

# UPDATES

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## EDITORIAL:

**Marcos Jr, number one IHL violator**

Consecutive cases of civilian killings and bombings by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) were recorded in Bohol, Cagayan Valley, Masbate, Negros Occidental and Panay Island over the past few weeks. Under the leadership of their commander-in-chief Marcos Jr, the AFP is on a literal 'killing spree' as they violate international rules of war one after another.


In Panay Island last February 28, the AFP's 3rd Infantry Division (ID) carried out an aerial bombing campaign along barangays Torocadan, Dongoc and Langca in San Joaquin town, Iloilo. The bombing started at two in the morning and was augmented with strafing and rocket-firing from helicopters, and artillery shelling using truck-mounted howitzers, lasting several hours. The aerial bombing and artillery shelling caused deep fright and trauma among the children, women, and elderly people. There are reports that people in the communities are being rounded up and prevented from working in their fields.

In Bohol last February 23, police officers raided the home of a certain "Berting" in Barangay Campagao, Bilar, Bohol. Witnesses saw Berting and his two minor children (one of whom is four years old) being manhandled in an effort to force them into revealing the location of Ka Silong (Domingo Compoc) and his companions. Berting and his two minor children were later forced into a white van, which left moments later. That was the last that Berting and family were seen by their neighbors. Their location is still unknown as of writing.

The abduction of Berting and his children was followed by the murder of five Red fighters by combined elements of the 47th Infantry Battalion (IB) and local police forces. Domingo Compoc, Hannah Cesista, Parlito Historia, Marlon Omosura and Alberto Sancho were captured alive in Barangay Campagao on February 23. Contrary to international rules of war, the five were tortured and deliberately killed after.

In Escalante City, Negros Occidental on February 22, more than 10 bombs were dropped by the 79th IB followed by machine gun strafing purportedly at 'more than five members' of the New People's Army (NPA). The NPA however denies the claim saying it was another one of fake encounter reports to justify the AFP's bloodlust at the expense of communities affected by indiscriminate attacks.

In Masbate last February 5, two elderly spouses Pedro Regala (78 years old) and Florencia Regala (67 years old) were killed by the 2nd IB in Barangay Toboran, Cawayan. The AFP once again replayed their tired old arguments claiming the two elderly couple were members of the NPA. Vulnerable groups including the elderly are afforded special protections under international humanitarian law during armed conflicts.

These cases constitute part of a greater number of atrocities under the Marcos regime all of which are tantamount to grave violations of international rules of war. All above-mentioned incidents are in contravention to the Geneva Conventions and its additional protocols that protect the rights of the people in times of war, both for combatants but most importantly for civilians. These are also violations of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect for International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) between the National Democratic Front of the Philippines and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP). 

**Greens senator protest Marcos appearance in Australian Parliament**

Greens Australian Senator Janet Rice raised a placard with the slogan "Stop human rights abuses" while Marcos Jr was speaking in front of the Australian members of parliament last 29 February. At the same time, Filipino and Australian groups staged a protest rally outside the chamber.

Senator Rice declared corruption in the Philippines intensified under Marcos Jr. "Hundreds of political prisoners remained detained and 'anti-terrorist' laws are used as a legal cover for extra-judicial killings." She said Marcos should not have been allowed to address Parliament.

Senator Rice was forced out of the session by other lawmakers. She then took part in the protest outside the building.


The Greens Foreign Affairs Spokesperson, Senator Jordan Steele-John, refused to attend the parliamentary session with Marcos Jr, and instead gave a fiery solidarity speech to the protest taking place outside the parliament. Another Greens Senator, David Shoebridge also spoke to the protest. The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan)-Australia led the protests. People from Melbourne, Sydney, and Queensland joined the action to express their condemnation of the Marcos regime. The rallyists then marched to the US embassy and held a short program where they condemned US imperialist interventionism and militarization in the Asia-Pacific which endangers the Philippines. Furthermore, they called for the scrapping of AUKUS, the military alliance of the US, United Kingdom and Australia.

Cristina Palabay, General Secretary of Karapatan, thanked Senator Rice and the other senators from the Greens



image: philippinerevolution.nu

party for their solidarity with the Filipino people. "The ongoing violations of human rights and international humanitarian law under Marcos, the prevailing culture of impunity and the Marcos family's history of plunder and human rights violations during the dictatorship are compelling reasons why the Australian people should denounce this regime," according to Palabay.

Peter Murphy, Chairperson of the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines (ICHRP), a broad international organization, said the ICHRP expresses its gratitude to Senators Janet Rice, Steele-John and Shoebridge for their bold action. "President Marcos has done nothing but continue his father's legacy of intensive repression, and has further empowered the mechanisms of terror set up under the Duterte regime." 

**Groundswell of opposition mount vs Charter Change**

The Philippines' opposition movement gathered by the thousands across cities on 25 February to protest against Marcos Jr's plans to amend the Constitution, using the 38th anniversary celebrations of the people's uprising that ousted his father in 1986 to rally support.

Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos Diocese said politicians have plenty of rhetoric about social ills and stressed that now is the time for concrete action to combat these problems.

"The root cause of our problems is really corruption, and our political system bears significant responsibility to it," said Alminaza, who is also the vice president of Caritas Philippines.

Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan), the largest coalition in the country, said it has been working with various groups in a "broad movement" that opposes constitutional amendments.

Dubbed as "Koalisyon Laban sa ChaCha," the group, composed of various religious groups and civil society organizations, asserted that charter change is not the solution to the country's problems.

The country's biggest labor alliance also called on Congress that it need not tinker with the 1987 Constitution, saying that it is not the key to the long-aspired economic prosperity but the implementation of critical constitutional provisions, which includes the ban on political dynasties. The Nagkaisa Labor Coalition (Nagkaisa) also pointed out establishing a living wage, strengthening job security, protecting workers who organize unions, setting up environmental protections, and other human rights and social justice clauses.

In a related development, youth organizations launched last February 21 the Movement Against Charter Change (MATCHA) Youth Alliance at the Commission on Human Rights, declaring their opposition to the people's initiative charter change (cha-cha) being pushed by a Marcos administration-affiliated group.

Meanwhile, a newly formed alliance of teachers and academics has branded the government's Charter change campaign as a form of historical distortion, warning that efforts to tweak the fundamental law also aim to erase the memory of the years-long anti-Marcos struggle that birthed the country's democratic cornerstone.


The Teachers, Education Workers, and Academics Against Charter Change (TEACH) described the Charter change campaign as an attempt to rewrite history and downplay the people's struggle against authoritarian rule under the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr., the president's father. 



image: philippinerevolution.nu

# CPP: Maco landslides a result of destructive imperialist mining



image: philippinerevolution.nu

More than 100 people, mostly mining workers, were killed last February 6 in a landslide disaster in a mining community in Maco, Davao de Oro (formerly Compostela Valley). This incident is the latest in a number of similar tragedies in the province which is one of the country's biggest mining centers. The landslide occurred in Barangay Masara which is part of the area of mining operations of the Apex Mining Company, a company owned by Marcos crony Enrique Razon, one of the biggest bourgeois compradors and among the top billionaires, according to a statement by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

The Apex Mining Corporation, the CPP reported, operates open pit mines in the area. Zone 1, where the tragedy happened, is a community of workers employed by Apex Mining. According to reports, despite dangerous conditions resulting from weeks of rains, no precautions were made to evacuate the community, and work in the Apex mines were not suspended.

In 2016, the operations of the Apex Mining was ordered suspended by the late Sec. Gina Lopez of the GRP's Department of Environment and Natural Resources, because of the dangers posed by the destructive mining operations of Apex to the people and the environment. Pro-people environmental advocates and progressive political groups have called for a probe of the Maco landslide disaster and condemned the continued operations of destructive imperialist mining companies

in the Philippines. They said that the Maco incident is a stark reminder of how companies have joined forces with complicit government agencies to the detriment of local communities. They noted that these environmental disasters have all taken place under the framework of the Mining Act of 1995, "which has historically provided little space for communities and civil society to assert their right to a clean, healthy, and safe environment against the profiteering of multinational companies and local oligarchs".

Despite Marcos' defense, the CPP said, Razon cannot escape responsibility for the deaths of 100 in Maco, mostly workers or people working for his company.

The CPP also held the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) equally responsible for the Maco disaster, for serving as security force of the Apex Mining company. Gross human rights violations have been committed by the AFP in Maco in the course of suppressing communities opposed to the Apex mining operations, especially against Lumad people of Mindanao.

The CPP said that for decades, the Lumad people in Mindanao, other indigenous people and peasants in various parts of the country, have been subjected to violence, oppressed, driven away and robbed of their ancestral land.

"The Maco tragedy underscores the need for the Filipino people to intensify their struggle against foreign mining and plunder of the country's environment and wealth, from the mountains to ocean.

"The Apex Mining tragedy will certainly be not the last in the face of the Marcos regime's effort to swing the country's door open to foreign investments, which will continue to pave the way for devastating and plunderous operations of profit-hungry capitalists. Multinational companies in mining, agriculture, energy, tourism, and infrastructure are now swamping different provinces nationwide. They will flood in further if Marcos succeeds in amending the constitution to open the door to foreign plunderers," the CPP emphasized.

"The revolutionary armed struggle is the most effective way of defending the environment. The New People's Army has repeatedly proved its determination and strength to sanction or eventually drive away foreign environmental plunderers and in shooting the fatal spear against the pro-imperialist reactionary state. In the face of the Marcos regime's efforts to fully open the country to foreign mining companies, it is imperative for the NPA to strengthen to defend the masses and the environment," the CPP stressed. 