

**ANG****Bayan**

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*Editorial*

## Resist Gloria Arroyo's delusions and worsening fascism

**G**loria Arroyo's speech during the opening of the 14th Congress last July 23 was outrightly meant to delude the Filipino people. Her declaration that the Philippines would be joining the ranks of the most prosperous and modern countries in 20 years was the product of a deranged mind. Arroyo's underhanded objective was to mesmerize the people with her words even as she uses fascist violence to the hilt to maintain the present exploitative and oppressive system.

Arroyo's promise of advancement for the Philippines is a lie. All she did in her nearly hourlong speech was to read a list of roads and highways, bridges and other projects lined up under her P1.7 trillion infrastructure program. Such infrastructure projects are a worn-out means of deception invoked by the Marcos dictatorship and other past corrupt regimes to bedazzle the people into believing that there is real development.

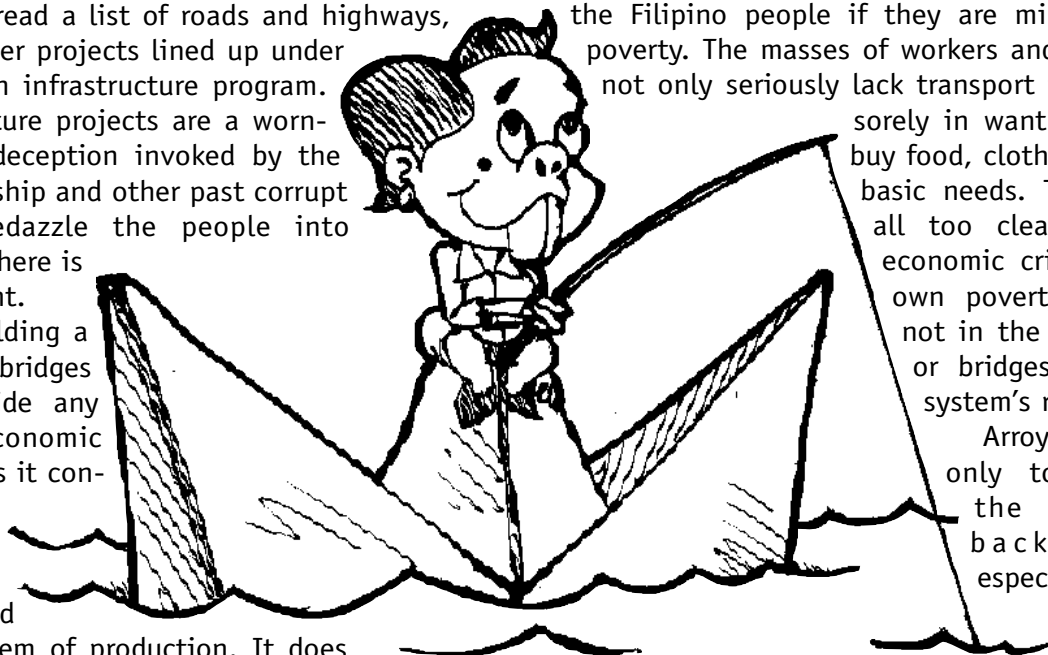
In fact, building a few roads and bridges does not provide any significant economic change nor does it contribute to the development of the Philippines' backward and rotten system of production. It does

not solve the economic crisis nor does it resolve the people's economic problems. Worse, such infrastructure projects will only serve as milch cows for Arroyo and her cohorts and will eventually become an added burden on the people's shoulders.

The lack of infrastructure is a reflection, and is not the cause, of the country's severe backwardness. In the absence of a corresponding change in the basic system of production, building bridges and hundreds of kilometers of roads can serve no other purpose but to obscure the miserable state of the Philippine economy.

Hundreds of kilometers of roads mean nothing to the Filipino people if they are mired in abject poverty. The masses of workers and peasants do not only seriously lack transport fare, they are sorely in want of money to buy food, clothing and other basic needs. They perceive all too clearly that the economic crisis and their own poverty are rooted not in the lack of roads or bridges but on the system's rottenness.

Arroyo's lies serve only to underscore the Philippines' backwardness, especially after her repeated claims that



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the economy has picked up since she took power in 2001. Arroyo only managed to starkly demonstrate the fact that the Philippines remains a semicolony of the imperialists and suffers from a semifeudal economy.

National industrialization is absent, and land reform non-existent. The Philippine economy remains dependent on foreign powers. It is an economy that is backward, unindustrialized, agrarian and chronically mired in crisis and debt.

Nowhere in her speech did Arroyo mention how industry and agriculture can be developed and how the people's economic conditions bettered. In fact, instead of paying attention to, and resolving the basic problems of, the economy, Arroyo merely perpetuates and even defends their existence. It is Arroyo and the ruling classes of big compradors, big landlords and foreign big capitalists who benefit from such a system.

In the six years under Arroyo, this system has been worsened through policies advocating imperialist "globalization." Arroyo went all-out in implementing liberalization, deregulation, privatization and the denationalization of the

economy, all of which have led to the destruction of local production.

She has implemented, among others, measures that give free rein to the dumping of imported excess products to the detriment of local industry and agriculture. She has allowed imperialists to have 100% control over all sectors of the national economy, from strategic industries to banks, public utilities, services and the retail trade. Foreigners, especially mining companies have also been given full freedom to plunder our natural resources. Foreign big capitalists also have the license to siphon out local capital. Arroyo's financial policy, meanwhile, is focused on endless debt servicing.

All this has led to the complete devastation of the country's productive forces and massive unemployment, worsening poverty and hunger for the people—with the latter aggravated by depriving the people of proper budgets for education, health, housing and other social services while increasing their tax burden.

The persistence of widespread poverty and oppression drives the people to tread the path of

struggle and revolutionary resistance. The people's desperation and anger are on the rise, seething and threatening to erupt in a powerful storm of protest.

In tandem with her mad rantings and delusions, Arroyo desperately suppresses the people's smoldering anger and resistance through the state's fascist force. Its foremost targets are the revolutionary movement and its suspected mass base, the open militant democratic organizations and others consistently opposed to the regime and its policies. Killings, abductions, detention, torture and the breakup of rallies and other protest actions are rampant.

"A president can be as strong as she wants to be," declared Arroyo, bestowing her blessings on the campaign of political suppression being perpetrated by her military, paramilitary and police forces against the Filipino people. It was likewise a threat of even more violence to come as she brandished her new weapon—the Human Security Act of 2007—against those who oppose her rule.

Only by advancing the national-democratic revolution and waging anti-imperialist, antifeudal and antifascist struggles can the country's chronically backward, plundering and oppressive reactionary semicolonial and semifeudal social system be resolved.

Only by attaining complete sovereignty and economic freedom from the talons of US imperialism and the puppet reactionary state can the nation develop. National industrialization and genuine land reform must be implemented in order to serve as the motor for modernization and real economic progress. For the people to be liberated from oppression, we must build the revolutionary people's government and allow genuine people's democracy to flourish. **AB**



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# Protests against Arroyo's SONA

Various progressive organizations and groups allied with BAYAN conducted the “People’s SONA” outside the Batasan Pambansa along Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City as Arroyo delivered her speech before the 14th Congress.

As early as the morning of July 23, rallyists from Southern Tagalog had arrived at the Ever Gotesco but were brutally dispersed by anti-riot police. Despite such repression (there were 10,000 policemen aside from military forces standing by), up to 8,000 demonstrators joined the "People's SONA" by 2:00 in the afternoon.

Aside from activists from KMU, Kadamay, KMP, Pamalakaya, LFS, Anakbayan, Kalikasan-PNE, Karapatan, Bayan Muna, Gabriela Women's Party and Anakpawis, some 50 activists from Belgium, Burma, Canada, Korea and the US also participated in the activity. Activists from Korea and BAYAN-USA Chapter rendered songs and dances. All afternoon, Sen. Ana Consuelo "Jamby" Madrigal chose to mingle with the activists instead of listening to Arroyo's speech.

Mass actions were likewise held in Iloilo City (2,000); Roxas City (700); Kalibo (350); Bacolod City (1,000); Cebu City; Davao City; Davao, Albay; and Laoag City in Ilocos Norte.

Overseas, the Kapatiran sa Gitnang Silangan launched a protest action in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Another mass action was held by migrants in Hong Kong under the United Filipinos (Unifil) in Hong Kong. Up to 400 Unifil members marched towards the Philippine consulate last June 22, the eve of Arroyo's address.

In Canada, members of the Montreal Centre for Philippine



Concerns held a picket last July 23 in Montreal. Among those who joined the picket was PINAY, an organization of Filipino women in Quebec, aside from other Filipino organizations and their supporters.

Protest actions were also launched in four cities in the US—New York; Seattle; and Los Angeles and San Francisco in California. BAYAN-USA and the National Alliance for Filipino Concerns led protests in front of the Philippine Consulate in New York. The “Sentosa 27” (Filipino health care givers who were duped by Sentosa, a foreign recruitment agency) joined the pro-

tests, supported by other New York-based migrant organizations.

In Los Angeles, other organizations such as Habi Arts, Anakbayan and Pilipinos Organizing Workers for Empowerment and Respect joined the BAYAN-USA-led protest. In Seattle, the city's PINAY chapter as well as Anakbayan and the Philippine-United States Solidarity Organization launched a "white ribbon movement" to commemorate victims of extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances right at the "Philippine Fiesta," a festival organized by the Philippine government.

## Philippines lags behind other Asian countries

NO less than the pro-imperialist Asian Development Bank (ADB) has belied Gloria Arroyo's claims that the Philippines would become developed and industrialized in 20 years.

An ADB study has revealed that the Philippines is one of the Asia-Pacific's laggards when it comes to development, even when compared to other backward and non-industrialized countries in the region. The Philippines' Per Capita Gross Domestic Product (HK\$1,914 or ₱11,000) falls below the regional average (HK\$5,298 or ₱30,500). It is also a far cry from the Per Capita GDP of countries in the upper rungs: it is 16 times less than that of Brunei Darussalam, 14 times less than that of Singapore and only half of that of Thailand.

The ADB also said that it would take 77 years before the Philippines reaches Brunei Darussalam's status and 23 years before it attains that of Thailand.

# Cultural work among children in the countryside

Children are among those who enthusiastically contribute to the advancement of revolutionary cultural work and other revolutionary tasks in revolutionary base areas.

In a guerrilla zone in Bicol, a group of child cultural activists has been actively performing cultural tasks attendant to the conduct of important mass campaigns.

One of its members is 19-year old Rica. She was recruited into an organizing group for children after being invited to perform during the celebration of the Party anniversary in their area when she was only 15 years of age.

Guided by the local unit of the New People's Army and along with a younger sibling and a cousin, Rica and her group began forming the organizing group for the local chapter of the Samahan ng Makabayang Bata (SMB or Association of Patriotic Children), the revolutionary organization of children in the countryside. They were able to

recruit even more members from among their playmates, classmates and distant relatives. When comrades from the people's army asked their parents for permission to let their children join the group, the parents happily agreed, especially after the guerrillas explained the importance of their children's tasks in the SMB.

It was 2005 when the SMB was organized in the village with 10 members age 8 to 16 years. The group was supervised by the local chapter of the Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid and also received guidance from the local Party branch. At first, an adult from the PKM served as the group's team leader. Not long after, Rica took over as the leader of the SMB.

Among others, the SMB has

participated in the campaign to reduce the fee for *resikada* (a certain percentage shaved off by compradors from the farmgate prices of copra ostensibly to make up for the lost volume after the copra loses its moisture content) and resist militarization in their area.

Since they participate in production and suffer hardships even at a young age, they fully understand what their fellow villagers are fighting for. Their economic survival depends on their resistance to various forms of exploitation and fraud perpetrated by compradors, landlords and other ruling class elements. Not only do they witness and come to know about the military's brutality against their parents and fellow villagers, there are times when they themselves become victims of violence and intimidation by soldiers. They are harassed by the military during performances. Sometimes, soldiers take pictures of them and badger

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## Poverty statistics

The toiling masses are more miserable under the Arroyo regime.

Up to 69 million or 80% of Filipinos struggle to live on less than ₱96 per day. More than 46 million Filipinos go hungry every day.

Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the combined income of all Filipino families is in the hands of the wealthiest 10%. The latter also account for 31% of all consumption and 63% of the country's entire savings.

On the other hand, 70% of families subsist on only 35% of the country's combined income. They account for only 39% of overall consumption and a minuscule part

of the country's savings.

Many families are deep in debt (30% of the poorest families) because they lack income for food and other needs.

The real value of wages and salaries has diminished. With the prices of goods and services spiraling, a peso is now worth a mere 70 centavos in the market.

Wages are pegged at ₱300 a day despite the fact that even government estimates indicate that a family of six needs ₱788 per day to live decently.

Unemployment and underemployment rates are at their highest. An average of eight factories close down per day, meaning that 156

workers lose their jobs daily. It thus comes as no surprise that more than 3,000 Filipino workers leave the country every day in search of adequate employment.

As of now, up to 30 million Filipinos or 34% of the population may be classified as part of the urban poor. More than 40% of the population in cities live in communities without decent housing and basic social services.

A survey by IBON Foundation this July revealed that up to 76.8% of Filipinos consider themselves poor. This is higher than the 67.6% figure in a similar survey last January and the 69.3% figure in July 2006.

AB

## A community acts in unison **Masem yu!**

*The following article was adapted from a similar article published in the June-July 2007 issue of Dangadang, the revolutionary newspaper in the Ilocos-Cordillera Region. It serves as a followup to an earlier article published in Ang Bayan about a people's mobilization to secure the release of six youth from Kili, Tubo, Abra who were captured and detained by the fascist military. This article also serves to rectify information released earlier that all of the victims were young students from Sagada, Mt. Province.*

**F**our women from Kili, Tubo, Abra who had just finished working in a farm in Sagada, Mt. Province were on their way home on June 15, a Friday. With them were two high school boys, also from Kili, who were likewise on their way home from their school in Bangaan, Mt. Province. While walking along the Bangaan-Buasao-Kili trail, they had already heard that a military operation was underway at the Ilocos Sur-Mt. Province-Abra border, and that their village was covered by the operation. Though worried, the women continued on their journey because they wanted to bring home to their families the money they earned as farm workers.

Besides, they were passing through a route normally taken by people living in the area. The students shared the same sentiment, as it was their custom to go home to their families on Fridays, after their schooling.

On the way, they met troops belonging to the 41st IB, notorious for a string of human rights violations. The soldiers arbitrarily arrested the four women (Josie Padingil, 35; Isabel Lawagan, 37; Josefa Banglay, 45; and Jane Dumalig, 26) and two youths (Egan Lumebyang, 18 and Sumil Maguinsay, 15). The soldiers intimidated and interrogated the victims and forced them to come with them. They also made the youths wear camouflage uniforms

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them when they pass checkpoints. When this happens, they usually forego their performances to avoid further danger. But they are not cowed into abandoning their tasks.

The children continue to hone their performing skills by studying, holding workshops and practicing. The group has written plays and composed songs for their presentations. The members sometimes do adaptations of bourgeois songs by substituting lyrics with revolutionary meaning so these could be used in mass campaigns.

They take the initiative in rehearsing for their performances, unlike in the past when comrades from the people's army and other adults had to supervise them.

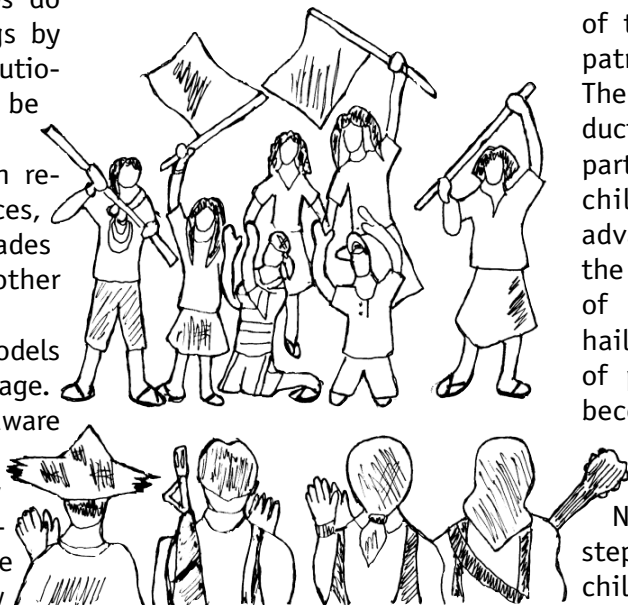
Though young, they are models for other children in the village. The members of the SMB are aware of their rights as children, aside from knowing what they can contribute to the revolution. This early, they have grasped their roles and how

they could be of service to other children and to society as a whole, and how to efficiently run an organization. For instance, they draft plans and conduct assessments after every performance. They also conduct criticism and self-criticism. Adults also inculcate in them the importance of operating clandestinely.

But the SMB's greatest contri-

bution lies in the fact that some of its members join the NPA when they come of age. Four of its former members are now Red fighters, with others slated to join the NPA once they turn eighteen. Even as child revolutionaries, they see the importance of armed struggle.

The SMB's valuable contribution in peasant organizing and advancing agrarian revolution became apparent in a summing-up of the experience in forming the patriotic children's organization. The local NPA unit, which conducted the summing-up, cited in particular the help provided by the children's cultural group in advancing mass campaigns against the *resikada* and to raise the price of copra. The Red fighters also hailed the group's role as a source of peasant youth who decide to become Red fighters when they reach the right age. Based on the summing-up results, the NPA unit was able to draft a step-by-step guide to organizing children's groups in the barrio. **AB**





while they were making their way through the mountains in a deliberate attempt to put them in harm's way should there be an encounter with the New People's Army.

Meanwhile, in Barrio Kili, relatives of the six missing villagers were beginning to worry. They wondered why their kin had failed to return after several days when the distance from Bangaan to Kili took only eight to ten hours to walk.

By coordinating with Sagada townfolk via radio, the Kili residents were able to confirm that the missing villagers were able to leave Sagada. Barriofolk from Kili immediately agreed to go to Sagada to find out what exactly had happened to the missing villagers. They also radioed all villages along the Abra-Mt. Province border to look for the missing Kili folk. Residents from both Bangaan and Kili mobilized to look for the missing. They approached their respective local officials for help. They also hied to nearby military camps but AFP officials denied having the missing villagers in their custody.

The NPA unit in the area also received sketchy reports about the abduction. But all the guerrillas

could make out of the report was that six youths had been seized, possibly by the enemy. The NPA immediately relayed this to *Ang Bayan*. On June 21, Party spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal condemned the abduction and called on the AFP to release the six youths. Cordillera Peoples' Democratic Front

spokesman Simon "Ka Filiw" Naogsan condemned and demanded a stop to the ongoing military operation and terrorism in Abra, Mt. Province and Ilocos Sur that was causing hardship to the mountain villagers and disrupting their livelihood. He disclosed that the AFP was using some schools as military camps, causing pupils to stop their studies.

By this time, news of the abduction was on local and national radio, television and print. Military officers had a hard time fabricating lies on how the six villagers had gone missing. Maj. Gen. Rodolfo Maclang, 5th ID chief, claimed that the barriofolk had merely gone to Baguio. Col. Loreto Rirao, 503rd Bde chief, implied that Red fighters had abducted the youths since it was the NPA that used children. Besides, he said, the mayor of Tubo had denied that there were any missing youths. But when the mayor later said they were in search of six missing Tubo residents, Rirao was forced to change his story and said that the missing had probably gotten lost in the mountains! He also repeated the ridiculous story that the missing villagers had just gone to Baguio.

With too much pressure on their heads, the military was later compelled to release the four

women in the last week of June. But they continued to hold the two youths in their military camps.

Villagers from Kili and Sagada then learned that the students were being detained in a farflung military camp of the 41st IB in Lagangilang, Abra.

Kili folk once more organized a huge delegation and went to northern Abra on June 25. They also asked help from their respective town officials. Forced to confront the delegation, camp officials reluctantly admitted having the two students in their custody, offering the lame excuse that they only kept them to prevent the NPA from abducting the youths. In another prevarication, they claimed that the youths had pointed out the location of NPA camps.

Relatives and fellow villagers were angered no end at the military's actuations, especially after learning that the soldiers had forcibly taken the two students along in their military operations. They further raised a howl of protest when the youths said that they had been subjected to psychological torture. The villagers demanded a stop to the military operation due to the immense destruction this has wrought on their livelihood.

The NPA heeded the urgent demand of people from the three affected provinces to punish the fascist troops for their brutality and the hardships they had caused. The people were overjoyed at the news that a soldier had been killed and an undetermined number of troops had been wounded in an NPA ambush on a unit of the 50th IB in Pananuman, Tubo on June 17 and that seven soldiers were killed in another successful ambush by the Agustin Begnalen Command on the

*continued on page 7*

# Military massacres four civilians in Leyte

**M**ilitarization is claiming more victims both in the countryside and in urban areas. Four civilians were massacred by soldiers on operation in Leyte even as more urban poor communities in Metro Manila are becoming more militarized with the deployment of hundreds of soldiers in these areas. In Kalinga, justice eluded 11 victims of a massacre by military and police forces last June as the troops responsible for the heinous crime were absolved of wrongdoing.

**July 23.** Operating troops under the 19th IB sprayed a peasant hut with gunfire, killing four civilians suspected of being members of the New People's Army. Killed in Barangay Tinghub, Villaba, Leyte were Feliciano Labrador, his wife Leonora, their 12-year old son Anthony and a certain Jezrel. The military labelled the killings a legitimate encounter. The victims' relatives, however, vehemently denied that their kin were NPA members. "They were ordinary civilians," they stressed. The local police also denied that an

encounter had taken place between NPA guerrilla forces and the military.

**June 10 up to the present.** Militant groups strongly criticized the redeployment of more than 200 military troops in urban poor communities, ostensibly to counter the presence of NPA guerrillas in these areas. Seventy soldiers have been deployed in Quezon City, 30 in Taguig and an additional 160 in Manila and Caloocan in the second week of July. The military plans to hold mass meetings and visit day care centers to inform children

about the alleged evils of communism.

**Second week of July.** Investigators from the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) as well as the CHR regional director have absolved military and police forces of any wrongdoing in the massacre of settlers in Sitio Malapiat, Barangay San Pascual, Rizal last June 25 (refer to the July 7 issue of *Ang Bayan*). CHR investigators claimed in their report that the police and military forces' shooting spree that claimed the lives of 11 settlers was all done in self-defense. **AB**

## Soldiers massacre 5 CAFGU elements

**S**oldiers from the 29th IB massacred five CAFGU elements in Kinamaybay, Las Nieves, Agusan del Norte on June 28. Joel Bilayong, Albert Tanyo, Humoc Tinabla, Legal Mansinugdan and Junie Bilayong were on the receiving end of the soldiers' wrath after the latter failed to catch up with the Red fighters who had raided the 23rd IB detachment in Lawan-Lawan, Las Nieves, Agusan del Norte on June 27. The detachment commander was killed in the raid.

The CAFGU elements had joined the soldiers in pursuit operations against the NPA. The soldiers, however, treacherously shot them on suspicion that they were in cahoots with the Red fighters.

To cover up their crime, the soldiers claimed that the five victims died in an NPA ambush.

But with too many witnesses to the crime, word soon got around to other CAFGU elements about what really happened. The incident caused grave demoralization in the CAFGU, leading many of its elements to desert.

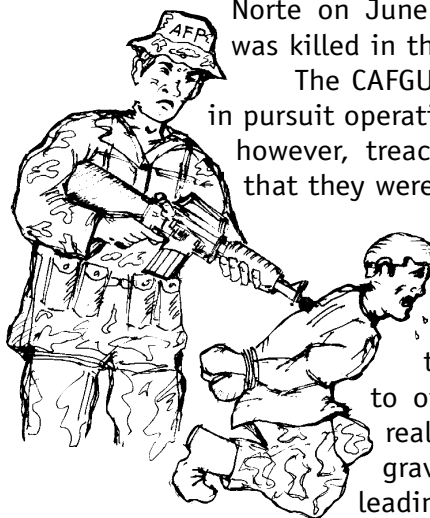
Meanwhile, the victims' relatives lost no time making the rounds of local radio stations to expose the truth. The relatives, however, have temporarily stopped airing their grievances after suffering har-

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*from page 6*

41st IB in Luba, Abra on June 25. In the Tubo ambush, the enemy even had to call in a helicopter and bomb the area to retrieve their wounded.

"Masem yu," cried the local residents. "Aped yu tiliwen nan anak mi ay maid basbasol da. Pinaligat yu, binutbuteng yu sa pay insarang daida as peggad." (Serves you right for arbitrarily seizing, torturing and terrorizing our children and endangering their lives.) **AB**



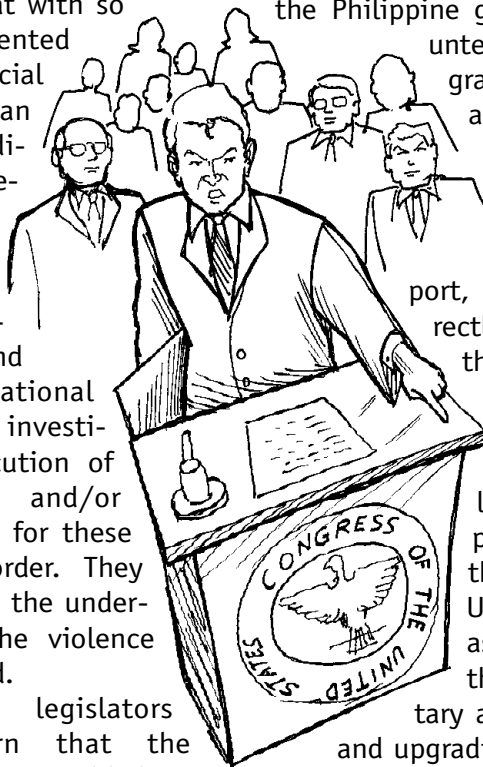


# Stop political violence, US Congress tells Arroyo

**F**orty-nine US congressmen have roundly condemned the unbridled political killings and other human rights abuses in the Philippines. The congressmen came from both the Republican and Democratic parties. In a letter to Gloria Arroyo last August 1, the American congressmen demanded an immediate stop to the unabated and brazen killings and many other human rights violations.

They added that with so many well-documented cases of extrajudicial killings and human rights abuses indicating the involvement of the regime and personnel from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP), the investigation and prosecution of those individuals and/or groups responsible for these crimes were in order. They moreover said that the underlying causes of the violence must be eliminated.

The American legislators expressed concern that the extrajudicial killings could be a conscious and systematic part of



the Philippine government's counterinsurgency program and that financial assistance from the US government was being used to support, directly or indirectly, those within the PNP and AFP who are responsible for the killings. They likewise expressed concern that aid from the United States to assist in training the regime's military and police forces and upgrading military equipment and hardware was being used to violate human rights.

Among those who sponsored the letter were James L. Oberstar (Democrat-Minnesota) and Joseph R. Pitts (Republican-Pennsylvania). The signatories included congressional committee chairs Tom Lantos (Democrat-California), Committee on Foreign Affairs; David Obey (Democrat-Wisconsin), Ways and Means Committee; Mike Honda (Democrat-California), Asian-Pacific American Caucus; and John Lewis (Democrat-Georgia), Oversight Subcommittee.

Meanwhile, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines said that lobbying by Protestant churches and Filipino communities in the US would continue in order to ensure the passage in the US Congress of a bill reducing military aid to the Philippines in 2008.

This past week, the European Union and Japan also expressed their concern to the Arroyo regime about the worsening human rights situation.

In Berlin, Germany, 1,700 teachers who attended the 5th World Congress of Education International on July 22-26 condemned widespread human rights violations in the Philippines. **.AB**

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assment.

In a statement, the National Democratic Front in North Central Mindanao (NDF-NCM) condemned the heinous massacre and demanded justice for the five CAFGU elements and their families.

This is not the first time regular soldiers vented their ire and frustration on CAFGU elements in

North Central Mindanao. The CAFGU elements who had been accused of conspiring with the NPA after Red fighters raided a military detachment in Boco, Banlag, Valencia City in August 2006 are still in detention. The NPA seized 29 firearms in this raid.

The NDF-NCM also called on all CAFGU elements nationwide to leave the paramilitary group. Aside

from being forcibly recruited, they are constantly being used as cannon fodder by the fascist troops in their antipeople operations. They are always ordered to march in front, where they become the most likely targets should hostilities erupt. Whenever the AFP suffers losses, it is the CAFGU elements who are usually blamed and turned into scapegoats. **.AB**



## Jonas Burgos brought to military camps

**A**nother witness has provided information confirming that military elements abducted Jonas Burgos, activist-son of anti-Marcos journalist Joe Burgos.

The witness, who identified himself as a former agent of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency said that he happened to be at the Ever Gotesco Mall on April 28 when Jonas was abducted. Aboard a motorcycle, he was able to follow two vehicles used in the abduction (with plate numbers WAM-155 and XBC-881) and saw them stop at the ISAFP office at Camp Aguinaldo. Afterwards, the vehicles proceeded to the Office of the Commanding General and the Military Intelligence Service Group at Fort Bonifacio.

Investigators have since traced the vehicle with plate number XBC-881 to a car assigned to the office of Gen. Romeo Tolentino, the Philippine Army chief.

Meanwhile, members of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) rallied last July 6 to mark the 100th day of Jonas Burgos' disappearance. The rallyists wore masks of Jonas Burgos' photograph, saying he was the face of hundreds of other victims of abduction.

Around 200 persons have been abducted and remain missing, according to the human rights watchdog Karapatan. **AB**

## Arroyo regime meddles in country's mining industry

**T**he Arroyo regime is set to go on a frenzied plunder of the country's natural wealth after seizing control of the entire mining sector in the Philippines.

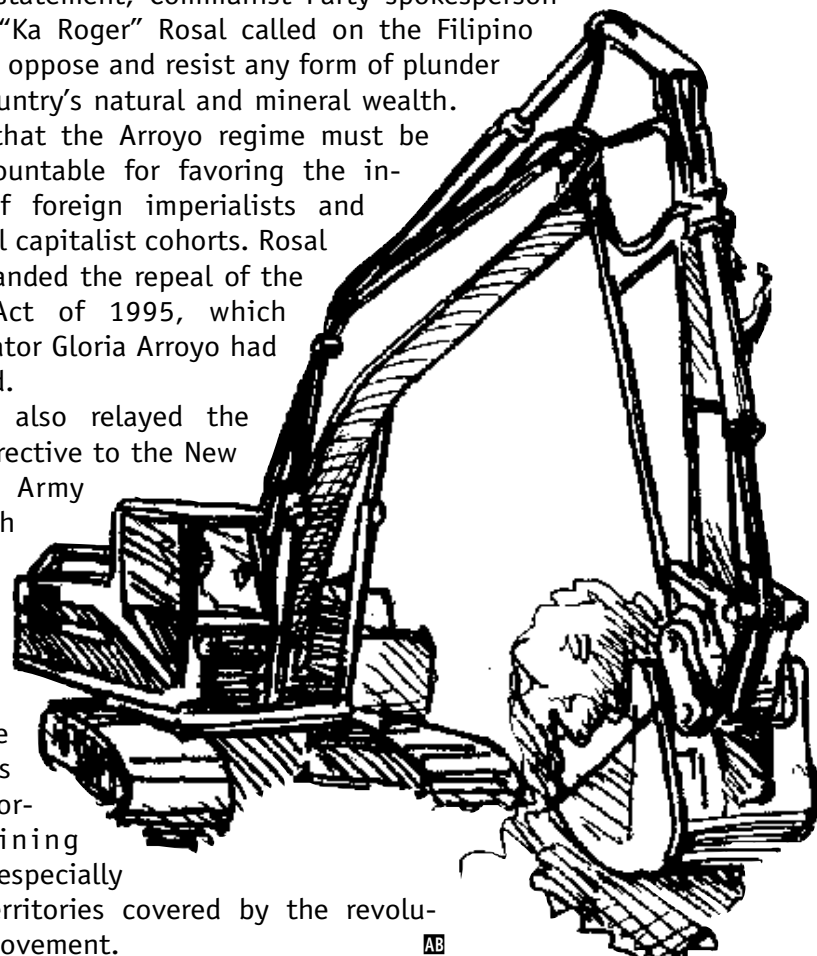
Through Executive Order No. 636 signed by Gloria Arroyo last July 18, Malacañang will directly supervise the Philippine Development Mining Corporation (PDMC), a government-owned corporation that oversees the mining industry and approves new mining projects. It also undertakes exploration, extraction and trading of minerals.

Almost simultaneously, Gloria Arroyo's minions in Congress appointed Rep. Ignacio "Iggy" Arroyo, the fake president's brother-in-law to head the House Committee on Natural Resources. Iggy Arroyo's appointment assures Malacañang that any law pertaining to mining will favor the ruling regime and its imperialist master and be in harmony with the pro-imperialist and plunderous RA 7942 or the Mining Act of 1995.

Since the approval of the Mining Act of 1995, foreign mining companies have plundered billions of pesos and seized nine million hectares of lands for exploration and mineral extraction. Their operations have likewise caused massive economic and environmental degradation.

In a statement, Communist Party spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal called on the Filipino people to oppose and resist any form of plunder of the country's natural and mineral wealth. He said that the Arroyo regime must be held accountable for favoring the interests of foreign imperialists and their local capitalist cohorts. Rosal also demanded the repeal of the Mining Act of 1995, which then-senator Gloria Arroyo had sponsored.

Rosal also relayed the Party's directive to the New People's Army to launch punitive actions and other appropriate measures against foreign mining entities especially within territories covered by the revolutionary movement. **AB**





# Bush crony firm deceives and enslaves Filipino workers in Iraq

**A**merican contractors have been abducting Filipino workers and forcing them to work in Iraq under extremely oppressive conditions.

The exposé was made by an American worker on July 27 when he testified before a US Senate investigation on the construction of the US Embassy in Baghdad. Rory Mayberry, a medical technician employed by the First Kuwaiti Trading & Contracting Company testified that he was on a plane from Kuwait with 51 Filipinos in March 2006. The Filipinos were all under the impression that they were going to Dubai to work in hotels. They were stunned to hear the plane's captain announce that they were in fact on their way to Iraq instead of Dubai. Pandemonium broke loose when the Filipinos realized the deception, but they had no choice. Mayberry said he testified because he could not stomach the kidnapping and smuggling by First Kuwaiti of the Filipino workers.

Even without passports and work permits, the Filipino workers were easily brought into the heavily guarded zone in Baghdad where the US embassy was being built. They were made to do construction work and paid wages for such labor, although they had been recruited for their technical skills. One Filipino was made to believe that he was being employed for his skills as a telephone repairman. Once in Baghdad, however, he was given construction work and paid wages lower than what was provided for in his contract.

The workers slaved away with-

out adequate protection, shoes, gloves and safety harnesses. They had cramped trailers for living quarters and were required to work even when they were ill.

John Owens, another American who worked in Baghdad from 2005-2006, testified that many foreign workers (non-American and non-Iraqi) at the embassy construction site had to work 12-hour shifts seven days a week.

Mayberry and Owens' testimonies underscored the slave-like conditions suffered by workers in Iraq. Aside from those they had seen in Baghdad, estimates put the number of Filipino workers directly involved in the US occupation of Iraq at 6,000. They work as cooks, drivers and janitors in US military facilities in Iraq.

In a short documentary entitled "Someone Else's War," a filmmaker followed the complicated and deceit-ridden process of smuggling workers from impoverished countries like the Philippines into Iraq.

Ramil Autencio, a Filipino worker interviewed on camera,

said he never thought he would end up in Iraq when he left the Philippines.

Autencio was employed by M G M

Worldwide Manpower & General Services, one of First Kuwaiti's local recruitment agencies. His contract indicated that he was to work

as a technician in Kuwait. But after six weeks in Kuwait, he was suddenly ordered by First Kuwaiti officials to get on a bus to Iraq with other workers. He was threatened with imprisonment and a fine when he refused. Without rights and already saddled with onerous provisions in their contracts, the workers had no choice but to follow their contractors' orders.

The documentary likewise revealed that almost all of the agencies involved in smuggling forced labor into Iraq, including First Kuwaiti, were subcontractors of Halliburton Inc., the American corporate giant that has cornered all infrastructure rehabilitation contracts in Iraq. Halliburton was formerly headed by US Vice President Dick Cheney and is widely regarded as one of the Bush regime's crony companies. **AB**

