

## Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

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Philippine Daily Inquirer, 31.05.2012

### Arrest rights abusers, other nations urge Philippines

By TJ Burgonio

Several nations pressed the Philippines to step up efforts to arrest the perpetrators of human rights abuses in the country, including retired Army General Jovito Palparan, during a session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva on Tuesday.

During the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UNHRC, various countries acknowledged the Philippines' ratification of treaties, campaigns against human trafficking and training of security forces to improve human rights in the country, the New York-based watchdog Human Rights Watch said.

But they also pointed to the government's "dismal record" in prosecuting cases of extrajudicial killings, torture and enforced disappearances, HRW said from Geneva.

"Several countries called on the government to redouble its efforts to arrest alleged perpetrators like retired Major General Palparan, who faces an arrest warrant in connection with the kidnapping of two activists in 2006," it added.

UPR Watch Philippines said the Australian mission, in particular, urged the Philippine government to arrest the fugitive Palparan.

#### Eluded authorities

Palparan has eluded authorities since a local court issued a warrant for his arrest over the disappearance and illegal detention of University of the Philippines students Sherlyn Cadapan and Karen Empeño.

The United Kingdom, Spain and the Holy See, on the other hand, called on the Philippines to "completely eradicate extrajudicial killings," UPR Watch Philippines said.

A total of 69 countries quizzed the Philippine delegation led by Justice Secretary Leila de Lima on its human rights record.

At least 22 countries expressed concerns over the continuing spate of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and torture, in particular, and impunity in general, UPR Watch said.

Several countries called on the Philippines to dismantle all paramilitary groups and militias, it said.

#### Established mechanism

The UPR is a mechanism established by the Human Rights Council to address human rights violations and improve the human rights situation on the ground in each of the UN member states. The second cycle of the UPR began this year and will be completed by 2016.

AMP Press Release, 16.05.2012

### Human Rights Report of the Philippines to the UN lacks measurable results

On 29 May 2012, the Philippines will be reviewed as part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) before the UN Human Rights Council on the implementation of its human rights obligations.

The Philippine government receives in advance the opportunity to explain in a government report, what measures it has taken to improve the human rights situation in the country and to fulfill its international human rights obligations.

"The recently submitted report lacks the transparent and objective evaluation of concrete and measurable steps taken by the Philippine government to improve the human rights record in the country in a sustainable manner" says Maike Grabowski, coordinator of the German-based Action Network Human Rights-Philippines ("Aktionsbündnis Menschenrechte-Philippinen" - AMP).

As an example, the Philippines government points to the establishment of human rights offices within the military and its

The Philippines' Commission on Human Rights Chairperson Loretta Rosales, who attended the session as an independent observer, confirmed the comments made by the other countries.

#### Committed

"There was a clear pattern of questions regarding impunity, the failure as yet to eradicate extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and torture, especially by the military and police forces; the failure of the military to control paramilitary forces like the Cafgu (Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Unit), the sorry state of detainees in detention, and the delay of the judicial process in addressing concerns within the jail system," Rosales said in an e-mail. She said the Philippine delegation "committed" itself to studying the recommendations and enlisting Human Rights Watch and the Commission on Human Rights "in collectively working out the process of implementing the recommendations for the enhancement of human rights on the ground."

The United States said that "impunity in human rights violations" continued, citing institutional barriers to the attainment of justice for victims of rights abuse.

#### Antitorture law

Ireland called for "decisive measures" to address the problems. Germany urged the strengthening of accountability mechanisms and the conduct of impartial investigations in cases involving state forces, UPR Watch said.

The Netherlands asked that the issue of impunity be addressed and called for the prosecution, trial and conviction of perpetrators, while Denmark called for the full implementation of the antitorture law, saying that state forces were still involved in abuses.

Spain and Canada called for the dismantling of all paramilitary groups and militias, a position that gained support after the Maguindanao massacre of 2009.

Belgium asked the Philippines about measures to record cases of extrajudicial killings, calling for the ratification of the convention against enforced disappearances. Austria expressed concerns over attacks on journalists and cases of torture, UPR Watch said.

France said it was "alarmed by the extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances and continuing violations against journalists and human rights defenders." Japan echoed this, saying that "extrajudicial killings continue as a significant political issue."

decades-long integration of human rights education in training institutions as indicators of improving the human rights situation. However, the government and the military have not truthfully evaluated such steps in the face of increased human rights violations, particularly politically motivated killings and enforced disappearances in the same periods.

In fact, civil society observed weak implementation of command responsibility that led to the impunity of the above mentioned violations.

Further, the Philippine report states that the government cooperates closely with national civil society organizations. Many of our civil society partners in the Philippines do not accept this vague generalized term of engagement with government," criticizes Grabowski.

The national human rights organization, Philippine Alliance for Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) has pointed out, for in-

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stance, that consultations with civil society prior to the drafting of the National Report and the National Action Plan for Human Rights were wanting in planning, thoroughness in discussions and formulations of unities and differences in views.

"The institutional and legislative progress mentioned in the National Report is to be welcomed, however, the real benchmark for the improvement of the human rights situation and the sincerity of the current government must be the professional investigation of human rights violations with due diligence and the indictment and conviction of the perpetrators and their string pullers staying in the back," demands Michael Schirmer, chair of the German human rights alliance on the Philippines. Impunity is still one of the main reasons for continued human rights abuses in the Philippines.

BusinessMirror.com.ph, 22.05.2012

### Government ready to face human-rights review

By Mia M. Gonzales

THE government is ready to face the United Nations review on the country's human-rights situation in late May, where it is expected to cite measures it is undertaking to improve its record under the Aquino administration, Malacañang said on Tuesday.

Deputy Presidential Spokesman Abigail Valte said in a news briefing that the government has "taken note" of the observations and suggestions of Human Rights Watch, that has criticized the Philippines for allegedly failing to go after those responsible for human-rights abuses.

Valte said the Department of Justice is drafting an executive order that creates an interagency committee that will monitor the progress of cases of extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances, torture, harassment and intimidation and to expedite the resolution and closure of such cases.

"We intend to present these developments when the Philippine delegation goes for the Universal Periodic Review," Valte said.

She said that from 2008 to 2011, the National Police's Task Force Usig reported 27 cases of extrajudicial killings, which is an improvement over previous years, since from 2001, there were a total of 166 cases.

"Experts from the European Union have also noted a decrease in the [number of] cases specifically at the start of the administra-

The eight member organizations of the AMP are therefore calling on Member States of the United Nations to analyze the national report of the Philippines critically and ask the Philippine delegation during the interactive dialogue of the UPR to set concrete and measurable steps to enable an effective impact assessment of the Philippine human rights policy. This is the only way for the Philippine government to prove its proclaimed change in policy on the issue of human rights.

For more information on the UPR, as well as potential questions and recommendations to the Philippine government please contact:

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tion of President Aquino. Having said that, we would still want to eliminate the number of cases. What we want is the total elimination of cases like this," Valte said.

When asked, Valte said the "improvement" can be partly attributed to the improved cooperation among concerned agencies to address the problem.

She cited the move to institutionalize human-rights protection in the Armed Forces by coming up with the first Armed Forces human-rights handbook which is being taught at the training level in the military, and its coordination with other stakeholders and human-rights advocacy groups.

"They continue to have consultations on the problems and the possible solutions to resolve these problems," Valte said.

Human Rights Watch had said that the Aquino administration "has failed to take significant measures to prosecute members of the military, police and militias implicated in extrajudicial killings, torture and enforced disappearances."

To this, Valte said, "We do note their observations and the PHRC [Presidential Human Rights Committee] for one has taken note of their observations and their suggestions and will act accordingly upon it," she said.

New York Times, 29.05.2012

### Philippines Chief Justice Removed Over Finances

By FLOYD WHALEY

MANILA — The chief justice of the Philippine Supreme Court, Renato C. Corona, was removed from office on Tuesday after it was disclosed during an impeachment trial that he failed to declare \$2.4 million in foreign currency deposits.

In a country where high-ranking public officials are often removed through street protests, and no one had ever been successfully impeached and convicted, the verdict was seen as a victory for the political maturity of the Philippines.

Chief Justice Corona was impeached in December by the House of Representatives and was convicted Tuesday by the Senate acting as an impeachment court. He was accused of biased decisions and hiding assets.

"If your client cannot explain, I cannot abstain," said Senator Alan Peter Cayetano, upon voting to convict. "If you did not disclose, we have to depose. If you are not fit, you cannot sit as the C.J. of our Supreme Court."

Chief Justice Corona's impeachment — and the prosecution of former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who appointed him chief justice — have been central to the anticorruption campaign

of President Benigno S. Aquino III. The president's supporters say that if Chief Justice Corona had not been removed, he could have been an obstacle to good governance efforts that are linked to the country's recent strong economic performance.

Mr. Corona's supporters say that Mr. Aquino is trying to consolidate power by attacking the judiciary. The chief justice has also alleged that the president favors the impeachment in retaliation for court rulings that mandate the breakup of an Aquino family plantation.

In testimony on Friday, Chief Justice Corona insisted that under his interpretation of the law he was not required to disclose the money. During testimony that was marked by weeping, anecdotes about his family and breaks for medical checkups by nearby doctors, the chief justice debated the legalities of reporting requirements for government officials.

In the Philippines, senior officials are required to file a statement of assets, liabilities and net worth each year to verify that they are not enriching themselves from their government positions. One of the impeachment articles against the chief justice states

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that he under-declared his assets.

MindaNews, 05.05.2012

### Finally, a CHR office in ARMM

By Bong S. Sarmiento

After 22 years, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) has set up an office in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

CHR chairperson Rosetta Ann P. Rosales led Thursday the opening of the CHR-ARMM at the regional government compound in Cotabato City.

Atty. Laisa Alamia was appointed as director of CHR-ARMM. She took her oath on Wednesday before Rosales and Commissioners Jose Manuel Mamaug, Coco Quisumbing and Norberto dela Cruz on May 3 at the Conference Room of the Office of the Regional Governor in Cotabato City.

The CHR regional office, set up by the national body, was inaugurated on the same day, at the JICA Building behind the Shariff Kabunsuan Cultural Complex in the ORG Compound

Rosales vowed to uphold human rights in the autonomous Muslim region not just by CHR standards "but also in the context of the rich cultural tradition of the Moro and indigenous peoples (lumads)" in the area.

"The CHR will uphold the rights of the indigenous and Moro peoples in the ARMM in the context of their rich culture and history of struggle for human development," she was quoted as saying by the ARMM Bureau of Public Information.

Rosales said acting ARMM Gov. Mujiv S. Hataman sought the establishment of a CHR office in the region, which groups the provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi. Hataman was appointed caretaker of the ARMM last

December with the deferment of the regional elections in August to the 2013 midterm polls. He stressed earlier that human development in the region had been stunted by poverty rooted in alleged massive corruption within the ARMM bureaucracy.

Rosales said that ARMM has a rich historical experience in their struggle for socio-economic, cultural and political development.

She cited the United Nations Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in vowing to uphold the observance of human rights in the context of a culturally diverse ARMM society.

ARMM Executive Secretary Anwar Malang, a human rights lawyer, said the establishment of a CHR office in the region is long overdue.

Rosales said putting up the CHR-ARMM unit is "a dream come true" that she, Hataman and President Benigno Simeon Aquino III "had shared in common since they first met as lawmakers in the House of Representatives."

Massive displacements of people and communities have marred the autonomous Muslim region with the rebellion waged by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which is now holding peace talks with the government.

The region is also home to political warlords.

On 23 November 2009, a total of 58 people were killed in Ampatuan town in Maguindanao in what is considered the worst election-related violence in the country's history.

Philippine Daily Inquirer, 08.05.2012

### Rights info drive kicks off in Tondo

'Notorious' area is launch pad

By Leila B. Salaverria

Acknowledging deficiencies in the effort to stop abuses, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) on Monday started taking a more direct way of educating people about their rights and providing help in going after wrongdoers.

And where better to launch its "Human Rights on Wheels" program than in Tondo, Manila—an area which gained a measure of notoriety nearly two years ago when officers of a police precinct there were implicated in the torture of a robbery suspect. The incident which was caught on video sparked public outrage over the alleged abuses committed by law enforcers.

Under the program which was timed to coincide with the agency's 25 anniversary, CHR personnel would go around different areas in Metro Manila to provide human rights education and training, counseling sessions and free legal aid to residents, according to Loretta Rosales, the agency's chair.

In addition, it would also offer workshops on a human rights-based approach to development and governance as well as activities to promote health and wellness, Rosales said.

The CHR program to conduct an information drive in the grassroots level comes in the midst of criticisms leveled against the Aquino government for its supposedly dismal record in battling human rights abuses. In addition, international rights groups have lamented that state forces implicated in abuses have generally not been held accountable.

This was supported by figures cited by Rosales in her speech at the program launching when she said that based on CHR data,

only 27 percent or 132 out of the 356 complaints filed against the military, police and other armed groups from July 2010 to March 2012 have been resolved. "As an institution, we therefore need to be more proactive in investigating, monitoring and resolving cases of human rights violations through regional case conferences and community-based dialogues," she added.

She called on other government agencies to join the CHR's latest endeavor, saying that by working together, they could build a "critical mass of human rights defenders, one community at a time."

Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim was unable to join the program launching although he sent a message which was read by a staffer. In his message, Lim said that despite having been given the nickname "Dirty Harry," he has always respected the rights of suspects although he values the human rights of victims more.

He said he would do all he could to protect citizens from criminals. Once the suspects have surrendered, he said he would give them all the rights due them under the law. In addition, he vowed to continue to go after hoodlums in uniform.

Meanwhile, United Nations Development Programme- Philippines Country Director Renaud Meyer, who was also present, lent his support to the program, saying it would give the people at the grassroots level the confidence to claim their rights as their own..

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Philippine Embassy Berlin Webmaster, 04.05.2012

### Closer cooperation between law enforcement agencies of PH, Germany

#### Hanns Seidel Foundation visit signals closer cooperation between law enforcement agencies of Philippines and Germany

BERLIN - "We look forward to closer bilateral cooperation in the field of law enforcement after this series of meetings," the Philippine Ambassador to Germany, Maria Cleofe R. Natividad, stated at the conclusion of the official visit of a delegation of high-level representatives from the Philippine justice sector from 23 to 27 April. The visit was supported by the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), a German political foundation which has initiated projects aimed at reforming the Philippine justice sector, notably the "law enforcement pillar".

The Philippine delegation was led by Hon. Leopoldo Bataoil (Congressman, Province of Pangasinan), Hon. Rico E. Puno (Undersecretary for Peace and Order, DILG), Director General Nicanor A. Bartolome (Chief, PNP), Chief Superintendent Lina C. Sarmiento (PNP), and Police Sr. Superintendent Realtor Bartolome (PNP Academy). They were accompanied by Mr. Paul Schäfer, HSF Philippine Representative.

Central to the information visit were the information exchanges between the members of the delegation and their German law enforcement counterparts, including sharing of best practices on how to address common security challenges. From Munich, where the group had meetings with state-level agencies such as the Bavarian State Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, and the Police Training Institute, the delegation proceeded to Berlin where Ambassador Natividad welcomed the delegation at the Philippine residence for a hearty Filipino dinner.

In Berlin, the delegation had meetings with counterparts in the federal agencies such as the Federal Criminal Police Office, Federal Ministry of Interior, and the State Prosecutor's Office. Ambassador Natividad led the delegation to meetings at the

Federal Chancellery, the Federal Foreign Office (FFO), the Bundestag, and the State Prosecutor's Office.

At the Federal Chancellery and the FFO, Ambassador Natividad also discussed issues of common concern with Deputy Director General Michael Flügger (Foreign Affairs, Security Policy, Global Issues) and Ambassador Clemens von Götze, the newly appointed Director General for Africa, Asia, Latin America, Near and Middle East. At the State Prosecutor's Office, Chief Prosecutor Detlev Mehlis himself, who once headed a justice sector reform project in the Philippines by the European Union, welcomed the delegation.

The Philippine delegation also met with members of the German Bundestag from the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Development, including Dagmar Wöhr, the Committee Chairman, and Dr. Christian Ruck. Former Federal Minister for Economics and Technology, Mr. Michael Glos, a Senior Member of the German Bundestag and Member of the Board of Directors of the HSF also met the delegation.

"The Philippines and Germany share common values - democracy, peace, and respect for human rights, among others. I appreciate the efforts of German political foundations such as the Hanns Seidel Foundation for planting the seeds and laying the groundwork for deeper cooperation in pursuit of these common values between our justice sectors," Ambassador Natividad said.

In October 2011, as part of its justice reform efforts, the HSF also supported a visit by a high-level Philippine delegation in connection with the drafting of a "modern" criminal code for the Philippines which is envisioned to bring about fairer criminal prosecution and a reduction of the general existence of impunity and, consequently, a better preservation of human rights.

The Philippine Star, 01.05.2012

### DOJ: No more legal fees for litigants

By Edu Punay

MANILA, Philippines - Justice Secretary Leila de Lima has stopped the collection of fees from complainants filing cases at the National Prosecution Service.

In issuing Department Circular No. 25, De Lima revoked Department Circular No. 42 that then Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez issued in 2004. "All assessment clerks and collection officers under the National Prosecution Service shall forthwith cease and desist from assessing and collecting legal fees stated in the above-mentioned circulars," read the circular.

De Lima said fees need not be collected from litigants since the salary of prosecutors had already increased by 100 percent with the implementation of the Salary Standardization Law.

"This will address the recurring issue of denial of access to justice by parties and litigants by imposing an exaction on the redress of wrongs when filing criminal complaints," she said.

"The DOJ will continue to work hard on making justice available everywhere to everyone with the full support of the national government.

INQUIRER.net, 11.05.2012

### Shocked De Lima orders NBI to probe security aide's death

By Tetch Torres

MANILA, Philippines—Justice Secretary Leila De Lima expressed shock at the death of her security aide and ordered the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to investigate it.

"We're shocked. Last night he was with us when they (security escorts) dropped me home," said De Lima. "He was a nice person, smiles a lot," she said.

Quintos, 32, was found dead in San Ildefonso, Bulacan, early Friday, and De Lima said that he could have been killed somewhere else and dumped only in the Central Luzon town.

De Lima told the NBI to dig into the motive of the killing, par-

ticularly if it was connected to the security threat she has been receiving.

De Lima has beefed up her security staff and tightened security at the Department of Justice since last year threats to her life.

Quintos was a member of the DOJ Internal Service Operations Group (ISOG). De Lima said Quintos was dropped off in Cubao by another security escort after duty. "He was supposed to be on his way home to Antipolo but his body was found in San Ildefonso, Bulacan," De Lima said, adding that Quintos' gun was missing.

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The Philippine Star, 12.05.12

### Ombudsman now more accessible

By Michael Punongbayan

MANILA, Philippines - Ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales has assured the public and media of increased access to information at the Office of the Ombudsman.

Speaking to reporters last Wednesday, Morales said they are coming up with service desks to augment accessibility to the anti-graft agency. "We started in Quezon City two days ago, then we will go to Mandaluyong, Manila, Makati, Pasig, Pasay and Calocan," she said. Morales said the Office of the Ombudsman also has a public assistance office.

"So I don't know what they are saying... and we entertain complaints received by Internet."

Since Morales became Ombudsman, media access to complaints, rulings, and other documents at the anti-graft agency has reportedly been restricted. Recently, Morales tightened the Office of the Ombudsman's rules on releasing to the public and media information about the status of pending complaints.

In a memorandum circular posted at the anti-graft agency's website, she said walk-in clients including "any individual not party to a case" is now required to write a formal letter stating the purpose of the inquiry which shall be subject to her approval or that of her deputies. Only authorized records officers and personnel may attend to requests for case status and release the information, according to Morales.

Based on the new rules, parties to a case, counsels on record, and authorized representatives of the parties must fill up a form or a verification to have easier access to information. The memoran-

dum circular is being issued "to ensure the effective implementation of the Citizen's Charter of the Office of the Ombudsman and properly observe confidentiality of proceedings," Morales said.

Meanwhile, Morales reactivated yesterday the anti-graft agency's team of investigators and prosecutors handling cases involving public officials and employees accused of violating environmental laws. "Pursuant to our commitment to address the need to conserve, protect and restore our life support systems through the proper implementation or enforcement of existing environmental laws, there is a need to reconstitute our Environment Team," she said in a memorandum.

Morales said an Environment Ombudsman will be tasked to head the body. The reactivation of the Environment Team is pursuant to the Office of the Ombudsman's commitment to a memorandum of agreement with the Integrated Bar of the Philippines in 2004, she added.

Among the nominees to the Environmental Team are Graft Investigation and Prosecution Officers (GIPOs) Edsel Ensomo, Nelia Lagura-Prieto, Amy Rose Soler-Rellin, Milagros Macaraig, and Hilde Likit.

GIPOs Marilou Unabia, Vivian Jumilla, Raquel Cunanan-Marayag, Ismaela Boco, John Felix Jr., Myla Teona Teologio, Laurrie Layne Cristobal, Alteza Aoso, Sylvia Severo, Charmaine Ruiz and Lucielo Ramirez Jr. are also being considered.

InterAksyon.com, 30.05.2012

### Package containing a grenade left at Ombudsman Morales' residence

By Trish Roque

A package reportedly containing a grenade was left at the residence of Ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales, the Office of the Ombudsman said on Wednesday. A letter was enclosed in the package, TV5 reporter Trish Roque said in a breaking news

report aired on *Andar ng mga Balita* on Wednesday evening.

"Nagmamalaskit kay CJ Corona," the letter said. Police have reportedly gone to the residence of Carpio-Morales, the report said.

Asian Legal Resource Center, 02.05.2012

### A Joint Statement from NGOs including the Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC)

**NGOs calls for the drafting of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration to be transparent and subject to meaningful consultations with civil society**

The ASEAN Human Rights Declaration: Drafts must be published and subject to meaningful consultations with local, national and regional civil society and human rights defenders

We, the undersigned international human rights organizations, are concerned that the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) has yet to take the necessary steps to ensure that the process of drafting the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD) is transparent and fully consultative with civil society organizations in the ASEAN region.

In a joint statement released on April 8th, over 130 local, national and regional civil society organizations across the ASEAN region called on AICHR to implement the following steps:

1) *To immediately publicize the draft AHRD so that the public can meaningfully participate in the drafting process. Consultations will remain meaningless if the draft declaration is kept confidential and out of reach of the peoples.*

2) *AICHR representatives who are already conducting national consultations in their respective countries must continue to do so, and ensure that these consultations are held nation-wide and in an inclusive and more regular manner. They should further encourage other AICHR representatives that have not taken such initiatives to do the*

*same. The AICHR should also conduct consultations both at national and regional levels, especially if national consultations are not applicable yet in particular places.*

3) *To translate the draft AHRD into national languages and other local languages of the ASEAN countries in order to encourage broader public participation in the region.*

4) *To ensure that consultation meetings of the AICHR will be inclusive of all stakeholders, especially civil society organizations and national human rights institutions.\**

On 12 April, AICHR announced that it would finalize the draft of the AHRD by July 2012 and hold one consultation with civil society organizations in late June 2012. A single consultation, conducted not at the outset but rather towards the very end of the drafting process, cannot be considered consultative and transparent. In addition to being non-transparent and non-consultative, this process has been clearly rushed with little thought provided on some of the key elements that have been articulated by ASEAN civil society for decades. An instrument of this importance and magnitude needs more time for adequate deliberation and discussion.

We fully endorse the April 8th statement made by national and

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regional civil society organizations and strongly urge all representatives of the AICHR to fully and immediately implement these recommendations. This would ensure that the AHRD reflects the legitimate concerns of civil society and human rights defenders in ASEAN and reflects existing international human rights standards.

The drafting of the AHRD is a litmus test of AICHR's willingness to constitute a credible, respected, and effective regional human rights body. Principles of transparency, accountability, and consultation are applied by the United Nations and all other regional bodies when they engage in human rights standard-setting and the ASEAN must not fall below well established international standards and practice.

This joint statement is endorsed by (in alphabetical order):

1. Amnesty International
2. Asian Legal Resource Centre

CMFR, 07.05.2012

### Columnist killed in Laguna province

Police have yet to identify suspects in the killing of a columnist for a local daily in San Pablo City, Laguna last 24 April 2012. The local police has offered a Php350,000 (approximately USD8,300) reward for any information that will lead to the arrest of the suspects.

A gunman riding in tandem on a motorcycle shot Michael Calanasan, a columnist for the local daily Laguna Courier, last 24 April 2012 at around 7 a.m. (local time) in Sta. Monica village, San Pablo City. Calanasan was also a city traffic enforcer.

San Pablo Chief Supt. Ferdinand de Castro told the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR) in a 2 May 2012 phone interview that the local police are "facing a blank wall" in

3. Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT)
4. Christian Solidarity Worldwide
5. Civil Rights Defenders
6. Freedom House
7. Human Rights Now
8. Human Rights Watch
9. International Commission of Jurists
10. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
11. International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC)
12. Protection International
13. Reporters Without Borders
14. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT).

their investigation. De Castro said Calanasan's wife and other witnesses have yet to provide the police any information on the incident.

Calanasan was a member of ALAM, a party-list group of local journalists and marginalized sectors of society.

Causing said that Calanasan's murder might be related to his work as a traffic enforcer rather than his being a columnist. According to the ALAM president, Calanasan's column, "Salita ng San Pablo", focused on what San Pablo city residents felt about local issues and is unlikely to be the reason behind the killing.

National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, 08.05.2012

### Unidentified gunmen shoot and kill Mati broadcaster

A news reporter of a Roman Catholic church-owned radio station in Mati City, Davao del Sur was shot and killed by still unidentified gunmen at around 2 p.m. today (May 8).

DxHM-AM (Ang Radyo Totoo) news reporter Nestor Libaton was on his way to the city proper on board his motorcycle when the suspects riding in a single motorcycle shot him seven times. Libaton died on the spot.

Libaton was with a fellow broadcaster Eldon Cruz on board another motorcycle when Libaton was shot by two men riding in tandem in Sitio Bitan-agan, Barangay Don Enrique Lopez,

Mati City, according to colleague Neelan Luciano.

Luciano said Libaton was a reporter of the Church-owned radio station but said Libaton did not have any commentary programs. Luciano said it was not the policy of the radio station to discuss controversial issues on-air.

Libaton, 40, was married and had four children.

Libaton is the third member of media killed within the last 15 days. The others were Rommel Palma, killed in Koronadal City on April 24, and Michael Calanasan, killed in Laguna on April 30.

National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, 10.05.2012

### STATEMENT: On threats received by broadcaster James Licuanan

In November last year, Michael James "Dacoycoy" Licuanan, chief of reporters of Bombo Radyo's Cagayan de Oro station, survived an attempt on his life. It seems whoever sought to rub him out is bent on finishing the job.

Licuanan has again received death threats believed connected to his commentaries against the illegal drug trade plaguing his city. News of the resumption of the threats comes immediately after still unidentified killers gunned down Nestor Libaton, reporter of Catholic church station dxHM, in Mati, Davao Oriental, the third media worker murdered in just 15 days and the 12th killed since President Benigno Aquino III assumed office.

While not established yet, it is more likely than not that the new threats against Licuanan come from whoever it was who ordered his killing.

This merely proves what we have said again and again, that those who would seek to silence the independent Philippine press know that, more often than not, they will get away with it, no thanks to government inaction and apathy.

Again, we call Mr. Aquino on his thus far unfulfilled promise to deliver justice and good governance to our long-suffering people and nation. Again, we point out that all indications are that the brains behind the bulk of media killings are the plague of corrupt politicians and warlords that are allowed to wield control over our provinces and municipalities as if these were their fiefdoms in exchange for their loyalty to the central government.

If Mr. Aquino really cares about making good on his promises, we challenge him to order all law enforcement agencies to solve the murders of our colleagues and unmask the masterminds.

## Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

Asian Human Rights Commission, 16.05.2012

### Two journalists killed, two others receive threats in separate incidents in Mindanao

Dear Friends,

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) deeply regrets to inform you that two journalists have been killed while two others have received threats in separate incidents in April and May. The AHRC is deeply concerned by the ongoing attacks on journalists as a result of their work depriving them of the protection necessary to exercise their freedom of expression.

CASE DETAILS: (Based on reports and cases documented by the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR) and National Union of Journalist of the Philippines (NUJP))

CASE 1: Killed while accompanying a colleague cover a story

Rommel Palma, a driver of Bombo Radyo Koronadal who occasionally reported the weather for the station, had been working for the station for four years. On 30 April 2012, at about 5am, Palma was with one of the radio station's reporters, Rey Legario, at the South Cotabato Provincial Hospital, Koronadal City.

Legario, who does his routine work as hospital beat reporter, entered the hospital to collect information to report for their station while Palma waited in the car outside. While Legario was inside the hospital two gunmen shot Palma. The security guard of the hospital responded to the scene but the suspects were able to flee. Palma was declared dead by doctors at the hospital. He sustained gunshot wounds in the back and neck.

According to Herminio Legaspi, station manager of Bombo Radyo Koronadal, the police had already 'invited' (in Philippines, this type of police invitation is in reality a custodial investigation in absence of legal counsel) to their office two possible suspects, an alias "Bobot" and "Hagibis" for questioning. But the two persons were later released after police failed to establish their involvement in Palma's murder.

Bobot and Hagibis allegedly had a dispute with Palma's brother about their quarrying business in which Palma had some involvement. Again, the AHRC express reservation as to how the

policemen could quickly establish the motive of the murder of journalists, usually over business conflicts and person grudges. On 22 April 2012, the two allegedly went to Palma's house looking for him but at the time he was not at home. Legaspi had told Palma to report the incident to the police, but it could not be immediately known whether he had done so.

CASE 4: A colleague of a murdered journalist receives threat

On 10 May 2012, at 8:39am, Lito Labra received a threatening text message which read: "P-tang ina ka! Dapat ikaw ang namatay dili si Nestor (Libaton) nga bootan. 'Tong amigo nimo sa Gensan dapat una ka ato. Sige ka balik-balik sa mining kay wala kay S.O.P., sige lang ug dili ka namo mabaslan naa man kay pamilya.

(You are a son of a b--ch! You should have been the one who died and not Nestor (Libaton) who was a good man. You should have died ahead of your friend in Gensan (General Santos city). You keep on discussing about mining because you have not received any S.O.P. (bribe money). If we can't get you, we can get your family.)

The threat on Labra began when he discussed illegal mining and logging activities in Mati. Labra is the host of a daily radio program at 91.5 dxWM-Sunrise FM in Mati. Labra reported the threat to a local police. He had to change his routine (usually this is what journalists could do to protect themselves due to lack of adequate protection) which he has been doing ever since he received various threats last February.

Labra had no idea as to who could be the persons or groups out to kill him. In fact, Labra said he has talked with Manny Cuizon, of the mining company Phil. Youbang Mineral International Corp., confronting them as to whether they have paid off a group to kill him. Phil. Youbang is one of the mining firms that Labra had lambasted in his radio program for their illegal mining operations.

ABS-CBNnews.com, 15.05.2012

### Environmentalist shot dead in ComVal

By Vina Araneta

MANILA, Philippines - An environmentalist was shot dead in Compostela Valley on Monday. Initial police report said Frederick Trangia, 60, was gunned down by an undetermined number of assailants in Barangay Mainit in Nabunturan town.

Trangia, who was also chairman of the said barangay, had expressed opposition against mining activities in Mainit National Park. Investigators are looking into the possibility that Trangia's anti-mining stance had something to do with his murder.

Bulatlat.com, 12.05.2012

### Anti-large dam activist gunned down

By RONALYN V. OLEA

Another activist was killed by an unidentified gunman, May 9 at around 6:15 p.m. at Palma Kibawe village in Bukidnon, Northern Mindanao, according to human rights group Karapatan.

Cabal was an active leader of Task Force Save Pulangi (TFSP), which is campaigning against the construction of a hydroelectric dam in Pulangi River that threatens the integrity of the ecosystem and would displace peasant and indigenous people's communities along the said river.

"We strongly condemn the killing of Mr. Cabal, an environmental activist who consistently fought for the rights of the community over their water resources," Clemente Bautista, national coordinator of environmental group Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment, said in a statement.

Records from the Task Force-Justice for Environmental Defenders revealed that there have been 13 cases of killings of environmental activists under the Aquino administration. Nine of such

cases happened in Mindanao, including the murder of tribal leader Jimmy Liguyon and Italian priest Fr. Fausto "Pops" Tentorio.

"Impunity towards ecologists is growing by leaps and bounds in Mindanao, presumably because of the torrent of destructive mining and energy projects in the region. Government policies on protecting foreign investments and engaging in counter-insurgency are overlapping exactly because both are meant to undermine oppositions to these dirty projects," Bautista said.

Before Cabal was murdered, state security forces vilified him as a member of the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

"This has been the same modus operandi in the killing of other anti-large dam and environmental activists. Peasant leader Jose Doton and indigenous Dumagat leader Nicanor de los Santos were tagged as communist supporters or NPA members before

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they were killed. In most of these cases of killings, military forces and agents were the suspected perpetrators," said Bautista. Doton and de los Santos were known anti-large dam advocates who were assassinated in 2006 and 2001 respectively.

The group also cited the vilification of Sr. Stella Matutina, a Benedictine nun and staunch anti-mining leader who has been tagged by the Philippine Army as a member of the NPA. "This dirty tactic is part and parcel of the harassment, terror and physical elimination of environmental activists who oppose government-supported big business such as large-scale mining and hydro-electric power plants," Bautista said.

Sr. Matutina is the secretary general of Mindanao-wide environmental alliance Panalipdan (Defend) Mindanao. On May 8, 2012, she filed a complaint with the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) against the 28th and 67th Infantry Battalion of the

Philippine Army.

"The increasing number of harassments and killings of environmental activists is a result of intensifying militarization under the anti-insurgency Oplan Bayanihan of the Aquino administration. It is implemented particularly in areas where there is a huge corporate investment to exploit our natural resources, at the same time strongly opposed by advocates and communities. These killings will not stop as long as the Aquino administration pushes through with Oplan Bayanihan and their destructive projects like large-dam and large-scale mining," Bautista said.

According to documentation by Karapatan, 76 leaders and members of people's organizations have been victims of extrajudicial killings from July 2010 until May this year.

ABS-CBNnews.com, 04.05.2012

### Capiz town vice mayor shot dead

By Nony Basco

MANILA, Philippines - The vice mayor of Mambusao, Capiz was shot dead on Friday morning. Initial police report said Vice Mayor Abel Martinez was gunned down in front of his house by a lone assailant at around 6:30 a.m.

Martinez was declared dead on arrival at Mambusao Hospital. Police have yet to determine the motive behind the shooting.

MindaNews, 13.05.2012

### 2 brothers executed by suspected NPA in Makilala

By Malu Cadelina-Manar

Suspected communist guerillas operating in the hinterlands of North Cotabato executed two farmers in Makilala, North Cotabato at around 7 p.m., Saturday, authorities said.

SPO3 Norberto Calayca, investigator at the Makilala police, identified the victims as brothers Marlon Sulutan, 36, and Randy, 32, both farmers and residents of Purok-Eden, Barangay Cabilao in Makilala town.

Marlon was president of the Barangay Defense System (BDS) of Barangay Cabilao, which the New People's Army (NPA) had repeatedly said was a tool of the military in its anti-insurgency campaign. The brothers suffered multiple chest wounds from M14 armalite rifles, Calayco said. Makilala mayor Rudy Ca-

oagdan ordered a thorough probe on the Sulutan murders. "This was a case of a summary execution done by the NPA," he said.

Barangay Cabilao chair Gideon Bugoy quoted the armed men as saying the brothers committed grave mistakes to the community and to the NPA and that they deserved to die.

"I was shocked, fearful of what's going to happen. But I knew he was going to die," Gwen said.

The NPA has not issued a statement on the killing of the Sulutan brothers which came two weeks after it raided a detachment of the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu) in nearby Magsaysay town in Davao del Sur. Two NPA members were killed.

Bulatlat.com, 09.05.2012

### Health workers, farmers arrested in separate incidents

By INA ALLECO R. SILVERIO

Another health worker has been charged with rebellion and accused of being a member of the New People's Army (NPA).

A week before eight of the 43 health workers collectively known as the Morong 43 filed a case against former president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for the torture and other human rights violations they suffered during their arrest and detention, another staff of a community-based health program of a Lumad organization in Dipolog City, Zamboanga del Norte was arrested on April 25, 2012.

According to reports from human rights group Barug Katungod Mindanao, Helen Igloria was arrested in her own home by some 20 members of the Philippine National Police and the Military Intelligence Group operating in the area. It said that soldiers and policemen arrested the health worker who now remains in detention at the Tangub Bureau of Jail Management and Penology Jail in Tangub City in Misamis Occidental trial for murder charges and direct assault.

The 56-year old Igloria is an administrative officer of the Kusog sa Katawhang Lumad sa Mindanao (KALUMARAN) and its Community-Based Health Services and a founding member of

the women's group Gabriela in Zamboanga del Norte. She is the latest among 32 women political prisoners arrested and are still currently detained under the Aquino government

Bangud Katungod Mindanao slammed Igloria's arrest, saying that health workers are still targets of the Aquino administration's military forces. It also said that Igloria's arrest and the false charges against her were part and parcel of the government's continuing attacks against human rights advocates and activists.

For its part, another human rights organization Tanggol Bayi said the entire process of Igloria's arrest consisted of many human rights violations. The group's spokesperson Cristina Palabay said the arresting officers did not read Igloria her rights and neither did they inform her regarding the charges against her. [...] According to reports, Igloria, 56 years old, is the administrative officer of kalumaran's health program since 1990. She suffers from hypertension.

#### AFP arrests civilians in Nueva Ecija

In the meantime, the Hong Kong-based Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has also released a petition for the release



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of five civilians including a minor whom it said were victims of arbitrary detention in Nueva Ecija. The group is calling on the Benigno Aquino III administration to immediately study the case of the civilians and order their immediate release. The AHRC said the victims were illegally arrested for criminal charges, which are based on evidence taken from a search conducted under questionable circumstances. The charges have no

real evidence to support the prosecution of a case against them. [...] One of the accused, the 17-year-old Jan Michael was also detained in a detention cell together with adults. He was found to be showing signs of trauma and depression.

On 4 April, the five were transferred from the NEPPO detention facility to the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology in Kalikid village, Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija.

INQUIRER.net, 03.05.2012

### 8 members of 'Morong 43' file case vs Arroyo

By Tetch Torres

Members of the so-called "Morong 43" on Thursday filed before the Department of Justice (DoJ) a criminal complaint against former President and now Pampanga Representative Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and several military and police officials.

Mrs. Arroyo was named respondent in the complaint for violation of Republic Act 7438 or An Act Defining Certain Rights of Person Arrested, Detained or Under Custodial Investigation and robbery.

Also named respondents were Major General Jorge Segovia, Brigadier General Aurelio Baladad and Colonel Cristobal Zaragoza, Col. Joey Reyes, PNP officials Police Superintendents Marion Balonglong and Allan Nobleza; Lt. Jovilee Cabading, a certain Vicente Lopez and several military personnel known only as Bulaklak, Caloagan, Cea and Idloy.

AFP Chief of Staff General Victor Ibrado and former Army Chief General Delfin Bangit were also included in the case under the principle of command responsibility.

The case was filed by Dr. Merry Mia Clamor, Dr. Alexis Montes, registered nurse Gary Liberal, registered midwife Maria Teresa Quinawayan and community health workers Mercy Castro, Reynaldo Macabenta, Jane Balleta and Samson Castillo.

The complainants said they were prompted to file the criminal

case due to the government's inaction to probe the police and the military's involvement in the arrest of the 43 health workers in Morong, Rizal.

Instead of investigating military and police officers, Liberal said those allegedly involved were even promoted.

Segovia was promoted from Lieutenant General to Major General while Baladad was promoted from Colonel to Brigadier General and Zaragoza from Lieutenant Colonel to Colonel.

The 43 health workers known as "Morong 43" were arrested on Feb. 6, 2010 at a rest house in Morong, Rizal while undergoing community health training.

The military accused the 43 of undergoing training in making explosives adding that explosives were seized in the scene.

But relatives of the 43 accused the military of violating the rights of the 43, subjecting them to torture and harassment to admit that they are members of the communist party.

On December, 2010, the Department of Justice already withdrew the information for illegal possession of firearms and explosives and violation of gun ban which have been filed in the Rizal court, thus prompting the release of the health workers before end of 2010.

Bulatlat.com, 19.05.2012

### Victim files opposition to promotion of military torturers

By RONALYN V. OLEA

One of the doctors belonging to the so-called Morong 43 filed a formal opposition to the promotion of two military officers allegedly involved in the torture of the health workers.

Dr. Alexis Montes filed May 17 his opposition to the promotion of Gen. Jorge Segovia and Col. Aurelio Baladad before the Commission on Appointments. Montes is one of the 43 health workers arrested by combined elements of the military and police on February 6, 2010 and charged with illegal possession of firearms and explosives.

Segovia, then commander of the 2nd Infantry Division of the Philippine Army, is set to replace Lieutenant General Arthur Tabaquero as Eastern Mindanao Command (Eastmincom) chief. The new post promotes him into the next higher rank of lieutenant general. Then colonel Baladad, meanwhile, has been promoted to brigadier general.

In his letter, Montes asked the Commission on Appointments to reject the promotion of Segovia and Baladad, citing the pending cases against them with the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), the Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 226 and the

Department of Justice.

Members of the Morong 43 filed the complaint [2] with the CHR against military and police elements for various forms of human rights violations weeks after the arrest. Six of the Morong 43 also filed a civil suit in April 2011. On May 4, eight health workers filed charges of torture, Violation of Republic Act 7438 (Rights of Persons Arrested etc.) and robbery.

Mercy Castro, one of the Morong 43, citing newspaper articles, said Segovia himself admitted that military personnel under his command blindfolded and committed other acts that are considered torture under the Anti-Torture Act of 2009.

Castro also revealed that sworn statements [4] were executed by Valentino Paulino, John Mark Barrientos, Eleanor Carandang and Cherylyn Tawagon and Jenelyn Pizarro detailing the torture they underwent in the hands of their military captors. The sworn statements were executed in the early days of their detention before the five sided with the military. These sworn statements were part of the letter-complaint submitted before the Commission on Human Rights.

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The Philippine Star, 29.05.2012

### CIDG forms task force to find 'Big 4'

By Non Alquitran

The Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) has activated a special task force composed of 80 policemen to conduct a more aggressive manhunt for ex-Army Gen. Jovito Palparan, former Palawan governor Joel Reyes and his brother, Coron Mayor Mario Reyes, and Dinagat Island Rep. Ruben Ecleo Jr., also known as the "Big Four."

CIDG chief Director Samuel Pagdilao Jr. also directed all regional and provincial chiefs to ensure the arrest of other fugitives and identify those who provide refuge and financial support to them. Pagdilao named Senior Superintendent Keith Emald Singian, CIDG deputy director for operations, to head the special task force. Pagdilao said the arrest of Palparan, the Reyes siblings and Ecleo will be the top priority of CIDG commanders.

He said CIDG operatives in the Caraga region, on the other hand, will be in charge of the manhunt for Ecleo, who is believed to be still holed-up in Dinagat Island. He appealed to the people who are sympathetic to or aiding Palparan, the two Reyeses and Ecleo to instead help persuade the four to surrender and prove their innocence in court.

Palparan is charged with kidnapping and illegal detention, the Reyes siblings are wanted for the murder of broadcaster Gerry Ortega, while Ecleo has been convicted of parricide.

The CIDG said concerned citizens may contact telephone numbers 02-7228993, 09277170752, 09283384482 and 09327018909 for information on the whereabouts of the four fugitives. Pagdilao likewise warned pranksters and those who would use the CIDG

### Interpol issues Red Notice on Reyes brothers for Ortega slay

Joel T. Reyes, the former governor of Palawan, and his brother Mario who is Coron town mayor, are now the subject of an Interpol Red Notice, which means law enforcers worldwide are on alert that they are fugitives from Philippine law, where they are accused in the murder of broadcaster and environmentalist Gerry Ortega.

"The Ortega family would foremost like to express our gratitude to the Interpol for granting our request for the inclusion of the Reyes brothers in the Interpol Red Notice. While speculations arose that the brothers have left the country illegally, this development surely gives us much hope that eventually they will be captured and tried in the court of law," a statement emailed from Mika Ortega, the slain journalist's eldest daughter, said Wednesday.

[www.interaksyon.com](http://www.interaksyon.com), 16.05.2012

hotline numbers to mislead the authorities that they "will not hesitate to track them down and make them liable for obstruction of justice."

The CIDG will post the pictures and other details about the Big Four on its website - [www.cidg.gov.ph](http://www.cidg.gov.ph) and [www.cidg-cis.com](http://www.cidg-cis.com) - for the benefit of CIDG volunteers and other concerned citizens who will help in the manhunt operation.

The Philippine Star, 07.05.2012

### Another Ortega slay suspect falls

By Non Alquitran

MANILA, Philippines - Another suspect in the killing of Palawan broadcaster and environmentalist Gerry Ortega was arrested in Pasig City yesterday.

Director Samuel Pagdilao Jr., chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, said Percival Lecias Sr., 44, was cornered by operatives of the CIDG and the Special Operations Group of Puerto Princesa City at his rented apartment in Barangay Caniogan, Pasig City at around 4:35 a.m. yesterday.

Lecias, a former security aide of former Palawan governor Joel Reyes, gave himself up peacefully. Lecias was tagged as the source of the gun used in the killing of Ortega in front of an ukay-ukay (used clothing) store in Puerto Princesa City on Jan. 24 last year.

Reyes and his brother Coron Mayor Mario Reyes Jr., are still at large.

MindaNews, 24.05.2012

### 100 suspects in Ampatuan massacre remain free

By Bong S. Sarmiento

One hundred suspects in the gruesome massacre in the town of Ampatuan, Maguindanao that shocked the nation two years ago have remained scot-free, the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) said on Wednesday.

Rowena C. Paraan, NUJP secretary general, stressed that only 96 of the 196 suspects have been arrested since the grisly manslaughter happened exactly thirty months ago today (Wednesday). She also lamented that of those 64 suspects arraigned, only two of them are primary suspects—former Maguindanao Governor Andal S. Ampatuan Sr. and his son and namesake Andal U. Ampatuan, Jr. former mayor of Datu Unsay town.

Another prominent family member, Zaldy U Ampatuan, former governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, has been put behind bars but has yet to be arraigned.

Zaldy has petitioned the Supreme Court to drop him from the murder charge sheet. Fifty-eight people, 32 of them media workers, were brutally killed in the Ampatuan massacre, named after the town where the incident happened, on November 23, 2009. It was the worst election-related violence in Philippine history and the worst single attack against media workers anywhere else in the world. Various journalists' groups in the country marked the 30th month of the massacre with prayers, photo exhibits and calls for justice for the victims.

The Philippines ranks third in the Committee to Protect Journalists' impunity index, ranking next to Iraq and Somalia among countries with the most media killings and the least convictions relative to their population, the NUJP said.

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Desaparecidos, 23.05.2012

### Desaparecidos to Baliaga: Tell it all, where is Jonas?

By Mary Guy Portajada

As Army officer Maj. Harry Baliaga, identified as one of the abductors of missing activist Jonas Burgos, is grilled for the second time at the Court of Appeals today, families of Desaparecidos joins the Burgos family in urging him to "tell it all, where is Jonas?"

"The family of Jonas, and all other families of disappearances, feels a bit of hope that an abduction case such as Jonas' had gone this far in terms of identifying the perpetrators. It belies the claims of the military that it had nothing to do with the abduction of Jonas." Mary Guy Portajada, Secretary General of Families of Desaparecidos for Justice (Desaparecidos), said in the protest action simultaneous with the hearing on the habeas corpus case.

Baliaga was identified by witness Jeffrey Cabintoy as one among the seven persons who dragged Burgos on April 28, 2007 into a van at Ever Gotesco Mall, Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City. "We hope the true testimony of Baliaga will finally conclude this hearing. Having a habeas corpus case stand for five years is unforgivably slow. We want justice now," Portajada said.

www.ucanews.com, 16.05.2012

### Activists protest military 'abuses'

About 300 human rights activists rallied Tuesday in front of the armed forces headquarters and government offices in Manila to protest alleged abuses by soldiers against civilians in southern Luzon provinces.

Members of Karapatan, a human rights organization, gathered in front of Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City with a mock coffin to symbolize alleged victims of abuses. According to radio reports, some of the protestors threw red paint and soldiers retaliated with water cannons.

The group then went to the offices of the Department of Interior and Local Government, the National Housing Authority, the Philippine Coconut Authority and the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), all in Quezon City.

Karapatan has also been campaigning against continuing military operations in Mindanao, which have allegedly displaced more than 80 families in Agusan del Sur province.

"Bombings of communities by the military and the consequent

The Philippine Star, 03.05.2012

### 'Human rights violators in AFP have been punished'

By Alexis Romero

Soldiers accused of human rights violations have been prosecuted and those found guilty have been punished, the military said yesterday. Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) spokesman Col. Arnulfo Burgos Jr. said the military is investigating human rights violations reported to the AFP Human Rights Office.

"In fact, some military personnel involved and proven to have been involved in incidents of human rights violations have already been sanctioned or placed behind bars," he said.

Burgos said disciplinary actions include dismissal from the service and removal of certain privileges.

"We go by our military justice system but this is not a prosecutory body," he said. "We can only go as far as undertaking disciplinary actions. Once an involved soldier goes outside military bounds, the final say will come from the higher civilian court."

The AFP Human Rights Office has documented a total of 59 complaints against soldiers last year.

The military has been accused of resorting to killings to silence

The group also urged Baliaga to "get rid of the stain that tainted his name." "Your name will forever be stained with the disappearance of Jonas, but the only way to get rid of that stain is for you to tell who else abducted Jonas and who ordered it," she said.

Coming from the Kankaney tribe in the Cordilleras that puts honor as a great importance to their tribe, Portajada said that Baliaga can still salvage his honor and name in telling who ordered the abduction of Jonas "no matter how big these persons are."

Baliaga, together with Lt. Col. Melquiades Feliciano, Col. Eduardo Ano and several John and Jane Does are also facing criminal charges of Arbitrary Detention while Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, Gen. Romeo Tolentino, Lt. Gen. Alexander Yano and Gen. Avelino Razon were charged with Obstruction of Apprehension and Prosecution of Criminal Offenders both filed at the Department of Justice by Jonas' mother, Edita Burgos.

Jonas Burgos, son of press freedom fighter Joe Burgos, was a farmer activist who taught peasants of Bulacan organic farming. Jonas has been missing for five years now.

displacement of people ... have become frequent and widespread since the start of 2012. Thousands, including women and children, have now become victims of forced evacuation," said Karapatan spokeswoman Cristina Palabay.

The armed forces have denied the accusations, saying there was no evidence to substantiate violations by government soldiers since President Benigno Aquino took office in June 2010. Armed forces spokesman Colonel Arnulfo Burgos said last week the military has created a board of inquiry to look into the complaints received earlier by the CHR.

"The findings of the [board] revealed that all of the referred cases tagging military personnel were only accusations and did not produce sufficient evidence against AFP [Armed Forces of the Philippines] soldiers," said Burgos, citing the initial result of the probe. He added that the CHR has already dismissed 15 of the 84 human rights complaints filed against soldiers.

activists critical of the government. However, human rights abuses and illegal executions are not part of its policy, the military said.

Last January, the Philippines urged the US government to remove the "withholding element" on a portion of its aid to the AFP. On Tuesday, New York-based Human Rights Watch asked the US government to reject efforts to remove congressional hold on the aid until "significant progress" has been made in the prosecution of soldiers tagged in unexplained killings.

Since 2008, the US government has withheld \$2 million to \$3 million per year in assistance to the Philippines.

This assistance will only be disbursed if the US State department declares that the Philippines is taking effective steps to prosecute those behind the killings, sustains the decline in the number of killings, and strengthens institutions tasked to eliminate such incidents.

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MindaNews, 08.05.2012

### AFP recruiting militiamen in coal-rich village in South Cotabato

By Bong S. Sarmiento

The military is training militiamen to thwart the alleged growing infiltration of communist rebels in Barangay Ned, a far-flung village in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato rich in coal deposits, a military official said.

Lt. Col. Alexis Noel Bravo C. Bravo, 27th Infantry Battalion commander, said that more than two dozens villagers have volunteered to become members of the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit. "They want to join to fight the communist guerrillas now operating in Ned," he said, noting the New People's Army Front 73 has established a foothold in the area.

Bravo said the military has "token forces" in Ned, a government resettlement area, since they are more focused in the towns of Columbio in Sultan Kudarat and Magsaysay in Davao del Sur where communist presence is more intense.

Columbio town forms parts of the Tampakan copper-gold project of foreign-backed Sagittarius Mines, Inc.

Bravo earlier classified the Tampakan project as "potentially highly at risk" from NPA attacks. In Lake Sebu, San Miguel Energy Corp. has set up a base camp in the village of Ned in a bid to extract massive coal deposits in the area.

Claiming increased NPA presence in Ned, Bravo said in a separate statement that 27th IB troops recently captured a suspected communist rebel there. He was identified as Marlon Donayre,

25, of Pantukan, Compostela Valley. Donayre confessed to belong to the NPA Guerilla Front 73, according to the military statement. He was captured by 27th IB troops at Sitio Tasufao in Ned after he detached from his group to gather firewood, it added. Allegedly taken from his possession were a hand grenade and a rifle magazine with ammunition. Bravo said Donayre was working to organize a mass base for communist guerrillas in the area.

The captured rebel's revelations on NPA activities in Barangay Ned coincided with the information provided by an alias Estoy, a former NPA Front 73 member who yielded to the 27th IB last February, Bravo said. Charges of illegal possession of explosive and ammunition have been filed against Donayre at a court in this city, Bravo said. The military official accused Karapatan of having a link with the NPA after members of the human rights group allegedly tried to help Mr. Donayre.

In March, the 27th IB and members of the Taboli Manubo S'daf Claimants Organization, which is opposing the coal mining project, met here to discuss the military presence in Ned.

Members of the tribal organization feared harassment from the military on account of the ongoing campaign against the NPA rebels in the area. TAMASCO said their members are not sympathizers of the communist rebels.

Bulatlat.com, 10.05.2012

### 'They took our land by force'

By Ronalyn V. Olea

On February 10, 2011, security guards of A. Brown Company, Inc. pointed their guns at Gilbert Paborada, a leader of the local indigenous peoples group Pangalasag. One of the guards threatened Paborada that he would be shot if he and his fellow tribesmen do not leave the land.

Paborada told this to the members of an international fact-finding mission led by Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Asia and the Pacific, Asian Peasant Coalition (APC), Peasant Movement of the Philippines (KMP), and Kalumbay Regional Lumad Organization. The mission was held May 6 to 8 to look further into the impact of the palm oil plantation into the lives of Higaonon tribe, where Paborada belongs.

Pangalasag has been vocal in its opposition to the entry of the American company's palm oil plantation in Opol. Through the facilitation of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and with the support of the local government, A. Brown started its operations in the area in 2010.

The entry and expansion of A. Brown's plantation is accompanied by gross human rights violations, including strafing, illegal arrest, and other forms of harassment.

On March 10, 2011, at around 11 a.m., Pangalasag members Edwin Baranggot, Jemar Armilla, Fausto Magpulong, Raul Magpulong, Jose Paborada, Dante Paborada and Ruel Tagupa headed out to gather 'bagacay,' a kind of bamboo. However, they could not proceed to their intended destination since they were barred by guards of A. Brown Company. The farmers proceeded to their temporary shelter at sitio Limbasan in Tingalan village to rest. After almost an hour later, a dump truck, two pick-up vehicles and a jeep arrived. One of the men, armed with a shotgun, got off from one of the vehicles and ordered the farmers to stay put. The command was followed by a series of gun fire aimed at the farmers. Four were able to flee but two of them Baranggot and Armilla were arrested.

The men, numbering more than 20, showed neither identifica-

tion cards nor a warrant of arrest.

Baranggot and Armilla were brought to the Opol municipal hall. Shortly after that, they were brought to the office of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) at the capitol where they were detained for one day and one night. The next day, they were charged with direct assault and were imprisoned for two weeks at the Misamis Oriental Provincial Jail. They were released after posting bail. On the day of the arrest, Pangalasag's Paborada went to the NBI to check on his colleagues. Nolan Gadia, chief investigator of the NBI, said the farmers could be arrested because they were harassing the security guards in the area. Gadia also told Paborada that A. Brown reported to the NBI that there were armed groups in the area.

During the dialogue with members of the fact-finding mission, Opol Mayor Dexter Yasay, said he was the one who sent the NBI to arrest the farmers "because they invaded the land which is not theirs."

Since the shooting, none of them was able to return to their farm. A. Brown immediately planted palm oil on their land. Sometime in November 2011, the house of Victoria Tabubo, 64, who was among those who were forced to leave after the shooting incident earlier, was burned down by A. Brown security guards. They took her coconuts and planted palm oil on the land.

Likewise, the cassava planted by Catalina Atayde, were uprooted by company personnel who planted palm oil trees on her land instead.

Sometime in September/October 2011, armed security guards accompanied by a local barangay official working for the palm oil plantation went to the farm of Amadeo Payla, 66, and uprooted and destroyed his crops with chemicals. Payla was held at gunpoint. Another farmer, Leoncito Mabao, 34, was held at gunpoint as 20 armed security guards uprooted and destroyed his crops using chemicals.



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Other leaders and members of Pangalasang have been put under surveillance and have been receiving threatening text messages. Members of the fact-finding mission experienced harassment. Company guards prevented the participants from visiting the house of a Higaonon located inside the plantation, claiming that

The Philippine Star, 22.05.2012

### Gov't to end peace talks next year, NDF says

By Alexis Romero and Aurea Calica

The National Democratic Front (NDF) has claimed the Aquino administration plans to terminate the peace talks next year even as it slammed the government over its supposed lack of interest in pursuing the negotiations.

"We have already received reliable information from Palace insiders that (President) Aquino plans to terminate negotiations with the NDF next year or earlier especially if he succeeds in controlling all three branches of the government and in making a peace agreement with the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front)," the NDF said in a statement.

"It is Aquino no less who is blocking both the regular track and the special track, which offer the possibility of truce and alliance on the basis of a general declaration of common intent for the benefit of the people," the statement added.

Malacañang, for its part, said members of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-NDF only have themselves to blame if the peace negotiation is stalled or terminated.

"We're not moving in the peace talks because the CPP-NPA

it was "private property". A. Brown personnel also reportedly threatened to abduct villagers who would join the focused group discussion.

A village official in Bagooboc also branded members of the fact-finding mission as New People's Army (NPA) rebels.

does not have the JASIG (Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees) list, which we have agreed upon will be used as a ground to release personnel they claim to be their own. They have not reconstituted it," presidential spokesman Edwin Lacierda said yesterday.

Meanwhile, NDF spokesman Fidel Agcaoili, chided Aquino for saying the CPP-NPA-NDF is not sincere in talking peace.

"He is not at all interested in serious peace negotiations but only in demanding the surrender and pacification of the revolutionary forces and people," he added.

The NDF also accused the Aquino administration of condoning the human rights violations of the Arroyo administration.

Malacanang accused the communist rebels of lack of sincerity in pursuing the talks after the attack on a construction site of an airport in Daraga, Albay last Friday.

The attack left two soldiers wounded and destroyed P70 million worth of construction equipment.

Philippine Daily Inquirer, 30.05.2012

### PNP acquires DNA lab for solving crime

By DJ Yap

Seeing the increasing importance of DNA evidence in crime investigation, the Philippine National Police has established a new facility specializing in forensic analysis of human genetic material such as may be found in strands of hair.

The PNP Crime Laboratory Group opened to the public on Monday its newest establishment, the DNA Investigative and Research Center (DIRC), highlighting the celebration of the unit's 67th founding anniversary.

The DIRC "will assist Crime Laboratory Technical Divisions and other investigative agencies in the identification of a person (using scientific methods) as well as a modern means of seeking justice and truth utilizing limited amounts of specimen ob-

tained," PNP spokesperson Senior Supt. Generoso Cerbo Jr. said. In a statement, Cerbo said the DNA facility was part of the CLG's relentless effort to enhance its capabilities through the procurement of forensic equipment and facilities, and help PNP forensic experts perform their jobs more efficiently and effectively. [...]

He added that the DIRC would provide training and lectures to PNP personnel in properly obtaining and handling evidence, as well as correct procedures in the chain of custody.

"Moreover, the DIRC creates a criminal database for convicted persons to serve as identification for those who were recently involved in such criminal activities," Cerbo said.

The Philippine Star, 08.05.2012

### PNP general eyed in slay of witness

By Paolo Romero

A police general is being eyed in the execution of the star witness in the killing of car dealer Venson Evangelista, whose charred body was found in Nueva Ecija in 2011.

This developed as the families of the victims of a carjacking syndicate allegedly run by brothers Raymond and Roger Dominguez yesterday appealed to President Aquino to take a direct hand in the investigation to unmask senior police officers and influential personalities coddling the group.

Venson's father, Arsenio Evangelista, led victims of the Dominguez group in asking Aquino to order a deeper probe into the alleged involvement of a police general in the syndicate.

The body of Alfred Mendiola, witness in the slaying of Evangelista in 2011, was dumped in Barangay Salawag, Dasmariñas City, Cavite on Sunday along with two other victims.

The three victims were shot in the head using a caliber .45 handgun. Mendiola was a state witness in the filing of carjacking and murder charges against the Dominguez brothers, who are ac-

cused of involvement in the killings of Evangelista as well as car dealer Emerson Lozano and co-employee Ernani Sensil last year. Mendiola, who had claimed he was recruited by the Dominguez brothers, had identified them as the masterminds in the murder of Venson.

The elder Evangelista also urged Malacañang to investigate the Witness Protection Program (WPP) under the Department of Justice (DOJ), which he said should be blamed for failing to protect Mendiola despite threats to his life. Arsenio said Mendiola had been trying to "escape" from his security escorts to see his boyfriend.

#### Relaxed security

It was not the first time that Mendiola managed to slip out of DOJ custody. "They went out swimming," a police source said yesterday. Last year, Mendiola sneaked out without the knowledge of his guards as he went to the toilet of a fastfood restaurant after attending a court hearing.

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Meanwhile, Antipolo City Rep. Romeo Acop, vice chairman of the House committee on public order and safety, chided DOJ officials for committing a serious lapse when they allowed Mendiola to leave their safehouse.

Acop said Justice Secretary Leila de Lima should not have

granted Mendiola's request that his escorts be removed.

"Mendiola was a state witness who requires 24-hour protection whether he likes it or not. The same goes for other witnesses under the WPP," he said.

KARAPATAN, 02.05.2012

### Bernabe, PNP Accountable for Death, Physical Injuries, Arrests

#### Rights group warns vs whitewash on violent demolition in Silverio

At least 18 bystanders were picked up and arrested, some 22 persons were wounded including 10 who suffered gunshot wounds, and one person killed. These are some of the cases that were initially documented during the April 27 fact-finding mission at the Silverio Compound in Paranaque City. The fact-finding mission was conducted jointly by Karapatan and its National Capital Region chapter, National Union of People's Lawyers, Health Action for Human Rights, and various church institutions and organizations after the violent demolition which occurred in the area last April 23.

Jigs Clamor, Karapatan deputy secretary general who headed the documentation teams, believed that, "the number of incidents may still increase as residents come out and bear witness on their experiences. As of now, some of the victims of police brutality are still in shock and traumatized, others are afraid to speak up because of fear as intelligence personnel reportedly A number of evacuees from Caraga region and Bukidnon who are currently in Manila also attended the Solidarity Forum. Bebeth Enriquez, a Mamanwa from Cabadbaran City, Agusan del Norte, expressed solidarity with the residents of Silverio Compound. [...] "The reign of impunity, the violence and terror amongst the urban and rural poor, stems from the Aquino administration promotion of Public Private Partnership program which gives credence to private corporate interests such as that of the SM Development Corp. over the rights of the poor. We challenge Aquino to make accountable Paranaque Mayor Florencio Bernabe Jr., the PNP, and Henry Sy for these violations on the political and civil rights of the peoples and their right to housing," Palabay concluded.

roam around the community. Some have sought temporary residence among relatives in nearby communities." A detachment manned by police men in civilian clothes is stationed at the entrance of the compound.

The fact-finding mission also revealed that the three persons who were earlier reported killed at the height of the police attack were among the 22 documented wounded individuals. All three survived severe wounds from gunshots and were taken to the hospitals, one of them placed at the intensive care unit. Majority of those arrested were also beaten up and thus suffered physical injuries while under police custody. Cristina Palabay, Karapatan spokesperson, addressing the crowd during the Solidarity Forum that was simultaneously held with the fact-finding mission, told Silverio residents that their exercise of their right to protest against a government policy that infringes on their right to decent housing and livelihood is legitimate. [...]