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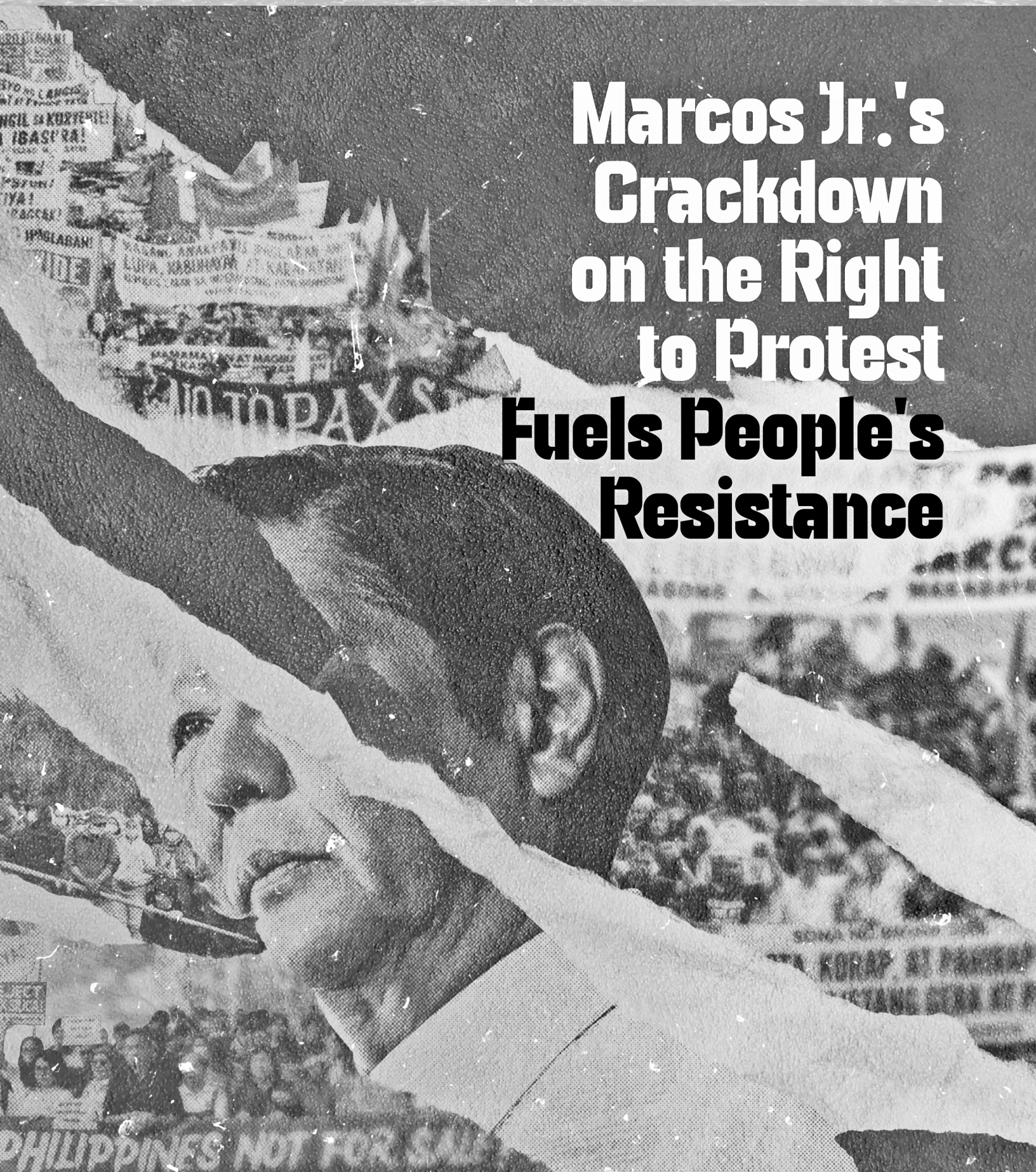
Marcos Jr.'s Crackdown on the Right to Protest Fuels People's Resistance



Marcos Jr.'s Crackdown on the Right to Protest Fuels People's Resistance

The third quarter of 2026 further exposed the Marcos Jr. regime's systematic suppression of the people's right to protest, signalling a turn for the worse in the current regime's repressiveness.

Historically, squelching the right to protest reached unprecedented levels under the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos Sr. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's "state of emergency" also strictly forbade protest actions through her "calibrated preemptive response" amid continuing mass actions to oust her from power. Under the Duterte regime, martial law was declared in Mindanao and mass protests during the COVID pandemic were violently dispersed in Metro Manila and other urban centers.

Protest actions are being suppressed, obstructed and violently dispersed under the crisis-ridden Marcos Jr. regime, with trumped-up cases filed against protesters for alleged violations of various local ordinances and the martial law-era Batas Pambansa (BP) No. 880.

BP 880 ostensibly guarantees the people's constitutional right to "peaceably assemble" and air their grievances, but actually restricts it. The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) has argued that BP 880 is unconstitutional because it imposes prior restraint on free speech by requiring rally permits in most public spaces. BAYAN also assailed the government's discriminatory stance, citing that pro-government demonstrations are not restricted, but assemblies critical of government policies are subject to strict enforcement, denied permits when applied for, or violently dispersed.

The Marcos Jr. regime has used both deception and a mailed fist policy to squelch the people's resistance, terrorize those who oppose its anti-people policies, and violently disperse street protests to maintain itself in power. This, despite the fact that protests are being triggered by widespread unrest that is born out of massive high-level corruption, a crippling economic crisis and the thick veil of impunity that has prevented wrongdoers from being held accountable.

Meanwhile, the regime's minions and talking heads as well as an army of online trolls slander people's organizations and leaders of the mass movement by branding them as terrorists. They also spread the lie that violence during rallies is initiated by the protesters to justify the use of state violence against them.

Recently, state authorities have been attempting to further relegate protest issues to the sideline by harping on a new and dangerous narrative: that political demonstrations have been serving as training and testing grounds for youth gangs oriented towards violence and criminality. In an attempt to sow fear among the populace, interior and local government secretary Jonvic Remulla has recently alleged that up to 58 of the more than 200 persons arrested in the gigantic anti-corruption rally of 2025 were members of TBS (True Brown Style), a gang of Hispanics and Filipino-Americans in California that has allegedly expanded toward every province in the Philippines in the past several years.

Government propagandists have been hard put forwarding the idea that protest violence has been emanating from the disciplined ranks of student activists articulating about social issues. TBS is now the new boogeyman in a terror-grooming narrative with a twist that is aimed at stripping protests of legitimacy and justifying the further infliction of violence against protesters.

Meanwhile, in the countryside, where virtual martial law prevails, the military enforces repressive laws to block protests assailing big landlord and comprador interests out to grab the lands and resources of peasant and indigenous communities.

The Marcos Jr. regime's heightened repression is a direct consequence of the unprecedentedly massive outpouring of rage at the flood control scam in 2025. The people saw the direct link between the failed or non-existent flood control projects and the inundation of their communities. They saw government crooks and the private contractors live luxurious lives while the vast majority wallowed in poverty. And they also saw Marcos Jr. go through the motions of putting mid-level bureaucrats in jail to deflect public attention from his own leading role in enabling corruption and profiting from it. Most importantly, they see through Marcos Jr.'s feigned sympathy with the protests as he increasingly clamps down on rallies and the progressive activists leading them.

Up to 244 individuals were arrested, tortured, and slapped with tumults and sedition cases after the anti-corruption rally of September 21, 2025. Four activist leaders were charged with illegal assembly after the May First rally of 2026. Up to 51 were arrested, most of them youth, during the State of the Nation Address rally, and nine of them charged with direct assault. During the anti-Pax Silica on September 11, 2026, five paralegals assisting victims of police brutality were arrested and slapped with trumped-up assault charges.

In Nueva Vizcaya and Benguet, local residents protesting the encroachment of mining firms into their farms and ancestral lands are being systematically harassed and their barricades violently breached. So far, 70 individuals in Nueva Vizcaya are facing charges for defending their land and 30 cases have been filed against community leaders, including elected officials and even their legal counsels who have had to post bail of over a million pesos for their temporary liberty.

These cases also constitute SLAPP or Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation, which are utilized by powerful entities to suppress free speech and public criticism. They are designed to intimidate or silence critics by harassing and burdening them with legal costs.

In all these incidents, the police falsely claimed to have exercised "maximum tolerance," but unhesitatingly wielded their truncheons and batons to rough up, push and drive away rallyists. Police forces, some of them armed with sniper rifles, violated protocol and penetrated the demonstrators' ranks during the SONA rally last July 27, 2026. They stopped vehicles bringing protesters to the rally sites, harassed the drivers, and in some instances, had the vehicles towed for invented traffic violations. Banners and streamers were seized. Cellphone signals were jammed on the pretext of preventing "terrorist attacks."

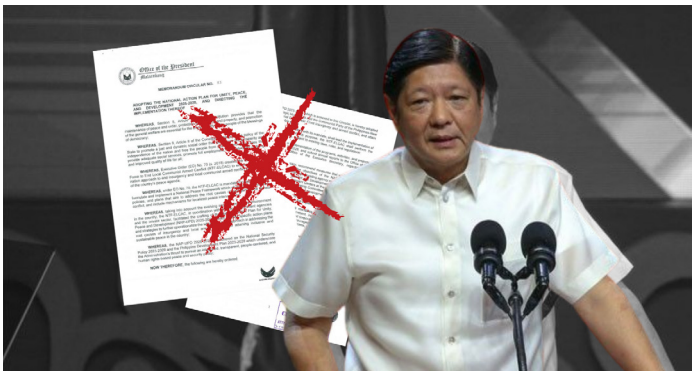
With BP 880 constantly brandished to threaten and suppress the people exercising their right to free expression and taking action to show their opposition to repressive government policies, marching on the streets and conducting mass actions in public places are being maliciously depicted as criminal offenses. The police and state authorities baselessly claim that all protests without permits are illegal. Even the burning of effigies has been banned, an act tantamount to censorship.

Journalists covering protests have not been spared from police brutality. During a protest against US war and aggression amid the visit of US State Secretary Marco Rubio on July 22, 2026, police ganged up on a photojournalist taking pictures of the harassment of a Moro woman leader. The police later gave the lame excuse that they mistook him for a protester, even if he had proper, highly visible identification and several cameras slung on his shoulder.

The NAP-UPD: Framework for repression

Heightened repression under the Marcos Jr. regime does not constitute a random response to perceived threats from growing people's resistance. It derives from an operational plan to combat the so-called communist insurgency. Under this operational plan entitled the National Action Plan for Unity, Peace and Development (NAP-UPD), all agencies of government from the national to the local level as well as private sector entities are weaponized by the lead agency, the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), to disseminate anti-communist propaganda to vilify and delegitimize people's organizations which are branded as "communist terrorist group front organizations" (CTGFO) and mass leaders who are labelled "CTGFO personalities". The NTF-ELCAC calls this all-out strategy the "whole-of-nation approach."

Terror-tagged individuals are constantly harassed and pressured to pose as surrendering armed rebels. Those who refuse to go along with this charade are slapped with trumped-up cases, arrested and jailed. Worse, they may fall victim to enforced disappearance or extrajudicial killing.



The NAP-UPD likewise utilizes the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 (ATA) and the Terrorism Financing Prevention and Suppression Act of 2012 (TFPSA) to judicially harass, arbitrarily arrest and detain dissenters, including human rights defenders.

The slew of terrorism-related charges against Cagayan Valley activists Agnes Mesina, Isabelo Adviento, Jackie Valencia, Walter Villegas, Calixto Cabantac and Mia Liquigan is one case in point. So is the terrorist designation of Cordillera People's Alliance leaders Windel Bolinget, Stephen Tauli, Jennifer Awingan-Taggaoa and Sarah Abellon Alikes and subsequent dismissal by the Baguio Regional Trial Court of a petition to nullify this as well as the freezing of their personal and organizational accounts.



Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA)

In a related development, Atty. Rex Gorgonio of the National Union of People's Lawyers-Negros has filed petitions for amparo and habeas data to seek protection from harassment and a series of death threats after his defense of beleaguered staff of Paghidaet sa Kauswagan Development Group (PDG) who are also facing trumped-up terrorism financing charges.



Atty. Rex Gorgonio

Eleven development workers formerly or presently associated with the PDG have been accused of terrorism financing. Authorities based the accusations on the testimonies of so-called surenderees who claimed to have received supplies from the activists while staying in an alleged NPA camp back in 2019.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court has issued the writs of amparo and habeas data for PDG peasant rights advocates Joselito Macapobre, Analyn Mirano, and Ma. Anabelle Ilustrisimo. The SC also issued a Temporary Protection Order (TPO) that mandates AFP chief Lt. Gen. Antonio G. Nafarrete, other high-ranking military officers and forces under their command not to go within one kilometer of the petitioners and their immediate family members, while directing them to answer the allegations before the Court of Appeals.

The activists also trooped to the Court of Appeals last September 24 to challenge the constitutionality of the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 and its twin, the Terrorism Financing Prevention and Suppression Act of 2012.

The NTF-ELCAC has been intensifying its red- and terror-tagging campaigns to include the delisting of progressive partylist groups and the delegitimization of teachers', health workers' and government unions. The NTF-ELCAC has repeatedly tried to have the Gabriela Women's Party disqualified from joining the electoral race. Former NTF-ELCAC talking head Lorraine Badoy-Partosa has also repeated her old allegations that the Alliance of Health Workers is a communist front, even after having her medical license suspended for similar utterances in the past.

The NTF-ELCAC's obsession with delegitimizing such groups stems from fears that a huge sector of professionals organized along progressive lines, especially within government, can tip the balance in the ongoing struggle for hearts and minds and undermine and render inutile the NAP-UPD's "whole-of-nation approach" to counter-insurgency altogether.

Marcos Jr.'s policies triggering more protests

The worsening political and economic crisis is expected to generate even more protests and people's actions calling for immediate relief, justice and accountability. The Filipino people seethe in anger against Marcos Jr.'s puppetry, corruption, and inutility amid the crisis and see him as a burden that the country should be rid of.

Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s insistence on pursuing the failed neoliberal economic model that has delivered control over the Philippine economy on a silver platter to the US and other foreign powers by flooding local markets with imported goods, has decimated local industry and agriculture. Neoliberalism likewise removed government regulations meant to safeguard public interests. Deregulation not only abandoned the masses to the vagaries of the market, it also led to the erosion of hard-won labor rights like a guaranteed minimum wage and job security.

Under the neoliberal framework, the government has also largely stepped back from providing essential services to the people, leading to privatization and the rising costs of health, education, housing and other basic services.



Around 70% of the country's employed labor force are stuck in informal, low-paying, part-time or so-called self-employed work, rather than stable, high-productivity formal sector jobs, according to IBON Foundation. With their low wages and unstable jobs and incomes, most families are unable to keep up with steadily rising living expenses and struggle to afford even basic necessities.

The much-hyped grant of an ₱85-wage hike in the National Capital Region soon came to naught when a regional trial court imposed a temporary restraining order that eventually segued into a permanent injunction. A subsequent wage hike of ₱60.00 was later approved. Whichever order would have prevailed, however, the resulting ₱755 to ₱770 daily minimum wage in Metro Manila remains a far cry from IBON's estimate of ₱1,200 to ₱1,400 needed daily to cover basic food, housing, health care, education and essential non-food needs. Steep inflation, especially in staple foods like rice, utilities and transportation has been eroding the purchasing power of the Philippine peso long before any wage adjustments take effect. Low income families bear the brunt of inflation without adequate safety nets or the assurance of wage growth.

The prevalence of low productivity jobs in the service sector has degraded both national industrialization and agricultural development, forcing the country to rely on imports to meet much of domestic consumption. The heavy reliance on imports is depleting the country's reserves, compelling it to resort to debt.

The results of a heavy debt burden can be readily seen in the proposed budget for 2027 which calls for deficit spending. The budget allocates more than 30% to debt service and imposes cuts on government spending for social services, especially health and housing (suffering reductions of 21% and 37%, respectively). Marcos Jr. has caused external debt to balloon to P5.95 trillion as of end-March 2026 and is expected to surpass the Duterte regime's debt record by the end of the year.



This same budget that bears Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s imprimatur, is riddled with confidential and intelligence funds and other pork (with the Office of the President taking the lion's share), and makes available the same opportunities for corruption that led to the explosion of a massive scandal in 2025 triggered by exposés of anomalous flood control projects.

Marcos Jr. is now caught in the maelstrom of this scandal that has been buffeting his regime for months. He and his subalterns are taking pains to conceal Marcos Jr.'s own culpability by letting elements of his clique like former House Speaker Martin Romualdez take the fall for him. Their efforts have especially been frantic after a member of Marcoses' inner circle disclosed a year ago that in the first quarter of 2025 alone, P8 billion in graft money had been delivered to Malacañang.

Meanwhile, Marcos Jr.'s continued adherence to the neoliberal economic model has made inevitable his government's acquiescence to the US' Pax Silica initiative, a gargantuan economic security zone project centered in New Clark City in Tarlac that will result in greater plunder, environmental destruction, the heightened exploitation of cheap labor, the displacement of peasants and indigenous peoples and the further trampling of our national sovereignty.

This project is part of the Luzon Economic Corridor, that is intended to spur the dumping of imperialist capital, personnel and materiel through infrastructure projects such as railways, renewable energy, seaports, airports, roads and bridges designed to counter China's presence in the region.



Marcos Jr.'s choice of entangling the country in this grand imperialist project, however, is bound to trigger massive people's protests especially in the run-up to US Pres. Donald Trump's visit this November where he is expected to sign the framework agreement for the Pax Silica Initiative.

As its contribution to the Pax Silica Initiative, the Philippines' role is to supply the critical minerals needed to feed a US-dominated global supply chain for the manufacture of industrial goods and weapons. To do this, the Marcos Jr. government has fast-tracked the granting of foreign mining permits on some nine million hectares of mineralized land nationwide through Executive Order (EO) No. 122, thereby converting the country's mineral-rich areas as strategic assets for the US initiative.

This intensified drive to extract mineral resources is already stoking fierce defiance from peasants and indigenous people in Nueva Vizcaya and areas of the Cordillera, whose lands are now up for grabs. With its nationwide application, the forcible implementation of EO 122 is certain to spark resistance across the country.



With the stakes this high, the current level of repression against peasant and indigenous rights activists, anti-mining and environmental advocates and their supporters will likely escalate from the mere filing of SLAPP-related charges to more serious human rights violations such as actual physical violence, extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances. This, coupled with the scaled-up suppression of people's protests already being seen, draws an ugly picture of a puppet regime desperately resorting to increasingly repressive methods to pander to its imperialist master and preserve itself in power.

Violation of human rights and international humanitarian law in the third quarter of 2026

Extrajudicial Killings

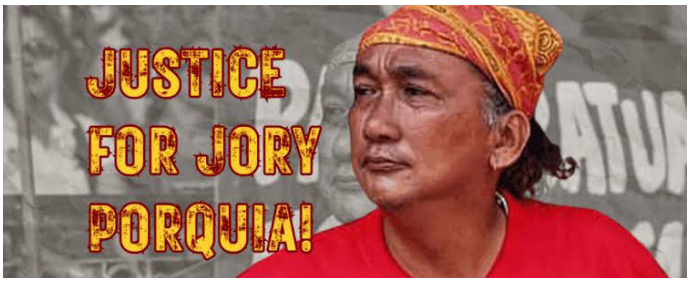
The longstanding climate of impunity in the country has enabled extrajudicial killings to become a systematic and enduring instrument of fascist state repression, as seen in the absence of justice and accountability for EJK victims even before Marcos Jr.'s time.

Eleven years ago, on September 1, 2015 in Lianga, Surigao del Sur, under the regime of Benigno Aquino III, three Lumad leaders were brutally killed by elements of the Magahat paramilitary group in collusion with the 36th Infantry Battalion and the Special Forces Regiment of the Philippine Army. Killed were Emerito Samarca, director of ALCADEV, or Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development, Inc., a secondary school for Lumad children; Dionel Campos, leader of Malahutayong Pakigbisog alang sa Sumusunod (MAPASU), a Lumad organization active in the fight against large-scale mining in Surigao del Sur; and Manobo leader Datu Juvello Sinzo. There have been two more presidents since the Lianga Massacre was perpetrated, yet there has been no justice for Samarca, Campos and Sinzo.



Under Duterte, there were 26 massacre incidents, claiming 442 victims of extrajudicial killings of activists, rights defenders and civilians, most of whom were farmers. More than halfway through Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s term, six massacre incidents involving 35 victims have already been documented. Massacres and extrajudicial killings have marked successive regimes, with the recent Negros 19 massacre in Toboso, Negros Occidental standing out for the sheer number of civilian victims. Injustice and impunity continue to reign under Marcos Jr., as his administration works double time to vilify the victims and justify the killings under its counterinsurgency program, the National Action Plan for Unity, Peace and Development (NAP-UPD).

In a more recent display of impunity, on July 30, 2026, Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) secretary Jonvic Remulla absolved the Philippine National Police (PNP) over the death of construction worker Eric Saber, who was killed during the police's violent dispersal of the anti-corruption rally on September 21, 2025 along the streets of Mendiola and Recto.



Meanwhile, on the same date, the United Nations Human Rights Committee, an 18-member body that monitors the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which the Philippines is a signatory, accepted and registered the complaint against the Philippine government on the killing of Jose Reynaldo "Jory" Porquia and called on the government to submit its response on the matter. Porquia, Bayan Muna-Iloilo City coordinator, long-time community organizer, and labor and environmental activist, was gunned down in his home on April 30, 2020. His murder came after months of surveillance and red-tagging by the Philippine National Police.

Porquia's assassination was also taken up by UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression Irene Khan, in her September 2024 communication to the Philippine government, where she raised concerns over widespread red-tagging, the pattern of attacks and judicial harassment against activists, and the "pervasive impunity" surrounding these cases.

In a related development, on July 14, 2026, UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders Mary Lawlor launched "Chasing Shadows," a report she commissioned into the killings of five human rights defenders, including that of veteran trade unionist Jude Thaddeus Fernandez. Fernandez was gunned down on September 29, 2023, in Binangonan, Rizal, during a raid on the house he was staying at by elements of the CIDG.

August 2026 also marked the 10th year since the height of the brutal extrajudicial killings under Duterte's term. His "war on drugs" remains one of the most severe human rights violations with at least 30,000 victims. Many of the families remain in search of accountability and justice.

Violations of international humanitarian law

In Davao del Norte. On September 19, New People's Army member **Arnida Cuaton Maguiguilid** was shot in the back by suspected military agents as she was entering the boarding house in Tagum City where she was staying. She is now paralyzed from the waist down. Maguiguilid was unarmed and on medical leave due to a difficult pregnancy and was therefore hors de combat, but was nonetheless targeted. Her housemate brought her to the hospital. Five days later, however, the 603rd Infantry Brigade and 6th Infantry Division seized her from her hospital bed, paraded her before the media and falsely claimed in a Facebook post that Maguiguilid had surrendered on her own after fellow Red fighters allegedly shot her.

The military's brutal treatment of Maguiguilid is a violation of the United Nations General Assembly's Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict as well as the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL).

In yet another despicable incident, the 93rd Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army (IBPA) published in its Facebook page on September 17, 2026 the pictures of a 7-year old child to pressure her mother, an NPA guerrilla, to surrender. The batallion made a show of throwing a birthday party for the child and published photos of it online as part of a psywar operation.

The publication of the child's pictures for military purposes violated the child's privacy and was likewise contrary to international laws of war. The Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 states that civilians, especially children, must be treated humanely. Posting the child's name, photograph and location while giving her mother an ultimatum to surrender was not only inhumane and exploitative, it was tantamount to holding the child hostage to compel her mother to do something against her will.

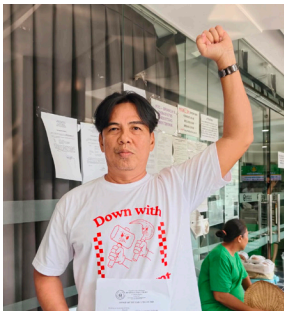
In Abra. Last August 4, the 50th and 98th IBPA deliberately delayed the retrieval by relatives and human rights groups of the remains of three NPA guerrillas killed in a military operation in Licuan-Baay. The remains of the three, identified as **Eugene Hilaus, Enrique Dayandante and Moises Balabag,** were in an advanced stage of decomposition and turned over to their families only after two days. The rights groups likewise assailed the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (AFP) release of photographs of the dead guerrillas lying exposed in a barren mountain area vulnerable to decomposition and desecration. They decried that using photographs of the bodies for military propaganda while withholding them from the families was a despicable violation of international humanitarian law.

Illegal Arrests and Detention



In Taguig City. Five paralegals were arrested and at least 27 protesters injured during the violent dispersal of a rally against the Luzon Economic Corridor (LEC) investors forum at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Bonifacio Global City on September 10. Paralegals **Jona Yang, Kenneth Castro and Mara Peralta** were arbitrarily arrested while the protesters were peacefully dispersing, while **RC Placido and Daya Juliano,** paralegals of the National Network of Agrarian Reform Advocates (NNARA) Youth and Karapatan, respectively, were arrested at the Taguig City police station when they accompanied Atty. Julianne Agpalo of the National Union of People's Lawyers (NUPL) to check on Yang, Castro and Peralta.

All five have been falsely charged with direct assault. They were able to post bail and were released on September 12, while trumped-up charges of direct assault are anticipated to be filed in court against them.



John Ruiz

In Cebu City. On August 31, 2026, Bayan Muna-Central Visayas coordinator **John Ruiz** was arrested by elements of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group on trumped-up charges of attempted murder. The Cebu City Police Office (CCPO) branded Ruiz as Cebu's "Top 1 Provincial Most Wanted Person" and ridiculously claimed that his arrest was the result of an "intelligence-driven operation", even if Rumol is highly visible in Cebu and often grants media interviews.

Also named in the arrest warrant used against Ruiz are Cebu-based activists **Jhonggie Rumol,** former executive director and current consultant of the Visayas Human Development Agency, and **Dyan Gumanao,** vice chairperson of Hustisya. The trumped-up case filed in Himamaylan City, Negros Occidental, stemmed from false allegations that the three were involved in an armed encounter in Toboso, Negros Occidental, on April 6, 2023. Ruiz, Gumanao and Rumol have posted bail for their temporary liberty.

In Nueva Vizcaya. The police arrested twelve protesters last August 28, 2026 when they violently dispersed a barricade put up by **some 1,000 residents of Kasibu town** to block mining exploration activities by the Northern Luzon Mineral Resources Corp. (NLMRC). Prior to this, three other environmental defenders were arrested on August 19 from the same barricade. The residents disputed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR) claim that it obtained the residents' free, prior and informed consent.



The Kasibu barricade was put up on May 8, 2026 and thus far, 14 residents have been arrested and 30 cases filed against over 70 individuals. The protesters continue to experience harassment and red-tagging daily.

On September 24, 2026, the Municipal Trial Court of Kasibu and the Regional Trial Court of Bayombong issued arrest warrants for indigenous anti-mining leader Donny Dugay and Barangay Pao Councilor Anthony Glenn Guingayan Sr.

In Laguna. Community organizers **Binay Serrano and Christina Pasion** were arrested in a joint military and police operation on July 30, 2026, in the house they were staying in Barangay San Isidro, Cabuyao, Laguna. Serrano, a Mangyan-Buhid community organizer, escaped the intense militarization in her native Mindoro and had to temporarily leave her community for her own safety. Pasion is a Filipino-American artist and activist who came to the Philippines to volunteer and work with marginalized communities, particularly peasants and Indigenous Peoples.



Christina Pasion

After police and military operatives barged into their residence early that morning, Binay's whereabouts remained unknown to the public for at least 72 hours. The quick reaction team dispatched by KARAPATAN-Southern Tagalog later located her at the San Jose District jail in Occidental Mindoro, where she was informed of the trumped-up murder charges against her. Meanwhile, immigration officers took Pasion to the main immigration office, where she was served a warrant for overstaying. She was then immediately transferred to Camp Bagong Diwa. During questioning, she received no clear answers regarding the timeline of her deportation. Weeks later, her lawyers learned that a complaint was filed against her at the Office of the Prosecutor in Mindoro Occidental for attempted murder. As of writing, she remains detained at Camp Bagong Diwa.

In Quezon City. A total of 51 protesters were arbitrarily arrested and manhandled as the SONA ng Bayan rally was about to begin at around 11:30 a.m. of July 27, 2026, along Commonwealth Avenue. Elements of the Philippine National Police attacked the ranks of rallyists near Feria Road corner Commonwealth Avenue and arrested individuals wearing black shirts. Many of those arrested were youths, some of them minors. They were brought to different police stations in Quezon City before being transferred to Camp Karingal.



Many, if not most, of those arrested were manhandled, pinned to the ground, and physically assaulted by the police. Also, the police who made the arrests have no body-worn cameras. Police also attempted to arrest an elderly farmer, a survivor of abduction, who was present at the rally.

Those arrested were questioned in a closed room without the presence of counsel, asked about their personal information, compelled to identify individuals who joined the protest, and pressured to admit membership in an organization called "Vandals United." In a separate round of interrogation, three men claiming to be representatives of the National Union of People's Lawyers (NUPL) and the Commission on Human Rights approached the detainees. When the detainees demanded to see identification, the men refused, saying it would compromise their confidentiality.

To date, all trumped-up charges of obstruction of justice, resistance and disobedience to a person of authority, malicious mischief, and violation of the Quezon City anti-vandalism ordinance, have been dismissed.

Political Prisoners

As of September 30, 2026, there are 551 political prisoners being held in various detention facilities in the Philippines.

In the continuing struggle to secure the release of community journalist Frenchie Mae Cumpio and development worker Marielle Domequil, their families and legal counsels petitioned the Court of Appeals on August 3, 2026, to reverse their unjust conviction for financing terrorism. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention supported this call on August 28, 2026 when it urged the Philippine government to immediately release Cumpio and Domequil, as well as Karapatan human rights worker Alexander Philip Abinguna.



Ceeka Garzon

On a related note, Mayla Garzon, the mother of detained cultural activist Charlize "Ceeka" Garzon, has decried the extremely slow pace of Ceeka's case, saying the Occidental Mindoro court trying her has set trial schedules that are expected to drag on for at least two years. Ceeka was arrested on March 29, 2026 in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro and slapped with trumped-up cases of frustrated murder and illegal possession of firearms and explosives. In the first days of her detention, she was physically assaulted, threatened with death and red-tagged.

Meanwhile, a number of political prisoners have regained their freedom. In Mindanao, Raquel Dahoya, Ryan Daluniag, Jhon Egama, and Ronell Nobong, who were falsely charged with violating international humanitarian law, were acquitted on August 19, 2026 by a Cagayan de Oro court after a six-year trial.



Ruben & Precy Saluta

On August 19, 2026, a General Santos City court acquitted retired NDFP consultant Ruben Saluta and his wife Presentacion and their co-accused Yvonne Losaria of trumped-up charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives. The elderly and ailing couple was arrested almost immediately upon arriving in General Santos City in January 2023.

Also freed from the National Bilibid Prison on July 22, 2026, was long-time political prisoner Rolando Pañamogan.

In Panay, Migrante coordinator Josephine Porquia was released on July 7, 2026, following the dismissal of trumped-up charges of illegal possession of explosives.

Political Prisoners as of September 2026

Region	Total number of Political Prisoners	Women	NDFP	Arrested under Marcos Jr.
Cordillera	16	2	1	12
Ilocos	8	2	0	4
Cagayan Valley	21	3	0	8
Central Luzon	11	6	0	8
Southern Tagalog	63	17	0	39
National Capital Region	65	14	5	4
Bicol	17	2	0	15
Western Visayas	16	3	0	8
Negros Island Region	96	10	1	36
Central Visayas	6	0	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
SoCSKSargen	30	4	0	0
Caraga	66	14	0	18
Total	**551**	**100**	**10**	**162**

Sick **68**

Elderly **73**

Arrested as Minor **4**

Even as Panay Alliance Karapatan called for the dropping of the remaining fabricated charges against her, however, the Anti-Terrorism Council arbitrarily designated Porquia a "terrorist individual" in a resolution dated August 27, 2026.

The move was reminiscent of the Marcos Jr. government's judicial harassment of Cordilleran activist Sarah Alikes, who was slapped with a terrorist designation in 2023 after her acquittal on trumped-up rebellion charges. Subsequent terrorism financing charges against Alikes were also dismissed in June 2026, further underscoring the baselessness of her designation as a terrorist.



Mary Jane Veloso

In a related development, Mary Jane Veloso, an overseas Filipino worker who fell victim to human trafficking and was convicted and sentenced to death by an Indonesian court in 2010 after being framed for drug trafficking, walked free after 16 years of imprisonment when she was granted absolute pardon on September 24, 2026.

Mary Jane's journey to freedom was the result of the combined efforts of migrant workers' groups, church people, progressive lawyers and other advocates who tirelessly campaigned for her release. In 2015, her lawyers from the NUPL won her a reprieve from execution to enable her to testify against her trafficker who was facing charges in the Philippines. In December 2024, she was remanded to the Correctional Institution for Women (CIW) on a prisoner transfer agreement with Indonesia. Her release came almost a year after the NUPL filed a habeas corpus petition with the Supreme Court.



Meanwhile, political prisoners at the CIW exposed the loss of ₱6 million from the trust fund of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) at the facility and led other PDL in demanding that the money be returned.

Prisoners at the facility had been allowed to withdraw up to ₱2,000 per week from the trust fund which consists of remittances from their families and money earned by the PDL through income-generating activities. As a result of the trust fund mess, however, withdrawals were eventually stopped, leaving the PDL unable to buy basic needs like food, personal hygiene items and medicine.

Some 300 incarcerated women at the CIW Maximum Security Camp eventually massed up at the prison's control gate on August 27 where they were met by armed Bucor guards and forced to disperse. The inmates also launched a noise barrage on September 1 to express their anger and demand action from the CIW. Hundreds of them had earlier signed a petition calling for accountability, the return of the missing monies and the abolition of the anomaly-ridden trust fund system.

Meanwhile, a team dispatched by the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) on August 31 and September 1 to look into the issue was forced to wait for hours by CIW personnel before being let in and were prevented at first from discussing the missing funds with the PDL.

The trust fund mess was reported by the media and brought up by Gabriela Women's Party Rep. Sarah Elago during congressional deliberations on the budget of the Department of Justice and Bureau of Corrections (BuCor).

In an attempt at damage control, the BuCor called for a meeting on September 3 with the NUPL, which has clients among the CIW political prisoners. The NUPL was accompanied by representatives from the Samahan ng Ex-detainees Laban sa Detensyon at Aresto (SELDA) and Karapatan. At the meeting, the BuCor said that its investigation was ongoing and that it was considering filing charges against the erring CIW personnel.

Meanwhile, at the CIW, the newly appointed acting superintendent finally met with the political prisoners on September 11, 2026 after ten days of ignoring their request for a dialogue. Two weeks after the dialogue, the missing funds were restored and the withdrawal schedules normalized.

The BuCor later announced the results of its investigation and said that it would be filing criminal, administrative, and civil cases against two former superintendents and five personnel responsible for the loss of the trust fund monies.

Accountability has not gone high enough, however. The BuCor's own guidelines on the trust fund system require prison administrators to give weekly and monthly reports on the PDL monies held in trust. Ranking BuCor officials cannot wash their hands claiming that they did not receive any reports from the CIW in the two years that the trust fund system has been in place. The absence of reports, if true, was a blatant violation of the BuCor's guidelines and a red flag that they should not have ignored.

Corruption is endemic in the country's jails and prisons and turning a blind eye to it has long been the norm. Such deep-seated corruption cannot be stamped out with a mere changing of the guards.

In the meantime, the arrest and detention of prominent politicians for corruption have brought to the fore the Marcos Jr. government's double standard when it comes to jailing personalities accused of plunder and other high crimes.

Marcos Jr.'s first cousin, former House Speaker Martin Romualdez tried to avoid being jailed in a regular detention facility by conveniently having himself confined at a private

hospital where the police served him an arrest warrant for a ₱7.44-billion plunder case. His lawyers then filed a motion for hospital arrest. An independent medical check-up by government doctors, however, determined that he was fit to be detained in a regular jail, and he was whisked off to the Quezon City Jail Male Dorm in Payatas. Romualdez's lawyers have resorted to filing a motion for bail despite the fact that plunder is a non-bailable offense.

At the same time, however, the Supreme Court also announced that it is mulling house arrest, medical confinement and community-supervised release as legal alternatives to jail detention—a move long demanded by human rights groups especially for elderly and ailing detainees as well as pregnant and nursing mothers. Rights and prison reform advocates welcomed the proposal but found the timing suspicious, as such a move could immediately benefit Romualdez who has claimed to be suffering from a number of ailments, including depression and anxiety.

Sara Duterte, who has been charged with three counts of grave threats before a Quezon City court on top of facing an impeachment trial, also received special treatment when she was not compelled to have her mugshot taken—a requisite for being booked on a criminal charge and for posting bail.

Another famous personality, Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr., who was arrested for malversation after being linked to ghost flood control projects in Bulacan, was allowed to post bail of ₱1 million.

In contrast, political prisoner Fatima Banjawan, who has been charged with illegal possession of firearms and explosives based on planted evidence and the perjured testimonies of soldiers from the 85th IBPA, has been denied bail by the Regional Trial Court in Labo, Camarines Norte hearing her case.

Community journalist Frenchie Mae Cumpio and development worker Marielle Domequil were also denied bail by the Tacloban City court that unjustly convicted them for terrorism financing, a bailable offense.

The most striking example is deceased Juan Ponce Enrile, who was jailed on plunder and graft charges, but was able to walk free on bail, with the court citing his advanced age and fragile health. His co-accused, Atty. Gigi Reyes, was later able to secure her release through a habeas corpus petition, saying that her right to speedy trial had been violated in the course of her nine-year detention.

No elderly, ailing and long-detained political prisoner has ever been released despite these precedents, some of them already died while in detention. The justice system treats equal protection of the law as an alien concept when it comes to political prisoners.

Meanwhile, in a testament to the Philippine justice system's execrable class bias, the Supreme Court reversed the Sandiganbayan's 2018 conviction of Imelda Marcos for graft. The Sandiganbayan ruling had found the late dictator Marcos' widow guilty of seven counts of funneling around US$200 million to various private Swiss foundations while she was Metro Manila governor. She was sentenced to six to 11 years in prison for every count, or a total of 42 to 77 years, but was allowed to post bail and never spent a single day behind bars.

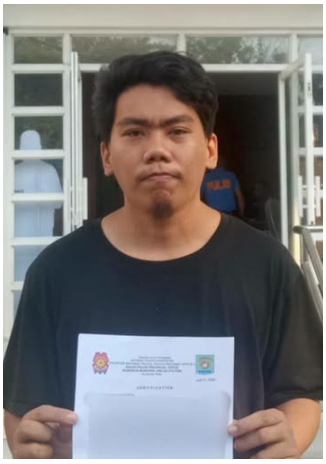
This is in stark contrast to the plight of ordinary detainees who could not afford bail and are immediately hauled to prison after being convicted. This is also in direct opposition to the cases of political prisoners who, upon being unjustly convicted on the basis of manufactured evidence, have the prison gates slammed shut in their faces immediately.

Significantly, a recent pronouncement from DILG secretary Jonvic Remulla may make it even easier for the state to cause the prolonged detention of activists. Remulla said he was proposing that illegal possession of firearms be made a non-bailable offense, which means that state authorities would no longer need to plant explosive devices in addition to firearms in order to ensure that targeted activists are unable to post bail.

Threats, harassment, and intimidation

The third quarter of 2026 ended with a PISTON-led nationwide transport strike to demand the removal of the value added tax (VAT) and excise taxes on oil and push for a fare hike amid the oil price shocks triggered by the Israel- and US-led attacks on Iran. Despite the legitimacy of their demands, however, strikers reported being harassed by the police and threatened with hefty fines and the cancellation of their franchises. It was the quarter's latest example of the state's ongoing clampdown on the people's right to protest.

The following are among the cases of threats, harassment and intimidation monitored and documented by Karapatan for the third quarter of 2026:


Rachelle Trayco

In Aklan. On July 21, 2026, Pagtililitbyog it mga Mangunguma sa Aklan (PANGUMA) vice president **Rachelle Lansarote Trayco** was coerced by NTF-ELCAC elements Mitchelle Tagumpay and Jocelyn Rafael to surrender before the amnesty expires. Several military men also reportedly watched from a distance. This, even if Trayco is a youth farmer with no connections to the NPA.


Michael Esperanza

In Quezon. Michael Orajay Esperanza, a campus journalist at the Southern Luzon State University (SLSU) College of Education, was volunteering last August 12, 2026 in a relief mission in Barangay San Antonio, Capalong town led by The Good Samaritan, a faith-based humanitarian organization, when elements of the 42nd IBPA stopped and questioned the group for more than 30 minutes. The military took photographs and videos of them without their consent.

Esperanza also reported that a few weeks after, a barangay official and an unknown individual showed his mother photos of him in a relief mission and urged her to dissuade him from joining such activities in the future. Esperanza has filed a complaint on the red-tagging and surveillance against him with the Commission on Human Rights.

In Kalinga. The 5th Infantry Division of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) hijacked Kalinga State University's Konsultahang Kabataan on August 14, 2026 which had **KPL Rep. Renee Co** as guest speaker. The Konsultahang Kabataan is an initiative that allows students to directly report their grievances to the Kabataan Partylist. However, the AFP and PNP attended the event and took this as an opportunity to red-tag progressive youth and student organizations.


Petronila Muñoz

In Tarlac. Petronila "Chieftain Pet" Capiz Muñoz, leader of the Aeta-Hunguey, reported that on August 23, 2026, two civilian-clad men on a motorcycle went to the house of her grandson Raymond Muñoz in Sitio Bakero, Barangay Bueno, Capas to ask for directions to her house, but Raymond refused. He was about to ask for their names when the men hurriedly left.

On August 27, 2026, six civilian-clad soldiers from the AFP Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) which has its headquarters in Camp O'Donnell in Capas town, arrived in Chieftain Pet's house where they spoke with her brother Antero Capiz and her husband Ireneo Muñoz. The men asked them if the NPA had been coming to their house. They asked for Ireneo's cellphone number, but he said he had none because he could not afford a phone. They then asked for Chieftain Pet's number, which Ireneo provided because he believed that his wife had nothing to hide. One of the soldiers left his number with instructions to call "should (the NPA) come."

On August 28, 2026, Chieftain Pet began receiving texts and calls from the military and police, asking to talk to her about "the situation in her area." The Aeta-Hunguey are among several indigenous groups opposed to the Pax Silica project which requires them to evacuate from their ancestral lands.

A police officer named Ivy Cubacub also called Chieftain Pet several times in August to inquire about a Facebook post announcing another Aeta group's plans to celebrate Aeta Day. In the same call, Cubacub warned Muñoz to be wary about the people she has been talking to. Chieftain Pet retorted that she and their supporters have been opposing Pax Silica through peaceful means.

Aeta Day is a government-recognized red-letter day marked annually on September 17 in the provinces of Pampanga, Tarlac and Zambales which have sizable Aeta communities.


Atty. Bart Rayco

In Bicol. On August 28, 2026, **Atty. Bartolome "Bart" Rayco** of NUPL-Bicol found two bullets with a black ribbon wrapped around them and a message: "Atty. Bart Rayco MALAPIT KA NA!!" The day after, **Ramon Rescovilla**, chair of the Bicol-wide Concerned Operators and Drivers for Reforms (CONDOR) and national vice chair of PISTON found a similar bullet with a black ribbon wrapped around it. It also had the message: "Ramon Rescovilla, MALAPIT KA NA!" Atty. Rayco had defended Rescovilla and secured his acquittal in December 2025 in a trumped-up case of illegal possession of firearms and explosives filed against him by the military.


Kyle Enero

In Cebu. The police tried to fish for information by calling BPO Industry Employee Network (BIEN)-Cebu president **Kyle Enero** on September 3, 2026, shortly after the arrest of Bayan Muna-Cebu coordinator John Ruiz III. BIEN managed to trace the call to a certain Police Captain Kerby Bagnol of the PNP Regional Intelligence Division-7. Enero has reported being red-tagged and surveilled since 2022 and was publicly red-tagged in October 2023 while running for Sangguniang Kabataan Councilor in Barangay Sambag 1, Cebu City.

The incident also comes barely a month after Enero's illegal dismissal from Azpired Inc., as reprisal for his labor advocacy. He has filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Commission in Region 7.

In another development, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP)-Cebu chair Nic Abasolo and his family continue to face harassment from AFP elements and state agents. As early as February, his sister and niece were repeatedly interrogated and harassed with fabricated rebellion charges, and coerced into surrendering. On August 13, a state agent texted Abasolo's son, demanding a meet-up with Nic Abasolo himself.

In Benguet. On September 9, 2026, anti-riot police attacked the barricade put up by **members of the Kankanaey tribe** from Barangays Bulalacao and Guinaong in Mankayan town to prevent the mining exploration activities of Crescent Mining Development Corp (CMDC). According to the residents, the CMDC did not comply with the requirement to secure the free, prior and informed consent of the affected indigenous communities. The barricade which was set up on September 8, consisted of 70 vehicles and 450 people.

In Negros Occidental. Elements of the Citizens Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) uprooted the cassava, sweet potato and vegetable crops of **farmers in Hacienda Fermina** in Bago City on September 10, 2026. They also threatened a resident who was taking a video of the incident. The farmers have long been asserting their right to cultivate food crops on the land within the hacienda, which is mainly planted to sugar cane.

In Tacloban City. On September 12, 2026 the AFP spoke at a National Service Training Program (NSTP) orientation at **Leyte Normal University**, where they warned students against joining rallies and other activist-led activities, claiming these were "recruitment steps" by the NPA.

On the same day at Tacloban University, the 8th Civil Military Operations Dangpanan (CMO) Battalion discussed "terror grooming" and dissuaded students from criticizing the government and participating in mass mobilizations. Additionally, the military labelled progressive organizations as "terrorist recruitment" sites and warned that socio-political "indoctrination" will lead students to join the communist rebellion.

In Iligan City. A Kabataan Partylist member was railed and harassed by state agents after joining a rally against the privatization of the Agus-Pulangi Hydroelectric Complex (APHEC) on September 12, 2026. According to the Iligan City chapter of KPL, he was tailed by two individuals, one on foot and the other on a motorcycle with plate number J5767F.

In Nueva Ecija. Central Luzon State University student regent **Rashela Ballesteros** received a package disguised as a love letter from a certain Jared Mariano of Guimba town on September 17, 2026. Inside was a photograph showing Ballesteros' face pasted on a soldier's body. The doctored photograph also accompanied a list of requirements to be an AFP officer, and a note saying "Hope I'll see your smile in (sic) campus." The suspicious package came just months after Ballesteros stood against the continuous cases of surveillance, harassment, red-tagging, and intimidation suffered by students in the first week of classes at the university.

Ballesteros also serves as the national convenor of Network Opposed to Pax Silica (NO to Pax Silica), and convenor of the Movement Against Destructive Solar Farms (MADSOLAR) and Save the Rice Granary (STRG).



In Cavite. On September 18, 2026, two soldiers visited **Shaina Maquilan's** residence and warned her parents of her "anti-government activities" at the Cavite State University, where she is the Vice President for External Affairs of the College of Education Student Council.

At 12:00 p.m. of the same date, two policemen and a barangay tanod (village watchman) went to the house of PAMALAKAYA member **Richard Catanza** in Barangay Wawa, Rosario town. The unwanted visitors asked Catanza and his companions about the protest action that PAMALAKAYA had just conducted in the area. They demanded that the group ask permission for any activity it conducts and took pictures of the house occupants without their permission.

Earlier, on September 13, 2026 in the same village, a barangay tanod named Edgardo Robles had also accosted **ten members of NNARA Youth and Sama-samang Artista para sa Kilusang Agraryo (SAKA)** who were on basic masses integration, distributing leaflets and conducting discussions of current issues with the residents. The barangay tanod said "Para kayong mga aktibista" and demanded that they inform the barangay about their activities. They were called to the barangay hall, where barangay personnel took pictures of four of the activists and asked for their names and addresses.

Meanwhile, on July 25, 2026, in Barangay Talaba II, Bacoor City, two men, one of whom identified himself as James Gomez, an official of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU), came to the house of PAMALAKAYA member **Bong Celis**. At the time, three student activists from NNARA Youth and Kadamay were staying there. Gomez said they came to know of Celis through his social media posts. He further claimed that he wanted to know about the dredging operations in the area and the conditions of residents so he could raise this before the OPAPRU. Meantime, his unidentified companion never said a word but was seen talking to someone on his cellphone. He also took pictures of the youth.

In Tondo, Manila. On September 18, 2026 at least five police officers surveilled Block 09 of Tambakan, Baseco. They reportedly asked residents for information on **women organizers from Gabriela**. In the same area, the NTF-ELCAC front YAKAP NG MAGULANG Movement also launched a forum that red-tagged progressive youth organizations like Anakbayan, Kabataan Partylist and the League of Filipino Students.

Two days before, the PNP had also visited the **All UP Academic Employees Union-Manila Chapter** office to warn union members to "keep the September 21 rally peaceful," as if the police had never violently dispersed protests.

In Bulacan. Students of Bulacan State University who wore black to commemorate the 54th anniversary of martial law were barred from entering school premises on the pretext that they could be outsiders. This, even if the students were wearing or carrying their personal student IDs.

In an earlier development, six state agents and military personnel pretending to be farmers searched for Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) national chair **Danilo "Ka Daning" Ramos** on September 12, 2026. Two days later, three of the men returned and asked about peasant organizations in the area. These incidents occurred after a big anti-corruption protest in Malolos on August 31 where Ka Daning was among the leading personalities.

Ka Daning had also suffered intense surveillance and harassment in 2023 and 2024. In January 2024, motorcycle-riding men told his relatives in Malolos that they were looking for Ka Daning, alleging that "he is a terrorist." In August 2023, six unidentified men were reportedly asking for his whereabouts in Malolos in at least four instances.

In Isabela. The school administration of Isabela State University in Echague arbitrarily cancelled the scheduled screening and talkback of award-winning documentary Bloom Where You Are Planted on September 21, 2026. The screening was to serve as the student organizers' martial law commemoration. The school administration cited concerns like rallies, "recruitment," and "anti-government" activities even if the student organizers had submitted the concept paper, program flow and permits for the screening ahead of time. The censorship of the 2025 Cinemalaya-awarded human rights film, as well as the presumption and equation of a recruitment or anti-government activity, was a blatant form of red-tagging.

Meanwhile, NTF-ELCAC elements were found surveilling the area in a separate screening in Santiago City on September 20, 2026.

In Oriental Mindoro. Nine soldiers of the 4th IBPA forced their way into the house of **Minggo Baringay** in Barangay Waygan, Mansalay town on September 21, 2026 ransacked his home and brutally assaulted him. Baringay, a member of the Mangyan-Hananuo tribe, reported the incident to the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), but the latter merely forced him and his family to make peace with the military instead of helping them attain justice.

In Northern Samar. A state agent snatched an activist's phone on September 22, 2026 after breaching the rallyists' ranks and taking photos of the protesters who were demanding the removal of University of Eastern Philippines (UEP) president Cherry Ultra. The victim, identified as volunteer paralegal **Mark Kendrick Orsua**, confronted the state agent, which resulted in a scuffle that damaged Orsua's phone screen. The police on standby did nothing even after the protesters reported the matter to them.

Earlier, the UEP administration had taken down a banner saying "Junk HB 9414" banner. The students confronted UEP security personnel, who pushed them back and almost caused a student to fall down a flight of stairs.

The students charged that House Bill No. 9414, which purportedly seeks to transform the UEP into a National University for Sustainable Studies, was drafted without consulting the stakeholders, including students, faculty, employees, alumni and the community. They also objected to provisions that would automatically have Ultra heading the new institution, with possible reappointment. The students cited questions regarding Ultra's leadership and performance, as well as audit findings pointing to her lack of financial accountability.

In Manila. Talkback speakers were harassed during the special screening last September 22, 2026 of award-winning documentary Bloom Where You Are Planted at the College of St. Benilde. The speakers, who included the film's director **Nonilon Abao**, reported surveillance by an unknown state agent who followed them and continuously took photos.

In Navotas City. On September 28, 2026, seventeen individuals were forced by elements of the AFP 11th Civil-Military Operations Battalion to admit that they were disaffiliating from PAMALAKAYA-Navotas, allegedly a "Communist Terrorist Group," and took an "Oath of Allegiance to the Government of the Republic of the Philippines." In a statement, PAMALAKAYA denied that the individuals were affiliated with the organization and decried the use of the organization's name to support the AFP's fake surrender narrative. PAMALAKAYA likewise said that it will be filing a complaint on the matter with the Commission on Human Rights.

In Muntinlupa City. On September 29, 2026, at 9:15 a.m., two policemen, one of whom was on a motorcycle, approached a group supporting the PISTON-led transport strike massed up at the Alabang Terminal. The motorcycle-riding cop took pictures of the protesters. Anakbayan-Muntinlupa member **Louie Rodriguez**, one of the protesters, also began taking pictures of the policemen for documentation purposes. When the motorcycle-riding cop noticed, he said, "Are you taking pictures so you could post them and bash us?" The policemen tried to snatch Rodriguez's cellphone but he held

on to it. The policeman demanded that he delete the photos, which Rodriguez did. Then the policeman suddenly seized Rodriguez's ID and took a picture of it.

In Leyte. The **Lagado family**, including a 3-year-old and a 16-year-old, was repeatedly harassed by 93rd IB soldiers led by personnel identified as Cris Edison Rivera and Simon, for the entire third quarter of 2026.

On July 28, 2026 military soldiers went to the house of **Brenda Lagado** on the pretext of checking in with her family. However, the military ended up pressuring her into admitting ties with the NPA. Her 16-year old cousin was also physically assaulted and threatened that he would be tortured and killed by soldiers and state agents.

On August 11, 2026, the perpetrators started threatening individuals connected to the Lagado family. In one instance, the teacher of Brenda's three-year old child was questioned to extract information about the family.

By September, persistent harassment by the military turned to blatant coercion, when Brenda's family, including her child, were subjected to threats such as the deportation of her OFW husband.

Rising people's protests

Filipinos continued to rise in defiance amid the grave economic and political crisis besetting the country despite the Marcos Jr. regime's escalating attacks against the people's right to protest.



SONA ng Bayan Rally

SONA ng Bayan. More than 15,000 protesters gathered along Commonwealth Avenue on July 27, 2026, in the SONA ng Bayan, presenting the real state of the nation while Ferdinand Marcos Jr. attempted to regale the country with false achievements and divert public attention from the fact that there has been no full accountability since the bureaucratic corruption scandal exploded in mid-2025. Behind this was Marcos Jr.'s fear of the repercussions once his major culpability in large-scale corruption is exposed.

Two days before the SONA ng Bayan, KARAPATAN-Southern Tagalog gathered for the State of the Human Rights Address 2026 to expose the continuing human rights situation in the region and amplify the people's calls for justice and accountability. With the theme **"Panaghoy at Pag-aklas: Limang Taong Paglaban sa Pasistang Rehimeng US-Marcos Jr. ng Timog Katagalugan"** (Outcry and Resistance: Five Years of Southern Tagalog's Struggle against the US-Marcos Jr. Fascist Regime), the event highlighted years of escalating political repression, militarization, and attacks on civil and political rights under the current administration. KARAPATAN-Southern Tagalog reported that in a span of four years, the Marcos Jr. regime perpetrated 39 extrajudicial killings and 164 arbitrary arrests. There were also 46,918 individuals affected by bombings and indiscriminate firing and 51,992 who were threatened and harassed in the region.



Laya Campaign

Free All Political Prisoners. KARAPATAN led other human rights defenders in launching on July 18, 2026, **LAYA: A Campaign for the Release of Political Prisoners.** Launched days before Marcos Jr.'s SONA and in time for the commemoration of Nelson Mandela day, LAYA renewed calls for the immediate release of all political prisoners while demanding accountability from government officials implicated in corruption. The campaign's call is "Mga kurakot ikulong, bilanggong pulitikal palayain!" (Jail the

corrupt, free all political prisoners!) Citing that the Marcos Jr. regime has arrested and detained at least 165 activists, government critics, and ordinary people, LAYA spokesperson Amanda Echanis said that it is the crooks who should be put to jail, not those who demand accountability and justice.

A highlight of the event was the launching of **Pansamantalang Mundo,** an anthology of poems and other works by women political prisoners at the Correctional Institution for Women. Published by Paper Trail Projects, the book is the product of two years of writing workshops joined by the 10 political prisoners at the CIW.

Freedom for Moro political prisoners. On July 13-15, 2026, the Moro-Christian People's Alliance (MCPA) marked the 25th year of the military crackdown on Basilan that resulted in grave human rights violations and widespread injustice against Moro civilians by launching **Kalimayahan ha Napipinjara (Tausug term for Release the Moro political prisoners).** The military offensives targeted Moro communities following the declaration of a "state of lawlessness" after a spate of kidnappings by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in 2001. Over the years, the number of innocent Moro civilians arrested on suspicion of being ASG members continued to grow. On top of this, Moro communities continue to face indiscriminate terrorist-tagging and arbitrary arrests based on defective warrants originally issued in connection with the ASG cases of 2000-2001. Kalimayahan ha Napipinjara is part of Sabukan On, the campaign to release Moro, Katutubo, and other advocates of national minorities who are unjustly detained.

Day of Action Against the ATA. Human rights groups, people's organizations, and advocates protested at the Department of Justice on July 3, 2026, in a gathering dubbed a Day of Action Against Terror Laws. The protest, which marked the sixth anniversary of the passage of the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, renewed calls for the junking of the ATA. Individuals who were charged with violations of the ATA and its evil twin, the Terrorism Financing Prevention and Suppression Act of 2012, testified on their experiences and denounced how the law was being used to criminalize dissent, derail humanitarian work, and undermine fundamental rights and freedoms.



Later, on September 9, 2026, several protest actions were organized to call for the review of the anti-terror laws. Human rights groups took to the Supreme Court to urge the repeal of the Terrorism Financing Prevention and Suppression Act of 2012 and the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020. According to KARAPATAN, 256 individuals were recorded to have been charged under such laws—most of which are progressive individuals who critique the state.

KARAPATAN and other human rights organizations also met with Ben Saul, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights while Countering Terrorism, during his academic visit in September 2026. In cooperation with the Institute for Human Rights at the UP College of Law, the NUPL held a forum where Saul and legal experts discussed the dire implications of the terror laws on civic space.

Justice for Negros 19. On July 16, 2026, independent publisher Sadiri Publishing launched two poetry collections from Prof. Aurelio Agcaoili's Negros Trilogy **Arsenal of Words** and **We Left & They Kept Dying**. Arsenal of Words, which was co-published by Northern Dispatch and KARAPATAN, explores how language can expose or conceal suffering and how honest words can become a form of resistance. We Left & They Kept Dying is a reflection on Filipino migration, separation, identity, political violence, and the resilience of those who carry their homeland wherever they go.

Prof. Agcaoili is a poet, novelist, scholar, essayist, lexicographer, and journalist and chairs the Department of Indo-Pacific Languages and Literatures at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa.

On August 18 to 19, 2026, a national solidarity mission led by KARAPATAN, Manindigan Negros and Defend Negros was conducted to express solidarity with the peasants in Toboso and other Negros towns impacted by heightened military operations. A protest action was held on August 19 to condemn the lack of accountability of the 79th IBPA and the AFP on the Negros 19 massacre.

International Day of the Disappeared. DESAPARECIDOS led the call to surface victims of enforced disappearances in the Philippines on August 30, 2026. Through a letter addressed to Chief Justice Alexander G. Gesmundo, signed by families of desaparecidos, including those who have filed for the petition of the writ of amparo, urged the Supreme Court to review the writs of amparo and habeas data for their failure to facilitate the surfacing of the disappeared and protect victims of enforced disappearance and their families.

The writ of amparo serves as a protection to individuals whose right to life, liberty, and security has been violated or threatened, whereas the writ of habeas data serves to protect individuals' right to control information held by the state about themselves. Upon issuance of these writs, measures to protect the victims must immediately be carried out.



However, families of the disappeared argue that they remain vulnerable to harassment and their loved ones remain missing not just because of bureaucratic delays, procedural roadblocks, and lack of strict enforcement, but because of the thick veil of impunity that protects the perpetrators.

Meanwhile, the Redemptorist community issued a statement marking the 41st year of the enforced disappearance of **Fr. Rudy Romano, C.Ss.R.** on July 11, 1985. Fr. Rudy, who was then vice president for the Visayas of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, was seized by men from the Military Intelligence Group as he was making his way home to the Redemptorist convent in Cebu City. In their statement, the Redemptorists said that the unresolved disappearance of Fr. Rudy—and all victims of enforced disappearance—remains a painful reminder that genuine peace cannot exist where truth is hidden, and justice remains elusive. They renewed their call for truth, accountability, and full respect for human rights.

Similarly, in Cebu City, KARAPATAN-Central Visayas held a prayer service, a holy mass, and candle-lighting and offering of prayers to mark the anniversary of Fr. Rudy's disappearance. They called for solidarity with the families of the disappeared, strengthening the collective call for justice and continuing the struggle they helped shape.



DESAPARECIDOS also welcomed the Supreme Court's decision granting a petition for certiorari filed by the family of missing labor organizer, **William Lariosa**. The 48th and 60th IBPA and the 10th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army, who have been implicated in Lariosa's disappearance, have been ordered to submit their comments.

Meanwhile, KARAPATAN condemned the Office of the Ombudsman's junking of the criminal and administrative complaints filed by Jhed Tamano and Jonila Castro, without a single hearing conducted. Tamano and Castro are environmental defenders who were abducted in Orion, Bataan in September 2023, and unjustly held in military custody for 17 days.

Hand Off Talaingod 13. Progressive groups protested at the Department of Justice on July 15, 2026, to demand the reversal of the 2024 conviction by a Tagum City court of 13 individuals, including former Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo, former ACT Teachers Rep. France Castro, and Lumad school teachers. They were convicted of trumped-up charges of "child abuse" after rescuing beleaguered students and teachers of a Lumad school in Barangay Palma Gil, Talaingod, Davao del Norte, that had been forcibly closed by soldiers and paramilitary forces. The Talaingod 13 were unjustly convicted in July 2024.



Defend Bicol. Human rights defenders from Bicolandia held the **second general assembly of the Defend Bicol Stop the Attacks Network** on July 18, 2026. The assembly, which was held amid intensifying military operations by the AFP in tandem with the NTF-ELCAC, urged the need to forge ranks and strengthen the people's voice and struggles against extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, illegal or arbitrary arrests, permanent encampments, and various other violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the region.

HRD gains in Panay. Efforts of Panay-based human rights defenders paid off with the passage on July 15, 2026, of the **Aklan Students' Rights and Welfare (STRAW) Ordinance** by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Aklan. Panay Alliance-KARAPATAN described the development as a significant step towards institutionalizing the protection of students' rights and democratic participation in the province.

Earlier, on July 3, 2026, a hundred human rights defenders from all over Panay met to mark the sixth year of the Anti-Terrorism Act and demand its repeal. They also called for

the passage of local ordinances to protect human rights defenders, criminalize red-tagging and the militarization of school campuses and communities, and support the scrapping of the ATA and the TFPSA at the national level.



Panay Martyrs' Day

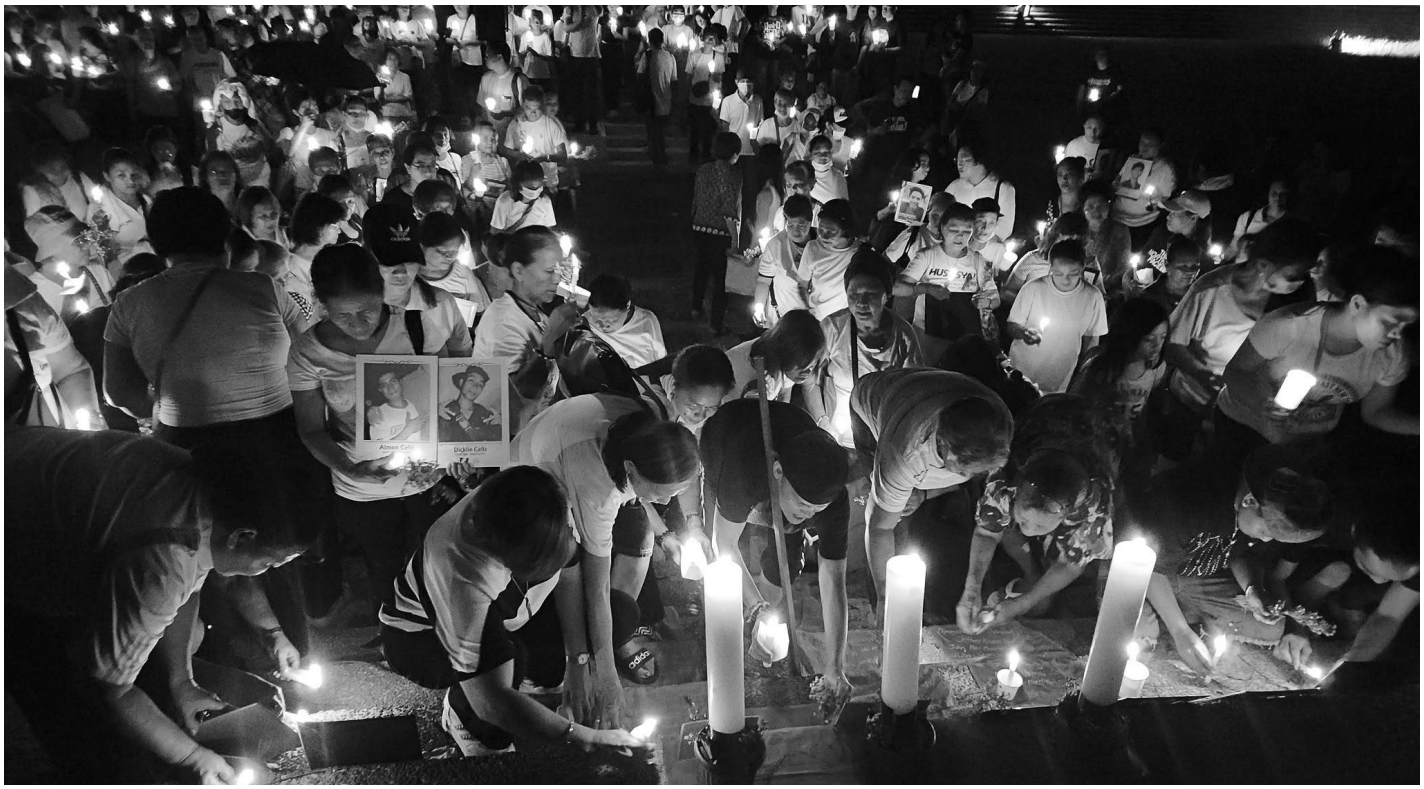
Panay also commemorated its 500 martyrs through a gathering of families, relatives, friends, and comrades on the **3rd Panay Martyrs Day**. Attendees vowed to remember the heroes by continuing the struggle.

54th Martial Law Commemoration. Filipinos all over the country took to the streets to commemorate the 54th year since the martial law declaration. Following not just Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s failure to stem corruption, but exposés of his own culpability, the mass mobilization "Baha ng Protesta" focused on demanding justice and accountability. More than a year since the flood control corruption scandal exploded, Filipinos have been bearing the brunt of these anomalies with multiple floods that killed and injured scores of citizens, and displaced thousands. More than 5,000 protesters rallied at Liwasang Bonifacio and marched to Mendiola to air their demands. Meanwhile, several protest actions leading up to the commemoration were launched by different sectors. The UP Artists' Circle Baguio chapter unveiled an exhibit with the theme **"Same Old News,"** citing the similarity of human rights violations under Marcos Sr. and Marcos Jr.

Duterte Panagutin. Families of Duterte's bloody drug war, together with rights advocates, welcomed the determination of the International Criminal Court (ICC) that the former president was fit to stand trial, at the third status conference of Duterte's three counts of crimes against humanity, held last September 16, 2026. The ICC also denied motions by Duterte's defense team to have experts verify digital evidence, saying this would unnecessarily delay the trial. The trial at the ICC will begin on November 30, 2026.

On July 1, 2026, a commemorative event called **Dekada ng Sama-samang Pag-alala, Pagkakaisa para sa Hustisya**, was launched to mark the 10th year since Duterte launched his





bogus and bloody war on drugs that killed tens of thousands of Filipinos, majority from urban poor communities. The participants renewed their calls for justice and for the perpetrators to be arrested and held accountable.

The **Dekada sa Sama-samang Pag-alala** exhibit also opened at the Parola, UP DIliman, on August 14, 2026, featuring artworks that centered on victims of the war on drugs. The exhibit was opened with a program with a performance from the community and messages from families of the victims. KARAPATAN was also able to highlight its artwork, **"Dekada Hustisya,"** which shows photos of all of the victims falling out of a box, symbolizing refusal to keep these individuals out of sight.

Tiempo Muerto, a play on the sufferings of sugarcane workers and farmers in Negros by cultural SINAGBAYAN (Sining na Naglilingkod sa Bayan) once again became available for viewing from September 18 to 20 at the College of Media and Communication, UP Diliman.

Ganggang. JL Burgos' 2nd film debuted at Cinemalaya on September 12, 2026. Ganggang focused on three boys trying to find a fighting spider to match their school bullies'. It is set with a backdrop that unreservedly tackles human rights abuses in the countryside—ones that do not get televised, like extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances.

Pan de Panitikan. Poets, artists, human rights advocates, and families of victims of human rights violations gathered at the Kamuning Bakery in the afternoon of July 25, 2026, to present their poems and spoken words under the theme of peace, justice, and human rights.






MARCOS
ATLETA
BUDGET SA
EDUKASYON
HINDI KORAPSYON




EDUCATION NOT 4 SALE!
BUDGET FOR SERVICES, NOT SURVEILLANCE
The GUIDON


ISKOLAR NG BAYAN
DOBLENG BADYET
TUTULAN ANG
REHIMENG US-MARCOS
SARA DUTERTE
EDUKASYON!


ENGINEER THE DOWNFALL OF THE US-MARCOS REGIME NOW!


MARCOS SINGILIN!
DUTERTE PANAGUTIN!
LAHAT NG SANGKOT,
ULA TUKTOK, DAPAT MANAGOT!
ONE TAFT

Student In-School Mobilizations. The youth and student sector organized several simultaneous protest actions for the third quarter of 2026—the most prominent being school walkouts against corruption and the continuation of universities' tradition of protest.

On September 18, as a build-up action for September 21, several universities organized a walkout to denounce different campus-specific issues. **University of the Philippines (UP)-Diliman and UP Los Baños** condemned the proposed ₱2.95-billion budget cut to the UP System. The **Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP)** likewise denounced the ₱291.8-million reduction in their budget. The next day, on September 19, **Ateneo de Manila University** students decried the universities' mishandling of "the team-building activity" that killed Rene Baterbonia at Divine Adili. On September 21, **Cavite State University** also denounced their P67-million budget cut and the militarization of their campus. **Southern Luzon State University** called for government accountability; and **Bulacan State University (BulSu)** students wore black to commemorate martial law and revolutionary martyrs from BulSu.





First day fights and graduation rallies were also held at the **Ateneo, PUP, UP, PNU, DLSU, FEU, Cavite State University, University of San Carlos, and Tarlac State University.**

Defend The Hood launched a cultural event, titled **"Gobyerno sindikato, panagutin"** on September 26 at the University of the Philippines to resonate the call against corruption. The iconic **oblation run** was also held on the 34th anniversary of the College of Law. Protesters are seen carrying posters calling to defend press freedom and freedom of expression.

Meanwhile, **UP Visayas students** staged a **rally and walkout** three hours after the announcement of Dr. Clement Camposano's reappointment for a third term as chancellor. Students challenged his reappointment last September 25 by pointing out anti-student policies he has overseen in the past six years.

Similarly, on September 22, **University of Eastern Philippines** students called for the resignation of the UEP president, Dr. Cherry Ibañez Ultra on corruption and performance issues.





Teachers. Teachers led by the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT)lobbied for a P50,000 entry-level salary and a higher education budget on September 7, The teachers urged the Marcos Jr. regime to take action, citing that education must be the government's top priority.

No to Pax Silica. The fight against Pax Silica continues through numerous protest activities launched by different sectors.

The Network Opposed to Pax Silica (NO to Pax Silica) was launched on August 31, 2026, bringing together indigenous peoples, farmers, scientists, environmental advocates, faith leaders, students, and progressive organizations to oppose the dispossession of ancestral lands dispossession, environmental destruction, and the surrender of national sovereignty arising from the Marcos Jr. administration's participation in the United States-led initiative.

Last September 6, 2026, several Filipino artists transformed the Sampaguita Projects Gallery in Quezon City into a protest site against the initiative. The group who call themselves Artists Unite Against Pax Silica (AUPAX) entitled their exhibit as "ALL CAPS: Art, Land & Labor—Creatives Against Pax Silica."

On September 10, 2026, activists staged a lightning rally to denounce the Luzon Economic Corridor (LEC) Investment Forum being held at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Bonifacio Global City in Taguig. At the forum, Philippine officials led by Ferdinand Marcos Jr. practically auctioned off Philippine territory to the highest bidders.

Meanwhile, on September 11, 2026, BAYAN led a protest caravan to the gates of the Clark Freeport Zone in Angeles City and the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) field office in Capas, Tarlac to assert their opposition to both the LEC and Pax Silica. Numerous police and military checkpoints along the way failed to deter the rallyists from proceeding to the protest site. The activity ended on a high note with the rallyists joined by indigenous people and activists from BAYAN-Central Luzon in a rousing cultural night in one of the villages in Capas facing displacement due to Pax Silica.

Ban Rubio. Activists led by Bagong Alyansang Makabayan staged a rally on July 22, 2026, near the Philippine International Convention Center, where US State Secretary Marco Rubio was holding meetings with government officials in preparation for Donald Trump's attendance at the 49th ASEAN Summit this November. The rallyists succeeded in holding their brief program denouncing the US' worsening intervention in Philippine affairs despite police attempts to violently disperse the rally and their harassment of photojournalists documenting the PNP's manhandling of Moro activist Amirah Lidasan. The violent dispersal of the PICC rally foreshadowed the police brutality unleashed during the SONA five days later and other subsequent rallies.



No To Pax Silica Caravan



No To Pax Silica Launching



PISTON Transport Strike. Around 70,000 to 100,000 jeepney drivers and operators launched a nationwide strike from September 29-30, 2026, maintaining 37 strike centers throughout the Philippines. PISTON (Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Nationwide) was joined by activists from other sectors as well as commuters in taking to the streets after another oil price hike rocked the nation. They were not deterred by the measly P1.00-fare hike and the capitulation of Manibela president Mar Valbuena, who lifted his group's strike after he met with First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos.

According to PISTON, PUJ drivers spend as much as ₱3,000; modern PUV drivers as much as ₱6,000; and truck drivers even more in gas prices. Meanwhile, Petron garnered ₱3.8 billion in the first half of 2026 alone. This is made possible by the overpricing of oil through the oil deregulation law. In fact, PISTON added that diesel taxing accumulates around ₱544 million in a day. In contrast, workers in the National capital Region receive only ₱755 a day in wages.

Before the strike, PISTON had organized a protest in Cubao on September 8 that ended with the symbolic banging of rice pots and pans, generating noise to oppose the oil price hike.

In both the protest and the strike, jeepney drivers and operators called for the removal of VAT and the excise tax on oil and the abolition of the Oil Deregulation Law.

REPRESSION BREEDS RESISTANCE. Our own history has taught us that suppressing the right to protest will never deter an outraged and determined people from waging collective action to demand justice and hold even the most powerful tyrants accountable. A poor student of history, Marcos Jr. is following in the footsteps of his dictator-father. He is doomed to repeat history and face the same verdict delivered by the people's movement: a resolute struggle for justice, human rights, genuine freedom, and democracy. K



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