



EDITORIAL

The Covid-19 pandemic has become more than just a health concern

From being a health crisis, the situation brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic has rapidly developed into an economic, social and political crisis. More and more get infected and die in the Philippines and across the globe. Simultaneously, more and more Filipinos suffer from hunger, disease and other hardships brought about by Duterte's lockdown imposed without comprehensive, sufficient and immediate health and economic measures in place.

The Duterte government is too slow to implement much needed mass testing as an immediate measure to contain the spread of the disease. Three weeks since the lockdown, only more or less 19,000 individuals have been tested while this has to be extensively conducted in communities. Despite the powers given Duterte to realign public funds, only a small amount was allocated to support health workers and aid public hospitals to keep up with the pandemic. The government is acting too slow amid supply shortages and is relying on initiatives by the private sector. Corrup-

tion is exposed with its procurement of overpriced equipment.

The longer the lockdown, millions more are made to suffer from hunger by the government. The budget allocated is way too insufficient to compensate all those who lost their jobs and income. The distribution of aid came very late and many are yet to be compensated. Officials of various agencies are passing the buck. It has become stark that the Duterte government is incompetent and incapable of leading amid the crisis. Many are dependent on the quicker and more extensive aid provided by volunteers,

mass organizations, private associations and other groups.

Duterte is using an iron fist in facing the public health crisis. He has deployed police personnel and soldiers at the frontline and in command of the government's machinery to address the health crisis. He further suppressed the people's right to speech and assembly. Duterte openly threatened anyone who will not abide by his rules and "incite chaos" with a shoot to kill order. Duterte imposes terror while the masses are distressed and left hungry by the lockdown and negligent government.

The longer the lockdown, Duterte's incompetence and incapability to rule and comprehensively address the people's plight is further exposed. Millions of toiling masses and the middle class are becoming more desperate because of hunger, scarcity and depletion of

their savings and loss of livelihood.

In the countryside, the peasant masses are driven to deeper poverty by roadblocks preventing the free flow of farm produce, and restrictions on transportation and food purchase. Despite Duterte's ceasefire declaration, AFP and PNP counterinsurgency operations continue unabated and have intensified. At least 146 barangays are currently occupied by the military. In some areas, soldiers conduct house-to-house inspections without wearing face masks to prevent the spread of the disease. Under the guise of fighting the spread of Covid-19, soldiers mounted checkpoints to restrict travel and prevent people from tending their farmlands and buying food.

To beat and contain the pandemic, the Filipino people need to stand up, act collectively and work together to prevent the spread of the disease and demand the government to provide aid in this time of crisis. At the same time, they must defend their rights and welfare that are being trampled upon by the regime's militarist solution.

They must continue to demand an end to the lockdown and for implementation of measures such as mass screening and testing in communities in order to immediately contain and prevent the spread of the virus. Thousands of health workers and volunteers must be mobilized, trained, and provided with sufficient funds and equipment. Now is the time to clamor for the strengthening of public hospitals instead of undermining these under the policy of spending cuts on health services.

While Duterte's lockdown is in place, the people must demand the quick distribution of sufficient aid for all. They must hold the Duterte regime accountable for its slow, insufficient and non-transparent distribution of aid.

Amid the lockdown, the collective aspirations of the people are primarily gathered in urban and rural poor communities. The people's hardships are concentrated in these areas. Communities must creatively act to collectively express the entire nation's plight and demands. They





must act in their numbers to fight and surmount Duterte's threat to suppress all mass actions.

To face the Covid-19 pandemic and in response to the United Nation's call for a "global ceasefire," the Party declared a ceasefire on March 26 that will remain in effect until April 15. We directed NPA units to focus on providing health services in barrios despite being continuously disrupted by AFP operations and raids which have resulted in at least seven armed encounters. Amid relentless AFP offensives, the Party reminded all NPA units to uphold their discipline in maintaining secrecy to deny the enemy an opportunity to attack and to ensure wide latitude for the NPA to continuously provide services to the masses. Organizations and forces in the countryside must be mobilized to assert economic demands and plan for increasing food production in preparation for the imminent shortage due to the lockdown and production stoppage.

While Duterte insists on his fascist dictatorial methods, he continues to isolate himself from the people. Duterte stinks even more because of the Covid-19 crisis brought about by his regime's failures. His regime is shaken by crumbling support. Every time his dirty mouth opens and with his every misstep, he further enrages the people and fires up their courage. He has at times gave in to people's demands to ease the situation. It remains to be seen whether he can stop the people's anger from boiling over or if he will be totally engulfed by the people's burning anger.

The heavy impact of the Covid-19 in the Philippines exposes the rottenness and fundamental contradiction of the ruling semicolonial and semifeudal system. It revealed the incapacity of the ruling state to address the plight of the people. The need for revolutionary change to establish a new people's democratic system that will uphold the interests of the Filipino people has become ever clearer.

AB

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Lockdown rouses anger, esprit de corps

The lockdown has failed to prevent the breakout of the people's outrage over the regime's blunders in facing the Covid-19 crisis.

On April 1, residents of Sitio San Roque, Barangay Bagong Pagasa, Quezon City protested to demand quick distribution of food aid. More than 6,000 residents live in the said community, majority of whom are odd jobbers who survive on daily incomes. The local government in the area has long sought to evict residents to pave way for the construction of malls and other commercial establishments.

Instead of addressing their plight, police personnel dispersed the peaceful rally and arrested 21 protesters. They were detained and threatened to be kept in jail until the lifting of the lockdown. In a video broadcast that evening, Duterte ordered the PNP to shoot anyone who will "resist." His marching order has further stoked the people's raging anger.

The call #OustDuterteNow immediately trended on social media after his speech. Many artists and known personalities expressed their support for the call and delivered aid for the poor. Many contributed to raise money to bail out those arrested (P15,000 each or P315,000). The police was compelled to release the 21 on April 6. However, the community was again attacked by the PNP on the same day. They violently demolished the residents' community kitchen.

On the same day, the police demolished a barricade in Barangay Didipio, Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya which residents put up to prevent OceanaGold from sneaking in its fuel tanker. On top of lockdown restriction, OceanaGold operates illegally as the local government has already suspended its operations.

Spontaneous protests were also launched by the people to demand immediate aid. In Iloilo, residents protested in front of the DSWD Region VI headquarters on April 3.

Tricycle drivers also trooped to the office of Gov. Edgardo Tallado in Camarines Norte.

Meanwhile, residents of Barangay Muzon, Taytay, Rizal trooped to their barangay hall twice (March 24 and April 2) to demand that they be given aid.

Online protest

Many sectors, especially the youth and professionals, expressed their raging anger against Duterte through the internet as going out and assembly are restricted. They continuously criticized the government's failure to provide health workers with sufficient face masks, thermal scanners and other personal protective equipment (PPE).

In social media, they criticized the regime for giving special priority to senators and congressmen in testings amid the shortage in test kits. The calls #NotoVIPTesting and #MassTestingNowPH trended as people demanded to prioritize doctors and nurses, and suspected Covid-19 positive individuals. The conduct of mass testing is among the basic recommendations of the World Health Organization. The regime announced it will start conducting mass testing on April 14 but only for those who have symptoms and for health workers.

The call #NasaanAngAyuda (Where is the aid?) also trended, demanding the regime's accountability over the slow distribution of aid and the extremely limited budget allocation.

Netizens also criticized the harassment by Duterte's henchmen against Vice President Leni Robredo and Pasig City Mayor Vico Sotto who, contrary to the national govern-

ment, were lauded for their initiatives to help health workers and those adversely affected by the lockdown. Atty. Chel Diokno, who volunteered to provide legal assistance for people being harassed by the NBI, also received wide support after being harassed and insulted by Duterte.

On April 5, the call #DefendPressFreedom also trended in defense of Joshua Molo, editor-in-chief of Dawn, the student publication of the University of the East, who was threatened to be arrested and coerced to publicly apologize for posting anti-Duterte statements in Facebook.

Esprit de corps in beating Covid-19

In the absence of adequate government assistance, aid poured out from various groups and individuals to help health workers and the poor. This is while local government units are struggling to make do with limited resources to help their constituents survive.

Through the #BarangayDamay campaign initiated by Kadamay, the group conducted relief drives in various urban poor communities. The Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas launched the campaign Sagip Kanayunan (Save the countryside) to aid farmers from Batangas at Bulacan. It also conducted the campaign Bagsak-Ahon Gulay Sale to help farmers from Bulacan to sell their produce online. Kilusang Mayo Uno also launched a relief drive for workers in Caloocan and Quezon City under the campaign #Tulong-Obrero (aid workers).

Actress Angel Locsin also spearheaded a donation drive and provided various hospitals in Luzon with isolation tents to help these establishments



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Where is the people's money?

The P200-billion financial aid allocated by Duterte regime is not only insufficient but its coverage is also limited. This was exposed during the regime's first batch of distribution of the P5,000-P8,000 aid to appease the hunger and poverty caused by the militarist lockdown. To make do with the budget, the regime imposed a quota system on local government units.

In Valenzuela, the aid coverage is limited to only 95,000 families or 61% of the total 155,000 families residing in the city. The city mayor griped against how the DSWD identify beneficiaries and asked how the other 60,000 families will survive without aid.

In other cities in the National Capital Region (NCR), less than half of the total number of families will be given aid. In Manila, for instance, only 185,000 (43%) out of 435,237 will receive aid; and 77,764 (49%) out of 160,000 in Parañaque.

The situation is even worse in provinces outside NCR. Local officials are now struggling to bridge

the large gap.

They are asserting that all families and not just the poor are affected by the month-long lockdown and need aid and compensation. Many workers and employees, whether regular or contractual, lost their sources of income and jobs. They have no other means to source funds but from the subsidy being distributed by government.

Data by the reactionary government indicate that only P100 billion was distributed by DSWD as of April 3. Around P100 million was allocated to DOLE to aid workers who lost their jobs; and another P100 million to DOH to aid patients with various ill-

nesses. DOST was given P52 million for the production of test kits. Meanwhile, almost the same amount (P52.3 million) was allocated to the PNP under vague terms. If summed up, these allocations are already more than half of the P275 billion promised by Duterte.

The people have been waiting for proper aid and compensation for more than two weeks now. Many are already going hungry. They are enraged at the slow distribution of aid especially since Duterte used this as a pretext to demand that he be granted emergency powers. Duterte is putting the blame on local officials and are accusing them of corruption and being slow. However, the people clearly see that it is Duterte and his military-led Inter-agency Task Force that who are inutile and incapable of handling the current public health crisis. AB

Frontliners' just demand

Doctors, nurses, technicians and other health workers, known as frontliners, have been performing dangerous duties to care for Covid-19 positive patients. For them to be able to perform efficiently, they have laid out their immediate needs and just demands.

Primarily, they demanded the government to provide health workers with adequate supply of personal protective equipment (PPE). PPEs refer to protective clothing, helmets, face shields, or other garments designed to protect the wearer's body from infection. Frontliners bear the dangers of shortages in PPEs in many hospitals. According to the Alliance of Health Workers, 26 health workers tested positive for the disease in Metro Manila alone. At least 12 doctors have died from the disease.

Frontliners also demanded free and, if possible, regular testing for health workers.



They also demanded additional hiring of and trainings for regular health workers to improve their capability in treating patients. In 2018, 47% of barrios across the country have no health centers.

The presence of health centers, however, does not guarantee the availability of doctors or nurses that will attend to patients. The doctor-to-patient ratio in the Philippines is one doctor per 33,000 patients (far from the global standard set at one doctor is to 1,000 patients). Similarly, only 10 hospital beds are available for every 10,000 patients.

Since the 1980s, the government's budget allocation to health has not reached 5% of the local gross domestic product. Particularly, the budget for the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM), which primarily conducts Covid-19 tests, was slashed by 57% in 2017.

Frontliners also demanded for wage increase, hazard pay and security of tenure. AB

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to accommodate more patients with Covid-19 symptoms. Many other artists and workers also volunteered to raise aid.

Many Filipinos donated to help procure more face masks and other medical needs in hospitals. Many restaurants, food stalls and ordinary citizens donated food, while others volunteered to give free transportation and delivery services, among others. AB

Looming food shortage

Widespread food shortage is becoming imminent in the National Capital Region (NCR) and across the country. Many farmers and businessmen incurred high income losses because of Duterte's militarist and restrictive lockdown. Many were forced to stop production. The situation is bound to get worse with Duterte's plan to extend the lockdown until April 30.

Agricultural supply became increasingly scarce due to the lockdown. Contrary to the regime's order to allow the transportation of food products and cargo, trucks that carry food and meat products are hampered at checkpoints.

These past few weeks, tons of vegetables were left to rot, dumped or fed to animals as farmers were unable to sell their produce. Many farmers were compelled to sell their products at extremely low rates. Pechay farmers for instance, sold their produce at P3/kilo, way below the P60/kilo suggested retail price (SRP).

Farmers from Benguet and Mountain Province, provinces which primarily supply Metro Manila with vegetables, incurred highest losses. They have long been suffering from

low farmgate price. Now, majority of traders stopped buying their produce as they could not transport these into markets. Despite efforts of some local governments to buy their produce, a large portion of their harvests were not sold.

Poultry farmers in Central Luzon and Calabarzon, regions that supply almost half of the total supply of chicken meat and eggs across the country, are also unable to sell their produce due to the lockdown. This has sparked a poultry glut in the region which further pulled down farmgate prices.

According poultry farmers, the farmgate price of chicken dropped to P30-P50/kilo which is lower than their P70/kilo cost of production. Ironically, the market price of

chicken in Metro Manila increased due to limited supply. Recent reports indicate that the average price of chicken in Metro Manila has reached P160/kilo, higher by P30 than the P130/kilo SRP. They are also unable to sell chicken eggs which are also just left to rot.

On top of these, more than 800 container vans containing perishable goods such as vegetables, fruits, meat and medical supplies are stuck at ports in Manila.

Meanwhile, multinational companies in export-processing zones threatened to move their operations to other countries if they will not still be allowed to re-open and operate. They challenged the regime to allow limited operation of their factories. However, they have not offered any comprehensive compensation program or safety measures for their workers. Their operations, which are primarily concentrated in enclaves, were put to a stop due to the lockdown. **AB**

Cuba, beacon of international solidarity and medical service

Cuba, a small country in Latin America which is being harassed by US imperialism, is leading in medical solidarity and providing services to peoples of the world to fight the Covid-19 pandemic. It promptly deployed medical brigades to help countries hardest hit by the disease. On March 18, allowed the docking of British ship MS Braemar which carried Covid-19 patients and was denied entry in other countries.

Cuba offered to export to any country a drug to help Covid-19 patients. The said drug, called the Interferon Alpha 2-B, was developed by Cuban scientists since the 1980s to treat dengue, HIV, hepatitis and other viral diseases. The drug helps the body's ability to produce interferon, a group of proteins that the body uses to strengthen its resistance to viral diseases. Viral diseases are not cured by drugs but are rather overcome only through the body's resistance..

The drug was jointly developed

by Chinese and Cuban scientists. It has been manufactured and used in China since January. According to scientists, the drug is most effective when taken during the early stage of infection or as a preventive drug. The World Health Organization (WHO) is currently studying interferon-beta, along with three other drugs, to determine their effectiveness against Covid-19. Eight hospitals in the Philippines will participate in the WHO experiment.

According to Cuba, they have Interferon Alpha-2 supplies enough

for thousands of patients. It is willing to manufacture more if needed. Meanwhile, half a million Cuban health workers expressed their readiness to provide assistance to countries in need of medical help. According to the Cuban Health Workers Union, more than 45 countries have requested help from Cuba as of March 30. In the Philippines, Bayan Muna Rep. Euphemia Cullamat filed a petition on April 5 to request help from Cuba.

Currently, more than 28,000 Cuban health workers are providing medical service in over 60 countries. Its deployment of medical brigades was a program initiated by former Cuban Pres. Fidel Castro in 1963. It has been able to provide medical service to more than 160 countries. **AB**

Over 1 million Covid-19 infections worldwide

Over 1.2 million people in 204 countries and territories have been tested positive for Covid-19 worldwide as of April 6. More than 52,000 have died from the disease since the outbreak of the pandemic in China last year. Pandemic experts believe that the actual number is likely higher given that many cases are not reported to the World Health Organization (WHO). Many countries have yet to conduct mass testings (including the Philippines and some countries in Africa). There are also some countries believed to be hiding their actual infection toll.

By the last week of March, more than two billion have been quarantined and are staying at home to implement social distancing to contain the virus. Factories and mass transportation have been shut down. International travel and mass assemblies were also prohibited. The most restrictive lockdowns were implemented in China, India, France, Italy, New Zealand, Poland and UK.

The centers of capitalism have been hit hard by the pandemic. The highest number of infections (366,906) were recorded in the US where more 10,868 have died as of April 6. New York City is considered the epicenter of Covid-19 with 4,758 deaths and 131,239 infections. This is despite the US government's implementation of a strict travel ban to and from China, and quarantine measures for those who came from the latter. On March 13, Trump declared a national emergency and allocated \$50 billion to contain the virus and mitigate its socioeconomic impact. Majority of its states implemented voluntary quarantine measures.

Like many other countries, US hospitals and clinic suffer from shortages in ventilators, masks and

other personal protective equipment. Its hospitals have become congested and morgues could not keep up with the number of dead.

In Europe, 626,140 infections and 33,498 deaths were recorded as of April 6. Countries hardest hit in the continent include Italy, Spain, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. The death toll in Germany is relatively low (1,810), although its infection toll has reached 103,374. Experts attributed this to the mass testing promptly conducted by the German government, wherein 500,000 were tested weekly, and its preparation of facilities for patients with severe cases of infection. Aside from UK and Italy, majority of countries across Europe implemented voluntary quarantine measures.

In China, 81,708 infections and 3,331 deaths were recorded. Infections are also high in Iran, Turkey and Canada. By April, the number of infections in Brazil and other countries in Latin America started to increase. As of April 6, the Philippines recorded 3,660 infections and 163 deaths.

According to WHO, the infection fatality ratio is currently at 3%. The infection poses a high risk to

the elderly (60 years old and above) and those with cardiovascular complications and diabetes.

While governments are struggling to grapple with the health crisis, they are concurrently facing threats of socio-economic deterioration and the loss of livelihood in their respective countries. Unions in Europe projects that over one million jobs will be lost due to the closure of factories, schools and businesses, and the ban on mass assemblies. This is lower than the 10 million jobs lost in the US, 6.6 million of which were lost during the last two weeks of March. AB

Release 609 political prisoners!

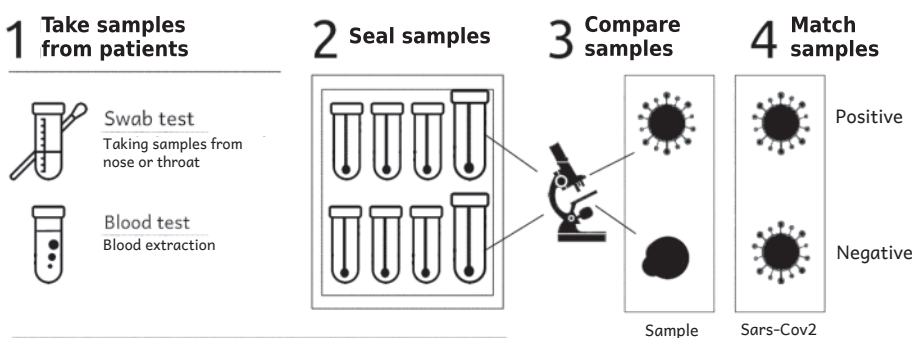
KARAPATAN CALLED FOR the immediate release of 609 political prisoners in the country, especially the elderly and sick. This is to take them away from the congested and vulnerable conditions in prisons during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The call was renewed when United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet called on governments to release prisoners to decongest jails. Iran, Brazil and other countries responded to this call.

The group also launched the #SetThemFree and #FreePoliticalPrisonersPH campaigns in social media. Earlier, churches including the National Council of Churches of Philippines and the Archdiocese of San Carlos also called for the release of political detainees.

Majority (209) of political prisoners arrested under Duterte are farmers who were accused of being members of the New People's Army. AB

Testing patients with Covid-19 symptoms



*test results are typically released after 6 hours

Mass clinics, food aid and production

In response to the call of the Communist Party of the Philippines to launch health campaigns to fight the Covid-19 pandemic, the NPA-Central Negros (Leonardo Panaligan Command) extended medical services to at least 1,000 farmers during the last week of March. NPA medics paid close attention to the elderly and pregnant women. They conducted check-ups and distributed herbal medicines for fever, cough and colds. They also distributed vitamins to improve the masses' resistance against diseases. At the same time, they educated the masses about the pandemic.

Members of the barrio health committee, Makibaka and Kabataang Makabayan helped in conducting the mass clinic.

In Bicol, around 260 families from three barangays received rice from the NPA during the last week of March. The said barrios were affected by the food crisis brought about by the regime's lockdown. The NPA unit and mass organizations supervised the the distribution of emergency aid. The funds

used by NPA in the relief operations were revolutionary tax collections.

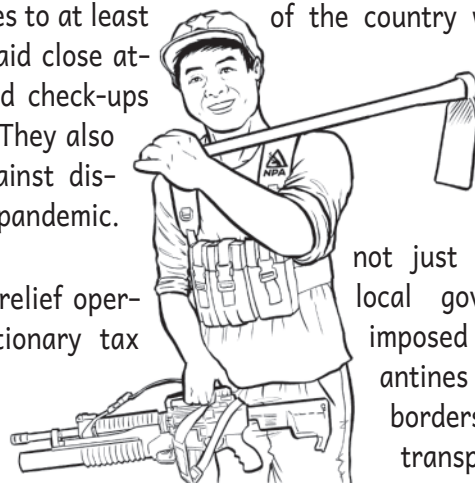
NPA units in Panay, Quezon and other areas also launched information drives.

These efforts are in line with the CPP's call to immediately help those in need. At the same time, the Party advised all its forces to carry out emergency food production and intensify economic work in revolutionary territories. The CPP issued

the call amid Duterte's restrictive lockdown in Luzon and other parts of the country which is causing severe problems on the people.

In reality, the lockdown is not just in Luzon. Many local governments have imposed enforced quarantines and closed their borders. Businesses, transportation, schools, churches and other socio-economic activities have been shut down. Because of this, majority of the people have lost their income and are having a hard time buying food, medicines and other basic needs. In some provinces, only churches give out

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NPA celebrates 51st anniversary

The New People's Army (NPA) celebrated its 51st anniversary amid the Covid-19 health crisis. Red fighters and people gathered at temporary encampments in various areas.

More than 2,000 farmers attended celebrations held by the NPA-Central Negros (Leonardo Pacci Command). The NPA staged cultural presentations that paid tribute to the noble contributions of the people's army in the island. They also paid tribute to victims of Oplan Sauron and relentless extrajudicial killings in the island. The people's army also held a mass clinic on the same day.

Red fighters from NPA-Negros (Apolinario Gatmaitan Command) wore face masks during the celebration to symbolize its solidarity with the Filipino people's fight against Covid-19. The celebrations centered on informing the masses about the pandemic and on the importance of maintaining a healthy diet to im-

prove the body's resistance against diseases. The NPA-Negros also launched *Ispading*, the literary folio of the revolutionary movement in the island.

More than a hundred Red fighters and residents from nearby barrios gathered in a guerrilla front in Bicol. The highlights of the program include dances, songs and solidarity messages of revolutionary organizations. They celebrated the anniversary with the theme, "Frustrate the US-Duterte regime's war of suppression! Further strengthen the New People's Army and comprehensively advance the people's war!" Speeches by Red fighters centered on responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and

preparations for the imminent crisis it may cause in the countryside.

In a statement, the NPA-Bukidnon called on the people's army and the masses to intensify their resistance amid relentless focused military operations in the province. Last year, it documented a total of 72 tactical offensives which resulted in 152 soldiers killed and 94 wounded. According to Ka Dereka Magtanggol, provincial spokesperson of the NPA, the AFP has dropped at least 84 bombs and fired 395 artiller rounds in the mountains of the province since 2018.

NPA units from the regions of Southern Tagalog, Panay and Bicol, and from the provinces of Kalinga, Abra and Mindoro also issued their respective statements.



NPA units must be on extra alert amid ceasefire

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) directed all units of the New People's Army (NPA) to be on extra alert in the face of successive attacks mounted by units of the military and police across the country. These attacks have been carried out despite Rodrigo Duterte's ceasefire declaration on March 19 and will be effective until April.

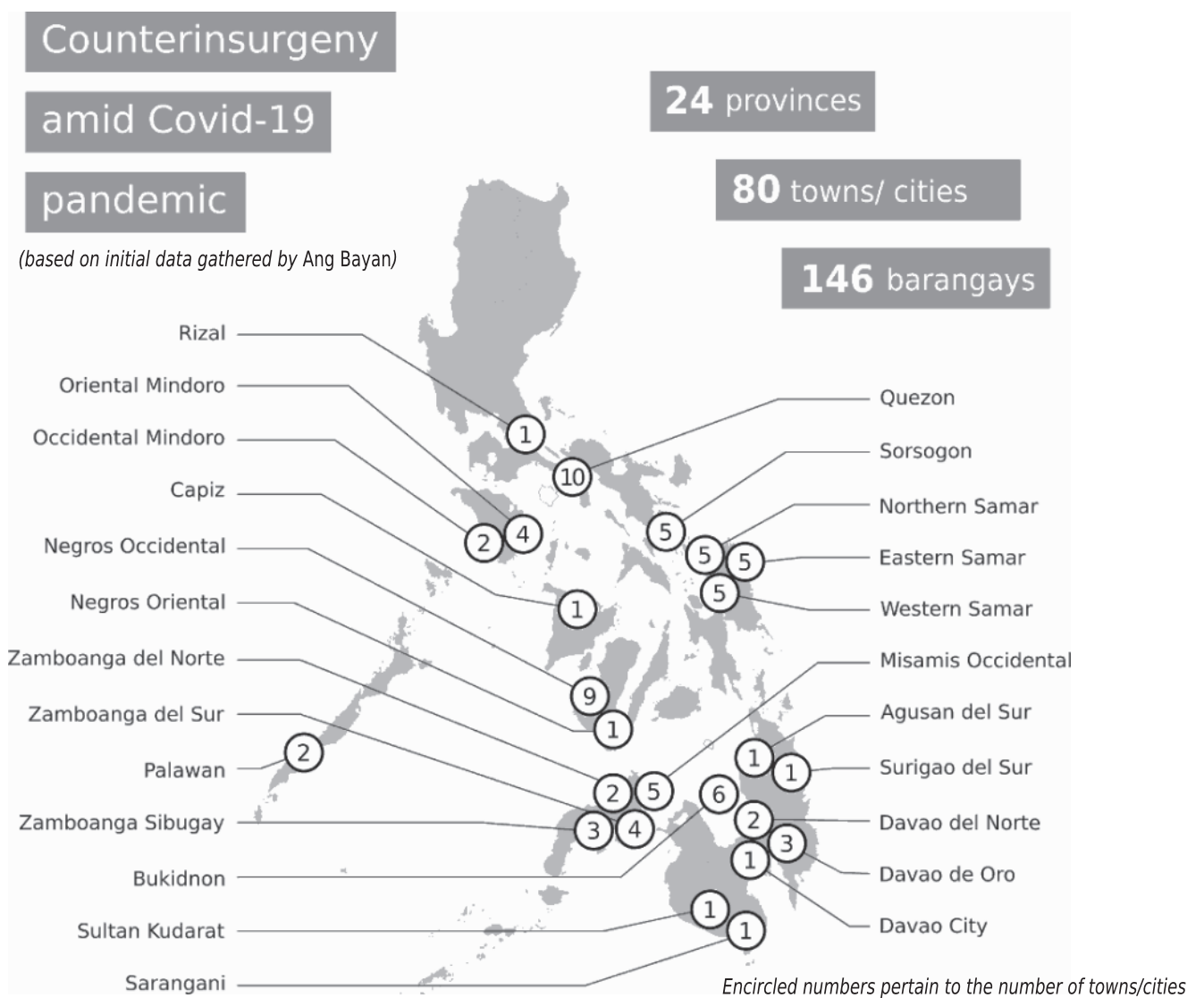
The Party also called on the NPA to exercise strict discipline to ensure secrecy in their maneuvers to deny the AFP and PNP any opportunity to attack while giving the Red fighters the widest latitude to undertake measures to educate the masses on how to prevent the

spread of Covid-19. However, it reminded the people's army to remain ever ready to engage in battle when necessary to defend themselves and the masses against offensive operations of the AFP.

The Party responded positively to the United Nation's call for a

global ceasefire to focus on fighting the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. On March 19, the Party directed all commands and units of the people's army and militia to cease and desist from carrying out offensive operations against AFP and PNP units and elements. It advised all revolutionary forces to continue conducting health campaigns and providing medical services to prevent the spread of Covid-19. The Party's ceasefire

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aid. Aid from local government units, if there is any, is distributed at snail pace. The people are yet to receive any subsidy from the national government.

The Party called on all NPA units to plan out emergency food production to cultivate palay, camote and other root crops, ba-

nanas, maize, pechay and other vegetables and crops that can be harvested in the short-term.

It also advised its forces to launch economic conferences to assess their needs and supplies, and their production potentials, and come up with specific plans to cover the rest of the year.

The Party also called on land-

lords to allow the use of their land for emergency food production without rent. It urged landlords to extend financial assistance, use of facilities and other resources. The Party also urged all local and international agencies and organizations to extend all forms of assistance to help the masses in emergency food production efforts.

AB

AFP bombing spree in Bukidnon, Davao amid Covid-19 ceasefire

The Armed Forces of the Philippines is on a bombing spree and continues to carry out focused military offensives in the Bukidnon-Davao border area amid the Covid-19 ceasefire. Based on field reports by the NPA-Bukidnon Subregional Command, Philippine Air Force (PAF) units under the 4th ID used an FA-50 fighter jet to indiscriminately drop five 500-pound bombs near two Lumad communities in Barangay Mandahikan, Cabanglasan on March 27.

Three bombs were dropped at around 9 a.m. and two more at 2 p.m., traumatizing Lumad children and residents. The airstrike severely damaged the environment which serves as the primary source of food and livelihood of the Lumads in the area.

After two days, using attack helicopters, the military dropped at least 10 rockets in the same barangay at noontime. Rounds were also fired from artillery cannons installed at an adjacent barangay in Loreto, Davao del Norte. A Cessna surveillance aircraft flew overhead the whole day after the airstrike.

The military also deployed an additional column of soldiers at Sitio Miyaray to conduct combat operations.

Meanwhile, two columns and three armored fighting vehicles were deployed at Sitio Tapayanon, Barangay Gupitan, Kapalong, Davao del Norte. On March 24, elements of the 60th and 56th IB attacked an NPA unit at the said area. The military made it appear that the attack was staged by the NPA although it was clear that they were carrying out offensive combat operations as evidenced by the fact that they have prepositioned artillery units to back

up their ground troops.

The military also raided an NPA encampment in Little Baguio, San Fernando, Bukidnon on March 29 at 2 a.m.

Residents reported that military troops continue to operate in Barangays Kibongcog and Poblacion, San Fernando; Barangay Concepcion, Valencia; Santa Filomena, Quezon; Barangays Bulonay and Kalabugao, Impasug-ong; Barangays Busdi, Caburacanan, Manalog, Saint Peter and Zamboanguita, Malaybalay City; and Barangay Poblacion, Cabanglasan.

Soldiers also installed two artillery cannons in Sitio Nursery, Barangay Concepcion and another in Sitio Salaysay in Barangay Santa Filomena.

The said areas have been subjected to continuous aerial surveillance since the last week of March. **AB**

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declaration will take effect until April 15.

The CPP is the first belligerent force in the world to respond to UN's call for ceasefire. In a statement, the UN lauded the declaration saying that this "will serve as an example across the world."

The UN announced on April 4 that 11 countries has responded to its call, including the reactionary Philippine government.

Relentless military offensives

The regime is not only violating its own ceasefire declaration, but is also its commitment to the global ceasefire, as military operations continue unabated amid the pandemic. It is squandering funds in its relentless and expensive conduct of combat psywar, drone surveillance and bombing operations in civilian communities instead of allocating funds to contain the pandemic. Based on initial reports compiled by *Ang Bayan*, the AFP has continued

to conduct counterinsurgency operations in at least 80 towns and cities, covering 146 barangays in the past three weeks.

Hours after Duterte issued a call for a ceasefire on March 16, the 8th IB bragged about raiding an NPA encampments in Sitio Bendum, Barangay Busdi, Malaybalay City in Bukidnon.

In Quezon Province, the 85th IB attacked an NPA unit in Barangay Ilayang Yuni, Mulanay on April 1. Another NPA unit was raided by 59th IB troopers in Barangay Mabunga, Gumaca on March 31. According to NPA-Quezon, the AFP has also been conducting sustained combat operations in at least 10 towns in the province.

On March 28, the 80th IB also attacked an NPA unit conducting a medical mission in Barangay Puray, Rodriguez, Rizal, and made it appear the attack was staged by the NPA. This is contrary to 2nd ID's own spot report which indicates

that they have been conducting combat patrols against the NPA.

On April 2, another NPA encampment in Barangay Balagon, Silay, Zamboanga Sibugay was raided by troops of the 44th IB. The same AFP unit raided another NPA camp in Barangay Peñaranda, Kabasalan in the same province last March 21.

Military and police operations and occupation of barrios endanger the lives and bring intense hardships on civilian residents. In Samar, the NPA reported that soldiers are operating in barrios without taking necessary medical precautions. They are operating in at least 15 towns in Northern, Eastern and Western Samar.

Military operations are also widespread in the islands of Negros and Mindoro, Davao Region, and Zamboanga Peninsula, and in the provinces of Sorsogon, Palawan, Capiz, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, Misamis Occident and Surigao del Sur. **AB**

State agents kill peasant leader in Surigao

Amid the Covid-19 crisis, state elements gunned down peasant leader Nora Apique, 66, while on her way home in Barangay Patong, San Miguel, Surigao del Sur on March 31. She was a leader of the Kahugpungan sa mga Mag-uuma sa Surigao del Sur, a local chapter of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas.

Apique served as the chairperson of the Municipal Agrarian Reform Committee (ARC) and was a member of the Provincial ARC. She participated in caravans of KMP-Caraga to Metro Manila to demand free irrigation. Apique was the 249th peasant killed under the Duterte regime.

Meanwhile, police and 3rd Special Forces Battalion elements arrested Manobo leader Gloria Tomalon in Barangay Diatagon, Lianga on March 16. She is known for actively participating in campaigns against the operation of five multi-

national companies at the Andap Valley Complex that plunder their ancestral lands. Tomalon is a sister of Bayan Muna Rep. Eufemia Cullamat.

Police and 6th IB elements also arrested civilian Leon Tacduro at Sitio Kipopo, Barangay Keytodak, Lebak, Sultan Kudarat on March 16.

Tomalon at Tacduro were both accused of being members of the New People's Army and were slapped with trumped up criminal charges.

In Davao de Oro, 11 peasant Lumads were illegally arrested by

71st IB troopers at Sitio Manggapanalaway, Pantukan on March 30. The victims were on their way home from hunting wild boars when they were arrested.

In Negros Occidental, elements of the 94th IB ransacked houses in Barangay Luz, Guihulngan City and illegally arrested peasant Teodoro Bolhano, a resident of Barangay Budlasan, Canlaon City on April 3. Military operations also continue unabated in Sitios Kambairan and Sampungan in Barangay Trinidad, Guihulngan City.

Meanwhile, 44th IB troopers ransacked the house of a Lumad peasant identified as Boy Tupaw in Barangay Cianan, Godod, Zamboanga del Norte during the last week of March. Soldiers stole his cash savings and shot his chickens. **AB**

ASF: Pandemic affecting domestic pigs

A pandemic has already been spreading around the world even before the Covid-19 contagion. This is the African Swine Fever (ASF) pandemic, a disease that infects and kills domestic pigs. It is not zoonotic but it devastates the livelihood of small peasants. There is neither cure nor vaccine for ASF, thus leaving swine slaughter the only effective disease control option. The virus has a 100% case fatality rate.

Like Covid-19, the current ASF pandemic broke out in China in 2018. During the first nine months of 2019, 100 million pigs died or had to be slaughtered. The virus continues to spread in the country until today. China is the world's biggest pork importer, producer and consumer.

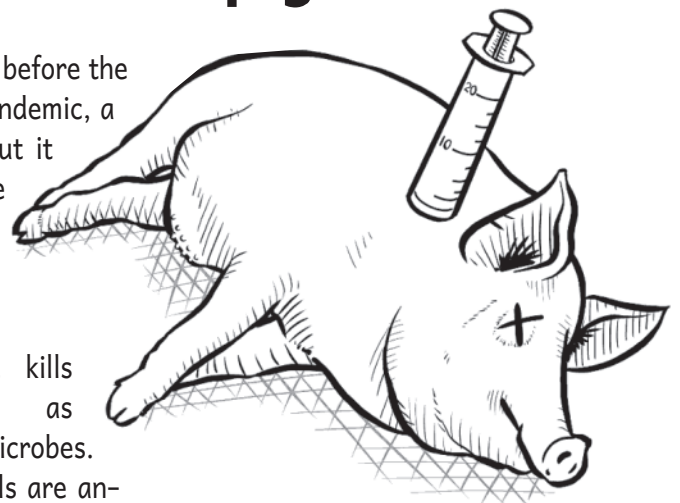
ASF first emerged in Kenya in 1921. It remained endemic in Africa until 1957. The virus is believed to be transmitted by soft ticks in wild boars. In 2007, the virus spread in Europe and subsequently in Asia.

ASF initially spread from big piggeries, poultry farms and ranches in capitalist countries, where antimicrobials are widely and indiscriminately used. An antimicro-

bial is an agent that kills microorganisms such as viruses, bacteria and microbes. Examples of antimicrobials are antibiotics and chemicals such as chlorine. Antimicrobials are often injected to farm animals from birth as growth promoter. It is also mixed in animal feed and water.

Regular and prolonged use of antimicrobials in healthy animals generate antibiotic-resistant bacteria and generally weakens their resistance to diseases. These animals become more vulnerable to new and more virulent types of diseases.

Consequently, this results in incurable infections which rapidly spread to other animal farms, and if



zoonotic, eventually infect humans.

Antimicrobials have been used in piggeries and poultry farms since the 1940s. However, its use became widespread and indiscriminate after piggeries and poultry farms grew into factory farms to meet the international demand for meat.

Antimicrobial abuse is currently widespread in US and China. In 2012, China used approximately 34 million kilos of antimicrobials. In the US, 13.6 million kilos of antimicrobials were used in animal farms. Majority of antimicrobials used are

"ASF..." continued on page 11

"ASF...", from page 10

antibiotics like chlortetracycline and penicilin, drugs which humans also use.

Worse, these antibiotics are passed on to humans through soil, water and air contamination. According to experts, animals excrete 75% of antibiotics through feces and urine. Antibiotic residues contaminate the soil, rivers, and eventually reach people's water sources. Feces, both of pigs and poultry, are also used as "organic" fertilizer. Hence, antibiotic residues are also absorbed by vegetable products that humans eat. AB

Hog raisers incur huge losses due to ASF

FILIPINO HOG RAISERS whose ASF-infected pigs were culled complained that the financial assistance given them by the Department of Agriculture is too low. The DA only gives the farmers P3000-P5000 per pig killed while hog prices are pegged at P9000 per head. There are approximately 13 million domestic hogs in the Phillipines, 40% of which are raised by poor farmers in their backyards.

Since the outbreak of ASF in the Philippines in August 2019, around 251,450 hogs died or have been culled to prevent the spread of the disease. The most affected provinces are Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Quezon, Batangas, Rizal, Cavite. Aurora, Benguet, North Cotabato, Davao City, and Davao Occidental and Sur.

In 2019 alone, hog raisers lost about P1 billion in income due to the pandemic. Hog raisers in Davao Occidental and Davao City are expected lose P80 million more this year. AB