

Editorial

Revolution! Not elections!

As the din of the campaign for the 2016 elections shifts into high gear, the Party and all national-democratic forces should further expose the bogus and empty reactionary elections in order to unceasingly arouse the Filipino people to persevere with their mass struggles, strengthen their organized strength and take the path of revolutionary struggle.

It is high time to reaffirm and propagate the basic principle that the social change the people have long been aspiring for can only be achieved through revolutionary struggle, primarily in the form of armed revolutionary struggle supported by a broad democratic mass struggle.

While some progressive and national-democratic forces engage in critical participation in the elections, the people should also be roused to reject the reformist illusion being inexorably peddled by the reactionaries and counterrevolutionary petty-bourgeois forces that participating in the reactionary elections will bring about

relevant change.

For the reactionaries and US imperialism, the elections play a critical role in preserving the ruling political system and their class dictatorship.

Through the electoral process, the reactionary government and the political system of landlords and big bourgeoisie are made to appear "democratic." This conceals the class character of the ruling state and creates the illusion that those running and leading the reactionary government are "chosen by the people."

The reactionary elections reflect the rotten politics of the parasitic ruling classes, the big

landlords and comprador bourgeoisie, and especially the bureaucrat-capitalists linked to the criminal syndicates. They covet control of the government as a source of favors in granting contracts, cutting taxes, smuggling commodities and protecting their criminal operations.

The reactionary elections are inherently fraudulent. Forms of fraud range from vote-buying to intimidation and coercion of voters to manipulating the vote count.

To lend credibility to the elections, the reactionary state started the automated election system in 2010. Since the counting of votes is concealed from the public eye, fraud has become even more widespread, massive and systematic.

US imperialism's control over the elections has also become stronger. Globally, the automated election industry is

controlled by a few companies linked with big monopoly capitalists. It has become easier for US imperialism to determine who among the candidates it will put into power, especially national officials of the reactionary state.

US imperialism's control over ruling class politics



has further tightened. It uses the reactionary elections to consolidate the ruling class, sort out rivalries among their ranks, anoint those chosen to be in power and obtain the support of various factions.

The coming May elections will result in none other than putting in place a new puppet of US imperialism and representative of ruling class interests.

For the Filipino people, the reactionary elections pose no great significance. They are aware that this simply replaces the faces of those administering the reactionary state. This will not bring about any change in its basic policies.

The next administration will only continue exploiting and oppressing the Filipino people under policies favouring big foreign capitalists.

Amidst the aggravating and deepening crisis of the ruling semi-colonial and semifeudal system, the ruling classes in the Philippines are becoming ever more desperately subservient to US imperialism.

Early as it is, leading presidential candidates are already competing for US imperialism's attention and presenting themselves as fervent advocates of neoliberal policies. Among their proffered programs is the continuation and expansion of the Public-Private Partnership program intensely desired by big domestic and foreign capitalists for its guaranteed profits.

Also included in these are the policies of depressed wages, union-busting and the encouragement of various forms of labor flexibility. Bounded with these also are policies favouring the landgrabbing for the establishment and expansion of commercial plantations and destructive mining operations.

The new reactionary state that will be installed under US rule come May 2016 will only become more dependent and servile to the dictates of its imperialist master. The US will ensure the installation of a regime that will certainly continue with policies favouring military intervention and the construc-

tion of US military bases in the Philippines, and serve its goal of strengthening its military power in the Asia-Pacific region.

Amidst ever-worsening poverty and oppression, the national-democratic forces should strengthen the propaganda movement which exposes the semicolonial and semifeudal system and arouses the Filipino people to fight to overthrow imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism.

The revolutionary forces must expose and reject the sham democracy under the reactionary elections. At a time when political candidates capture the people's attention and give them entertainment, the people should further be mobilized in mass struggles.

At the same time, mass movement activists critically participate in the elections by supporting forces and politicians who are friendly to or supportive of the national-democratic movement and the people's welfare.

Patriotic and democratic parties also participate to win seats for their representatives in the parliament and become the Left opposition that will bring the issues of mass struggles to the reactionary congress.

This congress should be relentlessly exposed as an instrument of landlords, big bourgeoisie and fascist and criminal bureaucrat-capitalists. The illusion that the people can achieve basic change by relying on legal and parliamentary struggle alone must be untiringly shattered. Ceaselessly raise the people's militance to resist the ruling state.

"Revolution! Not elections!" is the Filipino people's cry in rejecting the reformist illusion being propagated by the ruling class. Under the Party's leadership, they continue to march along the road of people's war with the goal of smashing the ruling state and ending the exploitative and oppressive system.

AB



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Candidates bare pro-imperialist stance

Some presidential candidates will continue with the US-Aquino regime's Public-Private Partnership (PPP) program should they assume power. This has been clear all along in their pronouncements. In fact, they do not conceal their intention to continue with the present regime's bankrupt policy with regard to attracting foreign investment.

The PPP is one of the policies most desired by the big comprador bourgeoisie and their big foreign capitalist partners. In order to attract US imperialism's support, Vice President Jejomar Binay pushes for the accelerated implementation of projects under the program. For him, the most pressing issue regarding the PPP is the "inexplicable delay" in the implementation of projects. In a similar tune, Senator Grace Poe vowed to finish seven airports under the PPP in the first half of her term.

Presently, 12 PPP projects "with a combined worth of P217.4 billion" have been granted by the US-Aquino regime. Two of these—the P2.01 billion Daang Hari-SLEX Link Road Project and the P16.43 billion PPP for School Infrastructure Project Phase 1—have been implemented.

The PPP's fate under the next regime is one of the biggest questions confronting businessmen in

the country. In fact, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce has been pushing Aquino to fast-track the implementation of PPP projects during the rest of his term. The American Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines has also called upon the presidential candidates to continue with the implementation of duly awarded PPP projects.

In reality, foreign and local investors are not worried about the future of the PPP even as the administration's bet, Sec. Mar Roxas, lags behind in poll surveys. The Commission on Elections does not ban the granting of contracts for PPP projects during the election period. Biddings and the granting of projects to favoured businessmen will continue as scheduled. The PPP Center aims to grant at least three more contracts before Aquino's term ends. In addition, leading candidates have also promised not just to continue with the program, but to improve upon its implement-

ation for the benefit of foreign capitalists. They have all vowed to increase government spending for pro-foreign infrastructure. This includes a budget designed to secure the profits of big capitalists investing in the projects.

Industries, not ecozones

Meanwhile, the Anakpawis Partylist criticized Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte for favoring the construction of economic zones like Clark.

According to Fernando Hicap of Anakpawis, "We criticize Duterte for siding with foreign businesses in ecozones, instead of promoting respect for Filipino labor rights such as wage hikes, the right to unionize and to strike."

Anakpawis also condemned Duterte's announcement that he will allow up to 70% foreign ownership of the country's industries.

Anakpawis made public its stand after Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) slammed Duterte for threatening them. On February 9, Duterte said he would not allow the establishment of labor unions and threatened to "kill" KMU members who do otherwise. AB



NPA wipes out PNP-RPSB platoon in Cagayan

Seventeen were killed while 10 other troops of the Philippine National Police-Regional Public Safety Battalion 2 (PNP-RPSB2) were wounded in an ambush staged by the New People's Army-East Cagayan (Henry Abraham Command or HAC) last February 16 in Baggao, Cagayan.

The ambush was carried out at Kilometer 13 in Barangay Pallagao at 10 a.m., when a company of the said PNP unit responded to a punitive action by the HAC against a destructive company, Brostan Construction, last February 14. As a result of command-detonated explosives, the whole RPSB force aboard two vehicles were immediately paralyzed and were unable to

retaliate.

Earlier, the NPA destroyed Brostan Construction's heavy equipment located along the road in nearby Barangay Sta. Margarita. These include two backhoes, one dumptruck, one bulldozer, and a payloador. Brostan Construction is owned by big foreign and local capitalists.

According to HAC spokesperson

Ka Ester Falcon, the ambush serves as punishment to the PNP-RPSB for acting as protectors of Brostan Construction's plunder. The company pushes for the construction of the Ngarutngot dam which it claims will be the source of the National Irrigation Administration's irrigation project. In truth, mining in Mt. Ngarutngot is Brostan Construction's real intention. The said dam project and mining operations endanger the lives and livelihood of the people of Cagayan's first district. Twelve barangays in Baggao are directly affected. **AB**

46th IB sustains 30 casualties in Pantukan

TROOPS of the 46th IB, PA sustained no less than 30 casualties at the close of a series of tactical offensives by the NPA under the ComVal-Davao Gulf Subregional Command in Pantukan, Compostela Valley last February 3.

The first ambush was executed at 12:30 in the afternoon last February 3 at Sitio Sapang Tin-aw, Barangay Tibagon. Nine soldiers were killed, including 2nd Lt. Garcia, commander of the unit, while 10 were wounded.

At 7:30 in the evening, Red fighters ambushed an army truck in Barangay Cabahian. Two soldiers were killed, among them 1Lt. Ralph Pantonial while seven were injured. Before this, at around 7pm, Sgt. William Morenio was killed after an NPA fighter fired at him in Barangay Biasong.

According to the National Democratic Front-Southern Mindanao Region, the NPA will persist in their offensives against the 46th IB because the latter protects the interest of the large mining companies based in Pantukan.

Meanwhile, the Guerilla Front 53 of NPA-SMR (Hermio Alfonso Command or HAC) punished Bernabe Abanilla, chief of the Civil Security Unit in North Cotabato last February 7 while alighting from his vehicle in Barangay Doruloman, Arakan, North Cotabato. Abanilla was among the masterminds of the killings of Fr. Fausto Tentorio in 2011 and Benjaline Hernandez in 2002, both killed in Arakan. Isabel Santiago, spokesperson of HAC, declared the punishment of Abanilla as a victory for the people of Arakan and the revolutionary movement. **AB**

2-day offensives in Negros

A SERIES of tactical offensives was carried out by the Guerrilla Front 1 (Leonardo Panaligan Command) of NPA-Negros last January in Himamaylan City, Negros Occidental.

Two soldiers from the 11th IB and an element of the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) were killed. These offensives belie claims of AFP units based in Negros that the NPA "has been rendered inconsequential" in the island.

These also serve as punishment to the said military unit for the killing of civilians Uldarico Camayodo of Sitio Cunalum, Barangay Carabalan and Jumar Hilario of Sitio Pisok, Barangay Buenavista. This is also a response to the proliferation of illegal drugs perpetrated by the soldiers in Carabalan and Buenavista

January 14. A unit of Red fighters harassed the headquarters of the Charlie Company of the 11th IB in Barangay Carabalan, Himamaylan City. The NPA managed to close in as near as 50 meters from the headquarters so that the soldiers were not able to counterattack.

January 18. Two elements of the 11th IB were killed and one injured in an NPA ambush. The AFP troops were pursuing the NPA who attacked their headquarters. This was followed by a series of harassment operations against the troops operating in Sitio Cantupa and Sitio Bantik in Barangay Buenavista.

These offensives serve as training for new recruits and commanders of the NPA as culmination of their consolidation activity last December 2015. **AB**

EDSA Uprising's legacy

Thirty years since the EDSA Uprising, the legacy of the US-Corazon Aquino regime, brought into power through a popular uprising, continues. This is a legacy of continued servitude to the imperialists, big landlords, and comprador-big bourgeoisie in oppressing and exploiting the Filipino masses.

The overthrow of Marcos was not a social revolution that crushed the evils of US imperialism, feudalism and fascism. The most obvious change that the EDSA Uprising brought about was the change of rule from one pro-US open fascist dictatorship to the rule of another pro-US faction with the trappings of bourgeois democracy.

The US retained its hegemony over the Philippines. The same classes of big compradors and landlords continue to rule the semicolonial and semifeudal Philippine society. The armed forces remain the main component of state rule.

Even before she took over, the US dictated the terms for its new chief puppet, including the continued use of US military bases in the Philippines, to which she agreed. When Corazon Aquino was brought into power by the EDSA Uprising, she immediately allocated 47% of the government budget to service the \$26-\$30 billion foreign debt, which was never enjoyed by the Filipino people but instead went to

the pockets of Marcos

and his cronies. Corruption went unabated and the debt continued to grow up to the \$6 trillion mark at present.

Not only did the new regime continue Marcos's anti-people, anti-labor and anti-peasant decrees, she upgraded these and sped up neoliberal globalization. Among the anti-people laws were the Omnibus Investments Code guaranteeing unlimited profits for foreign capitalists exploiting the country's wealth, and the Herrera Law legalizing contractualization and imposing tougher controls by the Department of Labor and Employment on worker's strikes.

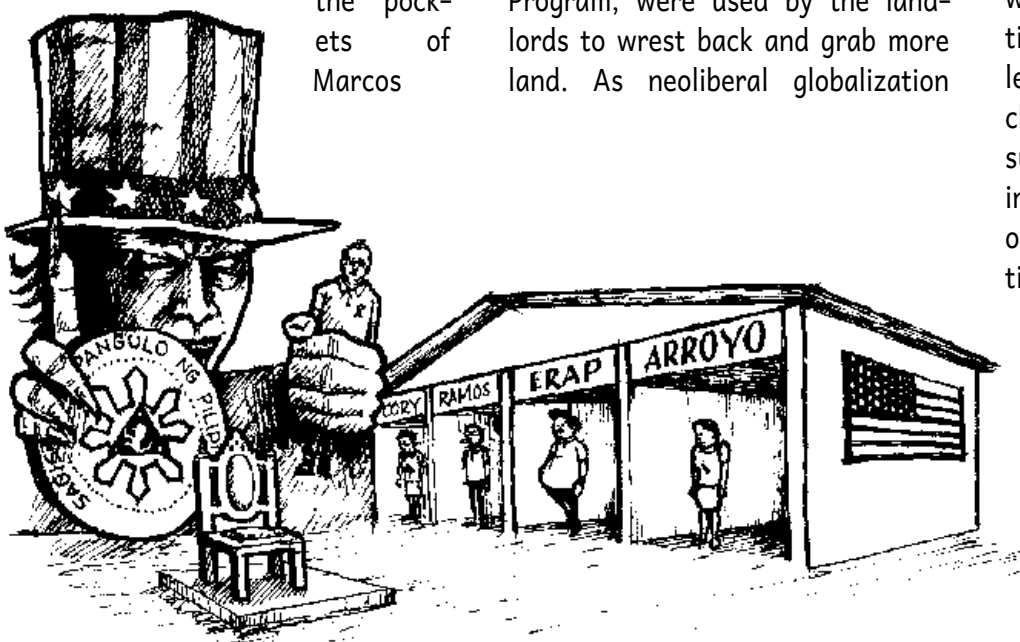
Policies of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank took off, such as the freezing of worker's wages, the prohibition of strikes, anti-industrialization, import liberalization, and privatization.

Loopholes intentionally built into the most expensive, longest and sham land reform program, the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, were used by the landlords to wrest back and grab more land. As neoliberal globalization

rushed forward, land grabbing accelerated for the use of foreign mining companies, plantations and commercial establishments including malls and tourist resorts.

The Corazon Aquino regime seemingly revived democratic processes by drafting a new constitution, convening congress, allowing freedom of the press, and holding elections. But it did not take long before the fraudulent February 2 plebiscite and May 11, 1987 elections were exposed for posting an incredible 95% registration of possible voters of which 90% supposedly went to the polls. Involved in these was Lord Mark Malloch-Brown, then Corazon Aquino's political consultant, who now owns the machines used in the automated elections of 2010 and to be used again in the 2016 elections.

In line with the regime's bourgeois democratic trappings, Corazon Aquino formally restored the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus and released Marcos' political detainees. But since then, respect for human rights would improve no further. The succeeding regimes will put to shame Marcos' record of tyrannizing the masses. Six million had to flee their homes, 150,000 were killed and 100,000 were wounded in military operations in Marcos's 21-year rule. At least 70,000 were detained without charges. Until now, none of the succeeding regimes showed interest in prosecuting even a single soldier or officer involved in these violations. The Corazon Aquino regime even raised the military budget by 47% and the salaries of the soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) by 60%,



increasing further with every succeeding regime.

As early as 1986, upon the direction of the Pentagon and US-Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) chief Gen. John Singlaub and operative Ray Cline, military and paramilitary forces have attacked activists and mass leaders in the cities and countryside. Among these attacks were the murder, with all impunity, of KMU chairman Rolando Olalia and his driver, and Bayan Secretary-General Lean Alejandro. While openly calling for reconciliation, since March 1986, more than 15 combat battalions have been deployed against the revolutionary forces in the countryside. The widespread massacres, assassinations, torture, strafing, zoning and forced evacuation which were implemented under Corazon Aquino's Total War became the standard of equally brutal anti-people, US-designed counter-insurgency campaigns in every succeeding regime. At the same time, military officers were given sensitive and powerful posts in high levels of the civilian bureaucracy. Oplan Lambat Bitag 1, 2 and 3; Oplan Makabayan; Oplan Balangay; Oplan Bantay Laya 1 and 2 up to the US-Benigno Aquino regime's Oplan Bayanihan, prove that fascism is very much alive behind the camouflage of bourgeois democracy.

Even as the Ramos, Estrada and Benigno Aquino regimes had not yet formally approved the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement and Visiting Forces Agreement, US advisers, trainers, covert operatives of the Pentagon and CIA, ground and naval troops together with the AFP had been running loose in the Philippines. They had been conducting aerial and naval surveillance operations, funding death squads and vigilante groups directly or indirectly through the CIA and international anti-communist organizations. Upon the EDCA's

ratification, the US has become more brazen in its intervention in the country and preparations for direct aggression.

Though the semicolonial and semifeudal system remained, the people did not allow themselves to be limited by the character of the succeeding regimes. Events show that the ruling class can no longer rule the old way. From the old bourgeois democracy, it imposed martial rule to halt the revolutionary movement. As the movement gained even more strength, it switched to bourgeois democracy. But the people's aspiration to oust an unbearably oppressive and exploitative regime has not waned.

In the face of numerous modes of deception, the masses are aroused, organized and mobilized for their liberation. The broad democratic people's movement continues both in the city and countryside. Revolutionary armed forces continue to grow and revolutionary bases expand in the countryside, and organs of the democratic people's government sprout in consolidated areas. These are the bases of future upsurges in the struggle.

The US-Aquino regime's legacy is that of neoliberal globalization's limitless destruction of the people's livelihood, the continued rule of bourgeois-comprador-landlord dynasties and their privileges for corruption, militarization and violations of human rights with impunity, and boot-licking servitude to US imperialism. This is a legacy carried on by the second US-Aquino regime's "tuwid na daan" (straight path), Oplan Bayanihan and EDCA.

On the other hand, the EDSA Uprising's legacy to the people is a tradition of struggle to overthrow a despised regime in a way not proscribed by the limits of bourgeois legality.

The EDSA Uprising, like other

historical uprisings of the Filipino people, was widely participated in and invigorated by the Filipino youth.

One generation before EDSA, the youth previously molded by "anti-communism" and "conservatism" unexpectedly led the First Quarter Storm of the 1970s and the Diliman Commune that bannered the red flag of revolution. One generation later, the youth martial rule attempted to mold through an educational system designed by the US-controlled Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education and who grew up amid the mantra of "sa ikauunlad of bayan, disiplina ang kailangan" (for the country's development, discipline is needed) surged to the streets to join the EDSA Uprising.

A generation later, the youth of "Generation X" who ostensibly gained awareness during the time of "reconciliation," and "yellow magic", and grew up amid the deception of "democratic space", formed the bulk of the second EDSA Uprising that overthrew the shameless US-Estrada regime.

The present generation of millennials (youth born during the close of the 1990s) who grew up amid the milieu of "social media" and the "YOLO" (you only live once) mentality, a generation molded by individualism and neoliberal ideas, is the generation that will take on the legacy of EDSA 1 and 2. They will also be the ones who will effect new uprisings once the illusions and deceptions clouding their consciousness are shattered. The unity of the youth and students with the toiling masses and thorough-going advance of the national-democratic propaganda movement and democratic mass movement will create a new upsurge of protests that will result in a new historical uprising greater than all past uprisings. AB

Schools launch series of protests

One protest after another was conducted by the students and teachers against the commercialization and the colonial system of education last January and February.

#AyokoMagmahal

The #AyokoMagmahal campaign, a nationwide protest against increases in tuition and other fees in colleges and universities, was launched last February 12 through the initiative of Anakbayan, League of Filipino Students and Kabataan Partylist.

Before this, students protested last February 8 at the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to condemn the estimated 5-12% tuition increase for the next school year. Among those who will increase fees are the same schools who have recorded the highest incomes in previous years, such as Far Eastern University, Lyceum of the Philippines and University of the East.

The #AyokoMagmahal campaign also condemned the plight of the increasing number of students who have committed suicide due to rising costs of education.

Jessiven Lagatic, a 4th year graduating student of Central Bicol State University of Agriculture, committed suicide last February 11 after losing his scholarship. Lagatic is the fifth student to commit suicide under the Aquino regime.

UP series of protests

Meanwhile, teachers and students of University of the Philippines (UP) in Diliman foiled attempts to revise the university's curriculum after a series of protests.

A group of students and teachers led by Anakbayan and Student Alliance for the Advancement of Democratic Rights in UP (STAND

UP) held a protest action on the first day of classes in UP last January 19. Students from UP-Diliman marched to the CHED last January 22. On January 25, they held a noise barrage during the meeting of the university council where the revision of the curriculum was discussed. During the voting, 256 voted against while only 187 representatives voted in favor of revising the General Education program (GE).

The students also denounced plan to reduce the GE program from 45 (15 courses) to 21 units.

According to Anakbayan, the proposed curricular reform is a colonial measure that seeks to realign UP education to better suit the demands of foreign and big businesses for cheap labor. This only paves the way for more specialized courses in the curriculum under the K-12 program and the integration among ASEAN member countries.

Furthermore, the proposed GE program makes the adoption of Filipino courses by UP constituents optional and puts warning labels for courses taught mainly in Filipino, as if to scare students away from taking such courses.

In a related matter, parents, teachers and students of Manila Science High School petitioned the Supreme Court last February 15 to stop the implementation of the K-12 program. According to Atty. Severo Brillantes, the Supreme Court should act on the appeal because universities and colleges are now conducting their entrance examinations for the next school year. AB

Group slams reduction of discounts at the NKTl

PATIENTS of the National Kidney Transplant Institute (NKTl) held a protest action in front of the hospital last February 12 to denounce the scrapping of the 80% discount for poor patients with kidney failure.

From 80%, the discount for hemodialysis patients was cut down to 20%. Even those who are covered by the PhilHealth are obliged to pay P550 for every hemodialysis session and P951 for maintenance medicines. They will also have to shoulder P1,500 for a dialyzer, a filter used to clean blood.

Without the discount, overall expenses amount to P4,500 for each session.

Hemodialysis is a medical process for patients with chronic kidney failure. It filters the patient's blood by allowing blood to flow through a special machine that removes wastes and excess fluids, before it is returned to the body. This method allows the kidney to function but needs to be performed regularly and for life.

NKTl officials told patients that the discount for hemodialysis was reduced to promote kidney transplant instead of having to endure such a medical procedure for life. Both processes are burdensome and expensive for the poor. A kidney transplant amounts to P1 million, aside from P30,000 for maintenance medicines. AB

Protests against EDCA continue

IN COMMEMORATION of the 117th year of Philippine-American War, members of Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) marched to the US embassy on February 4.

“More than 1.5 million Filipinos were killed under the violent 'benevolent assimilation' campaign of US imperialists,” said Charisse Bañez, national chairperson of the League of Filipino Students.

Last February 3, a group of progressive lawyers and sectors led by Bayan filed a motion for reconsideration regarding the Supreme Court's decision declaring Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) constitutional.

In relation to this, Bayan-Northern Mindanao Region held a rally to oppose the plan to utilize Lumbia Airport in Cagayan de Oro City as a US military base. No one believes that the airport will only be used to store equipments for disaster and relief operations, as was insisted by the regime's spokesperson.

In a statement released by Cesar Renerio, spokesperson of National Democratic Front - North Central Mindanao Region, the presence of US forces in the region will be destructive. Through EDCA, the US will be able to conduct whatever form of operation and activities based on agreed locations.

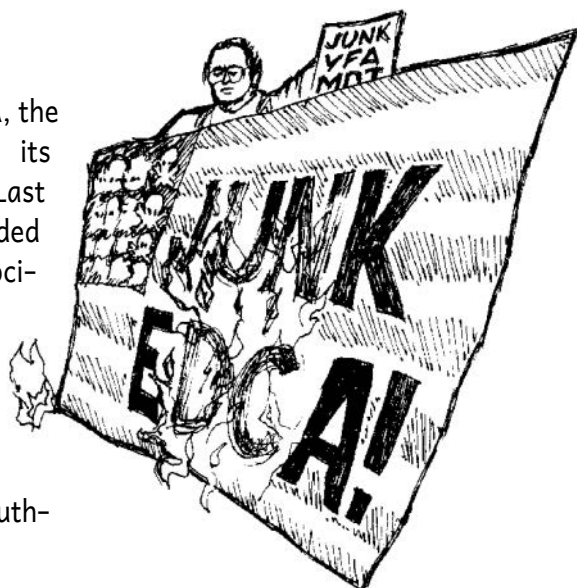
US-ASEAN Summit

In addition to the EDCA, the Aquino regime continues its subservience to the US. Last February 15, Aquino attended the first US-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Summit hosted by the United States in Sunnylands, California. The assembly was held to convince 10 leaders of south-

east Asian countries to create a definite stand against China. In the past, the ASEAN has failed to arrive at a united stand against China, even on the question of disputed territories in the South China Sea.

The US also took the opportunity to promote the Trans-Pacific Partnership, where Vietnam, Singapore, Brunei and Malaysia are members. Trade in products and services between the US and Southeast Asia amounts to almost \$254 billion, which is equal to half its entire trade relation with China. This group of countries is the third largest trading partner of the US and its largest capital investment in Asia.

The meeting served as the peak of US diplomatic maneuvers in Southeast Asia. Previously, US President Barack Obama visited the region seven times to develop diplomatic relations among the countries in the region. The US also strengthened economic and military ties between juntas and dictatorships in Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar. AB



Police attacks Zambales barricade

LAST February 7, police forces violently dispersed barricades put up by residents of Barangay Bayto, Sta. Cruz in Zambales against mining operations of Zambales Diversified Mining Corporation (ZDMC), Filipinas Mining, Benguet Nickel Mining Inc. and Eramen Minerals Corp. in their community. Many were injured in the dispersal while four were illegally arrested by the police.

On February 10, ZDMC filed charges against 10 residents for purportedly violating the Mining Act after barricading the mining site and blocking company trucks since January. Included in the complaint were a councilor in Sta. Cruz, two members of the barangay council, a pastor and two officials of Concerned Citizens of Sta. Cruz, the organization that led the barricade.

ZDMC is owned by DM Consunji Incorporated Holdings, one of the US-Aquino regime's most favored compradors.

According to the residents, these companies should stop their mining operations in the area because they violate environmental standards of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau. Last April 2015 these companies were suspended but eventually resumed operations after three months, insisting that their operations comply with the regulations.

But according to a fact finding mission conducted by the Center for Environmental Concerns, sediments flowed from the excavation sites after Typhoon Lando in October 2015. Moreover, more than 1,000 hectares of vegetation were affected to pave the way for the operations of mining companies. AB

Thousands join One Billion Rising: Rise for Revolution

VARIOUS sectors attended the annual One Billion Rising (OBR), a global campaign to stop violence against women and children. In its fourth year, organizations advocating women's and children's rights raised their call to the theme, "One Billion Rising: Rise to Revolution."

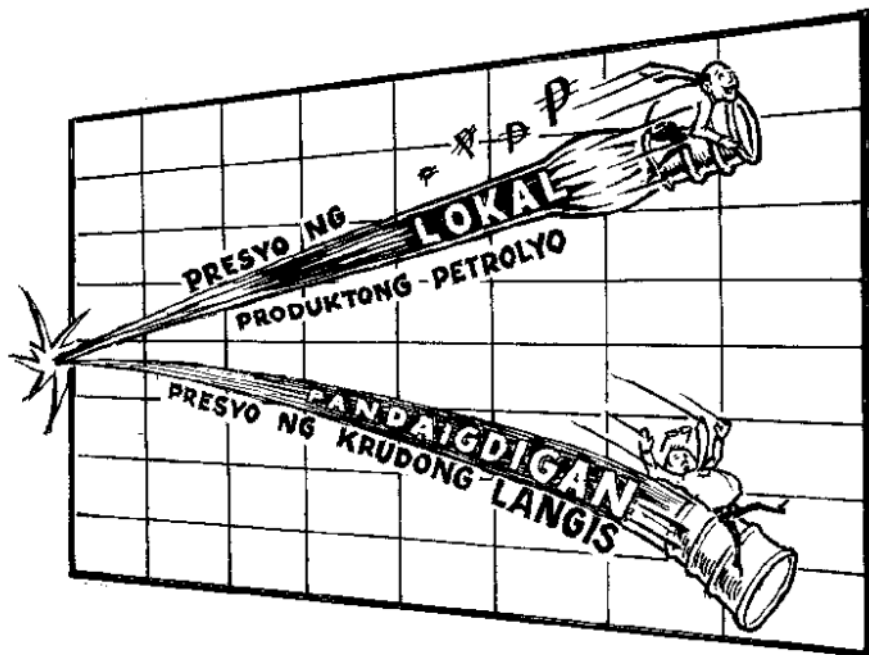
On February 14, thousands of women assembled in front of Lapu-Lapu Shrine, Rizal Park, Manila. Through dancing, performances and speeches, groups condemned the worsening poverty and abuses suffered by millions of Filipino women.

In Cebu, thousands also attended the OBR held at the University of the Philippines-Cebu Oblation Square and at the Provincial Capitol Grounds.

Last February 12, church women participated in OBR in Quezon City Memorial Circle to express solidarity with Lumad people. According to Darlene Caramanza of Ecumenical Women's Forum, "We are here today to express our solidarity with our Lumad brothers and sisters whose lives are still in danger because of harassment and militarization of their ancestral lands."

Along with this, UP Baguio and Diliman also reaffirmed their position and solidarity against all forms of violence against women. According to data from Center for Women's Resources, cases of violence among women rose by 200% from 2010 to 2014.

These activities were observed by Eve Ensler, writer and founder of OBR, who is in the country to join Filipino women. OBR was also held in provinces and cities of Davao, Baguio, Sorsogon, Pampanga, Tacloban and Negros. AB



Manipulating oil prices

Local oil prices are set to go up again this February even as crude oil prices continue to fall in the world market.

In peso terms, crude oil prices have dropped by up to 75% since mid-2014. In contrast, local oil companies have cut petroleum products prices by 53% (diesel) and 29% (gasoline) only.

Worse, these companies have repeatedly increased local prices even as prices dropped in the world market. In February 2015, oil companies raised the price of gasoline by P4 and diesel by P3.

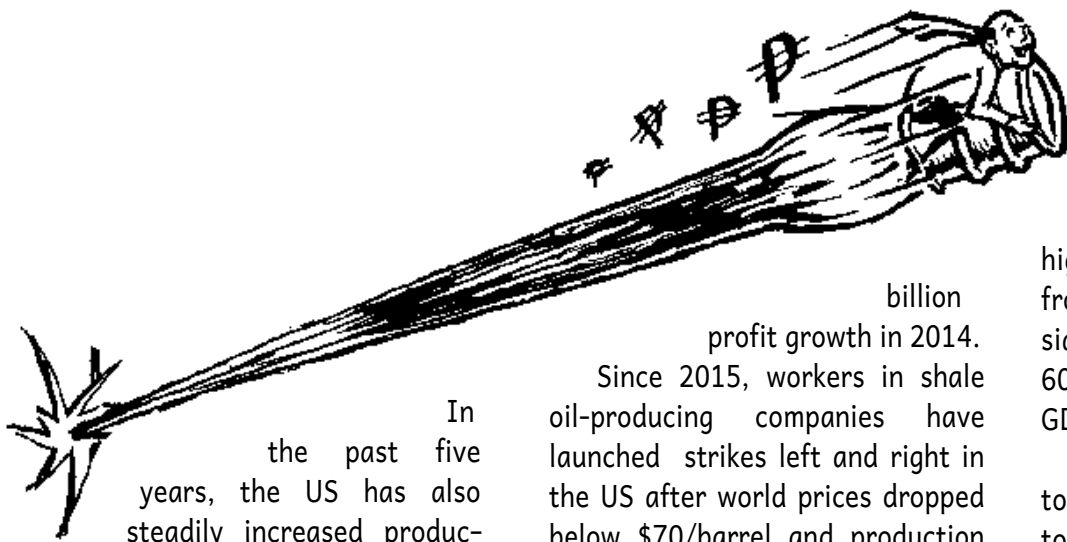
The IBON Foundation pointed out that at \$23/barrel, crude oil prices are at year 2000 level. Then, diesel was priced at only P14.24 per liter and gasoline at P17.08/liter, which is far from the current price of diesel at P19-20/liter and gasoline at P34-35/liter.

Public jeepney fares are among the most affected by fluctuating oil prices. In January, drivers and operators agreed to reduce fares from P7.50 to P7 despite the high

cost of vehicle maintenance. Fare reduction of other public modes of transportation, such as the MRT and LRT, as well as ships and planes, has been slower and in smaller rates, despite the fact that these, too, are run by petroleum products. Worse, lower oil prices have no effect on the prices of basic commodities, which have increased with every oil price hike.

Falling world oil prices

On February 16, Russia, Saudi Arabia and two more OPEC member-countries agreed to limit production to January levels to arrest the sustained fall of oil prices in the world market. In the past 18 months, world oil production has risen beyond its limits despite lower international demand or market. Towards the end of 2015, oil oversupply in the world market has reached an estimated 1-2 million barrels a day.



In the past five years, the US has also steadily increased production up to 66%. It flooded its own markets with cheap oil from shale and fracking. In 2015, it became the largest oil and gas producer in the world. It continued to increase shale oil production to depress prices and seize markets both in North America and Europe.

Crude oil prices dropped by 70%, from \$102/barrel in August to \$23/barrel on the third week of January.

Oil exporting countries are now suffering huge losses. Even in Saudi Arabia, lower profits have led to cuts in social services. Companies have started to go bankrupt, resulting in shutdowns and worker lay-offs (including Filipino migrant workers). Some countries are on the brink of economic collapse, such as Azerbaijan and Nigeria which have sought a \$4 trillion bail-out fund from the banks.

Due to low oil prices, Shell profits dropped by 87%. The company dismissed 7,500 workers in 2015 and plans to lay-off 2,800 more this year. Chevron registered a \$4.1 billion loss in profits in its US operations in 2015. Outside the US, Chevron's profits dropped by 85%. ExxonMobil registered a 58% drop in its profits in 2015 and has announced plans to cut its operational capital by 25%. British Petroleum dismissed 7,000 workers after suffering a \$5.2 billion loss in profits in 2015, as against its \$8.1

billion profit growth in 2014.

Since 2015, workers in shale oil-producing companies have launched strikes left and right in the US after world prices dropped below \$70/barrel and production was cut by up to 100,000 barrels a day.

There is no end in sight for falling oil prices. The contraction of the oil market reflects the intensifying crisis of overproduction that is plaguing the world capitalist system. Though China's oil imports have slightly increased in 2015, it is set to decline in the coming years due to the weakening of its manufactures.

Even if Saudi Arabia and Russia's decision to cut down production pushes through, oil inventories in the world market remain high. In fact, oil oversupply is set to increase now that US imperialism has lifted the embargo against Iran's oil exports.

Low oil prices, a weapon against Russia

In the past, conflicts arising from overt and covert interventions and wars of aggression of the US and its allies in the Middle East have caused oil prices to skyrocket. But since 2014, severe conflicts in the region have not arrested its downward spiral.

The US decision to manipulate world prices to pressure Russia predominates since the latter has hindered US military and economic expansion both in Central Asia and the Middle East, as well as to force Russia to withdraw its support to the Syrian and Iraqi re-

gimes.

On September 11, 2014, Saudi Arabia and the US agreed to keep oil production high to reduce Russia's profits from its oil and gas exports. Russian oil and gas profits make up 60% of its exports and 30% of its GDP.

By US estimates, Russia needs to keep world prices at \$80/barrel to avoid commercial bankruptcies and finance a large part of its national budget. Under the direction of the US Treasury's Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, Saudi Arabia flooded the market with its excess oil despite calls from its fellow OPEC members to cut down production. Saudi Arabia also offered cheap or discounted oil to Asia, notably China, in the guise of expanding its markets. China is one of Russia's biggest allies.

Price speculation

A large part of oil prices is determined not by supply or demand but by market manipulation of large finance speculators. In reality, supply contracts make up only 2% of all trading in the oil market. The vast majority are futures and various financial derivatives. It is estimated that 60% of oil prices are due to speculation in the oil market. This market is controlled by the largest banks and finance speculators based in the US, particularly Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs. Prices of futures are set with the help of rating agencies, so-called oil experts and the imperialist-controlled big media.

Last September 2015, Goldman Sachs announced that crude oil prices will fluctuate from \$20 to \$40 until the second part of 2016.

AB

Military slays 3 civilians in Compostela Valley

Three civilians were killed by the military in Compostela Valley this February while one minor was illegally arrested and detained after being accused of being a member of the New People's Army. Meanwhile, a team of the human rights group Karapatan was harassed by the military and barred from entering and launching an investigation in militarized communities.

On February 7, Alejandro Laya-og, 36, died from gunshot wounds on his back and head, which he sustained while on a bus terminal in Maragusan town.

Laya-og, one of the founders of Kahugpongan sa Mag-uuma sa Magcagong (Kamama), was accused of being an NPA member by the 25th IB. His organization, Kamama, has been opposing military presence and the human rights violations being committed against communities in Maragusan. Laya-og was also instrumental in the establishment of Salugpongan Community Learning Center, a Lumad school.

On February 9, a gunman killed Jennifer Albacite, 40, a banana vendor in the public market of Compostela town. Karapatan believes that Albacite was taken for her sister, Jeannirose Porras, a member of Compostela Farmers' Association (CFA), who was the real target. CFA strongly opposes the entry of Agusan Petroleum Mining Company (AgPet) in Compostela and adjacent towns.

On the same day, Ronel Paas, 35, a small-scale miner, was hit on the chest as soldiers of the 46th IB relentlessly fired their guns and cannons in Barangay Napnapan, Pantukan. Paas was rushed to the hospital, but died on the way after being detained for an hour with his rescuers in the detachment in Barangay Tibagan under the suspicion that they were NPA members.

A 14-year old boy was also hit on the leg in the relentless shooting. Rather than coming to his aid,

the military arrested the boy and brought him to Camp Panacan in Davao City, where he was presented as a "child soldier" of the NPA.

The military misleadingly declared that the child was arrested during a series of armed encounters between the military and NPA in Pantukan last February 11, two days after the shooting incident in their barangay.

On February 11, the military harassed a 30-strong delegation composed of Karapatan and local government officials to investigate the incident in Barangay Napnapan. While on the way to Sitio Post 4, they were shot at twice by the military. According to Karapatan, the 46th IB carries out the attacks to pave the way for the entry of large-scale mining operations in the province. Small-scale miners are tortured by the 46th IB to coerce them to cease operations. Troops and cannons were also deployed at miners' communities in Mabini, Pantukan and adjacent towns.

Visiting the Lumad

Eve Ensler, an American feminist playwright and activist, visited the Lumad refugees in the Haran Compound of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines in Davao City on February 12.

Ensler was moved to tears upon learning of the human rights abuses perpetrated by the military against the refugees and the relentless militarization of their communities. Ensler also called upon the government to immedi-

ately pull out troops from Lumad ancestral lands. Ensler is the founder of the One Billion Rising global campaign to end violence against women.

Around 57 Lumad families have evacuated their communities and sought refuge at the Haran Compound after the grisly murder of a minor and student, Alibando Tingkas, last January 29.

Not CAFGU

The National Democratic Front (NDF)-Bicol denied claims by the 9th ID and police that the NPA was responsible for the killing of Bing Obias on February 13. According to the military and police, Obias was an active CAFGU member, based in Barangay Pili Tabiguian, Caramoan, Camarines Sur, who was shot dead by Red fighters.

According to Maria Roja Banua, NDF-Bicol spokesperson, the NPA has nothing to do with the killing. She also denied that Obias is a CAFGU member. "Obias came from the peasant class and was a legitimate resident of Pili," she said.

Obias' body, with a gunshot wound on the head, was found a few meters from the 22nd IB-CAFGU detachment. Obias was a member of the Pambansang Katipunan ng mga Magbubukid, the revolutionary peasant organization.

"The NDF condemns the PA and PNP's arbitrary accusations to justify the killing and point the finger to the NPA as the perpetrator. This is part of the 9th ID's desperate acts of retaliation against civilians," Banua added. The killing happened two days after an NPA harassment operation against the 22nd IB detachment last February 11. AB

US-Aquino regime derails Bangsamoro Basic Law

The Bangsamoro Basic Law has finally been abandoned by the US-Aquino regime after Congress failed to enact the proposed law as the House of Representatives adjourned last February 3. This bares the empty promise of the US-Aquino regime to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) that the said bill will be passed as a result of MILF's peace agreement with the Government of the Philippines (GPH). Unlike the regime's speedy ratification of other bills, Aquino allowed the BBL to gather dust.

The regime's failure to enact the BBL has all the more strengthened the Moro people's resolve to continue with their armed struggle for self-determination. Although the MILF holds on to the BBL's enactment in the future, it has likewise indicated the possibility of resuming its armed struggle. Mohager Iqbal, chairman of the MILF Peace Panel, recently denied a news report saying that they have become "tired of war", and said that frustration is widespread among their fighters and followers.

Last February 10, clashes erupted between the AFP and the MILF in the towns of Datu Salibu and Datu Saudi Ampatuan in Maguindanao. Also, on February 8, the AFP blocked MILF leader Abdullah Macapaar (also known as Kumbander Bravo) and his troops from his hometown in Munai, Lanao del Norte where he was to hold consultations with the base communities of the MILF.

Even before the crafting of BBL, some sections of the MILF had already broken away and formed the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) owing to their disagreement with BBL's imposition of an indefinite ceasefire. Since last year, the military has been relentless in pursuing the forces of the BIFF. The BIFF has likewise been persistent in its armed struggle.

Last February 8, Nur Misuari of the Moro National Liberation Front gathered 2,000 of his men at his camp in Indanan, Sulu. This assembly is viewed as the MNLF's intensification of its protest against

the government's trashing of the 1996 peace agreement between the GPH and the MNLF.

According to MNLF spokesperson Absalom Cerveza, they welcome BBL's non-passage, and said that it will be disastrous for the government if it insists on pushing for the BBL. Also present at the said meeting were leaders and members of the BIFF and the bandit Abu Sayyaf Group. The AFP has since deployed a total of nine combat battalions and one company solely for the province of Sulu.

US military forces in the Philippines have long intervened in the Moro people's armed struggle. On the one hand, US imperialism adduces as pretext its "war on terror" campaign to justify the positioning of an increasing number of its troops, as well as the arming and training of the AFP and PNP.

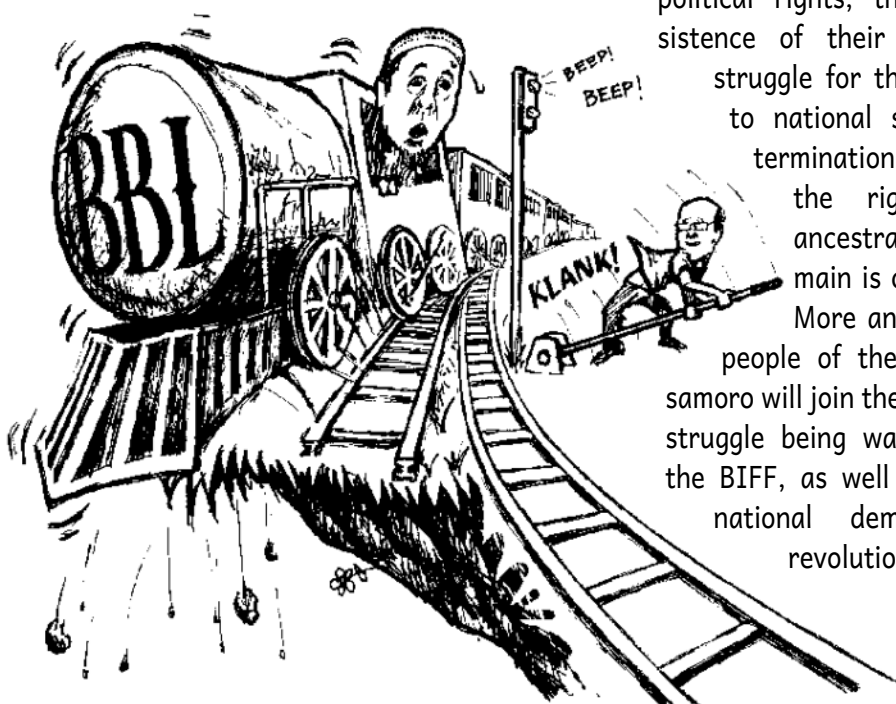
On the other hand, the US likewise covets the surrender of the

MILF and other armed groups in Mindanao in its desire to exploit the rich natural resources of the Moro people's ancestral lands. Big foreign capitalists have long salivated over the deposits of oil and natural gas in the Liguasan Marsh valued at \$1 trillion. The MILF and various Moro armed forces have control over the Liguasan Marsh.

This is why US imperialism has long intervened in the GPH's peace negotiations with the MILF. The GPH's sole objective is for the MILF and the Moro people to surrender their arms. The MILF on the other hand fights for the right to self-determination and for the right over ancestral domain.

The US and the Aquino regime likewise intend to take advantage of a showcase "final peace agreement" in order to pressure the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) to follow the MILF's example and enter into an indefinite ceasefire so as to forge a peace agreement. In truth, the US-Aquino regime has taken the MILF for a ride in crafting agreements which they will ultimately forgo and derail.

With the BBL's trashing and the continuing violation of the Moro people's economic and political rights, the persistence of their armed struggle for the right to national self-determination and the right to ancestral domain is certain. More and more people of the Bangsamoro will join the armed struggle being waged by the BIFF, as well as the national democratic revolution. AB



JCET: Instrument for US military intervention

The Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) is the US weapon for intervention, seizure of power and the maintenance of puppet dictator regimes in various parts of the world.

JCET is a program for joint training exercises, as exemplified by the US-Philippine Balikatan exercises, undertaken by the US Special Operations Command. Through this, the US trains local troops and groups that will defend their interests in countries afflicted by disturbances and on the brink of disintegration. This is done up to five times a year.

It is in the African region where the interests of the US and its allied countries such as France and Germany are immense that the use of the JCET by the US is most blatant. Under the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership, the US consolidated a regional army that it directly trained and funded to put in place and maintain in power its favored armed groups in the region. In five countries—Mali, Burkina-Faso, Mauritania, Niger and Tunisia—military officials trained under JCET led failed and successful coups d'état. In Mali in 2012, a military official trained by US Green Berets led a coup d'état against the elected government. The eventual armed conflicts arising from the coup led to a high number of civilian casualties. During the early part of 2013, US and French troops directly attacked Mali under the thin guise of countering the threat of al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in the country. In truth, France and the US are actually just protecting their interests in Mali, including the puppet dictator put in power.

In 2014, a graduate of a US militar academy and the JCET over-

threw the government in Burkina Faso. JCET-trained military officials also

launched US-supported coups d'état in Mauritania in 2005 and 2008, in Niger in 2010 and in Tunisia in 2011.

Violence, abuses and other violations of human rights characterize the troops trained by the US. Bloody records mark the armies in Algeria, Cameroon, Chad, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia, Niger, and Uganda—countries where regular and frequent JCETs are launched.

From 2011 to 2013, for example, the US Naval Special Warfare Unit 10 (NSWU-10) gave special trainings to armed forces of Cameroon and Chad in spite of reports of continuing and severe cases of abuses by their respective military units against the civilian populations. These include killing and mistreatment of detainees and prisoners and extra-judicial killings, threats, beatings, shooting and injuring of civilians. The Chad security forces are also involved in the massive recruitment of child soldiers, and an attack on the neighboring Central African Republic (CAR) in 2013.

JCET trainings were also held in Algeria and Kenya from 2012 to 2013, where killings, forced disappearances, torture, rape and excessive use of force by security forces are widespread.



The holding of trainings in countries where brutal and abusive armed forces abound is not limited to Africa.

In Colombia, five JCETs were held in 2012-2013, despite the record number of extra-judicial killings by the reactionary armed forces here, insubordinate collaboration of the military with armed criminal groups, and disappearances.

In Saudi Arabia, four JCETs were launched from 2011 to 2013 while the armed forces were busy suppressing demonstrators who were calling for an end to secular discrimination.

Three JCETs were held by Bahraini troops in 2012. In the same year Bahraini armed forces perpetrated arbitrary and extra-judicial killings, arrest and detention of protesting citizens with trumped up charges.

Also in 2012 five JCETs were held in El Salvador, four in Lebanon, four in Romania and two in Mexico. All these countries experience violations of human rights, such as extra-judicial killings and cruel treatment of detainees (El Salvador), torture and abuses (Lebanon), mistreatment and harassment by police against detainees (Romania) and forced disappearances of civilians (Mexico). AB