



# UPDATES PHILIPPINES

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## EDITORIAL

### A pattern of war crimes and crimes against humanity

On Christmas Eve, 24 December 2021, New People's Army comrades Menandro Villanueva and Sandra Reyes were captured alive by elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines after a gunbattle in Mabini town, Davao de Oro, in southern Philippines. At the time of his capture, Comrade Menandro was the National Commander of the NPA and a member of the Central Committee and Political Bureau of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

It was only the following day, on Christmas Day, that the AFP announced that Comrade Sandra was killed in action. In other words, she was hors de combat and summarily executed under the custody of the AFP.

In the subsequent days, posters were hung in Davao de Oro, offering reward money for the capture of Comrade Menandro. Still later, on 5 January, the AFP rained artillery shells on the villages of Mabini town, claiming that they were on the verge of capturing the high-ranking NPA and CPP leader.

It was only on 6 January – after twelve days – that the AFP deceptively announced that Comrade Menandro was killed in a gunfight in Mabini town. He was hors de combat, abducted and disappeared, tortured and summarily executed under AFP custody.

The AFP gloated over their murderous deeds, claimed their reward money and boasted once again of the impending demise of the revolutionary movement. They most especially rejoice and dance on the grave of Comrade Menandro because he roused and empowered the poor peasants and indigenous Lumad of Mindanao. Because he helped plant and nurture the people's democratic government in hundreds of poor villages. And because he helped lead the people's resistance against destructive mining and other profiteering operations which ravage the environment and plundered the nation's patrimony.

The CPP, NPA, all revolutionary forces and the Filipino people render their highest honors to Comrade Menandro. He selflessly served the Filipino people's revolutionary cause for five decades and helped advance their national democratic and socialist aspirations. He is now among the legion of heroes of the Filipino people.

His death is certainly a big loss to the Party and the revolutionary movement. But in his long and fruitful service, Comrade Menandro made great achievements in the recruitment, training and development of thousands upon thousands of CPP members, NPA Red fighters and revolutionary activists. Several comrades are already primed to take his place and perform his duties.

Duterte and his security officials can only vainly dream of defeating the CPP, NPA and Filipino people's aspirations for national liberation, genuine democracy and just peace. They will more certainly face the consequences of their horrendous war crimes and crimes against the Filipino people. **UP**



Image: miltech insights youtube channel.

### Turkey, Israel beef up Duterte's military capabilities

The first of a batch of six T129B helicopters from Turkey arrived in Manila on 9 January 2022 and received by officials of the Rodrigo Duterte government. Temel Kotil, General Manager of Turkish Aerospace, Inc. announced the delivery. The next two units are set to be delivered in 2023 and the last two in 2024.

Duterte's Department of National Defense signed the PhP13.7 billion contract for the acquisition of the helicopters in July 2020. The multi-role attack helicopters will be deployed to the 15th Strike Wing of the Philippine Air Force.

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Earlier, in December 2021, Elbit Systems of Israel delivered Soltam ATMOS 155mm howitzers to the Philippine Army. The Duterte government ordered two batteries from Elbit Systems for a contract price of PhP2.4 billion through a government-to-government deal with Israel. Newly-appointed Israel Ambassador to the Philippines Ilan Flus paid a visit to Duterte's National Defense Secretary Gen. Delfin Lorenzana in November 2021, where they drafted a defense cooperation agreement to boost security ties between the two governments.

The latest arsenal from Turkey and Israel add to the weapons and munitions delivered by the Joint US Military Assistance Group to the Armed Forces of the Philippines on 4 July 2021. The delivery included heavy-caliber machine guns and thousands of rounds of ammunition. The US has provided the Duterte government nearly US\$600 million of military assistance since it came to power in 2016.

Meanwhile, religious groups and peace advocates have been calling on the Duterte government for the resumption of peace talks with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, instead of bombing communities and perceived camps of the New People's Army. **UP**



*Families, colleagues and friends of Bloody Sunday victims demand justice, release of detained rights defenders.*  
Photo: Carlo Manalansan | bulatlat.com

## Duterte government snubs UN Rapporteurs on killings of rights defenders

UN Special Rapporteurs are demanding updates from the government of President Rodrigo Duterte regarding the 'Bloody Sunday' killings in March 2021 and other killings of human rights defenders attributed to government security forces. Duterte officials have yet to respond to the points raised by the UN rights experts.

The communication from the UN, dated 28 October 2021 but only made public 60 days later on 11 January 2022, was jointly signed by UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defender Mary Lawlor, UNSR on Extrajudicial, Summary and Arbitrary Executions Morris Tidball-Binz, UNSR on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful

Assembly and Association Clement Nyaletsossi Voule and UNSR on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism Fionnuala Ni Aolain. They asked the Duterte government for updates on its investigations into the killings of five human rights defenders Emmanuel Asuncion, Mark Bacasno, Melvin Dasigao, Chai Evangelista and Ariel Evangelista during the simultaneous 'raids' conducted by the Philippine National Police and Armed Forces of the Philippines in various towns of Southern Luzon region in 7 March 2021. The operation has been dubbed 'Bloody Sunday', resulting in the killing of nine people, mostly trade union and environment activists.

The UN rights experts demanded explanations why no reports have been submitted thus far. They asked, "how is such failure compatible with the government's international human rights obligations?" They also expressed "grave concerns" on the continued attacks against human rights defenders under the Duterte government. "We are seriously concerned by the information which would indicate that these individuals have been targeted in response to their legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of expression, as well as the right to peaceful assembly and association."

The UN Rapporteurs pressed the Duterte government "to take urgent and effective steps to ensure the safety and security of human rights defenders and to create an enabling environment for them to carry out their peaceful and legitimate human right activities."

The five mentioned in the UN communication are part of the hundreds killed since Duterte came to power in 2016. Philippine human rights alliance Karapatan has documented at least 421 incidents of extrajudicial killings since July 2016, while there have been 504 recorded cases of frustrated assassination attempts.

On 14 January, the National Bureau of Investigation announced the filing of murder charges against 17 police officials for the killing of environment activists Chai Evangelista and Ariel Evangelista. **UP**



Image: cpp.ph

## NPA defends indigenous T'boli villages against AFP bombings

The Far South Mindanao Regional Operational Command of the New People's Army condemned on 11 January the non-stop aerial bombings and artillery shelling by various units of the Armed Forces of the Philippines on the villages and ancestral lands of the indigenous T'boli in South Cotabato province, in southern Philippines.

According to the NPA, Duterte's security forces had already conducted more than 104 aerial strafing and bombings, and artillery shelling attacks between February

2017 up to October 2021, all aimed against rural villages from northern Cagayan de Oro to southern Sarangani provinces.

The NPA's regional command said their forces are fighting back against these attacks. Initially, on 30 December 2021, the AFP flew fighter jets and attack helicopters, dropping 12 bombs on the farms of T'boli town, just a few hundred meters from the residential village of Busong-Apang, in South Cotabato province. There were no NPA units in the area.

The next day, 31 December, AFP ground troops stormed towards Busong-Apang. A local NPA unit engaged the AFP troopers in a firefight, inflicting "many casualties to the enemy," said the NPA regional command. In the encounter that ensued, at least seven enemy troopers died while three were wounded. The NPA Red fighters suffered no casualties.

In retaliation, the AFP fired artillery shells toward the villages from their ships stationed in the sea near Kiamba, Sarangani.

On 1 January 2022, in a mountainous area also in T'boli town, an NPA unit ambushed a Special Forces Battalion of the AFP. Initial reports say AFP casualties ran to 5 killed and 2 wounded with no NPA casualties.

Security forces of the Duterte government are intensifying their military operations in the villages of Kiamba, Sarangani province and T'boli, South Cotabato province. These are the same areas of operation of 88 Kiamba Mining Development Corporation and Kiamba Mining Corporation. Indigenous peoples in the area as well as local anti-mining groups have long been resisting the destruction of ancestral lands and key biodiversity areas by these companies. **UP**

## NPA issues guidelines on campaigning for 2022 elections

The New People's Army announced on 7 January a set of guidelines for politicians who wish to campaign for votes in the upcoming May 2022 national elections, in order to "ensure the safety and well-being of the masses."

JB Regalado, Spokesperson of the NPA Central Negros Command in central Philippines, said that politicians should consult with units of the NPA or Communist Party of the Philippines in the area where they wish to campaign for the people's votes. Regalado stressed that politicians should "strictly avoid vote buying, bribery, intimidation and other forms of electioneering" and they should not be accompanied by armed units of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine National Police or any paramilitary group when entering the guerrilla zones and bases.

"Red political power through the People's Democratic Government is established in the countryside," Regalado declared. "Disrespecting the authority of the people by not heeding the aforementioned" will be subject to sanctions against the offending politicians, "such as disarming, disallowing of further campaigning in the area and confiscation of bribe money."

The NPA advised, "Instead of vote buying, politicians are encouraged to contribute to revolutionary organizations, augment livelihood projects and other needs of the masses," especially those severely affected by the most recent super typhoon Odette.

Regalado also reminded the politicians of their history of violence against each other. Particularly in central Negros, "several cases of cold-blooded killings of politicians and their supporters have occurred in the past election campaign periods." The NPA, he said, "will continue to pursue revolutionary justice for the victims of extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations due to the intense political rivalry in central Negros." **UP**