



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

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EDITORIAL

Wherever there is repression there is resistance

Although many decades have passed since this was first expressed by a great revolutionary leader, the recent developments in the Philippines once again prove this to be true.

The increasing repression of the Duterte regime started from 2016 with the extrajudicial killings of presumed drug addicts and dealers and unarmed social activists that has thus far resulted to more than 30,000 victims. It has then expanded with the hamletting and forced evacuations of rural communities suspected by the regime of being influenced by the New People's Army.

Using his regime's Anti-Terror Law as a flimsy legal justification, Duterte has now drummed into a crescendo the massive illegal arrests and murder of members of progressive grassroots organizations nationwide. In just the past few weeks, Duterte's armed troops massacred nine indigenous Tumandoks in Panay island, five farmworkers in Rizal province and activists all over the country.

This escalation of atrocities is accomplished by Duterte's enlargement of the Armed Forces of the Philippines which now has 150 battalions of maneuver troops. Duterte deployed 82% of these against the NPA in eight regions from Luzon in the north to Mindanao in the south. In addition, the Philippine National Police and 70,000 paramilitary augment the AFP in their operations. They are also emboldened by new supplies of military equipment from the US and other countries.

Suffering from increasing poverty and the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Filipino people, under a rapacious, corrupt and brutal dictator, are increasing their resistance. More and more are joining anti-fascist alliances, revolutionary mass organizations, the local organs of the people's democratic government, the CPP, NPA and the NDFP.

With greater numbers supporting the revolutionary movement, the NPA is continuously building guerilla fronts in old and new territories alike, even in the regions where Duterte has concentrated his forces. In just the past weeks, the NPA defeated Duterte's forces in Malibcong in Abra, Labo in Camarines Norte, Marabut in Samar and Carmen in Surigao del Sur, to name just a few.

Duterte, presently the main enforcer of the elite ruling class oppression, may not be in power for long. But the Filipino people's resistance will rise and prevail. **UP**



*Indigenous Tumandok leader Roy Giganto killed by Duterte security forces.
Photo: Panay Today.*

Indigenous Tumandok leaders killed in pre-dawn attacks

On 30 December 2020, nine community leaders belonging to the indigenous Tumandok of Panay island were killed in their homes in a pre-dawn attack by combined armed troops of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police. Among those killed were TUMANDUK leaders Eliseo Gayas Jr. and Roy Giganto.

According to family and neighbors, Gayas Jr. was shot after being ordered to go out of his house, while Giganto was shot dead while sleeping in the presence of his family. All victims were unarmed and shot in cold blood.

Later that day, 16 Tumandok leaders and community residents were arrested in simultaneous attacks in other villages in the island. They have been falsely charged with illegal possession of firearms, ammunition and explosives.

Following the atrocities, 500 residents evacuated from their communities, seeking shelter in evacuation centers in Tapaz and Calinog. Meanwhile, Duterte armed troops have set up checkpoints in Capiz province. Mayor Roberto Palomar of Tapaz banned journalists and non-residents from entering the town.

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The terrorist operations in Calinog, Iloilo and Tapaz, Capiz were conducted by combined elements of the AFP 12th Infantry Battalion and PNP Region 6. They claim that the nine “were killed in a firefight”. Col. Orlando Edralin, Deputy Commander of the AFP 301st Infantry Brigade, claimed that those killed and arrested were members of the Communist Party of the Philippines and New People’s Army.

Police held search warrants issued by two judges from Manila, more than 600 km. away. Both judges issued a total of 28 search warrants.

Condemning the atrocities and breakdown of the rule of law, the Movement Against Tyranny on 31 December said, “search warrants issued by courts turned into death warrants for red-tagged rural folk, leaders of the Tumandok tribe fighting against discrimination, landgrabbing and development aggression.”

The Tumandoks have been resisting the construction of the Jalaur Megadam and the Panay River Basin Integrated Development Project. Community leaders refused to sign the “Free, Prior and Informed Consent” resolution for the projects’ implementation in their ancestral lands. At least 17,000 Tumandoks are to be displaced by the Jalaur Megadam project, which is expected to cause flooding and other problems to at least 1.2 million residents along the Jalaur River Basin.

The Panay River Basin project, meanwhile, will affect at least 19 villages. Its catchment area is projected to flood at least 21,100 hectares of lands, affecting Tumandok ancestral lands.

The Communist Party of the Philippines called on the New People’s Army to heed the clamor of the Tumandok people for justice. “The brutal offensives are aimed at breaking the Tumandoks’ unity against the Jalaur Mega Dam Project which will inundate their ancestral lands,” the CPP said. **UP**



Photo: Karapatan - Southern Tagalog Region.

Families, rights groups decry cover up of farmworkers’ killings

Families of five farmworkers killed by combined elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police on 17 December 2020 in Baras town in Rizal province, are crying foul over accusations by Duterte government officials that their slain loved ones were members of a ‘death squad’ of the New People’s Army.

Jhonatan Alberga, Niño Alberga, Wesley Obmerga, Vilma Salabao and Carlito Zonio were killed in the early morning of 17 December in the upland village of San Juan, less than

50 km. east of the capital Manila. Aside from multiple gunshot wounds, some of the victims bore signs of torture and mutilation. The Alberga siblings’ scrota were burnt, teeth were removed and their hands pounded.

According to families, community residents and human rights groups, Zonio was the head of security and caretaker of the fruit farm. The Alberga siblings were the farm’s security guards while Obmerga and Salabao were farmworkers.

Duterte government officials claim that troopers of the AFP 2nd Infantry Division and PNP Regional Office 4A were serving an ‘arrest warrant’ at 2:30 am when the victims fired back at them. Interior and Local Government Secretary Gen. Eduardo Año bolstered the claim, adding that the victims were part of an NPA ‘death squad’.

Cristina Palabay, Secretary General of human rights alliance Karapatan, contradicted these claims. She said, “The police and military mercilessly killed five farmworkers and now Año is concocting outrageous lies to justify what is clearly a brutal massacre.”

Ms. Palabay added that accounts from the community residents and signs of mutilation on the victims “clearly disprove Año’s wild and delusional assertions”.

Residents reported hearing cries for help from the victims, at the time that security officials claim they were engaged in a shootout.

Macario Liwanag, Spokesperson of the NPA Narciso Antazo Aramil Command of Rizal province, confirmed that the victims were farmworkers and not NPA members. He vehemently condemned the killings saying, “The hands of the AFP and PNP are dripping with blood... The people of Rizal province are enraged by this massacre!”

He added that Gen. Año and Duterte’s fascist troops continue to desecrate the memory of the massacre victims by spinning lies about them. “They are desperately attempting to divert the people’s attention from their terrorist massacre... the five murder victims were clearly unarmed civilians.” **UP**



NPA platoon in formation. Photo: benarnews.com

NPA tactical offensives hit Duterte armed troops

The New People's Army in Abra province, in the Cordillera Region, launched a tactical offensive against units of the 72nd Division Reconnaissance Company of the Armed Forces of the Philippines on 4 January 2021 in Pacqued village, Malibcong. Nine AFP soldiers, including their commander 2nd Lt. Zaldy Lapis, Jr., were killed and several others were wounded.

According to Florencio Baluga, spokesperson of the NPA-Abra Agustin Begnalen Command, the Red fighters operated "with speed, secrecy and surprise" against the exhausted enemy unit which had been scouring the area since 22 December 2020.

Baluga said that Duterte's armed troops issued the false claim in November that they were "close to eradicating" the revolutionary forces in Northern Luzon. The military had been trying to facilitate the entry of largescale mining companies and hydroelectric dam projects in the Binongan, Tineg and Abra rivers. The armed units dispatched to the area serve as company guards, said Baluga, meant to quell resistance of the communities defending their ancestral lands.

Armed units of the 72nd DRC had been occupying the indigenous communities. Residents were made to suffer illegal arrests and detention, forced 'surrenders' and harassment. On 5 and 7 January, the AFP used newly-acquired Super Tucano bomber planes and dropped at least 23 bombs in the area, destroying forest vegetation and farm lots near Pacqued and Mataragan in Malibcong and Buneg in Lacub town.

On 12 December 2020, the NPA ambushed soldiers of the AFP 902nd Infantry Brigade in Baay, Labo town Camarines Norte province. The AFP soldiers had been besieging the community still reeling from the impact of successive typhoons.

The Red fighters were able to seize two 9mm Glock pistols from eight backpacks of the enemy troops.

In Samar island, NPA forces launched successive tactical offensives in late 2020 against the fascist troops of the AFP and Philippine National Police. On 10 December, the NPA Arnulfo Ortiz Command ambushed a police patrol car in Marabut town, Samar province, killing Police Capt. Earl Hembro.

The Red fighters declared that this tactical offensive was a slap on the face of the AFP-PNP Inter Agency Task Force Sabama which announced that it had dismantled the NPA in Samar. Duterte armed troops had been conducting terror operations in Samar villages from March to October 2020.

Earlier in October 2020, the AFP 19th Infantry Battalion suffered five casualties due to the harassment operations of the NPA in Northern and Western Samar.

The NPA declared, "The masses still give the NPA deep and wide support so it can launch tactical offensives at will!" **UP**