



# Interim Report of the Philippine Elections 2022

## International Observers Mission

**19 May 2022**

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# Summary

The International Observer Mission, sponsored by the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines (ICHRP), found that the May 9, 2022 Philippine National Elections were marred by a higher level of failure of the electronic voting system than ever before, along with a higher level of blatant vote-buying, disturbing level of red-tagging and a number of incidents of deadly violence. A large number of voters did not get to cast their vote, many found their name was no longer on the voter roll, and many had to trust that election officials would later put their marked ballot paper through a Vote Counting Machine (VCM).

This election does not meet the standard of “free and fair” because of these prevailing conditions that robbed the voters of access to reliable information, access to the voting places without intimidation, and a credible vote counting system. This election cannot be declared “free and fair” until all the illegal acts that have marred the process are dealt with.

The early unofficial result giving the Marcos-Duterte team a massive victory had been met with widespread skepticism and a growing protest.

Given that the Marcos-Duterte UniTeam praised the notorious policies of the current President Duterte, the international community needs to increase its focus on the human rights situation in the Philippines because it will only worsen from here.

Part of this intensified international focus should be a continuing effort to hold the outgoing Duterte team accountable for its abysmal human rights record. This work is underway at the International Criminal Court, and in the United Nations Human Rights Council processes, and can be pursued in national jurisdictions with Magnitsky-style laws. There should be no hint of a green light for continued human rights violations under the incoming Marcos-Duterte administration.

There should be immediate widespread international support for calls to release Senator Leila de Lima from prison, since all the principal witnesses against her have now retracted their evidence.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, she has been a political prisoner for five years, only the most prominent of 700 political prisoners, 480 of them arrested under Duterte, as of December 31, 2021.<sup>2</sup>

The International Observer Mission sponsored by the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines (ICHRP) has reported election-related violations of human rights since early March, noting the first political killings related to the elections took place in Sorsogon, Bicol Region, on January 15.

These violations took the form of political killings, shootings, abductions, death threats, political arrests, harassment and surveillance of candidates and supporters, very large-scale red tagging, widespread vote-buying, media manipulation and repression, fake news and harassment of journalists by the Marcos campaign.

OFWs were the first to cast their votes in this election cycle with overseas absentee voting (OAV)

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1 <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1589548/kerwin-espinoza-backtracks-drug-trade-accusations-vs-sen-lei-la-de-lima>; <https://www.rappler.com/nation/doj-star-witness-rafael-ragos-retracts-accusation-vs-de-lima/>.

2 <https://www.karapatan.org/2021+karapatan+year+end+report>, p. 42.

beginning on April 10, 2022. But from this first day, OFWs faced voter suppression and other obstacles to voting. As a result, only about 400,000 may have voted out of a possible 1.7 million OFWs, according to Commissioner George Garcia. Despite all this, the Commission on Elections refused to extend the voting period, maintaining that all votes must be in by May 9, Philippine time.<sup>3</sup>

The IOM participants, during April and May, visited Central Luzon, National Capital Region (NCR), Southern Luzon, Central Visayas, Western Visayas, and Mindanao, holding discussions with church people, small businesses, media, farmers, fisherfolk, urban poor, indigenous people, teachers, women and youth, local officials, and national and local candidates. In the election campaign period they witnessed a pervasive sense of resignation that the election would not be fair, that no promises would be fulfilled, a widespread fear of red-tagging, being told to “surrender” as members of the New People’s Army (NPA), and long experience of vote-buying from previous elections.

In this election there was widespread alarm at the recasting of the Marcos dictatorship as “golden years”, with church leaders resolving to speak out directly against the Marcos campaign.

On election day, the Observers received reports about and personally witnessed the massive military presence at voting places in two different areas in Mindanao. All locations witnessed the late opening of voting places, VCMs not working, people having to wait many hours to try to vote, and people engaged with vote-buying on a large scale.

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The Philippine Election 2022 International Observer Mission was established on the recommendation<sup>4</sup> of the INVESTIGATE PH Commissioners in their 2nd and 3rd Report of the Independent International Investigation into Human Rights Violations in the Philippines, which was in turn

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/05/05/2178930/comelec-no-extension-mail-overseas-voting-despite-late-deliveries>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.investigate.ph/media/final-report>, Recommendation 17, p 69.

established in response to the October 7, 2020, decision of the UN Human Rights Council 45th Session (Resolution No. 45/33),<sup>5</sup> which was very disappointing to civil society.

**Methodology.** This Interim Report is based on six IOM Bulletins issued since March 2022, compiled from the reports of election-related human rights violations by International Observers who volunteered for this Mission, reports from overseas Filipinos, background from our local partner Kontra Daya (Against Fraud)<sup>6</sup> and further supported by a Writers Team which monitored Philippine mainstream media and credible social media output by organizations and candidate campaigns which could be verified, over the period of the campaign and in the days after the May 9 vote. These reports cover urban poor, indigenous people, peasants, workers, women, youth, churches, teachers, local officials, local parties and candidates, community organizing, economics, political advocacy and peace negotiations.

*The names of individuals and organizations involved and the places visited are not mentioned in the report for their security.*

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5 <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/RES/45/33>.

6 <https://kontradaya.org/>

# Reports from IOM Observers

## I. NCR and CENTRAL LUZON

The Observers visited NCR and Central Luzon, particularly indigenous peoples and farmers and farm-workers' communities in early April 2022.

**Aeta Community.** The Aeta indigenous community had been displaced by the Mt Pinatubo eruption in 1991, and has not been connected to the electricity grid despite promises from politicians over the three decades. Their most pressing issue is the ongoing development of New Clark City, a national government project to build a megacity on approximately 9,000 hectares on their ancestral domain, which presidential candidate Robredo expressed support for and which she was also asked to reconsider;<sup>7</sup> and which rival Marcos Jr<sup>8</sup> said will benefit from Duterte's Build Build Build program which he vowed to continue.

While the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997 provides for a process of securing indigenous communities' free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) before their land can be used for development, the Aetas reported sudden development with no consultation. The changes to the land were stark - for example, a newly paved, multi-lane highway complete with wide sidewalks, solar-powered street lights, stands where only a few years ago, there were forests.

Community members were also very skeptical of promised jobs from New Clark City. They pointed out that other government-sponsored developments proved harmful in the long-term to the sustainable development of their culture, such as a landfill for overseas waste which promised jobs to community members but resulted in the poisoning of the Aetas' ancestral land.

There are some cases of unofficial private land sales to developers. One community member spent some of the cash he received from such a deal to purchase new carabaos for his farming, yet he said he accepted the deal despite its unfairness, and more from resignation to the inevitability of development aggression. The massive swathe of ancestral land paved over for the multi-lane highway was seized without any compensation or consent from the Aetas.

Worse, community members pointed to intimidation and deception from the government, and its Bases Conversion and Development Agency (BCDA), citing an instance in 2018 where the 3rd Mechanized Infantry Division of the Philippine Army displaced peasants from a nearby Sitio to clear their land for New Clark City.

A local community leader and barangay captain, commenting on New Clark City, said he would fight for the lands of the Aetas, saying the community's back is against the wall as many of the remaining undeveloped landholdings are residential. He described broad agreement among Aeta communities, of which there are several linguistic groupings, that the ancestral land belongs to

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7 [https://ph.news.yahoo.com/robredo-asked-to-reconsider-support-of-new-clark-city-as-project-displaces-aetas-064751825.html?guccounter=1&guce\\_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9zZWZyY2guYnJhdmUuY29tLw&guce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAAAA55UPQJejsU0Ly4zC7ayIp0aoWiF29eyoP3MSsUODEHajhfFWIGpYEVmMYjaNS5NcMLbEqeSjG-8JB-HZJNrk4zBm46ccaRFLCwAbEwSpE87920zSP-q52zC0JA2RIJP8pZr5qKkDGnOmEOl66V6o8yBSp\\_KQST\\_8yG-zr1MYZ5E1](https://ph.news.yahoo.com/robredo-asked-to-reconsider-support-of-new-clark-city-as-project-displaces-aetas-064751825.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9zZWZyY2guYnJhdmUuY29tLw&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAA55UPQJejsU0Ly4zC7ayIp0aoWiF29eyoP3MSsUODEHajhfFWIGpYEVmMYjaNS5NcMLbEqeSjG-8JB-HZJNrk4zBm46ccaRFLCwAbEwSpE87920zSP-q52zC0JA2RIJP8pZr5qKkDGnOmEOl66V6o8yBSp_KQST_8yG-zr1MYZ5E1).

8 <https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/03/20/news/regions/marcos-to-pursue-tourism-in-zambales/1836930>.

the community and is worth fighting for. Nevertheless, he and other community members also expressed disillusionment and resignation - a common sentiment is who to complain to about the “development”, when it’s the national government itself doing it?

Rather than have New Clark City, the community members would rather cultivate their lands as they are currently doing, growing plants and tending the area to ultimately pass on to their children.

Older community members said that, in their entire lives, they had never witnessed a clean election. With regards to specific candidates, many community members expressed disillusionment and neutrality because of long experiences of candidates breaking electoral promises once in office. Vote-buying and coercion occurred. A somewhat common practice among community members was the acceptance of money in vote-buying schemes without the intent to actually vote for the candidate whose campaign provided the cash. One community member cited both her sense of principle and her conviction that, once in the ballot box, her vote would be confidential.

Then again, regardless of the electoral process, both leading presidential candidates Robredo and Marcos Jr. support the New Clark City - an indication that neither truly knows and shares the Aeta communities’ realities on the ground, which means that whoever wins, the Aeta community will bear the brunt of the New Clark City.

***Farmer and farm worker communities.*** The two farm worker communities visited are staging occupations of agricultural land that they contend is rightfully theirs, in direct opposition to powerful landowner political families in the province.

In one barangay, community members who had long worked a 200-hectare plot learned in 2016 that the landlord had concealed, for several decades, a Certificate of Land Ownership Awards (CLOA) title listing 236 beneficiaries as rightful owners of the land. Community members filed complaints to the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) in order to assert their ownership over the land. The DAR issued a final order for the land to be distributed to the farmers in 2019. As of April 2022, the land had yet to be returned to community members. So the community organized a picket and occupied the land they rightfully owned at the beginning of February 2022. They had planted eggplant, string beans, and mung beans on around two hectares to sustain their struggle. A mayor donated a water pump to the community to express his support.

The landlord’s clan have elected officials at the barangay, municipal and Congressional levels. They even have family members appointed to positions in the DAR. Community members cited examples of this landlord employing their political strength to delay the processing of their claims by the DAR. They also organized sustained harassment, intimidation and surveillance at the peasants. They burned structures at the picket and ran over the community’s crops with tractors. So the community sees Philippine electoral politics as the realm of a coercion-wielding, dynastic landholding elite.

There was a common sentiment of dismay and anger that Bongbong Marcos would win because of his money and connections. Older community members who had lived through Martial Law recounted killings in nearby fields and intimidation by roving vigilantes and police. They said it was routine for civilian defense forces and other militia-type groups to coerce voters during election season. Community members staunchly supported several candidates who they saw as pushing

genuinely pro-farmer programs, such as presidential candidate Leni Robredo, Senate candidates Neri Colmenares and Bong Labog and the sitting mayor of their town.

In another barangay, Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) beneficiaries are occupying farmland in opposition to the sale of their 130 hectares of land to the SM Development Corporation (SMDC) by the Cojuangco family. They faced bribery and intimidation from both the Cojuangcos and SMDC to end their occupation. SMDC stationed 56 guards in an outpost near the area.

**Youth representatives.** A group of four youth activists organizing for the Leni Robredo campaign expressed fear of being red-tagged and labeled as communists. All four agreed that the spread of fake news through online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok are a major threat to the integrity of Philippine democracy and the electoral process and made their own efforts more difficult. They cited in particular the proliferation of false reports and information about Bongbong Marcos and his family, characterizing the Martial Law period as a golden age, and false accounts of the provenance of the Marcos' wealth.

**Elected officials.** The two politicians interviewed expressed their conviction that corruption was widespread and systematic. Both shared accounts of vote-buying by their political opponents, emphasizing that it is a common practice. For instance, a candidate was alleged to be spending multiple million pesos per day on vote buying. They said taking legal action against this was useless.

A mayor, who supports President Duterte's "Build Build Build" program, denounced the political repression against legitimate political activity undertaken by the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC). An elected official from the NCR decried the outsized influence of social media algorithms on electoral sentiment, claiming that "whoever rules the online world rules the national political sphere." This official also charged that members of the "Chinese mafia" were violating Philippine sovereignty through bankrolling specific candidates.

## II. MINDANAO

IOM participants were able to visit two areas in Mindanao before, during and after election day.

Election day in both cities was rife with militarization and voter disenfranchisement. Polls were difficult to access for various causes (heat, long lines, delayed openings, malfunctioning of VCMs) and VCM operators were not adequately prepared - trained teachers were replaced with inadequately trained personnel.<sup>9</sup> The presence of the military and police at polls was intimidating.

There is a pervasive narrative that elections in these areas, particularly among local candidates, are conflict-ridden and violent. Casual observers often blame the violence on clan rivalries and the history of armed insurrection in the region. However, in one of these areas, pre-election violence has been blamed on a rivalry between mayoral candidates.

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<sup>9</sup> In Cotabato City, police to serve as election officers, Bulatlat (May 8, 2022), <https://www.bulatlat.com/2022/05/08/in-cotabato-city-police-to-serve-as-election-officers/>

In a nearby province, the Governor pledged to deliver the province's votes to Bongbong Marcos. Local politicians can secure national-level government appointments for themselves and their relatives by making such promises to marshal local votes for national candidates. Further, traditional politicians rely on national politicians believing that local votes can be captured by securing the interests of local candidates. Such endorsements and promises by regional politicians reveal the extent to which national questions remain intimately linked to local affairs. These cases show that the local election violence often serves as a smokescreen and that preserving local conditions of violence benefits traditional politicians at the national level, and limits people's participation.

***Last-minute staffing changes.*** The COMELEC made last-minute staffing changes to local electoral boards. These boards, usually staffed by teachers, are tasked with operating VCMs on election day. Once assigned, local teachers receive specialized advance training to complete this task. Less than a week before the election, COMELEC told teachers in one of the visited areas in Mindanao that their roles would be shifted, sparking protests that replacement VCM operators would be insufficiently trained.<sup>10</sup> The COMELEC also failed to make teachers aware they would need to request an absentee ballot in a timely manner if they were posted far from their hometown.

The Philippine News Agency reported that four thousand Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) soldiers would be deployed throughout Northern Mindanao, including CARAGA.<sup>11</sup> AFP checkpoints, often labeled "COMELEC checkpoints," occur regularly along roads in the regions visited by the IOM. As well, there are curfews, some starting as early as 4PM and ending as late as 9AM. However, local communities are more concerned with having easy access to voting and eliminating voter fraud – military deployments to these areas did not address these concerns.

### ***Election Day Issues***

***First Area.*** On election day, military and police presence was heavily visible in one of the visited areas. It was the site of a five-month bombing and artillery campaign by the AFP. This heavy military presence did not succeed in the stated aim of ensuring a safe voting process. At the polling places voters experienced long lines and significant crowding. In just 30 minutes at one precinct in the area, at least three voters collapsed outside polls. However, no medical professionals were present to provide assistance. The only government representatives available were heavily armed police, unable or unwilling to intervene.

At some sites, polling precincts lacked basic signage indicating the locations of entrances and exits, showing voter registration and precinct assignments, and demarcating accommodations for People With Disabilities and senior citizens. Confused by the lack of clear direction, voters were left to crowd aimlessly around poll sites and face long waits. Although IOM participants were unable to enter voter-only areas, reports from around the country indicated widespread VCM failures. These technological failures may have contributed to the crowding at poll sites in the region. Voting rights organizations around the globe recognize long wait times as a form of voter suppression.

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<sup>10</sup> *Mga guro na nakatakdang magsilbi sa halalan sa Cotabato City sumugod sa COMELEC Cotabato*, ABS-CBN News, YouTube (May 5, 2022), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MN7mR7bdt7w&msclkid=81c8c26ceca911e-ca86386a60d6b5754>.

<sup>11</sup> *4K Army troops enlisted for May 9 polls in NorMin, Caraga*, Philippine News Agency (May 6, 2022), <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1173793?msclkid=cc31e558cea811ec9167de74b506839d>.

As a response to the plethora of issues, a popular call of extending the voting time developed. Multiple candidates including Neri Colmenares supported this call.

At voting sites in the area some poll watchers were barred from entry into poll sites and forced to wait outside with little instruction. Since their job requires observing the actual conduct of elections, that exclusion is a serious limitation in their ability to provide oversight and contributes to the ever-growing lack of transparency around the democratic processes.

International humanitarian law requires clear distinctions between military combatants and non-combatants. At the polling sites throughout the region, police appeared wearing highly militarized combat gear, including camouflage uniforms and helmets, combat boots, and carrying large semi-automatic weapons. Although police serve as civilian non-combatants, in this attire, police at polling sites were hardly distinguishable from the military. Further, tanks were present at polling places in and around the City. The presence of tanks makes such sites potential targets of war, violating basic international humanitarian law.

**Second Area.** The day of the election, the City borders were heavily guarded and closed due to fears of “fly-in” voters. Military units were at all polling stations. Observers even noticed members of the military scuba diving unit deployed to guard polling stations. Multiple tanks were seen throughout the city and at major polling sites. Military helicopters were heard overhead.

Polling stations were delayed in opening throughout the city. At 10am, an Elementary School polling station had yet to be opened, despite people being in line since the early morning. At some voting locations, lines stretched around the block. People reported standing in line for up to four hours. There were reports of restrictions of food vendors at these locations, leaving voters in line for hours without nearby access to food or water.<sup>12</sup> Small entrances into polling places choked access, and only small groups of people were allowed in at one time. Entry was barred by military/police, who even kept the doors to some of these locations closed and locked. This tactic of funnelling people inside made it impossible to abide by social distancing.

A teacher said that this was the first time in 10 years she was not staffing the polls due to the aberrations and disorganization of the process for setting teachers up for success. Another teacher called the voting process “magulo” - “mixed-up.” Small violent skirmishes were reported at various polling sites over the course of the day. At another Elementary school polling center, baton wielding police confronted a crowd where there was a commotion. A crude bomb went off near the Elementary School, though no one was harmed.<sup>13</sup> Pre-selected ballots were handed out to people waiting in line to vote.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Bangsamoro people: Interview with Amirah Lidasan, Third Nominee for Bayan Muna partylist**

In 2004 and 2007, Amirah Lidasan was the candidate for Suara Bangsamoro (“Voice of the Bangsamoro Nation”) partylist, but was not elected. COMELEC delisted Suara Bangsamoro after the

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12 <https://twitter.com/bulatlat/status/1523529666216275968>.

13 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/shootings-explosions-mar-elections-in-maguindanao-cotabato/>.

14 <https://twitter.com/bulatlat/status/1523535574572883968>.

two losses and so the Bayan Muna partylist selected Lidasan as their third candidate for this 2022 election, representing the concerns of the national minorities.

While Duterte was initially popular among the Moro people, since the 2017 Battle for Marawi City, several Moro leaders refer to him as “duti” (poison). Mining is also a main concern for national minorities who hope for a pro-people mining policy. Plantations in Moro areas suffer from the inability to organize landless peasants versus landowners, in the ways that peasants often organize elsewhere, since many of the landlords are extended family members of the landless. Still some landlords understand the agenda towards genuine agrarian reform.

During the last week of March, Lidasan campaigned in Zamboanga, where she is well-known. There she saw tarpaulins supporting Senate candidate Neri Colmenares in addition to her fellow Bayan Muna partylist candidates, but she also noticed signs that red-tagged them.

Lidasan provided information about vote-buying in Maguindanao. There are three different stages starting with the month leading to the election in which a “coordinator” is responsible for an advanced assessment of needs and numbers. Next is a poll watcher who can enter the voting precinct, and finally there are former teachers or other volunteers on an election board who are the ones to hand the ballots to the voters.

### III. Western Visayas

An IOM team went to the center of trade in Western Visayas, central Philippines. It is one of the top vote-rich provinces with a voting population of 1,628,752,<sup>15</sup> the majority of whom are young at 18-44 years old.<sup>16</sup> VP and now presidential candidate Leni Robredo won in that province in 2016. Having lost in that city, which is a bulwark of the Aquino-Cojuangco clan and with strong anti-Marcos sentiments, Rodrigo Duterte upon assuming presidency declared it a city of drug users, forcing the mayor to leave.

In this election, fourteen towns in this province were considered as “election watchlist areas”.<sup>17</sup> Thirteen of these are categorized as “orange” or “election areas of immediate concern” while the other one was categorized as “red” or an “election area of grave concern” because it recorded violent election-related incidents (ERI) in the 2016 elections and because of the presence of armed communist rebels in far-flung barangays.

Among the long-standing people’s issues there are the Jalaur River Multipurpose (Dam) Project, which has been opposed for its destructive social and ecological impacts; and the displacement of farmers and fisherfolks due to tourism development and the pandemic, who then flock to the city for work and become low-paid construction workers and form part of the urban poor sector; and heavy militarization which has caused killings and massacre.

The Mission Observers learned from their conversation with a local taxi driver that the May 3 BBM rally participants each received P2,000. The Mission held a roundtable discussion with human rights activists, peasants and indigenous peoples, fisher folks, environmentalists, church and legal networks, a fair trade organization, and they gave an overview of the overall situation in

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15 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/vote-rich-regions-provinces-cities-2022-elections/>.

16 <https://www.panaynews.net/majority-of-iloilo-voters-young/>.

17 <https://www.panaynews.net/14-towns-in-iloilo-election-watch-list-areas/>.

the region. The communities visited are highly militarized because they are supportive of the Makabayan bloc. Informants shared that electoral fraud in the city and urban poor areas is very high. The use of 4G: Guns, Gold, Goons, and Girls is very rampant. Girls in particular are hired to dance to political jingles and provide entertainment to distract the public from any meaningful agenda. A politician's representative goes house-to-house and gives an envelope with money (from P1000-1500) and goods. They say they will know how you have voted because they have a system.

With or without elections, the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) said extra-judicial killings are a perennial problem. Catholic nuns used to be part of the PPCRV in the roving election teams, but said they could not stand to be non-partisan this time and associated themselves with the Robredo camp. They give a lot of help, but those in the city are being red-tagged. Vote buying is so bad it causes a traffic jam of people lining up to receive their envelopes and sample ballots. Here the rate is 800 pesos, with a follow-up after you have voted. In the north, votes are being bought for 3000 pesos. The candidates, even the police, all deny this.

Money and disinformation are the top issues in this election - attempting to portray BBM as a good person using a variety of social media. Sometimes you hear people say that Marcos will redistribute the Marcos' gold (which does not exist). While most Robredo supporters are young, there are also some young people who have been deceived by misinformation. Even the local churches' messaging depends on the political motivation of the pastors. Individual priests have been bribed into campaigning for politicians. They are often close to political families. The only way to avoid this is to avoid all money from political candidates, but that is difficult - especially where the Mayor is the daughter of the Vice Mayor and both are threatening the jobs and homes of municipal government employees for not electing them or their candidates. It's called "Vote or Gabot". This happens all over the province. On the other hand, there are also other political dynasties, families of landgrabbers, which currently have six candidates in this election.

**Youth.** This election has made many youth become aware and proactive in the campaigns - for them the start of a historical event for the youth. There are many joining groups and rallies spontaneously for the election. When the people can return to their communities, they will be able to organize again - after having been badly beaten by the military before and during the pandemic. They are supporting Robredo so that she will make changes to Duterte's administration and for the peace talks to resume to resolve the basic socio-economic problems.

#### **IV. Southern Luzon**

The Mission in Southern Luzon from April 24-30 visited urban poor and peasant communities, and interviewed (individually and in groups) teachers and peasants, particularly coconut farmers and fisher folks, urban poor dwellers, vendors, activists, some government employees, progressive politicians/political parties, church people, and politician's staff.

The province is ruled by the oldest dynasty in the region with a political record spanning over a century. The outgoing governor is a lawyer, and a politician since 1998: a three-term congressman, two-time senator who will most likely be back to senate after the final and official results. There are other ruling families and according to locals, many of them are also in the contracting business and are local media owners. A councilor said that they command politics in the province; that nobody can run and become a politician without having approached them for approval.

Local politics is expensive, having to spend a lot of money on bribing the people and constructing small projects for them. Politicians' finances double during the campaign period. The politicians here have goons. Political matters are very feudal. If you are close to a powerful person, you can do whatever you want.

**Mis/Disinformation.** The adoption of the K-12 curriculum - which strengthens the education sector's market orientation - and the omission of Philippine history subjects have worsened the miseducation of Filipinos. Education further degraded during the pandemic, where education shifted online. Teachers had to shell out personal money to augment the measly school budget, improvise modules (sometimes erroneous and/or biased) to compensate for the limited copies of the standard and approved ones, and get overworked with non-teaching tasks. Worst, teachers who organize and fight for their economic and political rights are red-tagged, harassed, and threatened. Parents have to assist their children during classes, as well as answer the modules on their behalf for not wanting them to fail - taking up a lot of time normally spent earning a living. Children who work have to work harder to be able to meet technological requirements (so as teachers and parents). Social media has been instruments of Marcos historical revisionism and the state's political agendas. Representatives from the Philippine National Police (PNP) used their Kabataan Kontra Droga at Terorismo (Youth against Drugs and Terrorism) program to meet with students in the absence of their teachers, and red-tag ACT, Makabayan Bloc, and other legally recognized progressive groups and candidates.

Almost all media practitioners are divided into rival camps based on political parties. They understand that media production in the province depends on the economy. If you are an honest reporter, you will go hungry. For this election, most of the media men here are for Leni. There are only a few that are for BBM. They are also sympathetic of progressive candidates but are silent about them. They also refuse invitations to cover fact-finding missions for HRV victims including those during this election period because they are afraid of the military.

**Red-tagging.** As the red-tagging has intensified, many teacher-leaders have resigned from ACT and politicians previously vocal of their support have done so quietly. Furthermore, there have been intensified militarization in near-school communities throughout the province causing trauma and instilling a culture of fear in the teachers, students, and the rest of the local population. A local politician confirms that red-tagging happens all over the province, particularly targeting partylist spokespersons and strong local politicians (especially those who help poor families). Those who accept monies from the Army are listed as NPA surrenderees while those who do not are threatened or are actually tortured/killed. Vote buying is very openly done and enjoyed by many people, and the amount of money given has increased, ranging from P1000 to P4000. Some personal experiences during this campaign period shared with the Observers were the red-tagging and harassment of an activist after she was visited by Robredo and the taking down of Gabriela tarpaulins.

The fisher folks shared that their problems with fish monopolies and displacement due to infrastructure projects are being unheard and responded to with red-tagging and presenting them as NPA surrenderees. A coconut farmer detailed how she was repeatedly harassed to surrender as NPA and is still wanted by the AFP for speaking in rallies and on radio about their community problems. She was also told by the AFP that Duterte had made it illegal to participate in rallies under the anti-terrorism law, and threatened to sue her if she continues to do so. On February 10,

2020, the AFP held her husband and son hostage for a day to ensure she would not speak with the Vice President as she was visiting the City that day.

A local politician acknowledged that red-tagging and killing happens all over the province, but was particularly bad in one of the towns that was visited. The locals did not want to be visited and most local politicians are also scared even if the main targets are the partylist leaders. The AFP offers P5000 to the locals who, upon accepting, will be marked as a NPA member. Partylist members who refuse the money are threatened with torture or killing. Killings after every rally is very common in this City. The fisherfolk and farmers are landless and have no organizations so they cannot defend themselves - so some of them are either taken advantage of e.g. through massive vote buying during elections, or left with no choice but to join the armed struggle. A local politician running for vice mayor said that he can be red-tagged when seen to be helping poor families. Nonetheless, he said he is campaigning for new politics, as traditional politics stand in the way of progress. Locally, no programs and local funding exist for the poor and marginalized. The people are tenants and the lands are owned by well-known families and middle farmers.

A group of vendors, which has almost 200 members, said some of them are not selling anymore because the government has refused their permits in line with a national order to clean up the sidewalks and streets. They are only allowed this time because of the upcoming election and will be demolished and driven away afterwards. Even rallies are allowed because of the upcoming election - the local government wants to make themselves look good. Asked about the candidates, they do not see any one promising, and specifically dislike BBM and his political leader in the province, whom they once sought audience with but were rejected because they are “only sidewalk vendors”. They were attacked and red-tagged by the government and military, and put under surveillance for raising their concerns to a local radio station and for meeting and organizing street vendors.

The Observers also met with a community of crab fishers who will be affected by an ecotourism project - a casino. Since the local government knew that the casino would never work, they shifted to a coastal road project that will pass through the community and entail demolition, but tagged the residents as illegal drug tenders or NPA. Locals, asked about thoughts on supporting the Makabayan Bloc senatorial aspirant from the province, said their impression is that they are critical of him. There may be different dynamics at the national level, but locally he is not an ally because he sugarcoats what he’s saying, plans to have a private industry for health workers, is believed to have used local funds for his wife’s TV primetime soap, and seeks to monopolize the crab industry.

Violence has gotten much worse during the election, especially targeting volunteers of Makabayan bloc. Once the intels saw volunteers campaigning with them, they were red-tagged as well. Tarpaulins of progressive candidates and partylists are marked with red stars or removed. The intels and AFP change their posters to say things like “Kabataan: NPA recruiters” and link the candidates with the NPA and communists. Those who met with the Mission observers were not afraid to be interviewed but are being careful with their movements and whereabouts saying that there is no better thing to do than say what is true and fight for what is right. In another province in the region, an organized community has been deployed with about 50 AFP since March. AFP elements would go where there are progressive organizations and part of their program is to put up checkpoints and do voter intimidation.

**Vote-buying.** A local alternative media described vote buying as a last-minute activity - on the evening of May 8, when people wait for bribes. Around 80-90% of the people engage in and enjoy it. The amount of money given has increased from P200 (for mayoral votes) some years ago to P2000-P4000 in the last election, which businesses also take advantage of this, increasing sales right after election day.

Provincial candidates, board members, councilors have village and/or family leaders who list down their members and the party and candidate they will vote for. Some try to take advantage of this by enlisting in several parties. The candidates have a set of people who verify voting status and gauge supportiveness, and categorize into sure voters, soft voters, for special operation (those that can be converted), and sure non-voter - a process that started last October (2021). All of these people will receive money, the amount of which can differ depending on the candidate's prediction of a win (based on the list he has) - it can be on the high end if he has a high chance of losing, or on the low end if he is sure of his win.

Most voters just use the sample ballot from the candidate. They follow the congressional race the most because of the tight competition. At the last hour these people are given 1000 pesos each, and the rest is given during the campaign period. People take advantage of this and will bluff multiple politicians to get money. Vote buying by national candidates is not as obvious. The sample ballots may also include candidates in the national posts, but people are more engaged with local candidates feeling they know the person and because the family leaders are so involved. They say "we will know who you voted for" even though there is no way that could happen. A local official who asked for anonymity said that the regional leader of BBM offered his father, who is running for a local post, 20 million to support BBM.

This election, there is one candidate who said he will not buy votes and promised to solve local issues and corruption.

The people are suffering but are afraid to go "against the ruling party" because they could be deleted from the vote buying list and lose a source of income. A youth council member confirms vote buying even among progressive youth and minors during youth council elections, adding that people do speak up and attempt to organize on key development issues but sustainability is the problem..

**Election fraud.** Teachers, despite the lack of classes from May 2-13 due to the elections, were being forced to report to the offices. Because there were already voting machines in the rooms, they were afraid that they would be charged with manipulating these machines. Some local politicians insinuated that the teachers would do this, and wanted to use this to declare an election failure. Interviewed elementary school teachers said there is no signal or internet connection. In the transmission of journal actions for the electronic election machines, they don't know where the voting machines are being located during the election and there is no internet connection/signal in the area. In terms of manpower, unlike in the past where all teachers serve during the elections, this time it's only the 5th and 6th grade teachers, depending on how the comelec sets up the election. Teachers confirm that vote buying is very open in this area as well. If the lights are on at midnight they are still waiting for their money. Some think it's rude to not take the money. Some take money from multiple candidates.

## V. CENTRAL VISAYAS

The International Observer Mission to Central Visayas in April, has interviewed a local traditional politician and four barangay captains who were victims of political violence in the midterm elections; as well as stall holders campaigning against privatization of the market. Ahead of the interviews, there was the Visayan Church People's Summit For Peaceful Elections, where around 50-100 church members and leaders from different churches came together including the two keynote speakers, Antonio Ledesma Archbishop Emeritus of Cagayan de Oro and Pastor Carlton Palm, Director of the Justice and Peace Centre in Siliman University. The Summit received messages of support from other church leaders. Key points made were:

- The Philippine Constitution which separates church and state does not mean that the church cannot be active in demanding clean and peaceful elections or urging voters to choose candidates who are not corrupt and who are genuinely committed to supporting the poor and marginalized
- The churches cannot have a neutral stand on vote buying or intimidation and killings or election rigging or on the lies being told on social media.
- The church should urge voters to vote for candidates who, among other things, were not corrupt, respected human rights, were pro-poor, and supported the peace process.

Police intimidation and violence in the 2019 midterm elections are still affecting local voters and candidates alike - fear. These had led to councilors and barangay officials and activists having to go into hiding during the election period and still have a serious impact on their ability to campaign in the current 2022 elections. This has been further exacerbated by the ongoing use of red tagging and weapon planting in Duterte's "war on drugs" and their similar use against political opposition, development workers, and activists. This means that measuring election violence using only incidents recorded in the official election campaign period gives an inaccurate picture. Six years of extrajudicial killings; arrests based on the planting of weapons in homes, intimidation of the media; the passing of the Anti Terrorism Law and the widespread use of red tagging have created a permanent climate of fear that is utilised to intimidate and neutralise opponents of the Marcos-Duterte bid in the current presidential election.

***Violence against local officials.*** Four barangay officials were interviewed on their experiences of election violence. Their experiences included police coming en masse into the community harassing them, planting weapons in homes, checkpoints set up outside communities; party officials and members having their homes strafed by automatic weapons; having vehicles set on fire; and in one case the murder of a husband and wife in front of their children. Sometimes police appear to have been drafted into the area from other provinces.

This police harassment had led to councilors and barangay officials and activists having to go into hiding during the election period. This violence in 2019 has had a serious impact on their ability to campaign in the current 2022 elections. A climate of fear already existed and many officials had gone into hiding or become inactive. This has been further exacerbated by the ongoing use of red tagging and weapon planting in Duterte's "war on drugs" and their similar use against political opposition.

**Red-tagging, arrests, killings of church workers.** A group of young church people working on development issues and organizing among grassroots were interviewed. They all reported that such work is regarded by the government as subversive and constantly gets tagged as communist or terrorist. An anonymous Facebook page has been created called appending their church name with contra communist movement which red tags individuals. This was quite intimidating. One was personally red-tagged in this Facebook page. “They took my picture from my own Facebook Page and captioned it with ‘*Be a priest for the people not the communists.*’ I had to become more vigilant after that.” Such Facebook pages are set up anonymously but it is widely suspected that the military is behind them.

Another young development worker who was part Lumad indigenous people, had suffered her own education being disrupted when the military under instruction from President Duterte closed the Lumad schools as “schools of communism”. She continued her education in another school. After she graduated she became a development worker at her church. Government intelligence people often gather outside their office in the community. They have put up CCTV cameras as some form of security against the police.

Their physical churches were regularly vandalised. The walls were often painted with the words “communists” or “terrorists”. They had all been forced to become more cautious and careful when talking about things like human rights. They all took measures concerning their personal safety. They all reported that red-tagging had increased during the election period.

Last 8 April a member of a local farmers association was shot dead in an ambush by the AFP. The military claims it was an encounter. For them, these killings have become normal; to die like that is normal.

Tarpaulins labelling progressive groups like Gabriela and Anakpawis as supporters of CPP-NPA were also seen on the ground,

**Temporary “ceasefire” on the urban poor.** Vendors campaigning against the privatization of a market for threatening some 1,500 stallholders and 4,500 sidewalk vendors are experiencing a temporary relief from eviction this campaign season.

The vendors suspect there are powerful vested interests aligned against them. The previous Vice Mayor initially backed the stall holders against the agreement, but after being elected mayor he shifted his support to the developers - the Megawide Construction Corporation. The local media do not give the vendors’ side of the story and only repeat the developer’s propaganda, while courts keep delaying hearings of the legal case. Stallholders attending protests have been threatened by the market authority with losing their stalls. Others fear they may be accused of being terrorists, a common way of trying to scare off any form of dissent in the Philippines, and something which can put your life in danger.

Nonetheless, while vendors have no illusions about elections in a city dominated by political dynasties prepared to use intimidation and money to keep themselves in power, they are keeping their spirits alive and leveraging their role as voters this election and the strong local sentiments about the market. They have printed leaflets that list what each of the election candidates is saying about its future and are calling on voters to give their vote only to those who oppose the privatisation. Already one prominent politician has said they will rescind the joint agreement if

they win the election. The campaigners are impressively organized and have produced their own alternative plan. They stress they are in favor of modernisation, but not through this kind of privatization as it displaces and deprives the poor of their livelihoods.

# Election-related human rights violations in verified media reports

## EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLINGS

**Two Anakpawis members assassinated, January 15, Sorsogon.** On January 15, 2022, at about 7:45am Rosemarie Galias, 68, and Silvestre Fortades Jr, 70,<sup>18</sup> were killed by four motorcycle riding gunmen in Brgy San Vicente, Barcelona, Sorsogon. Both were members of Anakpawis, the progressive partylist which represents the interests of peasants and workers in Congress, as part of the Makabayan Bloc. This murder of the elderly political activist couple, was the beginning of state murders in the presidential election campaign period. They were in their tricycle,<sup>19</sup> which was parked along the road, when two pairs of motorcycle-riding men fired at Fortades. When Galias saw that Fortades was shot, she took their four-year-old granddaughter who was with Fortades, to run for safety. The men, however, also shot Galias. Fortades had received a warning the night before.

**Five massacred by soldiers, Davao de Oro.** Around 9.30pm on February 23, two weeks into the national election campaign, five people including two volunteer teachers of the Save Our Schools Network, were killed at Brgy. Andap, New Bataan, Davao de Oro, Mindanao, by elements of the 101st Infantry Brigade, Philippine Army.<sup>20</sup> These five victims were volunteer teachers Chad Booc and Gelejurain Ngujo II, community health worker Elgyn Balonga and two community volunteer drivers, Tirso Añar and Robert Aragon. In the context of over five years of repression of the Lumad Schools set up by the indigenous peoples of Mindanao and their allies in churches and the education system, this massacre is aimed at further terrorizing the IPs in the election period. On February 25 the 10th Infantry Division posted a press release on their official Facebook page<sup>21</sup> falsely claiming that the five were killed in an alleged encounter and accusing them as New People's Army fighters. However, information from locals said no encounter took place in the area.<sup>22</sup>

**NDFP Peace Consultant Ezequiel Daguman abducted and killed.** According to the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP)-Southern Mindanao,<sup>23</sup> peace consultant Ezequiel "Ka Rey" Cortes Daguman, age 50, was abducted and extrajudicially killed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) – not killed in an encounter between the New People's Army (NPA) and the AFP as claimed by the military. Daguman was allegedly unarmed and had been abducted along with his driver while *en route* to visit peasant communities in Davao del Norte on March 7, 2022.<sup>24</sup>

Peace talks between the government and the NDFP are a significant election issue.<sup>25</sup>

18 <https://philexaminer.com/?p=22913>

19 <https://ph.news.yahoo.com/2-pro-farmer-party-list-members-shot-dead-in-sorsogon-025924984.html>

20 <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/02/25/22/5-alleged-npa-rebels-killed-in-davao-de-oro-clash-military>

21 <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1168568>

22 <https://www.bulatlat.com/2022/02/27/5-killed-in-davao-de-oro-are-civilians-not-npa-group-says/>

23 <https://cpp.ph/statements/justice-for-ezequiel-daguman-uphold-jasig/>

24 <https://www.bulatlat.com/2022/04/13/missing-peace-consultant-was-abducted-and-killed-in-davao-del-norte-spokesperson-says/>

25 <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1544541/nica-chief-its-insane-to-talk-peace-again-with-reds>

## SHOOTINGS

**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.<sup>26</sup> The attack comes after Villegas and his local chapter of the progressive transport group TIRES-PISTON were red tagged<sup>27</sup> by the National Task force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (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.<sup>28</sup>

**Presidentiable Leody De Guzman and indigenous leaders shot.** On 19 April 2022 at Sitio Kiantig, Barangay San Jose, Quezon, Bukidnon, five farmers were shot and injured during a gathering to oppose the seizure of their ancestral lands by the Kiantig Development Corporation, which has ties to re-electionist Mayor Pablo M. Lorenzo III.<sup>29</sup> Presidentiable Leody De Guzman and his senatoriables had gone there to amplify their case against land grabbing. De Guzman was standing right beside Nanie Abela – a farmer organizer and advocate for indigenous people – who was shot. Four others were injured, including Datu Didilusan Arroyo, a leader of the tribe.<sup>30</sup> The shots were fired by a group of about fifty men directly at the protesters without warning for about 10 minutes. On 21 April, the police confiscated eight firearms from Kiantig Development Corporation security personnel, who were unlicensed, out of uniform, and with no exemption from the gun ban for the 2022 election.<sup>31</sup>

## ABDUCTIONS

**NDFP Peace consultant abducted in Samar.** On March 8, NDFP Peace Consultant, Edwin Alcidi, was reportedly abducted by military personnel in Catubig, Northern Samar, along with two other farmers.<sup>32</sup>

**Kadamay officer disappeared in Negros.** Iver Larit, the education officer of Kadamay–Negros, remains missing after he left his residence in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, around 9.00 am

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26 <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1567792/piston-leader-survives-slay-try>

27 [http://davaotoday.com/main/human-rights/bayan-muna-coordinator-in-gensan-wounded-in-gun-assault/?fbclid=IwAR3UG-MA7UN5sgMZn\\_rGeECItW4\\_ct0BaPHifNXhD9nV9u3QjZWwn-XqhQU](http://davaotoday.com/main/human-rights/bayan-muna-coordinator-in-gensan-wounded-in-gun-assault/?fbclid=IwAR3UG-MA7UN5sgMZn_rGeECItW4_ct0BaPHifNXhD9nV9u3QjZWwn-XqhQU)

28 <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/03/14/2167237/chr-probe-shooting-bayan-muna-coordinator-larry-villegas/amp/>

29 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/gunshots-fired-bukidnon-activity-leody-de-guzman/>

30 <https://www.bworldonline.com/the-nation/2022/04/19/443138/several-injured-in-shooting-at-bukidnon-ip-protest-attended-by-presidential-bet-ka-leody/>

31 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/cops-seize-guns-men-believed-behind-attack-leody-de-guzman-group/>

32 <https://ph.news.yahoo.com/rights-groups-call-to-surface-missing-peace-consultant-resume-peace-talks-063229445.html>

on 5 April, 2022, and did not arrive at an appointment with an urban poor community who were organizing against threats of demolition.<sup>33</sup>

***Disappearance of head of Robredo People’s Council in Quezon.*** Dante Gatdula, the head of the Robredo People’s Council for Candelaria City in Quezon province has been missing since April 23, 2022.<sup>34</sup> He left home around 7.00am to attend a meeting with other supporters of Leni Robredo in preparation of Leni’s rally in Lucena<sup>35</sup> on April 28, 2022, and has not returned home since. His wife received messages from those claiming to be with him, and messages from his cell phone bidding her farewell, but she has not been able to reach him.<sup>36</sup>

## DEATH THREATS

***Death threat to Kabataan Partylist first nominee Raoul Manuel.*** On March 19, Kabataan Partylist National President and First Nominee Raoul Manuel received a death threat.<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup>

## ILLEGAL ARRESTS

***Makabayan Cagayan Valley Coordinator, Agnes Mesina, arrested on an out-of-date warrant.*** On February 28, 2022, at around 7:30pm Agnes Mesina, Makabayan Cagayan Valley Coordinator, was illegally arrested in Aparri, Cagayan,<sup>39</sup> while having dinner. She was seized by 32 elements of the Philippine National Police (PNP), for murder charges issued by the Tagum Regional Trial Court Branch 30 in Davao del Norte that had already been dismissed on July 21, 2021.<sup>40</sup>

Earlier, Mesina was with a group led by the United Church of Christ in the Philippines for a Community Outreach Mercy Mission to Brgy. Sta Clara, Gonzaga, Cagayan, in the Cagayan Valley region when they were blocked at a checkpoint by the NTF-ELCAC. People blocking them held tarpaulins bearing her name and picture together with the 4th nominee of Anakpawis Partylist, Isabelo Adviento. The two were accused as terrorists, a classic red-tagging. Mesina was released at around 11:30pm after her lawyer proved the murder charges were dismissed.<sup>41</sup>

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33 <https://www.karapatan.org/karapatan+renews+calls+to+junk+mo+32+following+arrest+of+farmer+disappearance+of+urban+poor+organizer+in+negros>

34 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/robredo-people-council-head-quezon-missing-april-2022/>

35 <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1589670/huge-crowd-greets-robredo-in-quezon-sortie-more-endorsements-from-civil-society-groups>

36 <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2022/04/27/2177172/robredo-volunteer-quezon-reported-missing>

37 <https://www.facebook.com/iamraoulmanuel/posts/5034989696547418>

38 <https://mb.com.ph/2022/03/21/ph-navy-officer-relieved-under-probe-for-threatening-kabataan-pl-nominee/>

39 <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1561932/groups-slam-arrest-of-activist-in-cagayan>

40 <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1463652/davao-court-junks-murder-rap-vs-baguio-activist>

41 <https://nordis.net/2022/03/01/article/news/colmenares-arrest-of-makabayan-coordinator-in-cagayan-an-attack-vs-opposition/>

**Farmer leader Henry Palaje arrested in Albay.** 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.

**Jonathan Mercado, 10 Anakpawis activists arrested in Cavite, Bacoor.** On March 10, Cavite police in Barangay Mayugam, Silang, arrested Jonathan Mercado, spokesperson of Teatro Kabataan Mula sa Nayon and a staff of Anakpawis Southern Tagalog's regional campaign. He was arrested without a warrant at approx. 8:30 am. As well, PNP and Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) in Cavite raided sitio Bagong Silangan, Barangay Talaba 7 in Bacoor, arresting ten Anakpawis volunteers. At least nine were physically assaulted and harassed, including Joel Salabania, vice chairperson of Anakpawis Cavite.<sup>42</sup> This was on the heels of the March 4 Leni-Kiko rally in Cavite, which was red-tagged by Rep Boying Remulla and Ping Lacson.

**Negros farmer Nemfa Delima arrested.** On 1 April, state elements ransacked the house of Nemfa Delima and illegally arrested her. A caliber .38, ammunition and a rifle grenade were planted in her residence.<sup>43</sup>

**Anakpawis Partylist 4<sup>th</sup> Nominee Isabelo Adviento arrested on trumped up charges.** In the evening of April 8, at least 30 officers of the Philippine National Police arrested Isabelo 'Buting' Adviento while he was eating in a Jollibee restaurant in Nueva Vizcaya.<sup>44</sup> He is charged with illegal possession of firearms and explosives allegedly seized from an illegal raid of his house in Cagayan in December 2020. A warrant was issued in June 2021. Adviento and his counsel had asked the Department of Justice to review the cases for illegal procedures.<sup>45</sup>

**Peasant activist Carlo Reduta was arrested in Quezon province.** Young peasant activist Carlo Reduta was arrested in Quezon province on March 18, 2022, and is now facing trumped-up charges of murder under the Anti-Terrorism Act. He comes from a family of peasant activists who have long faced harassment by state forces.<sup>46</sup>

**BAYAN Panay leader Elmer Forro arrested.** The Secretary General of the Panay Chapter of BAYAN (an alliance of progressive organizations), Elmer Forro, was arrested in Iloilo on March 29, 2022, on trumped-up murder charges. He had been red-tagged multiple times before his arrest. Forro and other witnesses testified before the Iloilo Prosecutor's office that he was nowhere near the location on the date of the alleged murder but was distributing COVID-19 aid to communities.<sup>47</sup>

**Arrest of church worker Aldeem Yañez in Cagayan de Oro.** Following intense red tagging, Aldeem Yañez of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) was arrested in an early morning raid at his home in Cagayan de Oro on Palm Sunday, April 10, 2022. Police claimed to have found a pistol, a

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42 <https://www.bulatlat.com/2022/03/12/attacks-vs-anakpawis-coordinators-volunteers-in-southern-tagalog-intensify/>

43 <https://www.karapatan.org/karapatan+renews+calls+to+junk+mo+32+following+arrest+of+farmer+disappearance+of+urban+poor+organizer+in+negros>

44 <https://kodao.org/anakpawis-nominee-arrested-in-nueva-vizcaya/>

45 <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1580554/party-list-nominee-arrested-in-nueva-vizcaya#ixzz7Pw7ZJtn6>

46 <https://www.bulatlat.com/2022/03/21/peasant-youth-activist-arrested-in-quezon-province-charged-with-anti-terror-act/>

47 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/activist-elmer-forro-arrested-iloilo/>

grenade, rifle grenades and “subversive documents”.<sup>48</sup> Yañez is a good-standing IFI member who served as a volunteer to the IFI Visayas-Mindanao Regional Office for Development (VIMROD) and the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform, which seeks the resumption of the peace talks between the government and the NDFP.

**Arrest of three Bayan Muna elderly members in Pampanga.** Community organizers and Bayan Muna members, Maria Teresa Buscayno, Erlinda David and Evelyn Munoz, were arrested in Malacat, Pampanga on April 13, 2022. The police and military accused these elderly women of being high ranking officers of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).<sup>49</sup>

## HARASSMENT AND SURVEILLANCE

**Systematic attack on Anakpawis in Southern Tagalog.** 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. Also on March 9, 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 Isabelaba while on their way to join a mural painting activity in support of Leni-Kiko.<sup>50</sup> These systematic attacks came on the heels of the Leni-Kiko rally in Cavite on March 4, which was red-tagged by Rep Boying Remulla and Ping Lacson.

**Gabriela Partylist Rep. Arlene Brosas surveilled and harassed.** On April 4 in Cagayan, Rep. Arlene Brosas and members of the local chapter of Gabriela Women’s Partylist were stopped at a checkpoint and photographed while on their way to campaign and to undertake voters’ education. After leaving the checkpoint, they were followed. At the venue, a state agent took a photo of the attendance sheet and asked a resident to take photos of participants.<sup>51</sup>

## MASSIVE RED TAGGING

**Ping Lacson, Remulla red tags Leni-Kiko Cavite rally March 4.** Senator Ping Lacson, a presidential candidate, tweeted on March 6: “This is worrisome. A coalition government with the CPP/NPA/NDF will set back the gains of the government’s efforts to end the country’s decades-old insurgency problem.”<sup>52</sup> He was targeting Vice President Leni Robredo over her successful rally on March 4.

On local radio, Cavite 7th District Rep. Jesus Crispin “Boying” Remulla claimed that those who attended the campaign rally were paid P500 each. He then red tagged those in attendance saying, “They have many students there, the activists from the Left. They were trained by the NDF. They brought banners but these were pink.”<sup>53</sup> Attendees using the hashtag #BoyingSinungaling showed

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48 <https://www.mindanews.com/top-stories/2022/04/ifi-cries-foul-over-arrest-of-red-tagged-member-in-cdo/>

49 <https://kodao.org/rights-group-says-3-women-arrested-in-pampanga-are-organizers-not-terrorists/>

50 <https://www.bulatlat.com/2022/03/12/attacks-vs-anakpawis-coordinators-volunteers-in-southern-tagalog-intensify/>

51 <https://www.facebook.com/100069036405667/posts/281320534179158/>

52 <https://twitter.com/iampinglacson/status/1500325771755225092>

53 <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1564109/boying-remulla-claims-attendees-of-campaign-rally-in-general-tri-as-were-paid-p500-each>

the reality of the event. Robredo herself called on both Sen. Lacson and Rep. Remulla to show proof or stop making false accusations.<sup>54</sup> Soon after, on March 10, 12 Anakpawis Partylist Cavite members were violently attacked and arrested without warrant by the PDEA.

***Badoy red tags Leni, Baguio City Mayor, Cordillera People’s Alliance, Makabayan partylists.*** In social media posts on March 21, 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.<sup>55</sup> She also targeted 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, VP Robredo’s camp said Badoy and the NTF-ELCAC had to show proof for 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.”

***Tarpaulins red tagging progressive partylist and youth organizations hung in Baguio City.*** On March 25, red-tagging tarps were hung in Brgy. St. Joseph Village, signed by “Patriotic Filipinos of Baguio City”, despite the recent order of Mayor Benjamin Magalong banning the posting of red tagging tarps. The tarps tagged 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.<sup>56</sup>

***Robredo red-tagged in Leyte.*** On March 28, 2022, just before VP Leni’s campaign sortie began in Leyte, signs linking her to the CPP, the NDFP and the New People’s Army (NPA) were hung on trees around the government center in Palo City.<sup>57</sup> These signs were removed after Robredo supporters complained to the security guards, but other signs red-tagging progressive partylists could still be found around the city.<sup>58</sup>

***President Duterte red-tags Makabayan bloc.*** During his “Talk to the People” briefing on March 29, 2022, President Duterte red-tagged the Makabayan partylists Anakpawis, Bayan Muna, ACT Teachers, and Gabriela Women’s Party as “legal fronts” of the CPP and urged the people not to vote for them. House Deputy Minority Leader and Bayan Muna Representative Carlos Zarate condemned this as a desperate election tactic in the face of Robredo’s growing popularity.<sup>59</sup>

***Duterte hints in favor of peace talks but intelligence adviser red-tags candidates who agree.*** President Duterte promises to continue to crush the communist insurgency up to June 30. But he

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54 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/boying-remulla-ping-lacson-under-fire-red-tagging-leni-robredo-supporters/>

55 <https://mb.com.ph/2022/03/21/ntf-elcac-exec-slams-vp-leni-baguio-mayor-sorsogon-governor-over-cpp-mpa-issues/>

56 <https://www.facebook.com/1432036267094639/posts/2882774175354167/>

57 <https://www.karapatan.org/duterte+and+ntf+elcacs+red+tagging+vs+makabayan+and+robredo+spate+of+attacks+and+arrests+undermine+integrity+of+elections>

58 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/leni-robredo-red-tagged-streamers-leyte-visit-march-28-2022/>

59 <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1575492/duterte-echoes-ntf-elcac-links-makabayan-bloc-anew-to-communists>

also expressed hope that the next president would succeed in peace talks with the communists.<sup>60</sup> Then senatorial aspirant Loren Legarda expressed her support and made a statement on her website on April 21 urging the government to resume the peace talks and pursue socio-economic reforms.<sup>61</sup> The head of President Duterte’s intelligence agency, Alex Paul Monteagudo, however spoke against presidential candidates Leni Robredo, Ping Lacson, Isko Moreno and Manny Pacquiao for their support for resuming the peace talks.<sup>62</sup>

## **MEDIA MANIPULATION AND REPRESSION**

***CNN Philippines debate hit by DDoS attack.*** On the evening of 27 February, CNN Philippines hosted the Philippine presidential debate, with every Presidential candidate except for Senator Bongbong Marcos. At 7:30 pm, with the debate mid-stream, CNN Philippines announced on their social media that their website was down from a DDoS (denial of service) attack.<sup>63</sup> Two hours later, at 9:30 pm, their website was back up and running. Media outlets including ABS-CBN, Rappler, Vera Files, and Philstar have had repeated cyberattacks since December 2021. Alternative media websites Bulatlat, Kodao Production and AlterMidya have also been attacked. DDoS attacks are illegal in the Philippines under E-commerce law.<sup>64</sup>

***Fake News – Disinformation.*** There has been a massive spike in online posts, comments and misinformation about Marcos Jr. and Robredo.<sup>65</sup> “Data show Robredo reeling from preponderantly negative messages and Marcos Jr. enjoying overwhelming positive ones,” according to fact-checker Tsek.ph.<sup>66</sup> Among the false claims about the Marcoses is the popular assertion that the patriarch made his fortune when he was a lawyer via a massive gold payment from a client. False or misleading claims about Robredo, on the other hand, included doctored photos and videos portraying her as stupid, unfriendly towards voters, or even a communist.<sup>67</sup>

***Reporter harassed, red tagged, as safety office reopens for journalists.*** Rappler reporter Lian Buan was harassed by the Marcos camp on 13 April 2022 when she approached Marcos Jr. for an interview after his rally in Quezon City. A Marcos media relations officer shoved her wrist and kept putting down her smartphone – which she was using to take video – while security personnel pushed her onto the scaffolding causing her to cry out “Ouch! It hurts!” in Filipino.<sup>68</sup> Hours before this, Buan was red-tagged by a Twitter account, which accused her of being a “high ranking official of the CPP-NPA-NDF”.<sup>69</sup>

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60 <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/04/17/2174812/duterte-hopeful-peace-talks-cpp-npa-ndf-under-next-admin>

61 <https://www.lorenlegarda.com.ph/legarda-urges-govt-to-resume-peace-talks-and-pursue-socio-economic-reforms/>

62 <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1544541/nica-chief-its-insane-to-talk-peace-again-with-reds>

63 <https://www.facebook.com/CNNPhilippines/photos/3385699111669964>

64 <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/philippines-cnn-philippines-hit-by-cyberattack-during-presidential-debate.html>

65 <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/826034/marcos-jr-winning-philippine-election-misinformation-say-fact-checkers/story/>

66 <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/03/23/22/marcos-heir-wins-ph-election-misinformation-race>

67 <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1572763/marcos-jr-winning-ph-poll-misinformation-drive-analysis>

68 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/rappler-to-marcos-camp-stop-harassing-journalists/>

69 <https://cmfr-phil.org/press-freedom-protection/attacks-and-threats-against-the-media/alerts/rappler-jour->

**Fake video used against Robredo’s daughter.** Vice President Leni Robredo directly accused Marcos Jr., of spreading an alleged fake lewd video of her eldest daughter, saying fake news has really been his modus since he lost in the 2016 vice presidential race. The video surfaced barely a week after Robredo surged by 9 percentage points in the Pulse Asia survey.<sup>70</sup>

**Misogyny.** Gabriela Women’s Party (GWP) and Amihan National Federation of Peasant Women<sup>71</sup> slammed political candidates for objectifying and degrading women during their political rallies. Former actor turned Quezon City vice mayor, and mayor Senatoriable Herbert Bautista along with actor and Ormoc City Mayor Richard Gomez during a recent Uniteam rally entertained the crowd by “courting”, touching and kissing a 23-year old female supporter on stage.<sup>72</sup>

## OVERSEAS VOTING

**OFWs for Leni and the Migrant’s Agenda.** OFWs neglected by the Duterte administration rejected BBM-Sara and placed their hopes on Leni-Kiko who vowed to provide better protection and benefits to them.<sup>73</sup> “OFWs for Leni” trooped to the Leni-Kiko headquarters in Quezon City on May 3, 2022, recounting the neglect they have faced from the Duterte regime and symbolically presenting their 14-point migrant’s agenda to the Leni-Kiko tandem. The agenda is as follows:

1. Free and comprehensive support and assistance to all OFWs affected by the pandemic
2. Free RT-PCR testing and adequate quarantine facilities for repatriated OFWs
3. Immediate and safe repatriation of all stranded migrant workers displaced by COVID-19
4. Comprehensive and accessible reintegration program for returning OFWs
5. Enhanced social protection and welfare programs by mandated government agencies
6. Increased budget for additional shelters and welfare services for distressed OFWs
7. Timely, competent, and continuous legal welfare assistance to detained OFWs
8. Stronger and effective social protection mechanisms and access to justice for exploited OFWs
9. Security of tenure for sea-based migrants or seafarers including fishers after one year of working
10. Recognition of sea-based migrants working in fishing vessels as seafarers
11. Full protection, health coverage and benefits for illnesses, injuries and death resulting from overseas employment
12. Full subsidy for social protection and welfare services for distressed overseas Filipinos

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[nalist-shoved-during-uniteam-rally/](#)

70 <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1582252/robredo-marcos-behind-my-daughters-fake-lewd-video>

71 [https://m.facebook.com/pages/category/Nonprofit-organization/amihanwomen/posts/?locale2=en\\_US](https://m.facebook.com/pages/category/Nonprofit-organization/amihanwomen/posts/?locale2=en_US)

72 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZuIv5fOAJU0>

73 <https://mb.com.ph/2022/04/25/robredo-pangilinan-vow-protection-social-security-for-ofws/>

13. Abolition of policies that facilitate labor export; Job creation and job security
14. Support for OFWs' rights to form and belong to associations and unions that defend their rights

***Voter suppression and other obstacles to voting.*** OFWs were the first to cast their votes in this election cycle as overseas absentee voting (OAV) began on 10 April 2022. However, since the supposed first day of overseas voting, OFWs have faced voter suppression and other obstacles to voting. This has led to lower voter turnout than hoped for. As of May 5, Commissioner George Garcia said that while there are 1.697 million overseas voters, “the number of overseas voter turnout is not as promising<sup>74</sup> ... at only 400,000 more or less.” Despite all this, the Commission on Elections refuses to extend the voting period,<sup>75</sup> maintaining that all votes must be in by May 9, Philippine time. The following are some of the obstacles faced by OFWs as reported on by the media and by Migrante International:

- *Polling places were closed on the first day of voting:* In France the Embassy was closed and no one was able to vote on the first day of voting. In Dubai only the consulate was open, while the Philippines Overseas Labor Office (POLO) was not open<sup>76</sup>, resulting in longer lines of voters needing to wait in extreme heat.
- *Vote counting machines (VCMs) were delayed and insufficient in number:* At the start of voting in Hong Kong the polling precinct only had five VCMs initially (as opposed to the 10 VCMs provided last election), with additional VCMs only provided after outcry from OFWs<sup>77</sup> in Hong Kong. There were only four VCMs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In both locations the insufficient number of VCMs caused voters to wait in long lines with some giving up or being turned away before they were able to vote. In the US, VCM testing was postponed twice and an announcement of actual VCM testing and sealing was made public only 1-4 days prior to the testing.
- *Ballots for mail in voting were also delayed or unavailable:* Mail in ballots were not made available to overseas voters in Japan, Italy, New York (USA), Toronto (Canada) and to some voters in Swaziland as of day one of voting. In some cases, ballots were still not mailed ten days after voting had begun. In the US, Canada and Italy - vote by mail is the main mechanism through which OFWs can participate in the election.<sup>78</sup>
- *Lack of clear communication from Philippines government and Philippines posts abroad:* Filipino leaders from Italy tried to dialogue with the Philippine government leading up to the 2022 elections (given problems that emerged in the 2019 election)<sup>79</sup>, but they were

74 <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/05/05/2178930/comelec-no-extension-mail-overseas-voting-despite-late-deliveries>

75 <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/05/05/2178930/comelec-no-extension-mail-overseas-voting-despite-late-deliveries>

76 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/updates-overseas-absentee-voting-2022/>

77 <https://mb.com.ph/2022/04/11/comelec-to-add-5-more-vcms-in-hk/>

78 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/ofws-flag-philippines-post-alleged-lack-outreach-overseas-voting/>

79 <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/04/05/2172470/overseas-filipinos-say-lack-preparations-in-fo-may-keep-many-voting>

ignored. Despite a normal protocol of meeting well before elections, the Philippines consulate in Hong Kong waited just a week before the opening of voting to hold a meeting. US-based Philippines consulates were also delayed in issuing voting instructions.<sup>80</sup>

- *Obstacles specific to employment:* Many of the OFWs in Saudi Arabia who are domestic workers said they did not have a “legal basis” for asking for a day off from their employers to vote; while those in Hong Kong – who are also mostly domestic workers – can only go out to vote on Sundays.
- *COVID-19 related obstacles:* In Shanghai – where most of the OFWs in China work – voting is suspended due to strict “zero Covid-19 policy” lockdown.<sup>81</sup>

***Threats to the integrity of the voting process.*** There have also been select reports of threats to neutrality and to the integrity of the voting process around the world.

- *Threats to neutrality:* The wife of the Philippine Ambassador to Saudi Arabia was caught on video campaigning for Bongbong Marcos and Sara Duterte in Riyadh;<sup>82</sup> while BBM supporters in Dubai were campaigning very near election posts, but were not reprimanded by the Special Board of Election Inspectors (SBEI).
- *Procedural issues threaten “clean and fair” voting:* In Singapore a spoiled ballot was “inadvertently” given to a Filipino voter.<sup>83</sup> In the United Kingdom poll watchers were not shown the SBEI’s log-in minutes, which enable them to know if their concerns have been registered; the SBEI ran out of stickers and used signed regular adhesive tapes instead for the VCM; and one voter received two ballots. In the Netherlands irregularities include incorrect returned addresses placed on the ballots; registered voters not on the official list; some voters receiving incomplete packets – some with seals and others without.

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80 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/ofws-flag-philippines-post-alleged-lack-outreach-overseas-voting/>

81 <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1173132>

82 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/wife-of-philippine-envoy-saudi-arabia-wears-ferdinand-bong-bong-marcos-jr-shirt-talking-to-ofws/>

83 <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1583666/comelec-pressed-act-on-oav-complaints>

# Context

The 2022 election was a struggle between two major camps: a fascist militarism embodied in the dynastic candidacies of Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr., the son of late dictator and military strongman Ferdinand E. Marcos, and his running mate Sara Duterte, daughter of current President Rodrigo “Roa” Duterte; and a democratic anti-fascist slate led by current Vice President Leni Robredo. The ultimate power of the Marcos-Duterte alliance is rooted in the bloated US-backed military, which has been a pervasive feature of Philippine politics since the US-Marcos dictatorship (1972-86), and effectively marshalled by the Duterte regime to dominate every feature of Philippine political life.

The Marcos-Duterte victory brings six more years of what we have seen under the Duterte regime - mass killings and crimes against humanity in ongoing wars on Drugs, Dissent and the Moro and Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines.

Fascist repression is now the primary policy lever to keep a lid on the social volcano of poverty that is the foundation of the Philippines political reality. Under Duterte, it was the tool used to manage public health challenges such as drug addiction and the COVID-19 pandemic as well as to eliminate political dissenters and to facilitate land-grabbing.

## Legacy of Colonial Rule

Under U.S. rule, the Philippine state came into being as a representative of the political and economic elites and their self-interests, which largely aligned with those of the colonial power for U.S.-led investment and super profit repatriation. The oligarchy and landed elites wield the powers of government to serve and preserve these interests, legitimized with the holding of regular elections.

U.S. colonizers in the Philippines established a mirror of their two-party system of government and elections. Until 1972, the Nacionalista Party and Liberal Party took turns to take power. Intra-elite rivalry was driven by local, land-based political clans to capture resources and boost their wealth through ‘elected’ political positions.

What was entrenched through elite democracy was a government that willingly accepted the country’s subservient role of being an exporter of raw materials and semi-processed goods and an importer of finished products. It is a government vested in the interests of the U.S. imperial power and the domestic elite – a government that is run like a profit venture.

The semi-colonial democracy broke down in the early 1970s under growing political and economic instability. In its place was a U.S.-approved military dictatorship under Marcos which created a broad role for the military in political affairs, a role which has only grown over the three-and-a-half decades since the downfall of Ferdinand Marcos. Marcos Sr. ran a 14-year military dictatorship that led to widespread human rights violations: 3,257 known extrajudicial killings; 35,000 documented tortures; 77 ‘disappeared’; and 70,000 incarcerations. The Marcos dictatorship was probably most noted for the level of kleptocracy. The Marcos family was estimated to have stolen at least US\$10 billion from the Philippine Treasury of which only a small portion has ever been recovered. In no small measure was that stolen wealth used to fund the Presidential aspirations of Marcos Jr. The colonization of the Philippines under Spain and the U.S., and its legacy of elite control, has made the Philippines one of the most impoverished countries in Asia. Income distribution in the Philippines is highly uneven and the worst among ASEAN countries. Poverty rates are higher than any other ASEAN country.

Industrial development in basic industries has been stalled for decades due to neoliberal economic policies. In the absence of economic development and job opportunities in the Philippines, successive governments since the Marcos dictatorship have pursued a labor export policy sending more than 10 million Filipinos abroad in search of work. Immediately prior to the pandemic, up to 6,000 Filipinos were leaving the country for work every day. Nearly 1.7 million overseas Filipinos were registered to vote in Philippine elections.

### **Duterte Regime and Human Rights**

The Duterte administration has maintained the legacy of colonialism. It pushed forward neoliberal policies (e.g., the unprecedented liberalization of rice imports) and protected the profits of foreign corporations and domestic oligarchs. Duterte's domestic oligarchs have built their fortunes from real estate development and from taking over public utilities. As pursuit of neoliberal doctrines become less popular, the response has been to ratchet up state repression.

Of the 109 million Filipino people in 2021, at least 55 million and probably 65 million live in poverty. Yet inequality has grown, with land, wealth, and political power concentrated in the hands of a few oligarchs. This gross structural inequality is the driver of movements for justice which confront the combined power of political elites and big corporations. Duterte's regressive tax policies have distributed income upwards to the wealthy. The 2017 Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) increased consumption tax to hit the poor hard, while the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises (CREATE) program in 2020 gifted the rich with the reduction of the corporate tax rate from 30 per cent to 25 per cent.<sup>84</sup>

President Duterte's 2021 Budget increased defence spending by 14.5 per cent to Php 205.8 billion (US\$4.11 billion) and cut social welfare spending by 51.7 per cent to Php 176.9 billion (US\$3.53 billion). The government will expand its debt servicing in 2021 by over 86 per cent to Php 1.79 trillion (US\$35.8 billion), from the record Php 962.46 billion (US\$19.25 billion) it recorded in 2020. At this rate, debt servicing equates to nearly 40 per cent of the Php 4.5 trillion (US\$90 billion) budget for 2021.<sup>85</sup>

Rodrigo Duterte conducted a brutal "war on drugs", a war on dissent and a war against Indigenous and Moro peoples. During his six-year term, the number of civilians killed was in the range of 30,000.<sup>86</sup> The 2022 Philippine elections took place in the most repressive context seen since the time of dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Duterte encouraged extrajudicial killings throughout his Presidency, repeatedly calling for the murder of "drug personalities" and exhorting the police and military to kill all communist rebels and to "forget about human rights." Duterte's (NTF-ELCAC) and Anti-Terrorism Act

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84 The Php4.1 trillion (US\$82 billion) wealth of the richest 50 Filipinos is as much as the total assets of the poorest 60-70 million Filipinos. See Document 50 in Annex: Slideshow presented by Sonny Africa, INVESTIGATE PH Hearing, August 10, 2021, Slide 12. Tax policies could raise resources for eradicating poverty and realizing human rights, as well as reducing inequality. The government instead passed its TRAIN Law of tax reforms in December 2017 which increased consumption taxes including on the majority poor population while reducing direct taxes on high income and wealthy families. Personal income taxes, estate taxes and donor taxes were cut: See Document 50 in Annex: Slideshow presented by Sonny Africa, INVESTIGATE PH Hearing, August 10, 2021, Slide 15. <https://www.investigate.ph/media/final-report>.

85 See Document 50 in Annex: Slideshow presentation by Sonny Africa, INVESTIGATE PH Hearing, August 10, 2021, Slide 21. <https://www.investigate.ph/media/final-report> ; <https://www.philstar.com/business/2021/07/23/2114385/dof-head-allays-concerns-debt-servicing>.

86 <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1517512/52-out-of-30000-deaths-petitioner-in-icc-case-disputes-doj-probe-of-drug-war>.

institutionalized, legitimized and increased the practice of “red-tagging” - labelling unarmed civilians and groups as members, supporters or affiliates of the Communist Party of the Philippines and New People’s Army. This is state terror to repress dissent, and often results in extrajudicial execution. Under the NTF-ELCAC, the entire machinery of the state, including the judiciary, the military and police, the departments of education, social services and local government, has been marshalled for this war on dissent.

Because of the widespread human rights abuses in the past six years, Duterte is under continuing investigation by the International Criminal Court, but has yet to face accountability for his actions. This reflects decades of impunity in the Philippines. Impunity is systematic and incapable of resolving itself. As noted in the three 2021 Investigate PH reports,<sup>87</sup> domestic remedies to address the human rights abuses under the Duterte government are not only inadequate but the Duterte administration has actively orchestrated these violations. The Marcos-Duterte victory provides continued legal and legislative cover for human rights violations and crimes against humanity.

### **Specific Electoral Context**

It is no surprise that the 2022 Philippine elections were dominated by political dynasties - an oligarchy of elite families that rely heavily on U.S. support and patronage politics to maintain their influence. According to the projections of the Commission on Elections (Comelec), a candidate needed Php4 billion (USD 76.3 million) to run for president in the 2016 national elections, Php1 billion (USD 19 million) for vice-president, and Php350 million (USD 6.7 million) for senator. It is impossible to compete for political office without significant wealth.

Three of the country’s 10 wealthiest multi-billionaire tycoons are behind three of the country’s five biggest political parties - Villar (Nacionalista), Ramon Ang (Nationalist People’s Coalition), and Enrique Razon (National Unity Party). They are, not by chance, known to be the Dutertegarchs. Their political parties accounted for one-third of the 18th Congress –and are an ever-present fixture in presidential candidacies and governance. A fourth political faction is backed by Presidential aspirant Bongbong Marcos, who counts his billions in dollars rather than pesos. In the absence of political legitimacy, politicians resorted to dirty and misleading tactics to be elected such as electoral fraud, vote-buying, influence peddling, misinformation particularly in social media, and violence to get rid of elite rivals or militant opposition. Historically, acute intra-elite competition within the oligarchy for political office has generated violence in Philippine elections.

In the 2018 Local Elections, at least 33 people were killed and 19 others wounded in several poll-related incidents - 18 incumbent local officials, four candidates, three former elected officials and eight civilians were among the dead.<sup>88</sup> In the 2016 National Elections, at least 30 people were killed and 22 injured in election-related violence, based on reports verified by the Commission on Human Rights (CHR). The CHR reported a total of 72 pre-election-related cases of killings, strafing, gun poking, demolition and harassment have been verified. In the week leading to Election Day an additional 41 fatalities were reported to the CHR through its election monitoring initiative with civil society groups.<sup>89</sup> The May 9, 2022 National Elections have intensified political conflict and violence among competing political factions of the powerful families. The violence also highlights the growing role of the military and police apparatus in everyday life, and how these are used by deft politicians like Marcos and Duterte to thwart and undermine the democratic process.

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87 <https://www.investigate.ph/>

88 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/5/14/philippines-election-related-violence-leaves-33-dead>.

89 <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/785237/30-killed-22-hurt-in-election-violence-chr>.