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COLORS OF THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL: RED TAGGING, PINK TIDE, AND THE MISSING GREEN AGENDA

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Colors on the campaign trail: *Red Tagging, Pink Tide, and the Missing Green Agenda*

Red tagging and human rights violations.

Since the start of the campaign period in February, we have monitored an alarming increase in red tagging incidents, arbitrary arrests, and the filing of harassment cases against the media and critics of the government. We are concerned that Senator Panfilo Lacson, a presidential candidate and former police chief, falsely accused supporters and volunteers of Vice President Leni Robredo of being Communist Party members. He also warned against a possible coalition government with the Communist Party although he failed to substantiate this allegation. He was called out for spreading this malicious spin to discredit his rival while endangering the lives of Robredo supporters. Red tagging in the Philippine context often leads to violent consequences. In fact, a Makabayan Coordinator in northern Luzon who has been red tagged in the past was briefly detained by the police while conducting a fact-finding mission in Cagayan province. Red tagging is also used to undermine the work of independent media. For instance, the government's top lawyer has petitioned the court to revoke the agreement between the Commission on Election and news website Rappler on pursuing voter awareness campaigns. Rappler is accused of being a foreign entity while the government's anti-communist task force has red tagged the news outfit as being a friend and ally of armed communists.

Pink Tide. In just one month, the campaign of VP Robredo has succeeded in mobilizing tens of thousands of supporters in proclamation rallies across the country. Robredo has adopted the color pink as her political symbol. Despite lacking resources as an opposition candidate, Robredo was able to gather a record number of supporters in several cities which reflected her

rising popularity among voters. This was confirmed in a recent report which showed that Robredo garnered the highest number in the topics measured by Google Trends. It is expected that Robredo's poll numbers will continue to improve in the next few weeks even if she had previously placed second in last month's election survey results. But the emergence of the impressive Pink Tide in recent weeks could bring more votes, convert undecided local leaders, and inspire more people to campaign harder in order to defeat Robredo's main rival, the son and namesake of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos. As the Pink campaign gains greater momentum, it is feared that trolls and nasty operators with links to pro-Duterte groups will become more desperate in attacking not just Robredo but also her political allies and supporters.

Where is the Green agenda? A media study showed that presidential candidates have been quiet about their agenda for environment protection. This is disappointing since the Philippines is listed as among the most disaster-prone countries in the world as it suffers from the harsh impact of extreme weather events and climate change. It is a disservice to voters that candidates have chosen to keep mum about where they stand on key Green issues such as climate justice, the opening of lands to extractive industries, reclamation of coastal areas, renewable energy, restoration of destroyed habitats, and protection of environment defenders. Will the candidates finally speak up ahead of Earth Month or will they remain silent in order not to antagonize donors who may be engaged in logging, mining, and other businesses that pose a threat to the environment?



CAMPAIGN TRAIL

It has been six weeks since the campaign period began. Candidates have launched campaign rallies, community visits, private meetings with allies, media interviews, and other activities. What have they done and what pronouncements have they made to date?



Manny Pacquiao

Pacquiao has toured Metro Manila speaking with jeepney drivers and operators in Makati, street vendors in Manila, village health workers in San Juan, aid beneficiaries in Mandaluyong, and wet market workers in Quezon City. He has also visited Rizal, Laguna, Pampanga, Nueva Ecija, Cavite, Tarlac, and Pangasinan. Pacquiao says he is not holding grand rallies for his campaign but instead chooses to directly go down to the least-visited communities and municipalities to proclaim his plans and programs. He plans to change [government from being treated as a retirement agency and business](#) and vowed [to implement his housing program within the first year](#). He thinks that [both job generation and job security are important](#).

He also vowed to [protect Filipino fishermen](#) in Philippine territorial waters; reiterated a proposal to hold a special session of Congress to deal with soaring fuel prices by suspending value-added tax and excise on fuel; proposed that government give a sack of rice monthly to every poor household instead of a “measly” monthly aid of P200; and issued a statement asking the

Comelec to uphold integrity and prevent fraud in 2022 elections.

[Pacquiao has warned of jail time for scammers reportedly using his name](#). He fights back to those belittling him and said that [the dull-witted are those who are voting for a thief](#). He also [challenged Bongbong to a one-on-one debate](#).



Isko Moreno Domagoso

Moreno toured Bicol, except Robredo’s hometown Naga City in Camarines Sur; flew to Negros Island for some town hall meetings, and to Cavite. He vowed to [collect the unpaid taxes](#) of Marcos, [resume peace talks](#), but [will continue the war on drugs and won’t stop e-sabong \(cockfighting\)](#). He promises a [“life and livelihood” economic policy](#) and [to push for the use of safer and cheaper energy sources](#).



Leni Robredo

Robredo's campaign sorties have attracted [record-breaking crowds](#), with over 10,000 even in the Marcos Jr. bailiwick Isabela province; [35,000 in Zamboanga](#); [15,000 in Zamboanga del Norte](#); 70,000 in Bacolod City; 45,000 in Malolos, Bulacan; 47,000 in Lacson's Cavite; 137,000 in Pasig City; [50,000 in Nueva Ecija](#); and [50,000 in Tarlac City](#) - which leaves Robredo [unworried by survey results](#). After the record-breaking Pasig campaign rally, Robredo supporters took to social media to vie in a friendly competition among the VP's campaign rallies they dubbed as "[Olympinks](#)", attendance being the main criterion. [Supporters cite Robredo's good traits, track record and plans](#) in pushing for her candidacy. Robredo-Pangilinan's [murals were defaced and their tarpaulins taken down by authorities](#).

[Robredo announced her peace and order plan](#), a whole of nation approach to terrorism and insurgency. She announced a [100% support for the New Clark City](#), which is being [opposed by farmers and indigenous peoples](#).



Leody De Guzman

Labor leader Leody de Guzman [still hopes to win](#) — that farmers, workers, poor folk, drivers, and women would realize that his platform was for their welfare. Trailing in the surveys and having repeatedly received suggestions to give way to Robredo, he said [he will not back out](#) of the presidential race even as he expressed willingness to engage in unity talks with Robredo in light of what he regards as their "common enemy." He [called on government media](#) to help level the playing field among candidates vying for an elected government position. He vowed to file a case against [identity theft, the use of his name in an illegitimate website](#).

De Guzman plans to [revive the manufacturing sector and industries, cleaner, cheaper electricity sources for Mindanao, agrees to collecting the unpaid taxes of the Marcoses, and is opposed to e-sabong and any form of gambling](#).



Bongbong Marcos Jr.

Aspiring president Sen. Marcos Jr. and running mate Sara Duterte-Carpio have consistently [skipped public debates](#), saying that these are not the best use of their time; and that he would rather campaign directly to the masses and listen to their grievances. He has skipped debates organized by the COMELEC and the media networks but he joined other events such as a presidential interview by DZRH and the debate by SMNI, which was founded by his controversial supporter Pastor Apollo Quiboloy. He distanced himself from historical revisionism and [denied spreading false information](#).

In his Cavite rally, his supporter, Cavite Governor Jonvic Remulla [justified giving out as much as P28,000 to attendees](#).

He said that he is [against the death penalty](#) but [he would continue President Rodrigo Duterte's anti-communist task force \(NTF-ELCAC\)](#). He opined that [corruption cannot be stopped as it is a human condition](#). He also plans to [offer retraining to overseas Filipino workers](#).

The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) responded in writing to Presidential candidate and Manila Mayor Isko Moreno that it has demanded the Marcos heirs [pay their P203.8-billion estate tax debt](#). This has become an issue with voters struggling with soaring fuel prices. Moreno has asked the Supreme Court to issue a [“Certificate of Finality”](#) that this debt is payable, and has vowed to distribute the P203-billion tax as assistance for

families affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The mid-March polling reports - based on February data - showed that Bongbong-Sara [retained their massive lead](#) despite the surge in support for the Robredo rallies.

President Duterte has [still not personally endorsed](#) Marcos Jr. for President. As well, influential families in Mindanao have switched support from Marcos Jr. to Robredo. Representative Juliette Uy of the 2nd district of Misamis Oriental, a candidate for governor under the National Unity Party (NUP), declared support for Robredo - Sara on March 27, and Mayor Oscar Moreno, candidate for governor of Cagayan de Oro endorsed Robredo-Pangilinan on March 25.



Ping Lacson

Lacson is now running independently after his party, [Partido Reporma](#), [switched loyalty to Vice President Leni Robredo](#) over weak survey results and a campaign funding shortage. He also [failed to get the endorsement of Nationalist People's Coalition](#), the party chaired by his running mate Senator Vicente Sotto III. As far as the Commission on Election [rules](#) are concerned, however, Lacson will retain his Partido Reporma standard bearer status in the ballots and the P3/voter expenditure restriction (P5/voter for independents); but may no longer be able to get a copy of the election returns, which is given to the dominant majority and dominant minority.

Lacson is in favor of reviewing the minimum wage and of collecting the Marcos family's unpaid taxes.



Human Rights Violations Roundup

Wife of Ambassador campaigns for BBM; taints embassy neutrality

The wife of the Philippine Ambassador to Saudi Arabia was caught on video [campaigning for Bongbong Marcos](#) and Sara Duterte in Riyadh. She urged Filipinos to cast their vote, indicated her intention to vote for Marcos, and encouraged others not to “waste this moment” to elect an Ilocano president. With [282,000 registered voters](#), Saudi Arabia has the second highest number of overseas Filipino voters. Given that overseas voting is conducted at Philippine Consulates, which are deputized agencies of the COMELEC, these actions are categorized as [“threats to neutrality”](#). The Department of Foreign Affairs has directed the Philippine Ambassador to return to the Philippines for consultation.

Illegal arrests and harassment of Anakpawis Partylist leaders and volunteers

On March 9, 2022, Anakpawis volunteers in Quezon in Southern Tagalog, Felizardo Repaso and his wife, reported being continually harassed, spied on and surveilled by [soldiers outside their home](#) for at least three days. On the same day, there were reports that [plain clothes officers were searching for Anakpawis Laguna Coordinator Red Clado](#), who they accuse of being a “high ranking member of the CPP-NPA-NDF.” On March 5, volunteers for Anakpawis Cagayan Valley chapter were [harassed by the military](#) in Isabela while on their way to join a mural painting activity in support of Leni- Kiko. Two days later on March 7, Henry Palaje, leader of the Farmer’s Organization OMA which is a member of the Anakpawis Party List Albay chapter, [was arrested](#) in Albay.

Former Anakpawis Congressman Ariel Casilao, said that [these attacks are being carried out systematically](#). They come on the heels of a [Leni-Kiko rally in Cavite](#) on 4 March 2022, which Cavite Representative Boying Remulla used as an opportunity [to red tag and accuse Leni supporters](#) of having been paid to attend their rallies

(accusations that were backed by Lacson). The human rights alliance Defend Southern Tagalog has referred to these attacks as a “follow up” to the 7 March 2021 Bloody Sunday massacre in which [nine activists from the region were killed](#) by government security forces. Since then, attacks on unionists and peasants have [increased](#) in the Southern Tagalog region. Casilao [notes](#) that such attacks also took place [during the 2019 elections](#) and are used consistently at election time to bar Anakpawis from a seat in Congress and block the work of those who are truly promoting the interests of the poor.

Bayan Muna party-list coordinator Larry Villegas shot at his home

On 13 March 2022 at around 6:00 am, 64-year old Bayan Muna Partylist Coordinator Larry Villegas [was shot](#) while cleaning his tricycle at his home in General Santos City, Mindanao. Villegas was hit twice in the leg after dodging what appear to be [shots to the head](#), and was taken to a local hospital for treatment. The attack comes after Villegas and his local chapter of the progressive transport group TIRES-PISTON were [red tagged](#) by the government task force [NTF-ELCAC](#), and after he was [threatened by uniformed soldiers](#) who told him to stop his [“anti-government activities”](#). Villegas had been [leading preparations](#) for a [Leni-Kiko rally](#) in General Santos, [campaigning](#) for MAKABAYAN senatoriables [Atty. Neri Colmenares](#) and labor leader [Elmer Labog](#), and criticizing the government amidst the [oil price hikes](#).

[Makabayan bloc’s](#) SOCKSARGEN Chapter Coordinator Mark Avila [points to a larger pattern](#) of state crackdowns on progressive groups and activists, while House Deputy Minority leader, Bayan Muna Congressman [Carlos Zarate said](#) that the attack on Villegas took place amidst intensifying attacks against opposition parties. The Philippine Commission on Human Rights (CHR) is conducting [a probe](#) into the attempted killing and urged local governments to stay vigilant against [“election-related violence meant to disrupt the lawful exercise of political rights.”](#)



Death Threat to Kabataan Partylist first Nominee

On March 19, Kabataan Partylist National President and First Nominee Raoul Manuel [received a death threat](#). A Philippine Navy officer reposted news about [Manuel's statement on Chad Booc's autopsy results](#) - one of the New Bataan 5 massacre victims, captioning it with "Susunod ka na (You're next), Raoul. Bye in advance." The Philippine Navy said [the officer was relieved and placed under investigation](#) for making the post.

NTF-ELCAC attacks local politicians, progressive partylist and people's organizations

On 21 March, the NTF-ELCAC described Baguio City Mayor Benjamin Magalong as being friendly with alleged communists, saying that his ["recent directive to forbid the posting of so-called red tagging posters was in direct violation of President Rodrigo Duterte's orders."](#) It goes on to accuse Kabataan Partylist of being ["the top recruiter of our children into the criminal NPA."](#) In a series of social media posts, Undersecretary Lorraine Marie Badoy, NTF-ELCAC spokesperson for sectoral concerns, [attacked VP Robredo, Baguio City Mayor Magalong, and Sorsogon Governor Chiz Escudero for alleged connections with or sympathy for the CPP-NPA.](#) Also targeted were people's organizations such as the Cordillera People's Alliance and Makabayan partylist groups, accusing them of being ["urban operatives" of the CPP-NPA](#) and questioning why Robredo's camp refused to condemn them.

In response, [Vice President Robredo's camp continues to say Badoy and the NTF-ELCAC have the burden of proof to support these claims.](#) Youth Act Now Against Tyranny - Baguio-Benguet condemned the attacks against ["peoples and youth organizations such as KABATAAN Partylist and Cordillera Peoples' Alliance who have only tirelessly served and advanced the genuine interests of the youth and indigenous people."](#) The Makabayan bloc on March 25 filed a [complaint](#) against NTF-ELCAC officials as it "willfully and willingly issued...

fake news... to campaign ... [and] intimidate the public for them to refrain or desist from participating in campaign rallies...or from casting of votes in favor of said candidates", which is a "criminal act" under the Omnibus Election Code. Three other complaints were filed against Badoy on March 23 before the Office of Ombudsman by activists and concerned citizens. They said her red tagging of VP Robredo and Makabayan was a violation of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act and the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees. They called for

Tarpaulins red tagging progressive partylist and youth organizations hung in Baguio city

Despite the recent order of Mayor Benjamin Magalong banning the posting of red tagging tarps in Baguio City, on March 25 [red-tagging tarps were hung](#) in Brgy. St. Joseph Village with a signatory named "Patriotic Filipinos of Baguio City". The tarpaulins included Kabataan Partylist, Gabriela Women's Party and youth organizations National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP), Student Christian Movement of the Philippines (SCMP and) a duly recognized school-based organization, ACS UP Baguio among others. (pics in link)

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