid but also accountability from the government for what they call the criminal neglect of the poor during disasters and the ongoing climate crisis.

In Occidental Mindoro. On June 1, 2026, security personnel and a demolition team sent by Pieceland Corporation dismantled and destroyed 14 homes at the Mangyan-Iraya community in Malatabako, Abra de Ilog that were still intact after repeated demolitions in the past.



Instead of defending the rights of the indigenous people to their land, government agencies like the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources have been cooperating with Pieceland Corporation to displace the Mangyan-Iraya community which has suffered repeated abuses in the hands of the company since it began its operations in the area in 2024. These include the destruction of crops, restrictions on livelihood, the removal of their water source, intimidation, harassment, and other forms of coercion that have made life in the community increasingly difficult.

In many of the communities affected by demolitions, residents had been occupying the area for decades, some for as long as 60 years. Big business interests or so-called development projects had swooped in, locking horns with the residents, and the State had chosen to side, not with the people, but with the landgrabbers.

The timing of these attacks also suggested that they were being perpetrated so that Marcos Jr. could present a pretty picture to delegates of the upcoming ASEAN Summit in May onwards, for which the regime is allotting a whopping ₱17 billion. The dictator's scion was doing the Imeldific, trying to hide the seedy side of Philippine reality by forcing the unshirted poor indoors or incinerating or demolishing their communities altogether. Fences were also erected along roads leading from the airport to conceal urban poor shanties.

Political prisoners

There are 560 political prisoners as of the end of June 2026, with 165 of them arrested under the Marcos Jr. regime. One hundred and three (103) are women, while 73 are sick and 77 are elderly.

There have been small but significant victories, including the release of several long-detained political prisoners and progress, albeit painfully slow, in cases built on trumped-up charges. These developments only underscore the injustice of their prolonged detention and the lack of basis for the charges that have kept them behind bars for years.

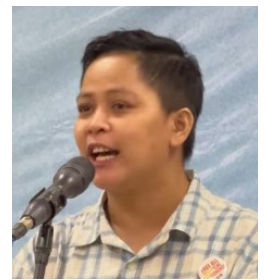
Dumagat political prisoners **Rocky Torres and Abelardo “Dandoy” Avellaneda** were released from prison on May 9, 2026 after trumped-up charges of murder and illegal possession of firearms and explosives against them were dismissed, almost eight years after their arrest.

Rocky and Dandoy were arrested by State forces in Barangay Umiray, General Nakar, Quezon province on May 14, 2018, following an alleged encounters between the NPA and elements of the 80th IBPA in Sitio Dadiangao and Sitio Libutan, Barangay Umiray. The military accused the two of being NPA members and subjected them to torture and coercion to force confessions.



Rocky Torres and Abelardo “Dandoy” Avellaneda

Marilyn Magpatoc, a political prisoner held at the Correctional Institution for Women, was finally released on June 17, 2026 after more than 11 years behind bars at CIW and the Davao Prison and Penal Farm. Magpatoc was a peasant organizer and anti-mining activist arrested in Davao Occidental in 2014. She was unjustly convicted in a trumped-up case of illegal possession of firearms and explosives. The NUPL filed a petition for the writ of habeas corpus, contesting Magpatoc's continued detention despite having served her sentence. Magpatoc was released after the Mandaluyong city court granted the petition.



Marilyn Magpatoc

Couple **Rowena and Oliver Rosales**, public sector unionists before their arrest, are finally free as the Malolos Regional Trial Court in Bulacan dismissed on June 30, 2026 the trumped-up illegal possession of firearms and explosives charges they faced. They were arrested on August 11, 2018 on their way home from



Rowena and Oliver Rosales

their small clothes shop in Balagtas, Bulacan. Rowena was slapped with several trumped-up cases in Agusan courts that were dismissed one by one. By April 2025, she was able to obtain temporary liberty by posting bail for her remaining case of illegal possession of firearms. Oliver, on whose person a grenade was planted, remained detained at Metro Manila District Jail Annex 4 in Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig City until their acquittal.

On June 2, **Juan Alexander “Bob” Reyes** took the witness stand before the Regional Trial Court of Quezon City on the trumped-up charge of illegal possession of explosives filed against him. For eight years, Reyes has languished in jail for a crime he did not commit. On this same day in 2018, operatives of the Philippine National Police-Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (PNP-CIDG) arrested him shortly after he attended a consultation with workers in

Quezon City. Before his arrest, Reyes was a trade union organizer, and maintained that the police planted the explosives allegedly recovered from his small sling bag. Now begins the long wait for the promulgation of his case.

It can be remembered that as early as 2015, Reyes and several public sector unionists and organizers sought legal protection by filing a petition for writs of amparo and habeas data due to the relentless red-tagging, surveillance, and harassment they had been experiencing. Instead of receiving protection from the courts and the State, however, many of the petitioners were later arrested and prosecuted on fabricated charges, including Reyes, Rowena and Oliver Rosales, and Antonieta Setias-Dizon.

Meanwhile, four of the political prisoners known as the Human Rights Day 7, remain in detention, with court hearings ongoing at a snail's pace. The prosecution has just presented evidence in the case of Joel Demate, who is detained at Metro Manila District Jail Annex 4. Romina Astudillo, who remains detained at the Quezon City Jail has just finished testifying before the court. Meanwhile, Mark Ryan Cruz and Jaymie Gregorio Jr., also detained at MMDJ Annex 4, are at the defense stage of their trial. They have been in prison for almost five years, after a series of raids in the activists' homes in Metro Manila on December 10, 2021.



(From L-R) Romina Astudillo, Jaymie Gregorio, Jr., Mark Ryan Cruz and Joel Demate.

The prolonged detention of political prisoners stands in stark contrast to the treatment accorded to politicians facing allegations of corruption, plunder, betrayal of public trust, among others. While political prisoners remain behind bars for years on fabricated charges, politicians such as Bong Revilla, Jinggoy Estrada, and Rodante Marcoleta have enjoyed considerably different treatment and political accommodation amid allegations and controversies involving public funds and the exercise of public power.

For political prisoners, years in detention can mean lost livelihoods, separation from families, deteriorating health, and lives placed on hold while courts slowly hear cases built on questionable evidence. Meanwhile, those with political influence continue to exercise power, participate in public life, and in some cases, even seek or retain public office.

This underscores the need to further strengthen the campaign for the release of all political prisoners.

Table 5 Political Prisoners as of June 2026

Region of Detention	Total number of Political Prisoners	Women	NDFP	Arrested Under Marcos Jr.
Cordillera	17	4	1	13
Ilocos	8	2	0	4
Cagayan Valley	21	3	0	8
Central Luzon	11	6	0	8
Southern Tagalog	62	16	0	38
National Capital Region	67	13	5	3
Bicol	18	2	0	16
Western Visayas	16	3	0	8
Negros Island Region	96	10	1	36
Central Visayas	9	1	0	3
Eastern Visayas	16	2	0	0
Western Mindanao Region	12	4	0	0
Northern Mindanao Region	86	14	1	3
Southern Mindanao Region	22	3	2	4
Socskargen	33	6	0	3
Caraga	66	14	0	18
Total	560	103	10	165

Threats, harassment and intimidation

By far the most prevalent form of threats, harassment and intimidation perpetrated by State forces is red-tagging. Human rights groups welcomed the findings and recommendations of a nationwide public inquiry conducted by the Commission on Human Rights on red-tagging, which affirmed the widespread, harmful and dangerous consequences of red-tagging on people's lives, liberty and security, especially those exercising their right to dissent, to expression, assembly and association.

Published in May 2026, the inquiry report falls short of actually stating that red-tagging is state policy, but boldly calls for an unequivocal assertion by government against red-tagging, putting it at a collision course with the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict, a state agency expressly created to conduct and orchestrate red-tagging at every level of government. The CHR also recommended that the Supreme Court conduct reviews of the protective writs of amparo and habeas data because these have been ineffective in according protection to victims and their families. It also called for serious reviews of the country's anti-terrorism laws for their role in exacerbating human rights violations and shrinking the civic space.

In Masbate. On April 2, 2026, soldiers burned down the house of **Roel Yase** in Barangay Buenasuerte, leaving his family homeless. Aside from this, soldiers in Barangay Buenasuerte and Barangay San Isidro were using the community's drinking water to wash their motorcycles. This angered residents because water is precious in their area –during summer, many of their wells dry up and there is barely enough water to go around. To make things worse, the residents of Barangay Buenasuerte were also being forced to pay for the electricity used by the soldiers stationed in their community—an added financial burden on families who already have little to spare.

In Mountain Province. At around 7:00 a.m. of April 23, 2026, **Raven Desposado**, coordinator of TAKDER (Cordillera Youth Movement for Democracy and Prosperity), was on his way to Bontoc via Baguio City as part of the advance team for the upcoming 42nd Peoples' Cordillera Day in Tadian, Mountain Province. While at the terminal in Poblacion, Bontoc, Desposado was approached by military agents Kenjie Lecciones and PFC Joebert B. Becares, who pressured him to “surrender” and enlist in “Buklod Kapayapaan,” a group linked to the NTF-ELCAC. The two offered to “clear” his name, and urged him to “surrender so he could live peacefully.”

The two agents repeatedly tried to obtain his contact details and took his photo without his consent. Desposado asked them to delete the images, but he discovered that they had already taken earlier photos of him even before approaching him.

Shortly after, a white pickup truck with red plates arrived. On board were three unidentified individuals who spoke with the agents. This prompted Desposado to immediately flee the scene and report back to the office of Cordillera People's Alliance-Mountain Province. In response, TAKDER issued a statement, affirming that Desposado is a community organizer.

In La Union and Ilocos Sur. Leaflets accusing student journalist **Iggy Lammi-ing** and filmmaker **JJ Buenaventura** of being communist sympathizers were distributed in two barangays—one in Ilocos Sur on April 24 and another in La Union on April 30.

Lammi-ing is the regional coordinator for the College Editors' Guild of the Philippines. He covers farmers' issues, human rights abuses, student concerns, and communities fighting against harmful projects. His targeting shows that he is being watched not just for his work with campus journalists, but also for his reporting on dredging in Ilocos Sur and the struggles of fishermen in La Union. Buenaventura, on the other hand, is a co-founder of Pelicula Union. He contributes photos to Northern Dispatch and is part of Tignayan Productions, which belongs to the Altermidya Network. Through his videos and photos, he has documented rural communities, the effects of disasters, and destructive projects in the region—work that has helped bring these stories to light.

Meanwhile, flyers were also spotted in Santa town on April 24, 2026 red-tagging HUSTISYA national board member **Angelica Galimba** as well as **Niño Oconer** and **Clio Rojas**, both officers of the La Union Peace and Justice Advocates (LUPJA); **Joseph Padama** of Isnag-Yapayao-Masamuyao Tribal Council of Ilocos Norte; and **Renz Kang**, executive director of Ilocos Center for Research, Empowerment and Development (ICRED) as well as ICRED former staff **Marissa Pugyao**.



**Angelica Galimba
and Niño Oconer**

The red-tagging flyers were issued by TABAKO (Tagapagtanggol ng Bayan Laban sa Komunismo), an organization formed in 2019 that consists of police and military elements in the region. It is notorious for putting up red-tagging posters and streamers made of nylon sacks in public places. In November 2025, it infamously red-tagged and intimidated persons who wanted to join the massive anti-corruption protests.

Youth leader Galimba had been subjected to intense surveillance and harassment by police elements in 2022 while Oconer and six other activists were slapped with trumped-up rebellion charges in 2023. The charges were later dismissed at the fiscal level for lack of probable cause.

In Pangasinan. On April 30, 2026, at around 4:00 p.m., Dagupan City police officers set up an informal desk directly in front of the booth of the Pangasinan People's Strike for the Environment (PPSE) during the Bangus Festival in Dagupan City and began taking photos and recording the advocates without their consent. By 5:40 p.m., a police officer openly pointed a recording device at PPSE Youth Convenor **Angelo Tejoso**, while he was simply grilling fish and celebrating with fellow advocates. PPSE condemned the surveillance, saying police had no business recording peaceful environmental advocates at a public festival. The group pointed out that this kind of harassment is not new in Pangasinan. Two years ago, environmental defenders Eco Dangla and Jak Tiong were abducted in San Carlos City.

In Tarlac. On the morning of May 1, police in Capas town stopped a vehicle carrying young people on their way to a Labor Day rally. The police kept changing their reason for the stoppage. First they said the road was closed for foreign cyclists. Minutes later, they said the jeep was on the wrong route. Then they said the driver's license was expired. The constantly shifting excuses showed there was no real legal basis for stopping them in the first place—and traffic enforcers themselves later confirmed the road was never actually closed. Despite this, the driver was brought to the police station. The youth group's phones were also photographed without their permission.

Kabataang Tarlakenyo para sa Bayan condemned the incident, saying this was not law enforcement but deliberate harassment. They said the police appeared to be profiling and intimidating the youth simply because they were on their way to a rally.

In Negros. After 19 people were killed in a military operation in Toboso, Negros Occidental on April 19, 2026, including UP student leader Alyssa Alano and community journalist RJ Ledesma, a manipulated photo began circulating on Facebook to discredit them.

On May 2, a Facebook page called "The TRUTH" posted a photo claiming it was taken days before the killing, with flags of communist armed groups and progressive organizations digitally edited into the image. The caption warned people not to be "recruited" by the NPA. The post was later shared by a page with over 414,000 followers.

However, fact-checkers found that the photo was fake. The original, unedited photo had already appeared in a tribute post on April 29—before the altered version existed. The original was posted by farmers from Candoni who thanked

RJ and Alyssa for visiting them to listen to their grievances against a hacienda company. The farmers wrote: "We believe you were not NPA members."

A comparison of the two photos confirmed the people's poses were identical—the flags were simply added digitally. Human Rights Advocates Negros called it a clear case of red-tagging.

The edited photo also deliberately mixed flags of actual armed groups with those of legal progressive organizations like Bayan Muna, Anakpawis, and Kilusang Mayo Uno—maliciously lumping them together to suggest all were linked to the NPA.

The CHR has launched its own investigation into the killings. Colleagues of both Alano and Ledesma maintain that neither was armed nor at the initial clash site when they were killed.

In a related development in Quezon City, the **family of slain University of the Philippines Student Council (USC) Councilor Alyssa Alano** reported that on the evening of April 24, 2026, they were visited by individuals who introduced themselves as members of two organizations, Hands-off Our Children Movement and BUKLOD Federal. The visitors were identified as Anabelle Sabado, Monique Espina, Erica Alonte, and Yakelin/Jaquelin Romeo.

The USC said these organizations are known fronts used by the NTF-ELCAC to spread false stories and red-tag the families of young activists. The Alano family had been repeatedly harassed and red-tagged by these same groups before.

In Bacolod City. On May 5, 2026, at around 7:00 p.m., Sgt. Espinola, a member of the 2nd Civil Military Operations Company of the Philippine Army, went to the house of **Cristita Villarosa** and informed her about they would be holding an activity that month. He was looking for the vice chairperson of the Hacienda Rosario Sur Farmers and Farmworkers Association (HRSFFWA). The army already knew who she was before the visit as they had met on several incidents since September 2025. Allegedly, they wanted to talk about helping the association with their concerns. Villarosa referred them to the farmers' association in the community, which the Philippine Army itself established.

The next day, Sgt. Valdez, with two others who stayed outside the house, returned to her house, but she was not there. In her absence, they asked about her daughter's personal details. When the daughter protested, one of the soldiers took a photo of her. They left but returned that day with a member of the barangay tanod. At that time, Villarosa had already returned home.

On May 8, Sgt. Espinola went to Villarosa's house again and informed her that she had won in a raffle sponsored by the Philippine Army. She was confused as she had not joined any raffle. She raised doubts on why the Philippine Army kept on coming to her house and considered it an annoyance.



Angelo Tejoso

On May 11, she reported the incident to the barangay and the police and said the actions of the military were intimidating. Since September last year, around 20 elements of the 2nd CMO have been maliciously insinuating that the HRSFFWA is an NPA front and its activities were red-tagged, including the association's action of filing a labor case before the Department of Labor and Employment.

In Rizal. On May 19, 2026, a student leader named **Gelim Maribojoc** from the University of Rizal System was visited at home by the university administrator of URS Pililla Campus, who questioned his participation in a Labor Day protest. Maribojoc is a member of STAND URS, a newly formed student political alliance at the university.

The administrator later invited Gelim to her office—with



Gelim Maribojoc

his paralegal present—and questioned him about STAND URS, its participation in protests, and its right to organize. The discussion also touched on the group's positions on academic freedom, jeepney drivers' rights, and campus militarization. The administrator argued that students joining protests while carrying the university's name would damage the school's image. Alarming, the administrator also said they would be consulting with the 2nd Infantry Division, the Department of Interior and Local Government, and the university director about Gelim's alleged "violations"—a clear instance of intimidation that put Gelim's safety at risk simply for joining a peaceful protest.

In Aurora. **Mario Juan**, an elderly Dumagat from Maria Aurora town ordered released from detention at the Aurora Provincial Jail on April 30, 2026 due to the dismissal of the two fabricated murder charges against him, remains in jail because of another pending trumped-up case. Since the dismissal, soldiers from the 91st IBPA have been harassing Mario inside the jail. They visited him repeatedly—accompanied by so-called "rebel returnees"—pressuring him to reveal where weapons were supposedly hidden in Barangay Malakawayan, Dingalan town. They also tried to pressure him into "surrendering" in exchange for military assistance. On May 20, soldiers went in and out of the jail all day, asking Mario who his visitors and supporters were—and they did all of this without signing the visitor logbook, violating basic jail security rules.

Mario has been an active defender of Dumagat rights since 2007 and has resisted destructive projects and land grabs in the Sierra Madre—including the Aurora Pacific Economic Zone that threatens Dumagat ancestral lands.

In Davao Oriental. The Philippine National Police (PNP) Cateel Municipal Police Station in Davao Oriental tagged KARAPATAN-Southern Mindanao Region (SMR) Deputy Secretary General **Grecian Asoy**, and leaders of youth and people's organizations as "Active Wanted Persons" through posts published on its official Facebook page on May 27, 2026. The posts, uploaded at around 8:45 a.m. and 8:47 a.m., contained photographs and captions implying criminal



Grecian Asoy

liability against the identified activists and rights defenders. While the posts have since been taken down, the damage caused by such malicious and irresponsible red-tagging remains grave and alarming. Similar tactics had previously been used against rights defenders in the region. In 2020, "Wanted" posters of activists, including KARAPATAN-SMR Secretary General Jay Apiag, were posted across Davao City. He was later subjected to surveillance before

being arrested in August 2024 on trumped-up charges and detained for at least two years.

In Metro Manila. **Atty. Catherine Dannug-Salucon**, coordinator of the National Union of People's Lawyers (NUPL) in Cagayan Valley, reported that a man who identified himself as Fernando Gopilan claimed to be Salucon's nephew and attempted to gain access to her Quezon City residence in June 2026. He left in a hurry after Salucon's daughter denied



Atty. Catherine Dannug-Salucon

that he is a relative. Surveillance and harassment against Atty. Salucon should have been prohibited after the Supreme Court affirmed the issuance of a writ of amparo for her in January 2018. She had sought protection from the courts in 2015 after being subjected to surveillance and harassment by suspected State agents. The court-issued writ has not been able to protect her, however, as she has reported that a police officer in her hometown in Isabela has boasted of

being assigned to conduct surveillance on her.

In Cagayan de Oro City. On June 2, 2026, two men in civilian clothes showed up at the Cagayan de Oro home of **Wilonah Itum**, saying they were from the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group of the PNP and that they were investigating Kalasan. Itum is a former staff member of Kalasan, a now-dissolved environmental organization based in Bukidnon. The experience left Itum deeply shaken. She said the men continued to contact her even after the visit.

During the visit, the agents asked her how she got into Kalasan—notably using the word "recruited" instead of

“hired,” a term typically associated with joining armed groups. They also asked about the organization’s funding sources, whether it received money from abroad, and asked for the name and whereabouts of their former project coordinator.

Itum told them she had not been connected to Kalasan since it was dissolved in 2024 when its contract ended. She was also unaware that the government had designated Kalasan as a terrorist organization—a shock to her, since Kalasan was originally established as a corporate social responsibility project of a multinational fruit company after deadly typhoons hit Mindanao in 2011 and 2012. It had even partnered with government agencies on environmental protection programs.

Despite being dissolved, Kalasan was designated a terrorist group by the Anti-Terrorism Council in 2025, and the Anti-Money Laundering Council froze its assets in early 2026.

In Northern Samar. In early June, soldiers from the 43rd IBPA entered and searched several homes in Barangay Caputoan, Las Navas town, supposedly looking for a 4-month-old baby. Residents had no idea why soldiers were hunting an infant.

On June 9, the soldiers barged into the homes of **Barangay Kagawad Junie Obiado, Vivencio Obiado, Aning Reponcion, Oking Mañoso, Itong Reponcion, and Naroy Tursido**. The soldiers went upstairs, shining lights even under the beds, all while wearing muddy boots. They also tried to break into Jennifer Reponcion’s empty house but stopped when neighbors intervened. Three soldiers separately confronted Caputoan Sangguniang Kabataan chair **Joy Salajendo** at a house in town where she was staying. They demanded she identify someone who transferred money through her mobile payment account, accusing that person of being an NPA member. Joy said she did not know who they were referring to. The soldiers threatened to take her to their military camp if she did not talk.

The soldiers then went to Ningning and Ninoy, Joy’s elderly parents, and interrogated them too, threatening to have Joy fired from her job and placed under house arrest unless the family confessed to something.

In neighboring Barangay Paco, soldiers were harassing the entire **Yanay family**. On the night of June 9, they showed up at the home of **Dadi and Seding Yanay**, both over 70 years old, for interrogation. A few days later, on June 13, soldiers shot a young relative, Olid Yanay.

Earlier, in Barangay Victory, Las Navas town, the 19th IBPA had arrested **Edmond Baluyot** on April 1, 2026, accusing him of being a member of an NPA guerrilla unit who had a pending frustrated murder case for allegedly stabbing a soldier in 2024. Baluyot had previously confronted soldiers over illegal military restrictions imposed on their community, including lockdown-style operations. This arrest happened in the same community where the military

has been harassing the Yanay family, summoning minors, and imposing illegal restrictions on residents. Taken together, these incidents paint a picture of a community living under military pressure, where speaking out or resisting can lead to arrest, harassment, or worse.

After all of this, the 43rd IBPA called a community meeting in both barangays and ordered every household to build a fence with only one way in and one way out—effectively controlling the movement of all residents. Soldiers also pressured the villagers to support and assist military operations, saying more NPA members were still around.

In Cebu. On June 9, 2026, the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency in Region 7 held a so-called “Peace and Order Forum” at a barangay hall in Buaya, Cebu. The forum turned out to be a red-tagging presentation that named activists, progressive organizations, and universities including UP Cebu, and linked them to armed revolutionary movements.

Among the names mentioned was that of **Vincent Pepito**, also known as Sahn Vicente, an artist and community organizer in Cebu. He graduated from UP Cebu and has spent years doing art, disaster relief work, and community organizing among the urban poor and workers.

Sahn’s grandmother, who works as barangay staff, was present at the red-tagging forum. The presentation frightened her because it featured images and narratives that seemed to target people like her grandson. After the forum, she approached one of the speakers, who introduced himself as “Joey,” to ask why UP Cebu students were being portrayed that way.

When she mentioned her grandson’s first name, the man immediately said: “We know him. He is already on our list.” He then added that he knew Sahn was good at drawing, and warned her: “Watch your grandson. He might be sent to Negros,” a chilling reference implying he could be killed there.

This was not the first time Sahn was targeted. In 2025, a suspected fake social media account posted his name alongside other activists, using a photo taken of him without his knowledge during a protest.

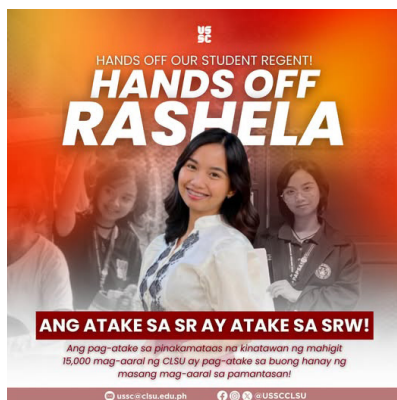
In Davao del Norte. On June 10, 2026, 76-year old **Elsa Villafuerte**, the mother of Febe Villafuerte, an NGO worker with the Nonoy Librado Development Foundation Inc., (NLDF) was visited at their home by two unidentified men who had earlier gone to their store in Barangay Pantaron, Santo Tomas town and asked where Febe was working. One of the men asked her mother if Febe was still working with the NLDF. Her mother answered yes.

According to Elsa, the men who were asking claimed to be former KMU organizers she had known before, though she could not remember exactly who they were. Febe said the men did not identify themselves, but she believes they are affiliated with the NTF-ELCAC, recognizable by

their appearance. She believes they are among the former residents of her house who were former Kilusang Mayo Uno organizers she knew by the names Anar, Ope, Priil, and Jaeb—who are now surrenderees under the NTF-ELCAC. The men who visited her mother reportedly asked very detailed and specific questions about her.

On June 14, 2026, Febe returned home and was informed that someone had been looking for her. Out of fear, she chose not to file a blotter report with the barangay. Adding to her concern, their barangay captain is known for red-tagging and was formerly a Purok Chairman who had pressured workers—members of the banana plantation union in their area—to sign surrender documents.

In Nueva Ecija. On June 12, 2026 two unidentified men looked for **Rashela Ballesteros**, asking employees of the Central Luzon State University (CLSU) for her whereabouts. Ballesteros is the newly elected chairperson of the University Supreme Student Council and Student Regent of the university. The same men also looked for **Cairo Sandoval** (Independent Campus Journalism for Press Freedom chair and CLSU Collegian staff), **Eyu Bartolome** (Anakbayan-Nueva Ecija chair), and **Loi Matias** of Unity of Leaders and Students for the Advancement of Democratic Student Right and Welfare member (USAd-DSRW). Anakbayan condemned the attacks against Bartolome, saying that these are part of the widespread repression of the youth. Bartolome, a BA Social Science student at CLSU, played a pivotal role in mobilizing fellow students against corrupt flood control projects under the Marcos Jr. regime.



In Nueva Vizcaya. Military men harassed environmental activist and student leader **Angel Lopez** while on a community immersion activity in Nueva Vizcaya from June 13-14, 2026. Lopez, a student at the College of Engineering of the University of the Philippines-Diliman, chaired the UP Diliman Engineering Student Council last year and is currently a councilor-elect of the UP Diliman University Student Council. He is also a member of Agham Youth UP Diliman, which is part of the broader environmental alliance Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines (YACAP).

According to Lopez's account, he traveled to Nueva Vizcaya to participate in a community immersion and environmental investigative mission in communities affected by large-scale mining operations. While attending an Information and Education Campaign (IEC) in Kasibu,



Loi Matias

Eyu Bartolome

Cairo Sandoval

he was forcibly removed from the activity after family members, accompanied by men believed to be military personnel in civilian clothes, arrived at the venue.

Lopez was then transported in a vehicle accompanied by four suspected military intelligence agents and later brought to a restaurant, where he was interrogated by individuals who introduced themselves as a former rebel and a military officer. During the interrogation, he was repeatedly forced to admit to being a member of underground organizations, and was told that the activities he joined would lead to his recruitment into the NPA. Lopez repeatedly asserted that there is nothing wrong with the community work he participated in.



Angel Lopez

In Misamis Occidental. On June 16, 2026, at 7:30 p.m., Fr. April Dwight Cila, a parish priest from the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI), sent a direct message via Facebook Messenger to **Fr. Ramil Muñoz**, saying that they needed to talk on June 17, in time for their Clergy Meeting. When Fr. Ramil asked Fr. Dwight what they were to talk about, Fr. Dwight answered that he was told by an unnamed soldier that he had a record with the "11th Division." Fr. Dwight asked Fr. Ramil if he was a member of the Akbayan Partylist, and Fr. Ramil denied involvement with the group. The soldier reportedly offered to clear Fr. Dwight's name or reputation in exchange for asking Fr. Ramil what his political views or stand was or if he was a member of Bayan Muna. Fr. Ramil did not engage further with Fr. Dwight.

On June 17, 2026, Fr. Ramil conversed with Fr. Dwight in the presence of Bishop Redeemer Yañez Jr. Fr. Dwight disclosed over lunch at the meeting that during a gathering with three other high school classmates at Maluro Beach, a private beach in Barangay Labu, Ozamiz City, he was informed by a classmate, a soldier, that Fr. Ramil was involved in a meeting.

According to Fr. Ramil, he was in a meeting of In Peace, a Mindanao-based peace advocacy group, on September 11 to



Fr. Ramil Muñoz

organizational grassroots movement against development aggression in the resource-rich area of the mountain and partners with Akbayan, Sanlakas, Gitib NGO and other groups.

In Central Luzon. In On June 19, 2026, two men identifying themselves as Manuel Buscayno and Gabriel Reganit of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) approached a relative of **Jose Marti**, who is employed at CLSU. They repeatedly sought information regarding his whereabouts, insisted on speaking with him, and even presented photographs of him. Such acts go beyond legitimate inquiry and raise serious concerns over surveillance and intimidation.

The harassment escalated on June 26, 2026. After visiting political prisoners Jennifer David, Ernesto Prinsipe, Maria Regina Obiso, and Marlene Espiritu at Aurora Provincial Jail in Baler, Aurora, Jose Marti was again subjected to surveillance. Two men believed to be intelligence operatives from the 91st Infantry Battalion Philippine Army reportedly went to the transient house where he was staying, questioned the caretaker about his whereabouts, and once more displayed his photograph.

Rising people's protests

Amid the stark inutility and escalating repression of the Marcos Jr. regime topped by US imperialism's renewed onslaughts on the country economy and politics, the Filipino people continue to rise in protest.

The April 19 massacre in Toboso, Negros Occidental has once again exposed the unrelenting fascism and attacks of the State against the people. Amid desperate attempts to vilify the victims by labeling them with various names and slapping accusations against them, the killings have sparked widespread outrage and a growing call for truth, justice, and accountability. Families and human rights defenders have dared to come together to challenge the State narrative and demand justice. The call for justice for the Negros 19 has become a resounding call to uphold the rights of civilians and hors de combat, and to hold accountable State forces that have long enjoyed impunity.

12, 2025. The group conducted community immersion in ground-zero in Marawi City and interviewed residents threatened by internal displacement. Fr. Ramil was also among the signatories in the invitation letters sent by the Save Mt. Malindang Movement and has been part of its Secretariat since October 2025. The Movement is an ecumenical, inter-

June 30 marked four years of Marcos Jr. in Malacañang. The people, amid crisis and repression, continue to be firm in defying the rottenness of the current ruling system and the recycled crooks and fascists that dominate it. Through protests and acts of defiance, big and small, they continue to demand thoroughgoing change.

"Safer Cities" program is a sham. Progressive groups held a protest on April 17, 2026 in front of the DILG to condemn the spate of arrests of activists and the demolitions and crackdown on impoverished communities under the anti-poor "safer cities" policy. In a statement, KARAPATAN said that the program was not about safety but a crackdown on the poor, plain and simple. "While the government projects an image of order, it is the poor who are already struggling to survive amid soaring prices and deepening economic crisis, who are once again being targeted."

Militant May 1. Progressive workers in Metro Manila, Central Luzon, CALABARZON, Bicol, Negros, Cebu, Panay, and Davao took to the streets on May 1, 2026 to assail low wages, high prices and the US' interventionist wars that have been fuelling intense economic crises worldwide. In Manila, workers marched towards the US Embassy after a brief program at Liwasang Bonifacio to dramatize their condemnation of US imperialism whose economic and political policy impositions have impoverished the working people and curtailed their rights. In its statement of solidarity on Labor Day, KARAPATAN called on the working people in the Philippines and worldwide to forge ranks to expose and oppose imperialist aggression and intervention, and defeat tyrannical puppet regimes like that of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. that do the biddings of US imperialism.

[Hindi]pendence Day. Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) led other progressive organizations in a rally near the US Embassy on June 12, 2026 dubbed [Hindi]pendence Day. BAYAN lambasted US imperialism as the greatest threat to the country today, especially with the presence of American troops and armaments within several EDCA sites, and the looming establishment of the Pax Silica hub that would gobble up 1,600 hectares of land in Central Luzon.

Pride is a Protest. Members of the LGBTQ+ community led by Bahaghari began Pride Month with a lightning rally at Mendiola on June 1. Carrying rainbow flags and placards, protesters gathered near Malacañang to demand solutions to the dire economic and political crisis, as well as the immediate passage of the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) Equality Bill.

On June 18, KARAPATAN and Bahaghari led a Rainbow Thursday protest in front of the Department of Justice, calling for the immediate release of all political prisoners, including LGBTQ+ activists Wilmar "Verdy" Pongasi and Alexandria Pacalda, whose continued detention reflects the broader climate of impunity and human rights violations under



[Hindi]pendence Day Protest



Pride Protest at the Liwasang Bonifacio, and in front of DOJ.

the Marcos Jr. administration. The call to free all political prisoners, including those from the LGBTQ+ community, is an expression of solidarity with those whose fundamental rights are violated under a system that criminalizes dissent and perpetuates impunity. The group also renewed its calls to junk repressive terror laws and dismantle the NTF-ELCAC, which continue to threaten civil and political rights, including the rights of LGBTQ+ persons.

Pride Month culminated in a rally at Liwasang Bonifacio on June 26, 2026 where groups gathered to say that Pride is both a celebration and a continuing assertion of rights, dignity, and freedom in the face of discrimination, repression, and injustice.

Jail Visits and Support for Political Prisoners. KARAPATAN, various organizations, and paralegals visited jail facilities from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, to check on the conditions and gather updates on the cases filed against political prisoners.

In April, jail visits were conducted for the 21 political prisoners in Cagayan Valley, majority of whom are peasants and human rights defenders. In May, Karapatan and Hustisya visited a total of 22 political prisoners in Occidental and Oriental Mindoro.

Meanwhile, representatives from KARAPATAN National Office and the Southern Mindanao Region, as well as health workers from the Health Action for Human Rights, and the Union of People's Lawyers in Mindanao (UPLM) visited political prisoners in the regions of Caraga and Soccsksargen. There are at least 127 political prisoners who are currently detained across these regions.

The UP Manila College of Medicine Class of 1993, together with members of the "Free Ana! Free Marc!" campaign network, visited Dr. Ana Rilloraza at the Ilocos Sur Provincial Jail. They provided free medical consultations to prisoners. Rilloraza is among eight Cordillera activists illegally arrested in March 2026.

There were likewise regular jail visits by SELDA, an organization of former political prisoners in the Philippines, and Hustisya (Victims United for Justice) at the New Bilibid Prisons and the Correctional Institution for Women (CIW). On May 29, a Mass and solidarity program was held at the CIW, organized by Gabriela Women's Party. Fr. Dionito Cabillas of Iglesia Filipina Independiente celebrated the Mass.

Release Our Ceeka. Artists, human rights defenders, relatives, friends and supporters of detained cultural activist Charlize "Ceeka" Garzon launched on April 25, 2026 the Release Ceeka Network. Ceeka's mother Mayi Garzon said her daughter remains steadfast despite repeated attempts by the military and police to coerce her to give up her principles and "surrender." On June 14, 2026, the Release Ceeka Network launched an exhibit

entitled “Ones Who Love You” that displayed her works from childhood up to her present sketches at the San Jose District Jail in Mindoro where she is detained. Featured alongside Ceeka’s artworks were the works of fellow artists and organizers, calling to free Ceeka and the dropping of all fabricated charges against her.

Free Ana and Free Marc Campaign. The Health Alliance for Democracy (HEAD) and the Health Action for Human Rights protested in front of the Department of Justice on June 22, 2026 to demand anew the release of Dr. Ana Rilloraza and psychologist and health worker Marc Mendiola who were arrested on March 11, 2026 in Tarlac City with six others in a joint police-military operation. The organizations decried that health workers and professionals like Dr. Rilloraza and Mendiola who serve impoverished communities are being jailed but corrupt politicians are allowed to escape accountability.

Justice for Negros 19. Actions, gatherings, and tributes were held on multiple occasions for the Negros 19. After individual tributes were held in Metro Manila and in Negros for the Negros 19 martyrs, a grand tribute titled “Panaghoy at Paghihimagsik” was held on May 9, 2026 at the University Theater in UP Diliman for the victims of the massacre in Toboso, Negros Occidental. Through

testimonials, cultural presentations and visuals, more than a thousand remembered the victims and hailed their lives and struggles. It also became an opportunity to explain the situation of farmers in Negros, the plight of the peasant class in a semifeudal country like the Philippines, and the justness of protest and dissent by the people who suffer from poverty and fascism. Families of the some of the martyrs spoke at the program, expressed the highest tribute, and condemned the desperate acts of State elements to dishonor their loved ones. They called on the people, especially the youth, to continue to be inspired with the life and struggle of the martyrs by continuing the work that they did for the oppressed and exploited masses.

On April 29, 2026, ten days after the massacre, KARAPATAN and other rights advocates and relatives of the victims held a press conference to discuss the incidents of violations of international humanitarian law by the AFP. Networks of support were also renewed and strengthened, to serve as centers in the campaign for justice.

The **National Fact Finding and Solidarity Mission** was conducted on May 13 to 14 in Toboso, Negros Occidental. The mission called for accountability from the AFP, an end to militarization in Negros and justice for the Negros 19. The NFFSM report confirmed that soldiers committed multiple violations against civilians, including the forcible use of civilian homes as military encampments, harassment and intimidation of residents in the name of counter-insurgency operations, restriction on farming activities, indiscriminate firing near homes, illegal detention, and even the use of a farmer as a human shield. The NFFSM also assailed the harassment of the mission participants and the deportation of Sadie Stone, an American pastor and member of the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines (ICHRP), who was supposed to join the NFFSM.

A month after the massacre, the **Defend Negros Network** was reconvened for coordinated campaigns for justice, accountability and the defense of communities in Negros. In a program on May 29, 2026 dubbed Panukot kag Hustisya (Accountability and Justice), the program likewise marked the 40th day of the Negros 19 massacre and the public presentation of the National Fact-Finding and Solidarity Mission report. The program decried recurring patterns of violence, forced displacement, arrests and killings over violations of IHL, with farmers and rural communities bearing the heaviest impact.

On June 24, 2026, various organizations gathered at the College of Media and Communication at the University of the Philippines in Diliman to launch the **Justice for Negros 19 Campaign Network**, which aimed to gather more advocates, supporters from among the church, academe, media, artists, and other sectors, and join the families in monitoring the status of investigations and demands for accountability. A resounding call in the network launch is for the remains of Errol Wendel to be returned to his family the soonest.



Medical mission at the Ilocos Sur Provincial Jail.



Solidarity visit and mass at CIW, May 29.



At the launch of the Justice for Negros 19 Campaign Network.

Duterte Panagutin. On April 22, the International Criminal Court (ICC) Appeals Chamber upheld a previous ruling stating that the ICC retains jurisdiction over crimes already being considered or investigated before Duterte made the self-serving decision to exit the Rome Statute that created the ICC. The decision, in effect, denied the appeal of the Duterte camp questioning the ICC's jurisdiction over the crimes against humanity charges against Duterte from 2011 to 2019, when the Philippines had not yet withdrawn from the ICC.

The International Criminal Court's confirmation of murder and attempted charges against former President Rodrigo Duterte is the most recent vindication of the Filipino people's efforts to uphold and pursue justice and accountability for the killings of thousands under Duterte's bloody regime.



On May 11, KARAPATAN strongly condemned the Philippine Senate's decision to place Senator Ronald "Bato" dela Rosa under protective custody amid the reported ICC arrest warrant against him over alleged crimes arising from former president Rodrigo Duterte's bloody "war on drugs." The ICC later confirmed that the warrant was authentic and made it public that same day. The call to arrest Dela Rosa continues, after he was able to escape after the Senate "standoff" or "lockdown" on May 12, 2026 with public demands for the Senate "not to coddle a criminal" and to hold accountable those responsible for Dela Rosa's escape. The incidents took place amid a major shift in Senate leadership, with Alan Peter Cayetano

elected as Senate President on the same day, and amid preparations for the impeachment proceedings against Vice President Sara Duterte.

Calls to hold accountable Duterte's henchmen and enablers of killings and rights violations continue, as KARAPATAN strongly opposed anew the application of Cecilyn Burgos-Villavert for appointment as Associate Justice of the Court of Appeals or the Court of Tax Appeals, saying her judicial record of abuse and political persecution makes her ever unfit for higher positions in the judiciary.

Most Distinguished HRD-Organization. KARAPATAN won recognition from Amnesty International Philippines Ignite Awards for Human Rights (Season 4), with the theme #BilangTibak under its Global Protect the Protest Campaign. The award was bestowed on June 1, 2026, Amnesty International's 65th anniversary. KARAPATAN's co-awardees were Rep. Sarah Elago of Gabriela Women's Party, indigenous activist Kim "Enkoryaw" Falyao and progressive visual artist Brian Barrios. The human rights group dedicated its award to the martyrs of KARAPATAN and the Filipino people and said it would work even harder for people's rights to be recognized, respected and upheld.



Ignite Awards

At the 62nd session of the UN Human Rights Council. Former political prisoner, writer, and human rights advocate Amanda Echanis and KARAPATAN deputy secretary general Atty. Maria Sol Taule participated in the 62nd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Switzerland in June 2026. Echanis highlighted the continuing attacks against Filipino peasants and human rights activists, citing the case of the Negros 19 as a recent and grave example. She also drew attention to the brutal killing in 2020 of her father, peace consultant Randall Echanis. According to KARAPATAN, at least 135 victims of extrajudicial killings have been documented under Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Echanis said that this continuing pattern of State violence against individuals who express dissent or advocate for social change demonstrates that human rights violations persist in the Philippines.



Atty. Sol Taule and Amanda Echanis with several members of the European Parliament.

No to EU-Philippines FTA. KARAPATAN deputy secretary general Atty. Maria Sol Taule and peasant activist Amanda Echanis met with several members of the European Parliament on June 25, 2026 in Brussels, Belgium to discuss the adverse implications of a Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and the Philippines. They said that any negotiations for a new FTA must be assessed based on its impact on grassroots and people's rights and livelihoods, particularly those of farmers, indigenous peoples and human rights defenders. Echanis emphasized that previous FTAs had failed to improve the lives of peasants, workers and other marginalized sectors.

No to lowering the age of criminal responsibility. KARAPATAN opposed calls to lower the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 15 to 12 years in light of a school shooting in Tacloban City involving a 14- and a 15-year old that resulted in the deaths of four students and injuries to 20 others. Calling such demands myopic, KARAPATAN said they divert attention from poverty, abuse, neglect and lack of government support for rehabilitation programs that lead to the involvement of minors in violent crimes and other anti-social behavior. KARAPATAN also warned against militarists exploiting the school shooting incident to justify increased police presence in schools.

Pagsibol. At a solidarity conference for the Philippines held on June 20, 2026 in Brussels, Belgium, the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines-European Union invited speakers from KARAPATAN, Amihan and Kilusang Mayo Uno, who called on members of the Filipino community and European civil society to foster critical dialogue and uphold the long tradition of solidarity for the Filipino people's ongoing struggles for justice and self-determination.

ILPS assembly. The International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS)-Philippines held its general assembly on June 16, 2026 and elected its new set of officers, among them Teddy Casiño as chair, Prof. Sarah Raymundo as vice chair and Arnold Padilla as secretary general. The assembly also elected Roneo Clamor of KARAPATAN, Clarice Palce of Gabriela, Danilo Ramos of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, Lana Linaban of Kilusang Mayo Uno and Gabriel Magtibay of the League of Filipino Students to comprise its

coordinating committee. The assembly likewise adopted its three-year general program of action which called for, among others, revving up the campaign against Pax Silica and growing US military presence in the country.

ARTISTS FOR RIGHTS: Ugnayan, Panayam, Palihan. On April 18, 2026, a whole-day workshop brought together artists and cultural workers to reflect on the role of art and cultural work in confronting the current situation of human rights in the Philippines. Professor Jun Cruz Reyes discussed the role of art and literature in tackling human rights, highlighting the stories and struggles of victims and their families. The workshop was divided into three groups, according to topic and genre: zine making and political prisoners, visual arts and desaparecidos, and creative non-fiction and families of EJK victims. The participants agreed to hold more workshops and produce materials which will be presented in the coming months.



Artists and HRV victims and families come together at Ugnayan, Panayam, Palihan.

Kontra-Daluyong. On May 8, musicians, artists, and activists came together at Mow's QC for Kontra Daluyong, a night of music and collective resistance against corruption, crisis, and injustice. The gig featured performances by KillRatio, Comply Resist, Figure Out, Nepenthe, Gapas, Ganid, Saipek, Tulala, Dayaspora, Morobeats, Not Them, AKAB, Facefirst, Sunog, Space Impakto, and Vitrum, with speakers from KARAPATAN, Atty. Sol Taule and Atty. VJ Topacio, and Vitrum of Hip-hop United Against Corruption. The gig's message was clear that amid crisis, corruption and repression, the people will not remain silent.

May K Ka! goes to Aeta Learning Center in Tarlac and San Juan. On May 17, 2026, KARAPATAN's May K Ka! Learning Tour went to Sitio Kalangitan in Capas, Tarlac, for a whole day exposure at the community's Aeta Learning Center. Together with Liwanag at Dunong, some 70 volunteers, indigenous people's advocates, BPO employees, and community youth shared with the Aeta children and their parents a whole day of learning, workshops, and song and dance, as expressions of solidarity with the Aeta community.



Atty. VJ Topacio at Kontra-Daluyong gig.

On June 20, May K Ka! conducted a whole-day educational visit to the Museo ng Katipunan and El Deposito in San Juan City. The Museo ng Katipunan features the history of the Katipunan, the life of Andres Bonifacio and Gregoria de Jesus, and the Filipino struggle against Spanish colonial rule. The group also visited El Deposito, a historic underground water reservoir built during the Spanish colonial period. It was part of the old water supply system serving Manila and was witness to significant events in Philippine history, including the 1896 Revolution.

These learning tours provided participants with opportunities to relearn and deepen their understanding of Philippine history and reflect on the struggles and aspirations for freedom (Kalayaan), rights (Karapatan), and justice (Katarungan).

Tangguyob: Pakigbisog para sa Hustisya. Katribu, Dang a Dang Radio and Defend the Talaingod 13 Network launched a special episode on June 15, 2026 of Tangguyob, a podcast on Youtube produced by Sandugo Alliance. The episode marked the anniversaries of the extrajudicial killings of Manobo-Dulangan youth Kuni Cuba on June 8, 2024, the Lianga Massacre on June 11, 2021 and the unjust conviction of the Talaingod 13. In the podcast, the indigenous rights advocates called for support for the struggle of Lumad people for the right to their ancestral lands, for education and self-determination.

Protest vs Marcos Jr.'s UNSC seat. People's organizations and human rights advocates led by KARAPATAN and KMP (Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas) held a protest action on June 4, 2026 to oppose the election of the Philippine government to a non-permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The action condemned the Marcos administration's record of human rights violations, violations of international humanitarian law (IHL), corruption, and subservience to US interests.

The Marcos Jr. regime has miserably lost its bid to become one of the US' rah-rah boys in the UN Security Council when it failed to win a seat as a non-permanent member, an ambitious, narcissistic deodorant project on which it spent millions in dollars since it began lobbying for it in 2023.

Marcos Jr.'s loss at the UN Security Council showed that no matter his aggressive PR campaign to distance himself from his dictator-father's notoriety, his regime's stench continues to reek in the international community—his record as the foremost US puppet in Asia, his government's outrageous corruption and his State forces' depravity born out of its subservience to a US-driven counter-insurgency program.

IT IS THE US-Marcos Jr. regime's escalating repressiveness that has spurred endless outpourings of protests, campaigns and people's initiatives designed to counter this regime's evil schemes. Eventually, the protests will be waves feeding on waves, crashing on and cutting through the seemingly intractable rock of oppression. The power of the people is stronger than the people in power. [K]



May K Ka! Learning Tour participants at Pinaglabanan Shrine, San Juan City after visiting Museo ng Katipunan and El Deposito.



Learning and sharing with Aeta community in Capas, Tarlac, together with Liwanag at Dunong.



Negros 19: Cherished, Mourned and Honored

by Atty. Sol Taule

“It’s just a twenty-minute walk from here.”

But I had learned that a “twenty-minute walk” in the countryside often meant an entirely different measure of time and distance for those of us from the city.

It is Tiempo Muerto -- the dead season in Negros. The earth lay cracked by drought, longing for rain. For generations, sakadas had plowed and tilled vast hectares of sugarcane land owned by despotic landlords.

But this year, the dead season took on a more literal meaning.

On April 19, 19 lives were taken by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), including nine civilians and peasant advocates – Alyssa Alano, Errol Wendel, Maureen Santuyo, RJ Ledesma, Kai Sorem, Lyle Prijoles, Roel Sabillo, “Melissa” and “Ron.” . Ten red fighters of the New People’s Army (NPA) – Roger Fabillar, Sonny Boy Caramihan, Rene Villarin Sr., Pedro Bonghanoy, Arnel Javoc, Joros Caramihan, Maria Clarita Branzuel Blanco, Genevieve Balora, Labskie Purisima Enustacion and Jocel Gimang -- were identified by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) as among the casualties, amid serious questions of violations of international humanitarian law.

On May 14, we had come to not only understand what happened to the nineteen but also to retrace the final footsteps of Alyssa, Errol, Maureen, Kai, Lyle and RJ, whose lives had become intertwined with ours.

More than a hundred individuals from various organizations as well as friends and colleagues of the six joined a fact-finding mission to Toboso, Negros Occidental, specifically in Sitio Sinugmawan and Sitio Plarinding.

We went in search of the truth behind what the military described as a “legitimate” armed encounter with the New

People’s Army (NPA). But the circumstances surrounding the deaths of the 19 individuals told a different story.

In Sitio Sinugmawan, where the first volley of fire rang out, a huge mango tree stood with its branches bent so low they nearly touched the ground. It sheltered the delegates from the relentless summer heat as we listened to the testimonies of the locals. Its trunk bore the scars of the bullets while spent shell casings still lay scattered on the ground – a silent witness to the indiscriminate firing that terrorized the community that day.

I stared at the bullet scars on the tree, wondering what kind of firearm could have carved such deep crevices into its branches. My thoughts were suddenly interrupted.

“RJ loved to hang a swing from this tree. His toes brushed the ground like a kid,” recalled one of the residents. “He liked to spend his time here.”

RJ, who hailed from Bacolod City, was a beloved journalist and an activist who lived with the peasants of Toboso. He listened to their stories and documented their struggles. He reported on land grabbing, the expansion of large-scale renewable energy projects that severely affected farming communities.

The residents we interviewed did not speak of enemies or combatants. They spoke of people who came to their community and had shared a life of struggle with them.

As they continued to tell their stories, my mind shifted to the memory of Alyssa’s tribute a few days before the fact-finding mission. Alyssa was remembered by her family and friends as a bright ray of sunshine. Her friends sang her favorite songs, most of them were by Ericson Acosta, an activist from UP Diliman who was martyred in Negros.



The Tiempo Muerto will come
and go, but the memory of
Negros 19 will forever live among
the people of Toboso, who
cherished them, mourned them
and honored them as their own.

Photos of Alyssa at home and with her friends flashed across a screen beside her urn, which was adorned with flowers and portrait sketches. She always carried her warmth and unwavering conviction wherever she went.

Colleagues of Maureen and Errol from the peasant movement also remembered their selfless dedication to their causes.

Errol had spent time living among peasant communities before arriving in Negros. The farmers from Hacienda Luisita to Negros spoke fondly of his simplicity and ease among the people. He delighted in riding tractors through the fields and found happiness in the company of the farmers.

Maureen, or Mau, dedicated her life to the peasant struggle even as a young activist. Her sister described her as selfless from childhood. She often placed the needs of others first before her own and used her skills, talent and knowledge in the service of others. She was creative and loved to draw the vast fields.

In the US, family, friends, and colleagues spoke with admiration of Kai and Lyle's decision to return to the Philippines, their homeland – not as tourists, but to immerse themselves among the masses.

Kai, a brave and vibrant youth, had a gift for bringing people together-- whether by organizing activities or filling gatherings with music. Often, she would pick up a guitar or a saxophone, and before long, everyone would be singing along.

Lyle, meanwhile, was held dear by his family and friends for being kindhearted and selfless. He enjoyed walking on rice paddies during his earlier visits. At his funeral, those who loved him stood in line holding lightsabers -- a fitting farewell and tribute for an avid Star Wars fan whose quiet warmth touched so many lives.

The residents knew that Kai and Lyle spoke English, yet despite the language barrier, they worked alongside the farmers, shared humble meals in their homes, and exchanged stories after long days in the field.

"They were here. They came into our houses, talked to us and helped us with our problems. I never understood why they said their bodies were found with firearms," said one of the residents.

Meanwhile, videos of the funeral processions of red fighters Roger Fabillar and Rene Villarin Sr. spread online. Hundreds of residents, riding in their motorcycles and trucks, joined despite the continued military operations of their communities.

From Sitio Sinugmawan, we trekked for another two and a half hours to reach Sitio Plarinding. The terrain was unforgiving.

We passed by a cemetery, with around ten niches. Residents said this was where the military had positioned while firing down towards the direction of the fishpond. "The gunfire was non-stop," they said.

The steep ascents, combined with the heat of the midday sun, drained our strength with every step. Many struggled to keep pace; some were forced to stop and rest along the trail.

We reached the edge of a steep descent leading to the fishpond where the 19 bodies were found. The slope dropped at nearly a forty-five-degree angle. One by one, we made our way down, clutching shrubs and tender branches for support, careful not to lose our footing on the loose earth beneath us.

Below, the fishpond waited. Tall bamboo stalks arched overhead, their leaves rustling softly in the wind. We walked beneath the bamboos' shadows toward ground zero.

I rested for a while, reached for my bottle of water, raised it against the glint of the sun and checked how much was left.

I looked out at the landscape before me and attempted to draw it. I opened my bag and took my paper and pencil. But my hands felt heavy. Instead, I paused and listened.

The fishpond lay still. The leaves whispered in the wind. I found myself imagining the gunfire that once tore through this place and the lives that fell here. I could only wish that the trees, the water, and the land could talk.

It was past 4 in the afternoon, and soon the sun would set. After our documentation work, we began the climb up the slope.

As we journeyed back, I realized that while those who pulled the trigger could paint them as enemies, the people of Toboso remembered them differently.

The Tiempo Muerto will come and go, but the memory of Negros 19 will forever live among the people of Toboso, who cherished them, mourned them and honored them as their own. **K**

Part I:
From unbridled
globalization to
controlling supply chains

For almost half a century, US imperialism relied on unbridled neoliberal globalization to assert and maintain its global hegemony. Trade and investment liberalization, privatization of public services and government functions, and deregulation of state control over key industries, sectors, and activities of the economy were promoted to facilitate the monopoly capitalist accumulation of U.S. financial oligarchs. U.S. imperialism also maintained a vast network of foreign military bases and a massive deployment of its troops to project its might and safeguard U.S. monopoly capital around the world.

Under this model, the integration of economies into a U.S.-led global order enabled American corporations and financial institutions to dominate markets, plunder resources, and exploit labor while maintaining geopolitical influence. Its financial oligarchy increasingly turned to financialization and speculation to quickly and massively generate profits while focusing on the production of high technology and expanding the U.S. military-industrial complex for corporate profit-making and global power projection. It outsourced most of its industrial production to take advantage of cheap labor and raw materials in poor countries and to meet the needs of its industries.

War and plunder: US imperialism in the Philippines

by Arnold Padilla

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Controlling strategic supply chains

However, the rise of China exposed vulnerabilities in this strategy. As the US outsourced industrial production and relied on financialization and war for profits and domination, China has become central to global manufacturing, using concentrated state intervention and an enormous army of cheap labor to steadily build its industrial base, acquire technology, and accumulate capital. China's economy has expanded to become the world's largest today in terms of the absolute volume of physical goods and services produced. The U.S. holds the top position in nominal gross domestic product (GDP) primarily because of its tech industry (software development) and financial sector, but China trumps it in actual manufacturing capacity and commodity exports.

China's manufacturing dominance means it has asserted control over global supply chains for the production and distribution of many goods and services, including sectors that American strategic thinkers deem a threat to U.S. hegemony. Globally integrated supply chains, which the US promoted through neoliberal globalization that culminated in China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, are now seen by U.S. imperialism as a national security risk amid China's rise. The reason is that these supply chains include sectors that could ultimately undermine the supremacy of US imperialism in one field that allows it to keep its global hegemonic position—the military.

In the context of its strategic competition with China, U.S. imperialism considers certain sectors to be “national power industries” or “force multiplier fields” because they dictate not just economic dominance but also military superiority. These include advanced computing and semiconductors, artificial intelligence (AI) and autonomous systems, clean energy and advanced mobility, critical minerals and materials processing, biotechnology and biomanufacturing, and defense, aerospace, and telecommunications. Control over the supply chains of these dual-use sectors (i.e., sectors with commercial and military uses) explains recent major U.S. imperialist projects, namely the Pax Silica initiative and the Critical Minerals Ministerial.

Consequently, Washington began recalibrating neoliberalism within the framework of its national security strategy. The emphasis shifted from maximizing efficiency through unrestricted globalization toward securing strategic supply chains and maintaining technological superiority. Concepts such as “economic security,” “friend-shoring,” “ally-shoring,” industrial policy, and state intervention emerged as key pillars of U.S. strategy. While wielding various protectionist measures for its economy and key industries, U.S. imperialism continues to impose neoliberal policies on its semi-colonies to facilitate the plunder of resources and assert control over supply chains.

Economic-military strategic framework

The Philippines occupies a crucial position in Washington's effort to contain China. Geographically, it lies within the so-called First Island Chain, a strategic arc stretching from Japan through Taiwan and the Philippines down to Indonesia. Control over this chain is viewed by U.S. strategists as essential for limiting China's maritime expansion and military mobility.

As a result, the Philippines has become a key platform for U.S. power projection. The expansion of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), the exponential growth of large-scale military exercises such as Balikatan, record-high increases in military financing, unprecedented deployment of advanced missile systems and drones, and enhanced interoperability between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the U.S. military under the command of U.S. imperialism all reflect this strategic objective.

US imperialist machinations in the Philippines in the current period are characterized by the ever-deepening integration of U.S. military and economic agenda into a single strategic framework. So-called development initiatives, infrastructure projects, industrial zones, and digital connectivity programs are specifically designed to support U.S. military and strategic objectives. Economic projects such as the Luzon Economic Corridor and Pax Silica's Economic Security Zone facilitate economic penetration, enable the plunder and exploitation of resources, and generate profits for American financial oligarchs while simultaneously strengthening U.S. military logistics, mobility, and operational capacity. This necessitates the exceptional puppetry and subservience to U.S. imperialism of the local elite's ruling clique, represented by the regime of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and the bourgeois compradors who benefit from these plunderous projects.

Part 2: Unprecedented deepening of US military intervention

Under the Marcos Jr. regime, U.S. military involvement in the Philippines has expanded dramatically. In February 2023, during then-US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's visit to Manila, the regime announced the opening of four new EDCA sites, including three locations facing Taiwan (Camilio Osias Naval Base and Lal-Lo airport in Cagayan, and Camp Melchor dela Cruz in Isabela) and one facing the South China Sea (Balabac Island in Palawan). Two months later, Marcos Jr. paid a visit to then-US President Joe Biden and announced the signing of the Bilateral Defense Guidelines, which updated the practical implementation of the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT). The guidelines include maritime security cooperation, cybersecurity cooperation, and even space-related cooperation. It also reaffirmed that an armed attack in the Pacific, including anywhere in the South China Sea, on either country's public vessels, aircraft, or armed forces would invoke the MDT.



Soldiers from the United States, the Philippines, and Australia conduct cold load training as part of the Balikatan exercise. (Photo from US Embassy in the Philippines Facebook page)

The language, priorities, and focus on multi-domain awareness found in the Bilateral Defense Guidelines directly mirrored those in the Philippines' National Security Policy (NSP) 2023–2028, released through Marcos Jr.'s Executive Order No. 37 in August 2023. The NSP shifted strategic priorities toward external defense, maritime security, and regional stability, explicitly identifying Taiwan (cross-strait relations) and the West Philippine Sea as primary or major concerns.

The US-designed and US-sponsored NSP introduced the Comprehensive Archipelagic Defense Concept (CADC), officially adopted by the AFP and the Department of National Defense (DND) in March 2024, facilitating a strategic pivot from internal counterinsurgency operations to a supposed external defense role, including securing the country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and sea lanes. As such, the AFP's modernization program increasingly emphasizes maritime (Philippine Navy) and air defense (Philippine Air Force) capabilities rather than internal counterinsurgency operations (Philippine Army). The CADC effectively integrates Philippine geography into U.S. regional military planning by developing a network of strategically located, forward-deployed military assets and facilities, as well as island strongholds such as Batanes and Palawan.

Subsequent agreements deepened this integration. The Philippine Security Sector Assistance Roadmap (PSSAR), announced in July 2024 during the so-called 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue of Philippine and U.S. defense and foreign affairs secretaries, aligned AFP modernization with long-term U.S. support and financing. The U.S. immediately allocated \$500 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for fiscal year 2024 to implement the PSSAR. It scaled up joint military exercises between the US and the Philippines, with over 500 held during the 2024–2026 timeframe, including

the largest Balikatan exercise, which took place this year. It also accelerated investments in and the expansion of EDCA sites, with allocations of \$128 million in 2025 and \$144 million in 2026.

Legally-binding deal on higher-level military intel, advanced weapons

To fully implement the CADC and PSSAR, the U.S. and the Philippines signed a landmark military agreement in November 2024 – the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA). It is a legally binding accord that establishes protocols, clearances, and guarantees ensuring that both countries will safeguard shared classified military intelligence. The GSOMIA facilitates the transfer of high-tech systems that rely on classified technical data (like advanced missiles or real-time satellite feeds) from the U.S. to the Philippines. It allows the Philippines to qualify for Foreign Military Sales (FMS) of advanced US weapons, including long-range precision strike missiles, advanced air defense systems, and naval strike weapons.

Between 2024 and 2026, through war exercises, the U.S. has already deployed some of these highly advanced systems on a rotational basis and showcased their capability. During Salaknib 2026 (April 15–16), the US Army, for the first time, live-fired 12 rockets using its High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) in Nueva Ecija. The Balikatan 2026 saw the first live-fire of a U.S. Tomahawk missile from the Tacloban Airport, traveling around 630 kilometers, to Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija using its Typhon Mid-Range Capability (MRC). During Balikatan 2025, the U.S. deployed its Navy/Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS) in Batanes and again in Cagayan in this year's Balikatan. In 2024 and 2025, the US Marine Corps' MQ-9A Reaper drones were deployed to Basa Air Base, an EDCA site

in Pampanga, to patrol over the South China Sea. The U.S. is funding the expansion of the Basa Air Base, including hangars for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and a tactical operations center, possibly to accommodate additional deployment of its Reaper drones. With the GSOMIA in place, the U.S. can now position these advanced systems in the Philippines permanently rather than deploy them on a rotational basis.

Permanent, coordinated operational readiness

Under GSOMIA, the U.S. and the Philippines also established a Combined Coordination Center (CCC) at Camp Aguinaldo in November 2024. It is a joint command-and-control hub between the AFP and the US Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM), designed to enable real-time intelligence sharing, joint planning, and interoperability for both militaries.

By 2025 and 2026, the process of deepening U.S. military intervention accelerated further. The establishment of Task Force Philippines in October 2025, under the framework of the 1951 MDT, created a direct operational linkage between the AFP and INDOPACOM. This unit handles strategic planning, including deploying advanced missile networks and aircraft during Balikatan exercises. The task force is designed to institutionalize a permanent, coordinated operational readiness. It covers “all domains of warfare,” meaning it plays a foundational role in coordinating high-end capabilities, such as advanced U.S. missile networks increasingly deployed in the Philippines, while also being heavily involved in day-to-day, real-time maritime domain awareness.

U.S. imperialism is allocating a massive amount of military funding to realize its agenda of transforming the Philippines into an effective platform for its power projection in the region and a vital part of its First Island Chain strategy to contain China. In December 2025, the US Congress passed the Philippines Enhanced Resilience Act (PERA), which is directly embedded in the FY 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). PERA is the most intensive US defense investment in the Philippines since the Cold War, allocating up to \$500 million annually in FMF from 2026 to 2030, totaling \$2.5 billion over five fiscal years, specifically for long-range coastal defense capabilities, maritime domain awareness, and cybersecurity.

Just earlier this month, the U.S. Senate introduced the First Island Chain Security Cooperation Initiative (FISCI) as part of the FY 2027 NDAA. If approved, the FISCI will structurally bundle Taiwan and the Philippines into a single unified defense theater. It signals to Beijing that the U.S. views the defense of the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea as geographically and operationally linked. This new initiative will grant the Philippines full eligibility for the same security assistance framework as Taiwan, allowing the country to access joint defense assistance, training,



So-called defense industrial cooperation with U.S. imperialism will only bind the country more tightly to the U.S. war industry's supply chain and U.S. strategic priorities, but it does not guarantee technology transfer, long-term modernization, or self-reliance.

and equipment previously tailored specifically for Taiwan. The U.S. Senate is allocating \$1 billion for the initiative, with an additional \$1 billion earmarked to replace defense articles and reimburse defense services. FISCI also aims to accelerate the delivery of arms to the Philippines, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea under the US FMS.

Part 3: Luzon Economic Corridor and Pax Silica: Defense-industrial imperialist project

With U.S. patronage, the Philippines wants to transition from a buyer of foreign military hardware into a manufacturer of its own defense capabilities, as outlined in the country's Self-Reliant Defense Posture (SRD) Revitalization Act of 2024. In March 2025, the two countries signed the Joint Vision Statement on US-Philippines Defense Industrial Cooperation, which identified priority areas for cooperation, including the production and logistics for unmanned systems; production, storage, and logistics for ammunition and energetics; maintenance and repair of ships and aircraft; production of system components and spare parts; logistics support; and refining of critical minerals.

But instead of fostering self-reliance, the joint vision will merely integrate the Philippine defense sector, as a neocolony, into the colonial master's defense-industrial base. So-called defense industrial cooperation with U.S. imperialism will only bind the country more tightly to the U.S. war industry's supply chain and U.S. strategic priorities, but it does not guarantee technology transfer, long-term modernization, or self-reliance.

This integration is actually underway through major ongoing and planned imperialist projects in the Philippines touted as “development initiatives” to attract investment, modernize infrastructure, and supposedly advance national industrialization. The Luzon Economic Corridor (LEC) and the proposed Economic Security Zone (ESZ)

under the U.S.-initiated Pax Silca schemes are providing infrastructure for the U.S. defense industrial base, reinforcing the U.S. military presence in the country, and creating massive profit opportunities for Pentagon contractors and other American corporations.

The LEC, launched in April 2024, is a product of the trilateral development initiative of US imperialism, its junior imperialist partner in Asia, Japan, and its neocolony, the Philippines. It is part of the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), a project of the Group of Seven (G7), the traditional centers of imperialism (US, Japan, Germany, UK, France, Italy, and Canada), to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the imperialist competition to control and plunder the world's resources and for spheres of influence.

The LEC involves major investments from various US agencies such as the US Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) and the State Department, as well as American private equity firms and U.S. defense contractors working in collaboration with local bourgeois compradors such as Ramon Ang, Manny V. Pangilinan, and the Aboitiz group. It involves big-ticket projects that aim to supercharge the connectivity and industrial integration of the country's four major economic hubs—Subic, Clark, Manila, and Batangas.

The projects being advanced under the LEC are concentrated in areas already characterized by a substantial U.S. military presence, including EDCA sites, military exercises, maritime exercises, warship docking, and aircraft landing sites. The location and dual-use nature of these projects suggest that their purpose extends beyond economic development to strengthening the strategic infrastructure needed to support U.S. military presence and power projection in the region.

Across the energy sector, for instance, the LEC includes U.S.-backed civilian nuclear cooperation under the U.S.-Philippines¹²³ Agreement, hydropower development, and the construction of fuel storage facilities and a 72-kilometer pipeline linking Subic to Basa Air Base, an installation with clear military significance. In transport and logistics, major investments in railways, ports, airports, and cold-chain facilities are designed to improve the rapid movement of goods, equipment, and personnel. At the same time, digital infrastructure projects, including submarine fiber-optic cables, nationwide fiber networks, 5G expansion, and Open RAN technologies, are creating the communications backbone required for advanced logistics, data centers, and dual-use civilian-military operations.

The LEC's advanced manufacturing projects further reinforce this strategic orientation. The Agila Subic Multi-use Facility, owned by US private equity firm Cerberus Capital, has evolved into a logistics and maintenance hub supporting the Philippine Navy, U.S. defense contractor V2X, and a large US-leased warehouse complex. Together

with Hyundai Heavy Industries' role in the Make American Shipbuilding Great Again (MASGA) defense-industrial and trade initiative and the Cerberus Maritime partnership, the Subic shipyard is being modernized into a strategic naval-industrial hub capable of manufacturing or servicing U.S. and allied warships. Meanwhile, the expansion of Collins Aerospace, part of RTX Corporation (formerly Raytheon Technologies), one of the largest US defense contractors, further integrates the Philippines into American defense supply chains. Taken together, these projects indicate that the LEC is not merely an economic corridor but also a platform for deepening US strategic, logistical, and industrial capabilities in the Philippines as part of its broader geopolitical competition in the region.

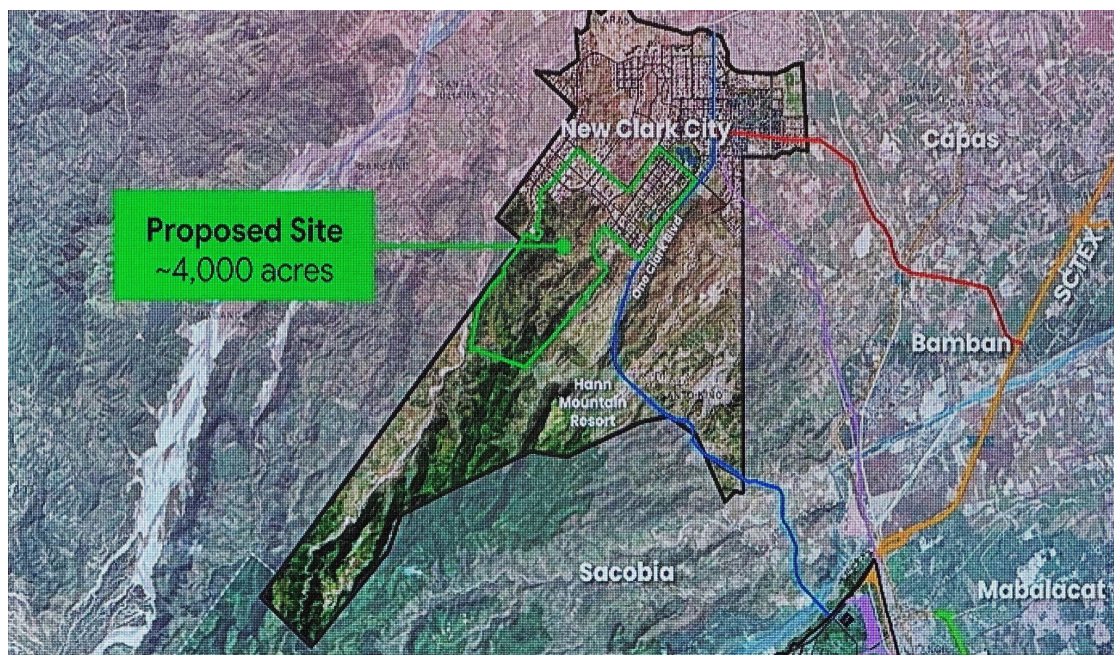
LEC's strategic importance to the US imperialist agenda is underscored by the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC)'s establishment of a regional office in Manila in 2025, serving as a hub to monitor and mobilize private-sector investments for the LEC. The DFC is a U.S. government development finance institution that provides businesses with financing, political risk insurance, and equity investments to spur private capital for major projects in other countries that further the US national security or strategic economic competitiveness.

Pax Silca and Economic Security Zone: Plunder for US wars

Further bolstering the strategic role of LEC in US imperialism's scheme in the region is the 1,600-hectare Economic Security Zone (ESZ), announced in April this year, which the U.S. and the Philippines plan to build in the corridor's New Clark City under the Pax Silca initiative. The Pax Silca is a U.S. project to bring together its allies and challenge China's control over the global AI supply chains—from critical minerals mining, refining, and processing to semiconductor production to advanced software applications and platforms. For U.S. imperialism, AI, its computational power, and the minerals that feed it are to the 21st century what oil and steel were to the 20th century. Control over AI will determine an imperialist power's industrial and military supremacy.

The ESZ is being described as “the first of its kind” and a “new model for AI-native investment acceleration hubs being developed under the Pax Silca Initiative.” It is designed to be a customized (“purpose-built”) manufacturing hub for U.S. allied countries. It means that what is actually built within the ESZ will depend on what the U.S. and the Pax Silca nations need. And what they need from the Philippines are its critical mineral resources that will be mined throughout the country and processed in the ESZ. The Philippines is exceptionally rich in critical minerals such as nickel (the world's second-largest producer and fourth-largest reserves), cobalt (fluctuates between fourth and seventh-largest producer

The map of proposed 1600 hectare industrial hub under Pax Silica. (Photo courtesy of the People's Television Network)



globally), and copper (holds massive underdeveloped deposits), all of which are highly vital for the modern high-tech and semiconductor supply chains that the US wants to control through Pax Silica.

In other words, beyond the 1,600-hectare industrial hub in New Clark City, U.S. imperialism intends to plunder tens of thousands of hectares more across the archipelago to supply these critical minerals, and potentially even rare earth elements, to the ESZ and its AI supply chains. Prior to joining Pax Silica and announcing plans to establish the ESZ, the Philippines signed a Critical Minerals Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. that seeks to integrate the country's mineral resources into supply chains controlled by the US and its allies.

Aside from critical minerals processing and refinement, the ESZ could potentially host high-tech manufacturers from the U.S. and allied countries. According to the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA), the main Philippine agency responsible for the ESZ, more than 50 companies, including "trillion-dollar tech titans," are keen to invest in the planned industrial hub. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and Board of Investments (BOI) also met with Israeli semiconductor and microchip design companies last May to sell them the ESZ. These companies include Pentagon contractors that supply the needs of the U.S. military and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), some of which are being used in its ongoing genocidal campaign in Palestine.

Creating a policy regime for US war and plunder

The implementation of U.S. imperialism's geopolitical and economic agenda in the Philippines relies heavily on the collusion of a trusted and subservient puppet in the

Marcos Jr. regime. To facilitate the LEC, Pax Silica, and the ESZ, Marcos Jr. actively crafted national laws and programs to create the best policy environment for US imperialist plunder of the country's resources.

In November 2023, the Philippines signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the US Commercial Service for the Partnership for Sustainable Development and Investment in Mineral Extraction and Processing.

This agreement operationalizes a US-funded \$5 million technical assistance program to exploit the Philippines' critical minerals. By embedding USAID's Regulatory Reform Support Program for National Development (RESPOND) Project directly within key Philippine government agencies, including the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Department of Finance (DOF), and the DTI, the Marcos regime has effectively institutionalized foreign bureaucratic control over native resource extraction. This mining initiative directly fulfills directives forged during Marcos Jr.'s May 2023 meeting with Biden in Washington.

To further smooth the path for foreign capital, the Marcos regime has systematically restructured the country's legislative framework to benefit foreign investors at the expense of national sovereignty. The CREATE MORE Act, which Marcos signed in November 2024, aggressively slashes corporate income taxes for strategic investments from 25 percent to 20 percent and offers 100% tax deductions for power expenses, serving as a massive state subsidy for foreign-dominated, energy-intensive manufacturing, such as the expected activities in Pax Silica's ESZ. Furthermore, the Philippines, long pressured by the American Chamber



Military agreements, defense-industrial cooperation, infrastructure corridors, critical minerals partnerships, and economic zones are interconnected components of this strategy. Together, they transform the Philippines into both a logistical platform for US military operations and a strategic node in US-controlled supply chains.

of Commerce (AmCham) and other foreign business interests to lift constitutional restrictions on foreign land ownership, signed the Investors' Lease Act in September 2025, liberalizing land use and extending foreign lease terms from 50 to 99 years.

This legislative surrender extends deeply into national infrastructure through the new Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Code, in which USAID and the US Embassy in Manila directly train Philippine officials to navigate the rules and attract foreign capital. This is reinforced by the Accelerated Right-of-Way (ARROW) Act of September 2025, which expands the government's aggressive power of eminent domain to private corporations. Crucially, Section 17 of the ARROW Act explicitly insulates foreign-assisted initiatives, such as large-scale infrastructure projects backed by the U.S., from local property disputes and court delays. Through these synchronized mechanisms, the

Marcos Jr. regime ensured that Philippine land, laws, and resources remain entirely subservient to US imperialist ambitions and plans.

Opportunities for the anti-imperialist movement

U.S. imperialism in the Philippines today represents not merely a continuation of traditional neocolonial domination but a substantial deepening of imperialist control shaped by the intensifying U.S.-China competition. The Philippines is increasingly being integrated into a unified military-economic architecture designed to contain China, secure strategic supply chains, guarantee access to critical resources, and preserve U.S. global dominance.

Military agreements, defense-industrial cooperation, infrastructure corridors, critical minerals partnerships, and economic zones are interconnected components of this strategy. Together, they transform the Philippines into both a logistical platform for US military operations and a strategic node in US-controlled supply chains.

They expose Filipinos to the dangers and destruction of regional conflicts, undermine national sovereignty and patrimony, and subordinate Philippine development and the rights and welfare of the people to the strategic interests of US imperialism in ways never before seen since the American colonizers granted the country its nominal independence 80 years ago.

However, the current landscape also offers significant opportunities for the Philippine anti-imperialist movement to strengthen and expand. For instance, the intensifying U.S.-China rivalry provides a crucial opening to educate the public and build broad support for an independent foreign policy. Furthermore, the aggressive push for resource-intensive projects tied to the US strategic agenda, such as the LEC, Pax Silica, and ESZ, creates new avenues for broad-based coalitions. These projects can serve as rallying points against foreign military bases, imperialist plunder, and war, effectively mobilizing environmentalists, land rights advocates, Indigenous groups, and peace activists, among others. ■

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