



UPDATES PHILIPPINES

RELEASED BY THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT OF THE PHILIPPINES

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Editorial A woman's place

One hundred and eleven years ago, on 19 March 1911, women from Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland marched on the streets to celebrate the first International Working Women's Day. A year before that, during the Second International Conference of Working Women held in Copenhagen, Clara Zetkin, the leader of the Women's Office for the Social Democratic Party of Germany proposed that every year, in every country, Women's Day should be celebrated as an occasion to press for the aspirations of women all over the world, marking the fight against poverty, illness, exploitation and imperialist wars.

The conference of over 100 women from 17 countries, representing trade unions, socialist parties, working women's clubs and women parliamentarians, unanimously approved the proposal. International Working Women's Day was born.

Filipino women, whether living in the Philippines or elsewhere, join in celebrating International Working Women's Day on 8 March. In the Philippines, marches and other activities are organized where the problems and achievements of women are brought out.

This year, the marches and statements spoke of the worsening economic crisis, skyrocketing price of basic necessities, unemployment and the lack of healthcare affecting women and the rest of the working people. They also brought out that women and children are the greatest victims of the armed conflict in Ukraine.

The Communist Party of the Philippines took the occasion to extend its revolutionary greetings to women in the Philippines and across the world. It praised the "heroism of women from the ranks of workers, peasants and other progressive classes and sectors who broke through imposed gender, cultural and economic barriers and took their place as cadres and fighters of the Philippine revolution."

The CPP also praised the revolutionary women's organization Makibaka for being in the vanguard of the Filipino women's struggle for over five decades. "The militancy and courage of Makibaka continues to inspire women to shoulder ever important tasks in rousing the people and in waging revolutionary armed struggle. From among the ranks of Makibaka have emerged Red fighters and commanders of the New People's Army."

Given the worsening conditions of Philippine society, Filipino women are bound to rise up in greater numbers. Their contributions will redouble in building and strengthening labor unions and women's committees in factories, community and campus organizations, marching on the streets and waging all forms of mass struggle. More women will join the revolutionary armed struggle to strengthen even more the fight for national and social liberation.

Echoing the call of women around the world, we say, "Let us hold high the banner and reaffirm that the women's place is in the struggle against wars of aggression, class and gender exploitation and oppression and the struggle for a bright future." **UP**



TORTURED & KILLED. Community teacher Chad Booc. Photo: bulatlat.com

Community teachers, health worker killed in Davao

Community volunteer school teachers Chad Booc and Gelejurain Ngujo II, community health worker Elegyn Balonga and their accompanying drivers Tirso Añar and Robert Aragon were killed by Armed Forces of the Philippines troopers in New Bataan town, Davao de Oro province on 24 February 2022. Families, colleagues and human rights groups condemn the massacre of the

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'New Bataan 5' and called on the Commission on Human Rights and other groups to conduct further investigation.

According to witnesses, the group was driving from New Bataan to Davao City when they were flagged down by elements of the AFP 10th Infantry Division. Security officials claim that the five were killed in "military encounters". Residents of New Bataan, however, reveal that there were no such encounters in their community.

The Save Our Schools network asserted that Chad and his companions were all unarmed civilians. They were in the area conducting "initial assessment and environmental scanning" in preparation for the possible reopening of indigenous Lumad community schools. The Duterte government had earlier ordered the closure of 178 community schools. Officials of his National Task Force for the Elimination of Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) have been relentless in accusing the schools as "communist breeding grounds".

Prior to their killing, Chad, Gelejurain and Elegyn had been targets of red-tagging, intimidation, death threats and surveillance by Duterte security officials due to their volunteer work with the indigenous Lumad communities.

In response to calls of the victims' families and colleagues, forensic pathologist Dr. Raquel Fortun conducted an autopsy of Chad, Gelejurain and Balanga on 7 March. Dr. Fortun classified the deaths of the three as homicide.

In her preliminary report, she declared that Chad had wounds to the trunk and lacerations in the lungs, diaphragm, liver, spleen, stomach, intestines, right kidney and right adrenal gland. There were fractures in his ribs and vertebrae and a gunshot wound to the right elbow. She further revealed that Chad's spinal cord was cut.

Gelejurain's body, according to Dr. Fortun, sustained several gunshot wounds, and parts of the skin on his stomach and right thigh had been peeled off. She said that Elegyn's left leg had been cut off a few inches below the knee while her right foot was cut off near the ankle. The dismembered limbs were then wrapped and re-attached using packaging tape. Blood clots also formed on Elegyn's fingertips. Dr. Fortun disclosed that Elegyn also suffered gunshot wounds to her right knee and below the right elbow. Her jaw was also visibly torn off and her nose bridge was bruised. **UP**



DEFIANT. Trade union organizer Dennis Velasco outside his detention cell. Photo: koda productions.

Human rights group condemns search warrant abuses

Philippine human rights alliance Karapatan on 9 March welcomed the dismissal by the Quezon City Regional Trial Court of illegal possession of firearms charges against trade union organizer Dennis Velasco, who was arrested on 10 December 2020 along with six others social activists. Among those arrested with Velasco were fellow trade union organizer Rodrigo Esparago and Manila Today editor Lady Ann Salem, whose cases were dismissed by a Mandaluyong court on 5 February 2021.

Both courts voided the search warrants which led to the arrests due to the warrants' infirmities and lack of evidence.

Karapatan took the occasion to condemn anew Quezon City Executive Judge Cecilyn Burgos-Villavert for the issuance of the warrants against the seven activists. According to Karapatan Deputy Secretary General Roneo Clamor, the search warrants were "based on concocted lies such as fabricated testimonies of so-called witnesses and confidential informants".

Other search warrants issued by Executive Judge Burgos-Villavert had already been quashed by various courts, including those against Alexander and Winona Birondo, former staff members of the NDFP peace negotiations panel, and John Milton Lozande, Secretary General of the National Federation of Sugar Workers.

In rapid succession, Burgos-Villavert approved 58 search warrants which the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police used in the simultaneous ransacking of the offices of community organizations and houses of political activists in Bacolod City on 29 October 2019 and

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in Manila on 30 October and 5 November 2019. Security forces arrested 57 activists and 14 others in Bacolod while the Manila break-ins resulted in the arrest of five activists.

Meanwhile, Karapatan decried the appointment by President Rodrigo Duterte of yet another “search warrant factory” executive judge, Vice Executive Judge Lorenzo Dela Rosa, as associate justice of the Supreme Court. Karapatan revealed that Dela Rosa issued the search warrants which led to the murder of Emmanuel Asuncion and the illegal arrests of Elizabeth Camoral and Esteban Mendoza during the Bloody Sunday raids of 7 March 2021 in the Southern Tagalog region. Earlier, Dela Rosa also issued the warrants which resulted in the killing of Roy Giganto and eight indigenous Tumandok leaders and the arrest of 17 others during the gruesome raids conducted by AFP and PNP forces in Panay Island on 30 December 2019.

Karapatan’s Clamor asserted that the subsequent quashing of Dela Rosa’s warrants against at least five of the Tumandok and the filing of murder charges against some of the policemen involved in the Tumandok killings are “damning indictments of Dela Rosa’s bogus search warrant factory”. **UP**



Duterte names new COMELEC Chairman, Commissioners

The government of President Rodrigo Duterte announced on 8 March the appointment of Saidamen Pangarungan as the new Chairman of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), replacing Sheriff Abas who retired on 2 February. Duterte also appointed two new COMELEC Commissioners, George Erwin Garcia and Aimee Torre Franca-Neri, replacing former Commissioners

Antonio Kho and Rowena Guanzon who also retired on 2 February. With the new appointments, the election body is now composed entirely of Duterte appointees.

Prior to being named COMELEC Chairman, Pangarungan was appointed by Duterte as Chairman of the National Commission for Muslim Filipinos in July 2018. He’s an alumnus of San Beda College of Law, Duterte’s alma mater. He had also served as legal counsel for the Bank of America, Caltex, San Miguel Corporation, Philippine Airlines and Philippine Long Distance and Telephone company.

Meanwhile, new COMELEC Commissioner Garcia served as the lead counsel for Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. in the latter’s protest contesting the election of Vice President Leni Gerona Robredo in 2016. Commissioner Torre Franca-Neri is closely associated with Duterte and Duterte’s longtime personal aide Sen. Bong Go. She served in the Davao City Mayor’s office and appointed to high positions by Duterte in the Department of Justice, Bureau of Immigration and Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Commissioners Socorro Inting, Marlon Casquejo, Aimee Ferolino-Ampoloquio and Rey Bulay, complete the seven-member Commission on Elections, in charge of ensuring clean and honest elections on 9 May. Inting, Casquejo and Ferolino-Ampoloquio all come from Davao City or had stints in Davao City, where Duterte and his family have reigned since 1988. Bulay, meanwhile, is a Lex Talionis fraternity brother of Duterte from the San Beda College of Law. **UP**



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