



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

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HEADLINES & POLITICS
Manilatimes.net, 09.02.2013

Friendship and support

IT'S one of the blessings that the Philippines unceasingly gets from the Almighty that despite the huge NAA Terminal 3 disaster suffered by the German investor Fraport, relations between our and the German government and between our businesses and those of Germany have more or less remained warm and productive.

Fraport AG, the globally respected German transport and logistics development and construction company, whose projects include some of the most important in every major country in the world, wrote off \$400 million in investments at the NAIA Terminal 3 because of disputes with the Filipino partners. A German business delegation accompanied German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle in his Philippine visit on Wednesday and Thursday to hold bilateral talks with our Foreign Secretary Alberto del Rosario. That was the first visit to the Philippines by a German foreign minister in 12 years. A director of Fraport, Michael Muller, was one of the German delegates. He said his company was interested in doing other businesses and even to invest in here—but not in building airport terminals in which it has had a negative experience. Fraport could indeed do a lot to improve Philippine airport services, security, ground handling and systems. Despite its optimism about doing business in the Philippines, however, the Fraport corporation, Muller said, would still continue to fight legally for it to receive just compensation for its investment in NAIA Terminal 3. What has happened, in Muller's standpoint, is that Fraport's right to NAIA 3 was expropriated by the government. So Fraport must be justly compensated.

One of our most important European partners

Germany is one of our country's most important European partner. It ranks 12th among our sources of foreign direct investment (FDI). Trade between the Philippines and Germany comes to euro three billion annually. German companies in the Philippines are in merchandise trading (mainly in textiles, clothing, accessories and food products); pharmaceuticals, medical, dental and optical equipment and products; automotive parts and motor vehicles, machinery and components; engineering, metal works, plants and equipment, technology, and air and sea freight and cargo forwarding. Some of the high profile German names engaged in Philippine business are Bosch, Henkel, Deutsche Bank, Siemens and Bayer.

Europe's richest and most stable economy

Germany is the acknowledged economic leader of Europe. With France and the United Kingdom, it is also the most important political leader of Europe. Without its support the European Union (EU) and the eurozone would both collapse and disappear. In the eurozone's current financial crisis, which ever so slowly seems to be subsiding, Germany has been the key problem solver, although it can't do

much more in the way of giving more loans to distressed European countries because the German citizenry are complaining that they too are suffering and need government support. It is therefore a triumph of Philippine diplomacy that Foreign Minister Westerwelle expressed Germany's support for the Philippine position to solve the territorial disputes with China under international law. China has stated its rejection of international law to solve the dispute. In the joint press conference after his meeting with Foreign Secretary del Rosario, he said in a prepared statement: "We appeal to all sides to resolve all the questions in accordance with international law and in a peaceful and cooperative way." Secretary Alberto del Rosario said that he had conveyed to his foreign counterpart the Philippine initiative to bring the territorial disputes before an arbitral tribunal under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to "clearly establish the country's sovereign rights and jurisdiction over its maritime entitlements in the West Philippine Sea." "I asked him to continue supporting the Philippine effort for a peaceful and durable solution to this dispute," Secretary del Rosario's statement said.

The Philippines had appointed Judge Rudiger Wolfrum, a German professor of international law, who is a former judge at the UN's International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea, to be our representative in the five-member arbitration panel. The two foreign ministers discussed not only the West Philippine disputes but also expanding German-Philippine relations, including defense ties.

German-Philippine defense relations

Secretary del Rosario said that the Philippines and Germany were taking steps to "re-invigorate defense relations" and that a delegation from the German Ministry of Defense (MOD) was due to arrive in Manila next week. The German MOD delegates, the DFA head said, would conduct bilateral discussions with Philippine defense officials. Will the discussions between the MOD delegates and those of the DND involve military training and procurement of military equipment. The Secretary del Rosario said some years ago, under an agreement between Germany and the Philippines, Philippine military men went to Germany for training. The visit of the Germans next week will form part of the "current initiative" to revisit and expand that agreement. A memorandum of understanding between the German MOD delegation and the Philippine DND team is expected to be signed at the end of the discussions. We Filipinos have a lot to gain from expanding our trade, educational, military and industrial relations with Germany.

MindaNews, 08.03.2013

Lopez-led signature drive vs SMI's Tampakan project gains ground

By Allen V. Estabillo

GENERAL SANTOS CITY — Anti-mining and environmental groups in South Cotabato province and the neighboring areas have started gathering around 300,000 signatures in a bid to pressure the national government to call off the Tampakan copper-gold project of foreign-backed Sagittarius Mines, Inc. (SMI).

The massive signature campaign was launched following a recent series of public forums in the area spearheaded by popular anti-mining activist Regina Lopez and other local and national environmental groups.

Lopez, convener of anti-mining group Save Palawan Movement,

said the signatures will highlight the "true sentiment" of local residents with regards to SMI's US\$ 5.9 billion Tampakan project.

"We will show to them that at least 50 percent of the population in South Cotabato don't want the project to continue and are saying no to mining in Tampakan," Lopez said.

Bulk of the copper and gold reserve lies in the town of Tampakan in South Cotabato, with the mines development site also straddling Kiblawan in Davao del Sur, Columbio in Sultan Kudarat and Malungon in Sarangani.

Once the target 300,000 signatures are met, she said they would



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present them to the Senate and even to President Benigno Aquino III to persuade them to stop the project.

She said they would lobby with national government officials to look into the signatures and "consider that as the true will of the people regarding the mining project in Tampakan."

"The people know and decide what's best for them and they (national officials) cannot go against the people's will," said Lopez, who is managing director of ABS-CBN Foundation Inc.

Environment Secretary Ramon Paje issued last month a conditional environmental compliance certificate (ECC) to SMI despite a standing ban on open-pit mining ban implemented by the provincial government of South Cotabato.

Among the conditions cited in the ECC were the settlement of the question on social acceptability, protection of the rights of indigenous people, land access under the Department of Agrarian Reform and the willingness to assume continuing liability over any environmental damage.

The open-pit ban, which was embodied in the province's environment code, was the main reason for the DENR's denial in January last year of SMI's application for ECC. The company appealed the decision but the DENR rejected it on the same ground.

SMI, which is controlled by Xtrata Copper, the world's fourth largest copper producer, had disclosed that it would employ the controversial open-pit mining method for its operation, a move vehemently opposed by local environmental groups and Roman Catholic Church.

Lopez said records showed that not one of the mining companies that operated in the country "in the last 100 years" was able to rehabilitate a mine area.

"What we have instead were four major mining disasters," she

pointed out.

In terms of benefits from mining, Lopez said a study released by the National Economic and Development Authority showed that among the areas that have high percentage of people living below the poverty line were those that hosted mining projects.

She cited the case of Bataraza in Palawan that posted a poverty incidence of 53 percent, Caraga Region with 47.5 percent, Zamboanga Peninsula with 42.75 percent and Bicol Region with 44.92 percent.

"If mining is good then why are there still many poor people in these areas? Look at the Igorots in Benguet, many of them are still poor," she said

Lopez's group also launched about two years ago a massive signature drive against plans to mine Palawan.

From an initial target of one million signatures, the group has so far gathered 7.3 million signatories against the project, its website said.

The signature campaign was supported by ABS-CBN Foundation Inc., Haribon Foundation, Greenpeace, Alyansa Tigil Mina, Aldaw, LRC-KsK, Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines and ABS-CBN's Bantay Kalikasan.

John Arnaldo, SMI corporate communications manager, said they welcome Lopez's sentiments and efforts against the mining project and noted that they would also want to engage with her.

[...] Arnaldo said they would introduce Lopez to the project's stakeholders, especially the B'laan tribal folk within the mining area, "so they can directly tell her what they think and feel about the project."

"We want her to see the project site so that she can personally see the condition of the area today so she will have a basis to compare later if the project will push through," he added.

ELECTIONS

Rappler.com, 23.02.2013

The power of hacienda votes in Negros

By Voltaire Tupaz

MANILA, Philippines - Landlords still influence the outcome of local elections. This is according to 48-year-old Jun Garzon, a sugar worker in Negros Occidental.

[...] "The hacendero tells people to vote for his candidate," Garzon said.

In Negros Occidental, the old feudal system that dates back to the Spanish colonial times still holds true: the *hacenderos*, whose power comes from their ownership of vast lands and control over thousands of workers, dictate who wins in elections.

Home to acres of sugar plantations controlled by 3 sugar planters confederations, the province provides nearly half of the country's sugar demand. But the planters also provide social services and financial assistance to their workers.

Garzon, who has worked in a plantation for more than two decades, said he votes for candidates backed by landlords if they are kind and generous to people in need -- like his family.

Of the 32 towns and cities in Negros Occidental, 21 have been considered by the National Anti-Poor Commission (NPAC) as being among the poorest local government units (LGUs) in the country.

Hacienda votes

Landlords and political clans are natural allies in the province.

"Negros is still very clannish. Most of the haciendas are still owned by big families, the Lacsons, the Ledesmas. (Businessman Eduardo "Danding") Cojuangco is a major factor in Negros politics," local political consultant and former journalist Mate Espina said.

Through their *encargados* or hacienda administrators, landlords

mobilize hacienda votes, a form of bloc voting in Negros Occidental.

"When you say hacienda votes, the land owner would choose which politician to support and then dictate upon the workers (who to vote for). There is a list," Espina said.

Espina said that a candidate assumes that votes will be delivered if he or she is backed by a landlord.

"Working (with) politicians in the past, there are no more negotiations. Sometimes, (there's) no more campaigning in the haciendas. They will campaign directly (with) the landowner," Espina said.

Rifts in the local elite

But politics is evolving in Negros. The crisis in the sugar industry, the emergence of an educated younger generation, and even the involvement of the Catholic Church in social issues have influenced the behavior of voters in the province.

[...] Divisions within the political elite have relatively weakened the monopoly of the ruling local party controlled by landlords.

For the first time, the political dynasties are not on the same side in the upcoming 2013 elections. Cojuangco's Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC) has split from the ruling United Negros Alliance.

"This is the first time that most mayors will be running against someone because of the rift that happened in the political party," Espina said.

Crack on political ceiling

Civil society groups in Bacolod believe the split is a mere tear in the political fabric of the elite.

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"It's a fact in Negros, there is a political dynasty (that has) been here I think for more than a hundred years. When we are talking about provincial political fight, it's a really a fight (between) two families," Francis Yulo of the group Tuloy Pinoy Negros said. Some sectors in Bacolod also feel that until today, alternative and independent candidates cannot match the resources and machinery of candidates backed by hacienderos. [...]

Anti-dynasty measure

Without a law that discourages political dynasties, emerging clans merely challenge old ones, leaving voters with no choice but to vote for what they consider the lesser evil.

The Constitution bans political dynasties, but the Supreme Court cannot act against dynasties in the absence of an enabling law. Bayan Muna's House Bill No. 3314, also called the Anti-Political Dynasty Bill, has been gathering dust in the Lower House since 2004.

"This is the kind of politics that elects only the privileged, the incumbent, or their relative," Bayan Muna Representative Teddy Casiño, author of the anti-dynasty measure, lamented.

Some groups cautioned against generalizing about political clans in the province.

"Just because you belong to a clan (you are no longer qualified to run). The proposed law is (very strict). I feel that we just have to learn how to choose good public servants," Yulo said.

But other advocates for new politics in Negros Occidental say a law will be a good start in ending the landlords' and the dynasties' monopoly on power.

Philstar.com, 06.03.2013

PNO, Comelec urged to do more vs poll-related violence

By Christina Mendez

MANILA, Philippines - Sen. Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan has expressed alarm over the increasing number of election-related violence in the country, where perpetrators have obviously challenged the capability of the Philippine National Police and the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to ensure peaceful elections.

[...] "We have yet to hear of an election-related violence case that was investigated and that has led to the conviction of the perpetrators and masterminds," Pangilinan said.

Pangilinan recalled the brazen act of razing a school building in Taysan, Batangas during the 2007 elections. The incident left two innocent individuals killed and several others injured.

While it is clear that the case was election-related, Pangilinan noted that no mastermind was pinpointed and arrested.

INSTITUTIONS

Philstar.com, 14.03.2013

Rights group submits list of nominees to HR Claims Board

By Dennis Carcamo

MANILA, Philippines - Rights group Selda on Thursday announced it has submitted a list of nominees to the Human Rights Victims Claims Board that will evaluate and process the application for claims of the Martial Law victims.

Selda secretary general Angie Ipong said they sent its list of nominees to the Office of the President last March 12.

Selda came up with the list after President Benigno Aquino III signed into law the Human Rights Victims Reparation and Recognition Act.

[...] Based on the criteria set by the law, the nominees must be of known probity, competence and integrity; must have a deep and thorough understanding and knowledge of human rights and involvement in efforts against human rights violations committed during the regime of former President Ferdinand Marcos; and must have a clear and adequate understanding and com-

Philstar.com, 13.03.2013

SC closes door on petitions challenging political dynasties

MANILA -- Justices of the Supreme Court junked Tuesday appeals of two groups to compel the Senate and the House of Representatives to pass a law that would define "political dynasties," which under the Constitution are prohibited from participating in elections.

In a text message, SC Public Information Office chief Theodore Te said the Court denied the separate motions for reconsideration filed by a group led by former Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr. and senatorial candidate Ricardo Penson.

Earlier, the Court denied a similar petition by certain Louis Biraogo asking the SC to order the Comelec to outlaw political dynasties, saying the provision is a "non-self-executing provision, requiring as it does the legislative act of Congress to define what 'political dynasties' are and to prescribe the scope and limits of such prohibition."

In his petition, Penson said Congress has yet to pass a measure that would operationalize Section 26, Article II of the Constitution, which states "the State shall guarantee equal access to opportunities for public service and prohibit political dynasties as may be defined by law."

Penson added that Filipinos are still being controlled by political clan alliances composed of the families belonging to the Nationalist People's Coalition, Lakas, Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, and the ruling Liberal Party of President Benigno Aquino III.

Sunstar, 05.03.2013

Election-related violence has already been noted during the campaign for the 2013 midterm election, with the killing of a mayor in Isabela being one of the high-profile cases. Recently, two electoral candidates in Masbate were shot a day apart from each other.

[...] Apart from the Comelec and the PNP, Pangilinan said the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) must work double-time and outsmart these perpetrators to pinpoint the masterminds behind election-related violence and electoral fraud.

"It is only when we bring these cases to justice will we begin to see genuine change in how political campaigns are being run in the country," he said.

mitment to human rights protection, promotion and advocacy. Among the nominees include rights group Karapatan chairperson Marie Hilao-Enriquez, Bonifacio Ilagan, former Gabriela partylist Rep. Liza Maza, Prof. Judy Taguiwalo, Dr. Edeline De la Paz, lawyers Romeo Candazo, Kit Enriquez, and Dominador Lagare Sr.

"With such sterling names and achievements of our nominees, we are confident that they possess the qualifications required by law and if appointed, the personalities we are submitting for nominations will do honor and work for the interests of the victims of martial law and see to it that this law will redound to the victims' benefits," Ipong added.

Selda is the organization that initiated the class action suit against the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

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More erring metro cops dismissed from service

By Dennis Carcamo

MANILA, Philippines - More Metro Manila policemen were sacked from service for various administrative and criminal cases against them, the National Capital Region Police Office bared on Wednesday.

NCRPO director Leonardo Espina said he signed last Monday the order to dismiss from police service 19 cops, demotion of

nine, and suspension of 29 other law enforcers based in Metro Manila.

[...] The latest batch of sanctions brought a total of 95 cops dismissed, 31 demoted and 104 suspended since Espina implemented his campaign in cleansing NCRPO of erring policemen from Sept. 7, 2012. [...]

CURRENT CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Asian Human Rights Commission, Hunger Alert Programme, 28.02.2013

Vendors of the Luneta Park forcibly evicted

[...] The vendors of the Luneta Park were forcibly evicted by the National Parks Development Committee on 27 February 2013. The NPDC moved in the park with a huge contingent of police personnel and SWAT teams and ordered the vendors out. Though the vendors and some support groups strived to resist the order but faced with threats of violence and confiscation of their goods they had no choice other than moving out.

[...] The vendors have been living under continuous threat of eviction for more than a week and now, having been finally evicted, face an uncertain future with serious threats to their food security.

Though the NPDC had attributed the eviction to the beautification programme for attracting more tourists, the AHRC has been told that the real reason behind the eviction is NPDC's plans of binging in big food chains owned by private companies inside the park.

[...] Most of the vendors have been living and vending their wares in the park for more than 15 years while some have spent even 30 years in park. Organised under the People's Democratic Hawkers' and Vendors' Alliance (PDHVA), the vendors have approached the authorities innumerable times for getting their legitimate rights. The authorities, however, have been relentless in their persecution. [...] Many of the vendors even live inside the park and sleep in their carts as their meager incomes do not allow them to afford renting a house and commute to the park daily. Forced eviction will force them into destitution.

The vendors has been hounded and arrested in the past at the behest of the NPDC. The situation remained unchanged even after 2004 when the Department of Tourism has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the vendors' representatives and granted them the rights selling their wares inside the park while continuing with the negotiations. The vendors were also given a moving cart in exchange for them agreeing to keep the Park

clean and orderly. The organised livelihood programme would have contributed to maintain the historical and cultural heritage of the Park but it was revoked unilaterally by the new NPDC director Juliet Vegas when she took charge. She ordered eviction of the vendors and demolition of their carts inside the park and led to huge chaos. Many vendors had to flee the Park.

[...] The NPDC delivered another blow to the vendors in February 2012 by going back on its promise of giving them alternative space and asserted that it wanted to turn Luneta Park into a Zero Vending Zone. The vendors then approached the Department of Tourism which asked the NPDC to resolve the problem of the vendors but NPDC Director Juliet Villegas ignored the recommendation.

NPDC, instead [...] forcibly evicted 15 vendors on February 6, 2012 inside the Halamanan Pilipino followed by another eviction of vendors and confiscation of their goods and personal belongings on February 15, 2012. The authorities launched another attack on the vendors on March 27, 2012 when more than 20 security person confiscated all the goods and personal belongings of the vendors while also physically assaulting them. They reportedly punched a pregnant vendor and brutally attacked the others.

The illegality of the attack is betrayed by the fact that vendors approached city mayor and got their confiscated goods released. To assuage the vendors, officials of the Department of Social Welfare and Development approached them and asked them to fill up forms to work as street sweepers and immediately vacate their vending spaces. The employment offered, however was just for 3 months, leaving the vendors, dependent on daily earnings, with no choice other than refusing to accept it. The current assault continues the cycle of violence and intimidation against them and exposes them to hunger.

MindaNews, 28.02.2013

Media groups demand probe, relief of Davao City police chief

By Lorie Ann Cascaro

DAVAO CITY - Media groups issued separate statements on Thursday calling for an investigation and filing of charges against policemen who allegedly mauled Inquirer correspondent Karlos Manlupig during a news coverage on Wednesday.

The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) national council was more specific: it urged Local Governments Secretary Manuel Roxas II and Philippine National Police Director General Alan Purisima to "immediately relieve" Davao City police chief, Senior Superintendent Ronald de la Rosa, "for command responsibility" and "have him and his abusive men investigated and file criminal and administrative charges against them."

The Photojournalists' Center of the Philippines (PCP) called on the PNP to "immediately take action against the erring policemen."

"We demand sanctions and disciplinary measures, including dismissal from the service if it is warranted, after a thorough and

transparent investigation. We make it clear to the PNP that attacks and violence against photojournalists is not tolerated. We note that previous incidents of alleged violence against journalists in this country have not resulted in any action," the PCP statement read.

Dela Rosa said [...] "If indeed he (Manlupig) was hurt during the riot, it was unintentional. He was in the middle of a fracas between the rioters and riot cops."

Dela Rosa said they are open for investigation.

[...] Manlupig claimed to have been attacked by policemen during a riot Wednesday at the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) regional office.

Manlupig said he was pushed by policemen with their shields and truncheons when he went inside the DSWD compound to interview the protesters who were arrested after the riot.

[...] "Although Manlupig said he suffered only a slight gash on the left arm, he felt insulted and humiliated," the statement read. In a separate statement, NUJP-Davao City chapter said



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Manlupig "was shoved by the police with their clubs and shields, his face hitting the gates in the process."

"To add insult to injury," the statement added, dela Rosa "scolded Manlupig in public, saying, 'You're in a middle of a commotion, so don't expect special treatment!'" the statement read.

A riot broke out at around 10:30 am Wednesday, when protesters tried to block the food for the police. It was followed by another commotion when they disarmed a policeman in plain-clothes who entered the protesters' camp, bringing a 9mm pistol.

Dela Rosa admitted that the disarmed man was a part of police intelligence, who worked under his command.

"We have given more than enough maximum tolerance," he said in Cebuano, adding that he did not want the situation to reach a dispersal because there were children, women and elderly.

Mayor Sara Duterte on Wednesday gave Dela Rosa blanket authority to "do whatever needs to be done to end it ASAP (as

soon as possible)."

She said in a text message, "If rallyists resort to violence (I) told him to use force to quell the violence and arrest as many as they can."

The NUJP Davao in its statement also noted that as the protesters were leaving Thursday morning, reporter Irene Dagudog of the online news, Davao Today, "also got to face dela Rosa's brashness."

The statement added that dela Rosa "confronted her and asked, 'Are you neutral? If you blush, you are not,'" when she tried to interview him.

"Such arrogance and disrespect by dela Rosa towards members of the press is condemnable," it said.

The NUJP national council said "when law enforcers are themselves the first to abuse and disregard human rights, is it any wonder why impunity continues to mark the continued murders and attacks on journalists and the other countless abuses committed against the citizens of this country?"

Bulatlat.com, 04.03.2013

Kalinga folk want soldiers out of their village

By Alma Sinumlag

LUBUAGAN, Kalinga — Residents of sitio Ag-agama, Western Uma in this town are calling for the immediate pull out of military troops deployed there. Elements of the Alpha Company of the Army's 21st Infantry Brigade have encamped in the community since the third week of January.

Village elders have called two dialogues with the Army officers but as of press time the community's plea remains unheeded.

"We cannot have peace until they leave our community," Beatrice Belen, a woman leader and a member of the Barangay Council said in an interview.

Belen recounted that it was on January 18 when the soldiers arrived in their community. She added that they let them rest for a night in the sitio because the soldiers were all wet from the rain. However, Belen said that they did not expect them to stay longer. She said that she has confronted the troopers and reminded them that it is unlawful for the armed elements to stay in the community. The soldiers ignored her.

On the night of January 19, the women in the community called for a dialogue with the Army. A resident complained that the soldiers stayed at his house. The soldiers left the house but transferred to another civilian's house. Again, the women went out to confront the soldiers who appealed to stay for the night.

The next day, all sectors of the community gathered for a dialogue with the troops. Residents questioned the military encampment but the officers said they were there for the Bayanihan program of the government.

Disruption of economic activities

Residents complained that the presence of the Army disrupts their day-to-day activities. Belen said that they are afraid every time the men have go to the forest to gather iwoy (rattan) for the community industry, soft broom making. They have bad experiences during military operations in the past that make them fearsome of the mere presence of the Army in the village.

"We are not free to do our regular work in the rice/vegetable fields with the troopers requiring us to let them know of our whereabouts," she said.

Belen said that her husband was asked by the soldiers where he would use the kitchen utensils he was carrying on the way to the forest. She said that gathering iwoy takes at least five-day stay in the forest thus the need for food supplies and kitchen utensils.

On the Bayanihan

Buscayno Bommosao, a youth leader in the community, said that they do not need the Bayanihan program in their community. Even without the help of the Army troops, he said they can survive on their own because they have their own traditional indigenous practices of helping each other in agricultural and other chores.

He mentioned that they have an "Angkas" system (of voluntary, free labor) and the "Abbuyog" (exchange of labor) which continues to be practiced until today. [...]

Awakening the trauma

[...] Sometime in 2009, one of the residents of Ag-agama was shot dead in the field by one of the soldiers operating in the area. The person was not even carrying any firearm, only his bolo (knife) but he was tortured and killed. [...]

Sitio Ag-agama has been subjected to a lot of military operations in the past. In these operations, there were instances where troopers pointed their guns at the villagers on mere suspicion that the residents are supporters of the armed revolutionary movement.

Buscayno said that the soldiers are using the children to gather information about the members of the community especially those who are openly expressing their opposition to their encampment.

Using the Bodong for deception

The elements who are encamped in this community are all Binodngan (members of tribes that are exercising the bodong system). Most of them are members of the Cordillera Peoples Liberation Army (CPLA) who have been integrated with the Philippine Army. These elements are telling the community that they will not inflict any harm because they are Binodngan and they know the culture of the community.

[...] If these army troopers really respect the principles of the bodong (tied the bodong on their guns), they could have removed themselves out of the community when the community asked for it.

[...] He added that it is one of the rules of bodong not to inflict harm on the members of your sister tribes. Creating fear among the members of the community is already inflicting psychological harm, he said.

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Karapatan, Tanggol Bayi Press Release, 06.03.2013

Karapatan, Tanggol Bayi slam Aquino govt for the killing of typhoon Pablo survivor and 13 other women EJK victims

Human rights watchdog Karapatan denounces the killing of Cristina Jose, the latest victim of extrajudicial killing under the Aquino government. Cristina Jose was one of the leaders of Barug Katawhan (People Stand Up), an organization of victims of typhoon Pablo in Davao Oriental that led the protest at the DSWD office in Davao City. Jose was killed by three men who were aboard a motorcycle, four days before the world commemorates the International Women's Day.

Jose is the first woman victim of extrajudicial killing documented by Karapatan this year, and the 18th, including four minors, since Pres. Noynoy Aquino took office in 2010.

[...] Members of the 67th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army (IBPA) deployed in the area branded Jose as "kagawad ng mga NPA" (the New People's Army's councillor), as she received threats prior to her death. Prior to the killing, in January 2013, the 67th IBPA conducted military operations in Jose's community, after which Jose assisted human rights teams of Karapatan investigate the reported cases of harassment against residents/civilians.

[...] Karapatan said the government's callousness to the people's situation is also manifested in the way the Department of Social Welfare and Development deprived the typhoon victims with their supply of relief goods, aside from profiting from overpriced projects such as the bunkhouses for the typhoon victims. [...] Kiri Dalena, convenor of Tanggol Bayi, meanwhile said, "women human rights defenders are being jailed because of trumped up charges." There are currently 33 women political prisoners under the Aquino government. "These women are mostly those who exercise their rights to be involved in political and socio-economic struggles of the people. Yet, this government sees them as enemies and are often victims of human rights violations," Dalena said. "If Pres. Aquino thinks the people will be pacified through intensified state terror, he is mistaken. More women will assert their rights and for justice," Dalena said.

Rappler.com, 06.03.2013

Reporter shot in Cavite

MANILA, Philippines - A reporter was wounded after being shot by unidentified gunmen in Cavite on Wednesday, March 6. Police said Jun Valdecantos, a local reporter, was waiting for a ride when he was shot by two unidentified men onboard a motorcycle in Barangay Mambog, Bacoor, Cavite, at around 9:20 am.

Asian Human Rights Commission Urgent Appeals Programme, 13.03.2013

Police and soldiers violently assault student protestors while they were sleeping to disperse them

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) is requesting your intervention to demand that an investigation be conducted into allegations of the violent dispersal of protesting students. The students, who were opposing the appointment of the new head of a State university due to allegation of corruption, were attacked by joint forces of the police and the military while they were sleeping in their makeshift tents.

CASE DETAILS: (Based on information received from Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP)) On February 13, 2013 at 2am around 50 members of the Philippine National Police (PNP) arrived at the compound of the

Leader of 'Pablo' survivors killed in Baganga; Governor orders probe

By Erwin Mascarinas

DAVAO CITY - A community leader of the group of typhoon Pablo survivors that barricaded the regional office of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) here last week was shot dead Monday evening in her hometown in Baganga, Davao Oriental.

The victim was identified as Cristina Morales Jose, a barangay councilor of Binondo, Baganga and a community leader of Bayan Muna and Barug Katawhan, a group of Pablo survivors from Compostela Valley and Davao Oriental.

[...] Davao Oriental Governor has ordered a "thorough investigation" on the killing of Jose, whom she described as "very close" to her.

Malanyaon told MindaNews Jose was "my supporter since the start of my political career."

The 67th IB, which is based in Baganga, condemned Jose's "senseless killing" as an act which can only be done by criminals.

"Our sympathy goes to the bereaved family. The military will assist the police in the ongoing investigation that hopefully would lead to justice and speedy resolution of the case," said 2Lt. Rowena Abayon, information officer of the Civil-Military Operations of the 67th IB.

During the barricade, Barug demanded for the release of 10,000 sacks of rice from the DSWD as promised by Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman during their January 15 barricade in Montevista town, Compostela Valley.

But the DSWD refused to release the rice saying Barug did not submit a distribution list with the names and addresses of the recipients. The group argued the local government units already have such list.

On the second day (Feb. 26) of the barricade, some 4,000 protesters destroyed the gate of the DSWD regional office and took away relief goods from the compound, saying they "confiscated" what were intended for Pablo victims.

However, police and soldiers dispersed them and retrieved the goods. A number of protesters were injured in the melee that ensued.

MindaNews, 04.03.2013

Tanggol Bayi and Karapatan expressed alarm on the rising number of human rights violations targeting women and children, as they staged a protest action in front of the Department of Justice carrying photos of women and children victims.

Baldecantos was immediately rushed to Medical Center Imus.

Chief Supt Benito Estipona, regional police director for Calabarzon, said they have launched a manhunt operation for the two suspects. One has been identified, he added.

No motive has been established yet for the shooting.

University of Southern Mindanao (USM), in Kabacan, North Cotabato in Mindanao, for the sole purpose of ending the student protest. The protestors, organized by the University of Southern Mindanao - Multi-Stake Holders Movement for Truth and Justice (USM-MMTJ), had been on protest since January 14, 2013. The group members were composed mostly of students, relatives and alumni of the school. When the police came, four students tried to negotiate with them and to urge them not to interfere and enter the school compound. They pointed out that the protest is against the reappointment of Dr. Jesus Antonio G. Derije as President of the



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University by the Board of Regents (BOR). They believed Dr. Derije made anomalous transactions and decisions inimical to the interest of the students of the USM. At 3am, around 100 members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) also arrived. According to Al Rashid Sencil, an alumna assisting the students in their protests, the AFP brought three armoured personnel carrier (Simba tanks) and four military trucks. The four students who were negotiating with the police went inside the university where their other co-protesters were sleeping. There were about 20 students and 30 other supporters inside the campus. They started texting and calling members of the local community to help them. At around 3:20am, the Simba tanks were used to force open the USM gate. Around twenty policemen came in with shields and truncheons. They shut off the electricity supply and surrounded the protesters. Taking advantage of the darkness, the PNP started assaulting the protesters with their truncheons. A police

officer also fired his gun. At that moment the civilians from the nearby community came in to the student rescue. They fought it out and retaliated against the police and military. The students and other members had to withdraw towards the school building. This is when they noticed that the Simba trucks, 50 meters away from them, had run over their barricade and makeshift tents destroying their property. The AFP also aimed the barrels of their tanks at them. At 5am, as they were leaving the university campus police and the military made arrests. They were Sahid Mamalundas (53), Norhan Mamalundas (21), Tata Mama (42) and a minor, Muhamad Mama (17). Muhamad was released immediately after learning that he was a minor while other were released only after posting bail. The six persons injured during the dispersal were: Al Rashid, Garry Magunto, Badrudin Datuali, Mincucum Sencil, Patik Mohamad and Omar Mohamad. [...]

InterAksyon.com, 11.03.2013

InterAksyon correspondent bares threat to his life

MANILA, Philippines -- InterAksyon correspondent Fernan Jose Angeles, who survived an assassination attempt exactly one year ago Monday (March 11), has gone into hiding saying his life is again in danger.

Angeles, then a reporter for the Daily Tribune, survived after being shot seven times by gunmen he said belonged to a drug syndicate with whom Pasig City and Eastern Police District policemen were allegedly colluding.

He earlier said he suspected policemen to be behind last year's attempt because the attack came just 14 hours he had sent a tip to then EPD Director Francisco Manalo that the alleged gunman, Faisal Sancopan, who has been charged with two others for frustrated murder, had dealings with policemen from Pasig City.

Sunday night, Angeles sent a text message to colleagues and the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines saying a friend had gone to his house warning him that EPD policemen were

allegedly spreading the word that he was the one behind a raid on a "shabu tiyangge" or illegal drug distribution center in Pasig City's Mapayapa Compound.

The compound, which has been raided several times in the past, has been described as a virtual market for methamphetamine hydrochloride, or *shabu*.

Angeles said he believes the rumors were spread by those behind the attempt to kill him last year and are intended to link a successful hit to his supposed role in the Mapayapa Compound raid.

Late Sunday night, he said he had sensed suspicious persons surrounding his house.

In a subsequent text message to the NUJP, Angeles said he had successfully sneaked out of the area and found a safer place to hole up in.

The NUJP has issued an alert on Angeles' plight with his permission.

BAWGBUG Press Release, 13.03.2013

A Call for Investigation on Reports of Rights Violations against Filipino Tausug Migrants in Sabah, Backlash of Lahad Datu Incident

By Temogen "Cocoy" Tulawie (President)

The continuing armed skirmishes between the Malaysian government and the forces of Sultan Jamalul Kiram III has led to a backlash against the Tausug migrant communities in Sabah particularly in the area of Lahad Datu and its surrounding villages. There have been several unconfirmed reports that the Malaysian authorities have conducted massive arrests and deportation of Tausug migrant workers and that in some cases several of those arrested suffered from beatings and other forms of physical violence and abuses.

We call on the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM), the Commission on Human Rights Philippines (CHRP), and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) to conduct an investigation of these reports and to ensure the protection of the rights of the migrant workers communities in the light of the current situation in the area.

As we join the appeal for a peaceful diplomatic resolution of the Lahad Datu debacle, we urge the Malaysian government to conduct its military operations in a manner that is consistent

with Common Article 3 and Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions, and protect the rights of the Tausug migrant community in Sabah as outlined in various international human rights instruments and United Nations resolutions and recommendations.

The government of President Benigno Aquino III should likewise put in place concrete measures that would safeguard the welfare, and facilitate the safety of its Filipino Muslim constituents in Sabah, who as of the moment are the ones who are made to bear the brunt of the crisis that was precipitated by the actions of Sultan Kiram and his followers.

While we agree in principle to the veracity of the claim made by the Sulu Sultanate, this "military adventurism" will only lead to massive economic dislocation and suffering for the Tausug migrant community in Sabah, and aggravate the life of poverty that most Tausugs and other Muslim Filipino communities are already suffering due to the years of underdevelopment and neglect brought about by government policies that are biased against the Bangsamoros.

Inquirer.net, 18.03.2013

Village chief shot dead in Iloilo



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By Jamie Marie Elona

MANILA, Philippines—A village chieftain was shot dead by one of two motorcycle riding gunmen in Iloilo Monday morning, police said.

Police Officer 2 Johnny Oro identified the victim as village chairman Reynaldo Bullo, 52, who was attacked in Barangay (village) Cawayan in Carles, Iloilo around 11 a.m.

Oro said Bullo was on a motorcycle and heading home with another village official when the gunmen riding in tandem on

another motorcycle drove near them. One of the men shot Bullo point-blank.

Oro said Bullo was rushed to the Jesus Colmenares District Hospital in Balasan, but was declared dead on arrival after sustaining a lone gunshot wound to his side.

He said investigation is ongoing for possible identification and arrest of the killers.

Asian Human Rights Commission, Urgent Alert, 21.03.2013

Police detain an ailing man as substitute for a wanted man

[...] Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP), writes to inform you about the arrest of a Muslim civilian by members of Philippine National Police (PNP), assigned with Mindanao Area Police Intelligence Office (MAPIO), Regional Intelligence Division Region 9, which served a warrant of arrest that only contained the name of a certain Aman Kabalu and not the real name of the victim.

The victim is a resident of Latuan Baluno, Isabela City, Basilan Province, Island of Mindanao and a madrasah teacher since 2007. He was confined at Ciudad Medical Zamboanga, Zamboanga City in Mindanao on February 22, 2013 due to heart ailment.

[...] On March 5, 2013 at about 9:00am, around ten joint operatives of the Mindanao Area Police Intelligence Office (MAPIO), Regional Intelligence Division (RID), Regional Public Safety Battalion 9, Police Regional Office (PRO) 9, arrested Mujeenar Dagam Cabalo, allegedly a suspect in a bombing incident that happened in Kidapawan City, North Cotabato in October 2007.

The victim was arrested right after he was discharged from Ciudad Medical Zamboanga due to his heart ailment. He was brought to the police station in the Municipality of Sta. Maria in Zamboanga City, where he was interviewed and taken mug shots and documentation. Mujeenar narrated that at the station, the police confiscated his mobile phone, then moments later they returned it to him but he noticed that all of his contacts had been deleted.

At about 2:00 PM he was brought to Zamboanga airport and took the Cebu Pacific flight to Manila. When they arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), he was brought to the office of Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) in Camp Bagong Diwa, Bicutan, Taguig. The jail personnel refused to admit Mujeenar for custody due to his health condition which needed immediate medical attention. He was later brought to Camp Crame hospital in Quezon City for temporary confinement.

On March 7, 2013, P/Supt. Romeo A. Espero filed a manifesta-

tion in court and cited the health condition of the victim. He attached the medical certificate issued by PCI Beverly de Guzman, Medical Officer of Camp Crame hospital [...].

The court granted the request and temporarily committed Mujeenar to PNP Custodial center at Camp Crame while being confined/treated at the PNP General Hospital, until such time that he is fit and able to be committed at the SICA, Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig City.

At Camp Crame hospital, Mujeenar is currently under tight security with several uniformed police guarding him 24 hours a day inside his room. Although bedridden and with medical apparatus attached to him, visitors noticed a handcuff located and attached to the side of victim's bed.

His lawyer Atty. Sampao of the Public Attorney's Office in Taguig is planning to file a motion for reinvestigation. [...]

The victim was already confined on February 22, 2013 in a hospital in Zamboanga City. On February 25, Mujeenar said, about five or more armed men entered the ward. Then they approached the victim, his wife and his sister-in-law. Then, they asked the wife if she's the wife of Kabalu which she mistakenly heard as Cabalo and she replied "yes".

According to Mujeenar, the police showed them a warrant of arrest for a certain "Aman Kabalu", of which the family said that it was not the victim. The police showed a picture of a pale and thin Cabalo that was probably taken recently and contained the name of Aman Kabalu. The police refused to be identified after being asked by the victim's wife and the victim himself.

Since then, he was already guarded by the policemen. Mujeenar never thought that he was already arrested at that time because the police who only showed to him the warrant of arrest never gave them a copy and did not explain to him about his case and why he was arrested. During interview, the victim said, the police never informed him of his constitutional rights.

During the visit and interview conducted on March 11, 2013, the victim was still confined at Camp Crame hospital with medical apparatus. His arraignment is scheduled on April 25, 2013.

Partido ng Manggagawa, Press Release, 24.03.2013

PM slams PNP harassment of Cebu union, demands release of Toledo Four

The militant Partido ng Manggagawa (PM) slammed as harassment the early morning raid by the police of the office of the union of the giant mining company Carmen Copper in Toledo City, Cebu last March 22. The raid follows a similar raid on the house and resort the union treasurer last Tuesday in which four persons were arrested.

"With a month to go before Labor Day, the union repression in Cebu sadly highlights the state of workers rights in the Philippines. Truly the Philippines is the second most dangerous place for trade unionists in the whole world," Renato Magtubo, PM national chair said.

PM is also demanding the release of the Toledo Four arrested in the Tuesday raid. The group is accusing the police of planting a 45 caliber pistol allegedly found in the union office this morning and other arms supposedly seized in the raid last Tuesday. The police raid of the residence of union treasurer Roldan Cansancio

was supposedly due to his involvement in the killing of a ward leader of Sonny Osmena in Toledo last month.

"The police in collusion with certain elements in Carmen Copper management are trying to divert the real issue which is the brewing labor dispute. They are also trying to silence one of the very vocal critics of management's contractualization scheme and unfair labor practices," insisted Dennis Derige, PM-Cebu spokesperson.

Labor relations at Carmen Copper started to get strained late last year when management started to implement a contractualization scheme that affected regular jobs. The union Panaghugpong sa Mamumuo sa Carmen Copper (PAMCC) also became increasingly critical of the damaging impact to the environment of the company's open pit mining. A full blown labor dispute erupted when it was discovered that management formed a company union in a bid to bust PAMCC.



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“Elements of the PNP are being used by powerful interests in Carmen Copper to criminalize the labor row. They maliciously link Cansancio to the killing last month of a certain Rene Embranilag, who is not an employee of Carmen Copper nor related to the labor dispute, to justify the entry of PNP to the labor problem,” asserted Derige. Osmena himself attributed the killing of Embranilag as politically motivated and unrelated to the labor dispute.

Meanwhile PAMCC president Tony Cuizon condemned the raid and defended Cansancio. “This is unacceptable! The PNP Regional Intelligence Division has no business intervening in the labor dispute. They timed the raid when all of union officers, including Cansancio, are here in Manila attending an International Labor Organization seminar so that we cannot defend

Bulatlat.com, 26.03.2013

Detained tribe leader released

MANILA – A leader of an organization of indigenous peoples in Surigao del Sur who was arrested two days ago was released at around 9:30 p.m., March 25.

Jalandoni Campos, chairman of the Manobo intermunicipal organization in Lianga, San Agustin and Marihatag, Surigao del Sur, Malahutayong Pakigbisog Alang sa Sumusunod (Mapasu) and council member of the Mindanao Lumad alliance, Kalumaran, was arrested at 8 p.m., March 23 by policemen in civilian clothes. He was charged with rebellion in connection with the April 28, 2011 raid of the New People’s Army (NPA) on the Philippine National Police (PNP) Lianga station. Thirty-six other civilians and members of Mapasu are also named respondents in the case.

[...] For two days, more than 200 members of the Manobo tribe under the leadership of Mapasu, along with their supporters from other sectors, trooped to the Tandag City Jail to demand the release of Campos. The tribe leader was released last night to the custody of Surigao del Sur Governor Johnny Pimentel, in the presence of Provincial Prosecutor Florito Cuartero and Tandag City Police Supt. Jeffrey Lawrence D. Mauricio.

Judge Alfredo Jalad of the Regional Trial Court Branch 28 in Tandag City signed the transfer of custody order as over 80 members of Mapasu from Lianga and Marihatag stood vigilant outside the court and the Lianga PNP Station.

“Jalandoni Campos’ transfer of custody could not have been accomplished so swiftly without the vigilance of Mapasu and their concerned allies from the different sectors,” Castro [secretary general of Karapatan-Caraga] said. “The bombardment of support and public outcry hastened the normally snail-paced court process that expedited the signing of the court order.”

Among those who joined the protest actions were teachers from the community schools, parents and pupils and nuns and priests from Catholic and Protestant churches who knew Campos and his organization’s work.

Castro said reliable sources from the PNP informed her that

UPDATES ON CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Inquirer Visayas, 05.03.2013

Boracay land disputes turn violent

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.

ILOILO CITY – Violence has erupted anew in Boracay over property disputes in the world-famous tourist destination. Police on Monday detained five security guards of a property owner who opened fire with shotguns at another group of security guards.

No one was hurt in the shooting [...], said Chief Inspector Joeffer Cabural, chief of the Boracay Tourist Assistance Center (BTAC), the island’s police office.

ourselves from their malicious attack. This is a cowardly act.”

[...] Cansancio and PAMCC declared that they are readying their own charges against those responsible for the raid. PAMCC and PM also announced protests are to be held in the coming days. The groups are also alleging police brutality occurred as a 13-year old minor was pinned down the floor, an Armalite rifle was pointed at him and he suffered verbal abuses from the raiding team.

“We cannot take this sitting down. The raids have a chilling effect not on PAMCC but also to the labor movement in general. We call on the Department of Labor (DOLE) and Commission on Human Rights (CHR) to intervene and investigate this act by the police. Certainly, the PNP violated our human rights and rules on labor disputes,” Cuizon ended.

there were at least two attempts made by the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) and Regional Intelligence Unit (RIU) to transfer the custody of Campos to them.

[...] Castro said Campos and other Mapasu members implicated in the case were not informed of the complaint filed against them. She said the warrant of arrest was issued without allowing those accused to respond to the charges against them. She added that Campos is well-known in Lianga as the leader of one of the biggest people’s organizations there.

Campos and Mapasu leaders are active in the campaign against large-scale mining in the Andap Valley complex in Surigao del Sur. They have led the organization to thwart combat and civil-military operations in the 22 tribal communities that resulted in massive forcible evacuation in 2005, 2007, 2009 and 2011. Mapasu leaders represented the Manobo tribe in negotiations with the operating units of the military to allow their safe and unconditional return during these incidents.

“Clearly there was no reasonable investigation to determine probable cause,” Castro said,

Castro said Fiscal Cuartero has assured Campos’s supporters that he would ensure a reinvestigation of the case.

[...] Castro said the case against Campos and other members of Mapasu is among the 12 documented cases of trumped up charges filed against over 80 leaders and members of progressive organizations in the Caraga region.

Campos was among the 76 Lumad leaders from the whole island of Mindanao who actively participated in the Manilakbayan last December. He was among those who personally sought an audience with Justice Secretary Leila De Lima and Undersecretary Francisco Baraan III to raise the issue of fabricated charges, killings and dislocation of leaders and members of Lumad organizations.

[...] For Mapasu, the struggle for the defense of our ancestral domain, environment, right to self-determination, and defense of human rights continue.

Cabural said five security guards employed by AFFA security agency were detained at the BTAC station and would face charges of illegal discharge of firearms.

[...] Cabural said the shooting erupted around noon on Monday after the AFFA guards, who were assigned to the property being claimed by the Aguirre family, had erected a fence that blocked the property of Tropicana Ocean Villas, which is being managed by South Philippine Resort property management company.



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The AFFA guards fired at the Golden Eye security guards who had tried to remove the fence, according to Cabural.

The shooting occurred 10 days after the killing of Dexter Condez, the spokesperson of the Ati tribe in Boracay. Tribe members and their supporters believe the killing is related to disputes over a 2.1-hectare property that was awarded last year to the tribe by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples through a certificate of ancestral domain title.

Condez was buried last Saturday in rites attended by at least 1,000 mourners, including President Aquino's sister, Victoria Eliza "Viel" Aquino-Dee.

"He was so young and he had a bright future. Those responsible

Bulatlat.com, 05.03.2013

Kin, supporters disappointed with DOJ resolution on botanist's killing

By Ronalyn V. Olea

MANILA - [...] Glenda Co, wife of renowned botanist Leonard Co, expressed disappointment with the Department of Justice (DOJ) resolution.

In a 19-page resolution, the DOJ said there was no probable cause to file murder charges against nine members of the Philippine Army's 19th Infantry Battalion. Co and his two companions were killed during an alleged military operation in Kananga, Leyte on November 15, 2010.

"We are not happy with the resolution. We do not agree that the killing of my husband Leonard, and his companions Sofronio Cortez and Julius Borromeo, is a simple case of homicide," Mrs. Co, who filed murder charges against the suspects, said in a statement.

A panel of prosecutors ruled that a key element of murder – intentional felony or motive to kill – was absent in the case.

The DOJ recommended the filing of reckless imprudence resulting in multiple homicide, attempted homicide charges against the soldiers. Those ordered charged were 1st Lt. Ronald Odchimar, Corporal Marlon Mores, Private First Class (Pfc) Albert Belmonte, Pfc William Bulic, Pfc Elmer Forteza, Pfc Alex Apostol, Pfc Roger Fabillar, Pfc Michael Babon, and Pfc Gil Guimerey.

The nine were also charged with obstruction of justice, along with 27 other individuals.

Mrs. Co lamented that the DOJ ignored the results of the independent fact-finding mission led by the Justice for Leonard Co Movement 10 days after the incident.

Results of the independent investigation belied claims by the Armed Forces of the Philippines that Co, Cortez and Borromeo

(for Condez's killing) should be caught and punished," Dee said in a speech after the funeral Mass.

The conflicts involving ownership claims over prized lots have heightened and erupted into violence in recent years as investors, residents and longtime claimants fight over property rights. Only about a third of the 1,032-ha Boracay Island has titles while the rest are being occupied through tax declarations.

The boom in the island's P22-billion tourism industry has attracted property claimants and investors. This has increased the number of lots from 270 in the 1970s to more than 6,000 at present. [...]

were killed in a crossfire with members of the New People's Army (NPA). On the contrary, the fact-finding team found out that there was no firefight; and that the continuing bursts of gunfire that felled Co and company was one-sided, originating only from where the soldiers of 19th Infantry Battalion were positioned.

[...] Hustisya, an organization of families of victims of human rights violations, dismissed what it calls as "flimsy alibi" that the killing incident was merely an "honest mistake" as claimed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

"Amid their posturing to subscribe to due process, their attempts to mislead the public and cover up the dastardly act makes them all the more guilty of murder. The massacre of Leonard Co and company was not an accident, the soldiers were there to kill," [Hustisya secretary general] Guevarra said.

In a separate statement, the Katungod-Sinirangan Bisayas, the regional chapter of Karapatan in Eastern Visayas, said the resolution is "very contemptible."

Rev. Irma Mepico-Balaba, regional coordinator of Katungod-SB, pointed out that the soldiers denied one of the victims immediate medical attention that eventually caused his death. "This particular fact establishes that harm was indeed intended against the victims," Balaba said.

Katungod-SB also cited that a survivor appealed to the soldiers to cease firing at them since they are civilians but the plea was not heeded. Even forensic analysis presented during the public hearing at Leyte Park Hotel suggested that Co was shot in a closer position, which could have clarified the victims' identity as civilians, the group said. [...]

MindaNews.com, 05.03.2013

NBI agents in Sarangani sued for death of detainee

By Allen V. Estabillo

GENERAL SANTOS CITY – Police have filed murder charges against several agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) assigned in this city over the mysterious disappearance and eventual death of an alleged murder suspect while in their custody nearly three years ago.

Philippine National Police (PNP) Director General Alan Purisima said the results of their investigation showed that some agents assigned with the NBI-Sarangani District Office (Sardo) were allegedly involved in the death of suspect Sumar Abdulwahab, who was last seen alive in their custody on June 3, 2010.

NBI-Sardo initially declared that Abdulwahab, who was a resident of Sitio Manil in Barangay Daliao of Maasim town in Sarangani, had managed to escape from its detention facility in Barangay Lagao here.

But his decomposing body was found dumped near a cliff in Malalag town in Davao del Sur on June 8, 2010, with his hands [...] The AHRC's Urgent Appeals Programme released details of

the PNP Chief's updates on the case in an emailed document dated March 1.

Case records showed that Abdulwahab was arrested by NBI-Sardo agents on June 3, 2010 in Sitio Manil of Barangay Daliao in Maasim, Sarangani Province due to a count of murder, multiple frustrated murder and multiple attempted murder supposedly filed against him.

The following day, the victim's sister Johaniya followed up her brother's case at the NBI-Sardo in Barangay Lagao here but was allegedly told that she could only see Abdulwahab the next day. Johaniya returned the next day but was told by NBI personnel that Abdulwahab had escaped the night before by supposedly breaking the glass window of the detention facility.

But on June 8 or five days after the arrest, a dead body was recovered somewhere in Malalag, Davao del Sur that was later confirmed as Abdulwahab's.

[...] He [Purisima] said records of the case showed that it was "still pending for preliminary investigation at the prosecutor's



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office.”

[...] The murder case against the NBI agents was strengthened by the testimony of a key witness, whom he described as a former confidential agent of NBI-Sardo.

“(The witness) came forward on November 5, 2012, and gave his statement to the police regarding his knowledge about the killing. He said that the arrest of Abdulwahab was a case of mistaken identity after the NBI agents mistook him for Aman Kabalo,

Bulatlat.com, 12.03.2013

UP student's mom-in-law recounts last time she saw Sherlyn Cadapan

By Ronalyn V. Olea

MANILA — For the second time, Adoracion Paulino took the witness stand and recalled the last day she saw her daughter-in-law, Sherlyn Cadapan [...].

Sherlyn, her colleague, Karen Empeño, both students of the University of the Philippines (UP) and farmer Manuel Merino were abducted allegedly by state security forces in Hagonoy, Bulacan in June 2006.

Paulino was the third eye witness who testified before the Malolos Regional Trial Court for kidnapping and serious illegal detention charges filed against retired Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr. and three other military officials.

In her judicial affidavit, Paulino, 63, said that on April 11, 2007 or nearly ten months after Sherlyn and Karen were reported missing, her daughter-in-law went to their house in Calumpit, Bulacan. With her were three women and two men, all unfamiliar to Paulino.

Paulino said Sherlyn looked like a beggar with a dirty shirt, maong pants and rubber slippers. “She was sad, anxious ...” [...] Paulino had a lot of questions but Sherlyn did not answer. “She just said: ‘Mother, I would just go to the room to get some of my things,’ Paulino said.

[...] Sherlyn took two shirts of her husband and a pair of pants and prepared to leave.

“She kissed me and hugged me and said she would leave,” Paulino said. “She said: [...] Mother, I have changed my route

Asian Human Rights Commission, Urgent Appeal Update, 14.03.2013

Investigation reveals the boy killed on a rooftop during a demolition was shot

[...] In October 12, 2012, we [Asian Human Rights Commission] issued an appeal asking for an investigation on the killing of John Khali Lagrimas, a boy who was killed in a demolition in 2 October, 2012 at 9:30am in San Roque village, Tarlac City.

In a letter dated 22 February 2013, Loretta Ann Rosales, chairperson of the Philippines Commission on Human Rights, has informed that;

"As noted in the report, "it is evident that there were violations of human rights committed, based on facts and pieces of evidence."

In the investigation report, four persons, namely Eduardo Reyes (59), Marco Millena (29) and others whose identity has yet to be ascertained, have been charged with "Murder" [...].

The charges were filed against Reyes and Millena's after the four witnesses "identify the suspects who belong to the demolition team during a police line-up."

[...] The report held: "Based on facts and pieces of evidence gathered, it is evident that there were violations of human rights committed.

Foremost, the procedures to be followed during actual demoli-

Bulatlat.com, 16.03.2013

Labor rights advocates commemorate fall unionists, warn of worsening repression

By Marya Salamat

MANILA — The Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR) commemorates this month the life and struggle of two

the real murder suspect," Purisima said.

[...] In a statement, the AHRC welcomed the release of the PNP's investigation report that "confirmed our earlier suspicions that the victim did not escape and the cause of his death is now clear."

The group, which has been closely monitoring the case's developments, urged the PNP to ensure the safety of the key witness.

and my destination."

A day after, four men went to their village looking for Paulino. Two of the men wore Army fatigue uniforms while the other two wore undershirts and shorts. Paulino said she recognized one of them as one of the men who accompanied Sherlyn to their house the previous day.

[...] The men warned Paulino not to accept any visitor. They also told her they would go back.

Fearing for her security, Paulino left their house. She received messages from relatives that men went to their house looking for her. [...]

Palparan is still at large

Mrc. Concepcion Empeño, mother of Karen, said: "As much as I am thankful for the courage of the witnesses to come out [...] with Palparan still free, the lives of our witnesses and their families are in danger," she said.

Palparan and another suspect, Master Sgt. Rizal Hilario remain at large after the local court issued a warrant of arrest against the suspects in December 2011. Two suspects - Col. Felipe Anotado and Staff Sgt. Edgardo Osorio surrendered to the authorities and are now detained at Fort Bonifacio.

"I challenge this government to seriously pursue Palparan and Rizal Hilario. It is almost seven years since our daughters disappeared. I hope that our daughter's abductors and torturers will be in jail soon," Empeño said. [...]

tion and or eviction were not complied with as one of the demolition crews was armed [...].

The Sheriff who was tasked to implement the Writ of Demolition committed administrative lapses as an armed member of the demolition team caused the death of minor John Khalie Lagrimas."

The AHRC welcomes the investigation report; however, we have reservation on the lack of information as to whether charges have been filed or action taken against the Sheriff who "committed administrative charges." The report did not mention whether the Sheriff was also a respondent for criminal or administrative offense.

Furthermore, the CHR's recommendation only "to interview the mother of the victim and to monitor the case filed before the City Prosecutor's Office of Tarlac" was insufficient and very simplistic. For violation likes this, we could not understand why it did not recommend compensation to the victim's family; or, notify other to agencies involved in demolitions to strictly observe rules to prevent such situation.

trade unionists: Rogelio Concepcion, who was abducted and who remains missing up to this day, and Gerardo "Gerry" Cris-



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tobal, who was killed. Both of these cases happened on the month of March during the Arroyo administration.

[...] Gerry Cristobal was President of the Samahan ng Manggagawa Independent in Japanese-contracted EMI Yazaki at a free-trade economic enclave in Cavite. He had survived three attempts on his life, including an ambush that severely wounded him. But on March 10, three years ago, he was killed by still unidentified men in Imus, Cavite.

Rogelio Concepcion, meanwhile, was officer-in-charge of the Solid Development Corporation Workers Association (SDCWA) in Bulacan when he was abducted on March 6 seven years ago

[...] by unidentified men near their factory in San Ildelfonso, Bulacan. Concepcion remains missing.

[...] To date, there have been 137 victims of extrajudicial killings since Aquino took office in July 2010. Eight of these are from the labor sector. CTUHR has also documented more cases of filing of criminal charges against labor activists and unionists. They warned that their documentation showed that on the average every year, 90 workers fall victim to the state's criminalization of labor cases since 2010. The number has more than doubled, from 42 victims per year during the period 2004-2009. [...]

Inquirer.net, 20.03.2013

CA nullifies body that filed case vs ex-Palawan governor Reyes

By Tech Torres-Tupas

MANILA, Philippines – The Court of Appeals nullified the body created to investigate the involvement of former Palawan Governor Joel Reyes in the death of broadcaster Gerry Ortega and set aside its ruling finding probable cause to charge Reyes and his brother of murder.

However, the appeals court, in its 20-page decision, said it is still up to the Department of Justice (DOJ) to determine whether Reyes and his brother Coron Mayor Mario Reyes should be charged with murder by acting on the still pending petition for review filed by Ortega's wife Patria Gloria Inocencio Ortega. [...]

The Philippine Star, 28.03.2013

CA: Army accountable for Burgos disappearance

By Rhodina Villanueva

MANILA, Philippines - The Court of Appeals (CA) has declared the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), particularly the Philippine Army, accountable for the enforced disappearance of political activist Jonas Burgos.

The CA yesterday furnished the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) a copy of its decision, which pointed to Maj. Harry Baliaga Jr. as the one responsible for Burgos' disappearance.

The CA ruling stemmed from Jonas' mother Edita's consolidated petitions for habeas corpus and recognized Burgos' abduction as a case of enforced disappearance covered by the rule of the writ of amparo [...].

CHR chair Loretta Ann Rosales welcomed recent developments, saying, "These are concrete positive steps on the part of the judiciary in addressing the climate of impunity in the previous administration."

"Aside from holding Maj. Baliaga personally responsible, the decision is noteworthy because it also categorically declares the AFP, as an institution, directly accountable for the enforced disappearance of Burgos," Rosales said.

"This conclusion effectively discredits the theory propounded by the AFP that Jonas was a victim of an internal Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army plot," Rosales said in a statement.

Top military officials were "imputed with knowledge relating to the enforced disappearance and therefore duty-bound to disclose all relevant facts of the case and investigate it with ex-

traordinary diligence," she said.

"Unfortunately, by failing to fully cooperate with the CHR investigation team, to the extent of denying it access to vital documents, the AFP has failed to comply with its duties."

The CHR argued "the unwillingness of respondent officers of the 56th Infantry Battalion to cooperate in the investigation by CHR was taken by the court as a persuasive proof of an alleged cover-up of the military's involvement in the enforced disappearance."

Rosales expressed belief that "it is incumbent upon the AFP to heed the court's directive to fully cooperate with the CHR investigation, even as it conducts its own investigation in accordance with the strict standards set by the court."

She said the CHR would request the court to elaborate on the full measure of accountability ascribed to the AFP - whether this extends to the duty to recompense the family of Burgos as required under international human-rights law.

The CHR will also monitor the progress of the Philippine National Police (PNP)'s compliance with the court's directive to investigate the case with "extraordinary diligence."

The court noted the PNP's failure to conduct an exhaustive investigation of the case after it ordered three separate investigations from the agency, the AFP, and the CHR.

The CA directed the AFP chief of staff, PNP director-general, and CHR chief to submit a quarterly report to the court on the results of their respective investigations.

MAGUINDANAO MASSACRE

Philippine Daily Inquirer, 08.03.2013

Maguidanao backhoe operator seeks stop to arraignment

By Julie M. Aurelio

MANILA, Philippines – The backhoe operator in the 2009 Maguindanao massacre is asking a Quezon City court not to push through with his arraignment and transfer to a jail at Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig City.

Accused Bong Andal urged Judge Joselyn Solis Reyes of the Regional Trial Court's Branch 221 to reconsider her earlier order, saying his life would be at risk.

The four-page pleading was filed by Andal through lawyer Romarico Ayson.

In his motion, Andal said he has not yet divulged all he knew about the massacre, fearing that the Ampatuan clan would harm

members of his family working for the political clan.

[...] Andal is currently detained at the Custodial Center in Camp Crame following his arrest on November 24, 2012 in an entrapment operation.

The prosecution had originally asked that Andal be removed from the charge list and be designated a state witness. But in a motion last week, the prosecution said it no longer wished to present Andal as a witness since his testimony was already covered by the testimony of Sukarno Badal.

The court granted this motion and ordered that Andal be detained at Camp Bagong Diwa and arraigned on March 13.



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Andal, however, argued that he was still under the Witness Protection Program and that the prosecutors were still required not to include him on the charge list.

"The (prosecution) motion does not include an attachment

Philstar.com, 18.03.2013

Maguindanao suspect killed in clash

By John Unson

COTABATO City, Philippines - A key suspect in the Nov. 23, 2009 Maguindanao massacre was killed while five policemen and a soldier were seriously wounded in a firefight in Shariff Aguak on Monday, the military said.

Col. Edgar Gonzales, commanding officer of the Army's 1st Infantry Mechanized Brigade, identified the slain massacre suspect as Dayna Ampatuan [...].

Ampatuan is a relative of former Maguindanao Gov. Andal Ampatuan now detained, along with his three sons and several other relatives, in connection with the massacre.

Gonzales said a team of policemen from the Maguindanao provincial police office and soldiers attempted to arrest Ampatuan after learning of his presence in one of the barangays in Shariff Aguak from local residents.

PEACE PROCESS

Sunstar.com, 29.03.2013

Shootout marks Good Friday in Butuan

TWO members of the military were killed in an encounter with communist rebels early morning of Good Friday while securing devotees taking part in a station of the cross in Sitio Iyao, Barangay Anticala, Butuan, an army official said.

According to Lieutenant Colonel Eugenio Osias IV, troops from the Army's 3rd Special Forces Battalion were securing civilians praying the Stations of the Cross around 5:15 a.m. when they were attacked by the rebels.

The victims were identified as Ariel Daug Anduhuyan, who just recently finished his training in the Special Civilian Active Auxiliary (SCAA), and Ernie Darasin who is a Caggu member assigned at Station 3.

Anduhuyan sustained a gunshot wound in the head while Darasin was hit in the chest.

terminating the Witness Protection Program coverage of Bong S. Andal, therefore, his exclusion as accused is legal and proper," the motion said. [...]

[...] Gonzales said Ampatuan's group was outgunned by government forces as the firefight ensued.

"He was killed in the process. His cadaver has been retrieved by his relatives from the scene of the encounter," Gonzales said.

[...] Gonzales said they have asked the 6th Infantry Division to immediately report the incident to the joint Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities.

The committee, comprised of soldiers, policemen and representatives of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, oversees law enforcement actions against criminals and terrorists in areas covered by the 1997 Agreement on General Cessation of Hostilities. Ampatuan's companions were last reported to have escaped to a marshy area covered by the government-MILF ceasefire accord.

The encounter lasted for about 10 minutes, Osias said.

Osias added that there were about 15 members of the New People's Army involved in the attack and pursuit operations by the Army are ongoing.

No casualties among the civilians were recorded, he said. Some of the devotees were able to complete with the station of the cross even after the incident.

The authorities said the New Peoples' Army (NPA) was behind the attack. It was reported that the Communist Party of the Philippines celebrated their 44th founding anniversary today.

In a radio interview, NPA spokesperson George Madlos or "Ka Oris" denied the allegations saying that what happened was a "misencounter or friendly crossfire" between the police and the military.

Communist leader says Butuan clash was a mis-encounter between gov't forces

By Dennis Santos and Allan Nawal

DAVAO CITY, Philippines—A communist rebel leader in Mindanao has called for a civilian probe into the so-called "Good Friday ambush" in Butuan City which the military has blamed on the New People's Army but which he claimed was really a "mis-encounter" between government forces.

[...] The incident, which coincided with the NPA's 44th anniversary, enraged Catholics in Butuan City, with the priest who officiated the religious rites condemning the NPA "for disrespecting the event."

[...] But Jorge Madlos, spokesperson of the National Democratic Front in Mindanao, said he believed the incident was actually a "mis-encounter" among soldiers, militiamen and policemen deployed to secure the event.

He said the area where the alleged NPA ambush took place was very close to the camp of the Army's Special Forces, making it difficult for the NPA to launch any attack.

The NPA could not have carried out the attack, Madlos said, because there was nothing to be gained as it was a religious event and a backlash would be serious.

"I called up our field commanders and they said did not deploy any force in the area. I think it's a mis-encounter between the Special Forces of the Philippine Army, the militiamen and the policemen," said Madlos, who is also known as Ka Oris.

He said in order to settle the issue, an investigation should be conducted.

"I would suggest that a fact-finding mission involving religious groups, the local government and non-government-organizations be conducted so we could determine what really happened," Madlos added.

Osias said the military expected the communist rebels to make a denial "as they were used to making" such denials.

Dr. Naty Castro, secretary general of Karapatan in the Caraga region, agreed that only an "impartial civilian investigation" could shed light on the incident.

[...] She said Karapatan was willing to take part in the investigation "to help in clarifying this matter."

"Only an impartial investigation by civilian authorities with the cooperation of [civil society organizations] can make the accusations of breach of rules of engagement clarified. Erring forces should be reprimanded and asked to account for their actions. This is the only way that the Butuan City public can be assured that no such incident will occur in the immediate and long-term future," Castro said.

Inquirer Mindanao, 30.03.2013



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On the other hand, Police Superintendent Martin Gamba, information officer of Police Regional Officer-Caraga Region, said the NPA's claims are impossible.

"I-clarify lang natin na 'di misencounter o friendly crossfire ang

nangyari dahil ito ay engkwentro ng 9th Special Forces at NPA," according to Police Superintendent Romy Palgue, Butuan City Police Office acting deputy city director for operations.

Rappler.com, 02.03.2013

Bloodshed in Sabah and the peace process

By Benedicto Bacani

The latest reports show that Malaysia's Prime Minister Najib Razak ordered that "necessary action" be taken against the Sulu intruders in Sabah. In the firefight that ensued, 10 to 12 "royal army" members and two Malaysian security personnel were killed. The standoff appears not over as the spokesman of the Sultanate of Sulu vowed that their supporters in Sabah will continue to fight. Since the "invasion" of Sabah by the "royal army" more than two weeks ago, the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have been trying to distance the peace negotiations from the claim of the Sultanate over Sabah. Chief government negotiator Miriam Ferrer said that the standoff in Sabah will not affect the peace process since the unsettled claims over Sabah is a foreign policy matter that is outside the purview of the talks.

The MILF was more blunt in describing the move of the heirs of the Sultanate of Sulu as sour-graping, putting their personal interests above that of the Bangsamoro people.

In response to the claim of the heirs that claim over Sabah was not considered in the peace talks, the government and the MILF said that the heirs of the Sultanate were consulted on the developments in the talks. In fact, the Sultan of Sulu was even present during the public signing of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro in Malacañang. It is understandable that the parties are zealously defending the talks because at this stage, the parties are about to sign the comprehensive peace agreement, the mechanisms for implementing the pact are in place, and expectations are at a fever pitch that Mindanao peace is finally to be achieved before President Aquino's term in 2016. [...]

Yet this peace [...] has vulnerabilities and these are exposed more by this unfortunate incident in Sabah.

Government's claim that the peace process is inclusive sounds hollow when indispensable parties to achieving durable peace like the Sultanate of Sulu and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) feel left out in the process.

How can the claim of the heirs of the Sultanate of Sulu be outside the peace process when the sultanate is the historical basis for the Bangsamoro claim for self-determination which is at the heart of the negotiations?

Why must the sultanate's claim be off the negotiating table when it holds promise for more resources to the Bangsamoro at the very least from the rentals paid by the Malaysians to the heirs of the Sultanate? Why would the Sultanate and the Misuari-led MNLF be treated like "spoilers" when they are a great source of pride and identity to the Tausugs whose fragile support to the peace talks with the Maguindanoan-dominated MILF could be further eroded by the bloodshed in Malaysia?

Malaysia's role

True or not, the dominant perception is that by having Malaysia as facilitator of the talks, the parties have from the very start foreclosed any discussions of the Sabah issue in the negotiations. The peace process is handicapped by Malaysia being perceived as not being an honest broker in the talks because of its own interest in Sabah.

This perception is becoming more real when Malaysia resorted

Joint Statement of Malaysian-Philippine CSO, 07.03.2013

Standoff in Lahad Datu: Engage in Dialogue Now

We the undersigned Civil Society organisations (CSOs) from Malaysia and Philippines are extremely concerned over the on-going standoff between the Malaysian security forces and followers of the Sultanate of Sulu's heirs, Jamalul Kiram III at Lahad Datu, Sabah. We the CSOs, together with all individuals, organizations and networks, urgently call upon President Benigno S. Aquino III of the Philippines, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak of Malaysia and Sultan Jamalul Kiram III, to disavow all forms of violence, and instead supports dialogue as the primary mechanism for a resolution to the siege.

We are very concerned and worried about the security of civilians in Lahad Datu, Semporna and the surrounding villages and we would like to see a peaceful solution to resolve this ongoing problem. According to media reports, at least sixty (60) people have been killed in Lahad Datu, Semporna and Kampung Tanduo, Sabah.

We believe the situation in Lahad Datu requires swift and peaceful intervention. We urge all parties to resist from using force while remaining committed to dialogue and negotiation throughout this process.

We are also very concerned with the lack of real-time information with respect to what has actually taken place so far in Lahad Datu. Up to this point the information received through the Malaysian news media lacked transparency and created unnecessary rumours and assumptions about the situation. The people has rights to get the information on on-going issues in Sabah.

In this context, we call on the governments of Malaysia and Philippines and the Sultanate of Sulu to:

- **Immediately declare a HUMANITARIAN CEASEFIRE so that agencies concerned can take immediate measures to ensure the safety of women, children, elderly and other vulnerable persons in the affected area. And provide "safe zones" where humanitarian organizations and relevant agencies can install facilities to be accessed by those who are injured and require immediate medical care;**
- **Take immediate steps to end the use of violence and to engage in dialogue with all stakeholders to resolve the crisis peacefully.**
- **Take proper measures to ensure that in the process of resolving the crisis, the human rights of everyone involved are respected and protected especially civilians from Lahad Datu, Semporna and nearby villages;**
- **Take immediate measures to secure the safety of journalists who chose to access the area at all times to ensure fair reporting and dissemination of information to the general public;**
- **Cease and desist from using excessive force and armed violence to end the prevailing conflict;**
- **Initiate an independent and impartial investigation into the killings that has taken place and make the findings of the investigation public.**

We fervently dissuade all the principals involved from brinkmanship by instead living up to your respective legacies as genuine leaders of your people with honor and dignity.

We urge you to come to terms with the unfolding of events that has serious implications on many lives and social institutions. We all can't afford that this will escalate into a grave humanitarian crisis spilling over into other nearby villages aside from Lahad Datu and Semporna, Sabah.

Time is of the essence. The world is looking at you, now.

to violence to end the Sabah stand-off, sending off the message that its territorial interest over Sabah is primordial over its relations with the Philippines and its peace-making role in Mindanao.

While the Philippine government exerted all effort to leash the heirs of the Sultanate to maintain its good relations with Malaysia and protect the peace process, Malaysia reciprocated by resorting to swift violence over patient diplomacy which it demonstrated as a Mindanao peacemaker. [...]



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

What's at stake

The Sabah bloodshed will generate anti-Malaysia sentiments in the country and in the Bangsamoro which will hurt even more the credibility of the peace process.

In the aftermath of the Sabah standoff, the biggest mistake that government and the MILF can do in the peace process is to continue to put the Sabah issue under the rug and to discredit those who are critical of the process as "sour-graping," "matigas ang ulo" (hard-headed) and "spoilers."

There is an opening to harness broad support and coalitions to the agreed negotiated peace formula in the Transition Commission where Malaysia is out of the picture.

The MILF dominates the Transition Commission and with their negotiators and consultants in the majority, it is practically given the blanket authority to draft the Bangsamoro Basic Law for consideration of Congress. The receptiveness, sensitivity, and openness of the MILF to the concerns and feelings of stakeholders like the Tausugs, the Sultanate of Sulu, and the MNLF in the crafting of the Basic Law will spell the success or failure of the peace process.

If the MILF wills it, the Transition Commission can potentially be the arena for genuine and meaningful intra-Moro dialogue and the building of alliances.

The Philippine Star, 28.03.2013

MILF wants peace talks fast-tracked

By Alexis Romero

MANILA, Philippines - The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) yesterday urged the international community to call for the fast tracking of the peace process, saying the conclusion of its negotiations with the government is an "urgent business."

"We call on everyone, including the international community, to urge all parties to expedite the talks in a deliberate and sure manner," the MILF said in an editorial posted on its website luwaran.com.

"Time is ticking away; once it has passed, we cannot go back anymore. We also call upon them to journey with us until the conclusion of these negotiations," it added.

President Aquino earlier requested that the 37th round of talks that were originally slated for March 25-27 be reset to next month.

The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process said Aquino deems it necessary to have more time for review and

consultations on the draft annexes.

Despite the delay, the two parties made a "firm commitment" to continue the talks in an expeditious manner.

The MILF everyone wants to settle the conflict in Mindanao with honor, justice, and without delay.

[...] "The truth is that if we cannot close this negotiation successfully during the administration of President Aquino, we do not know what lies ahead in 2016. And more seriously, it can be a menu for more violence and fighting in Mindanao," it said.

Civil society groups in Mindanao are dismayed by the postponement of the peace talks, believing this would provide "spoilors" the opportunity to pursue their agenda.

[...] The Mindanao Action for Peace and Development Initiatives is worried that the postponement could lead to violence similar to that triggered by the voiding of the memorandum of agreement on ancestral domain in 2008. [...]

FURTHER READINGS

InterAksyon.com, 03.03.2013

WHERE DID GROWTH GO? Philippines' elite swallow country's new wealth - economists

By Cecil Morella, Agence France-Presse

MANILA - Optimism is soaring that the Philippines is finally becoming an Asian tiger economy, but critics caution a tiny elite that has long dominated is amassing most of the new wealth while the poor miss out.

To view the full article, please [click here](#).

Bulatlat.com, 06.03.2013

Military rules in Bicol region

By Janess Ann J. Ellao

GUINOBATAN, Albay - Before Felix Paz, 81, became a peasant leader in the Bicol region, he was a farmer himself. Having his own share of hard work in the fields during his days as a farmer, Paz told Bulatlat.com, life is harder for farmers now because - they do not just worry about making a living. Their rights are violated by no less than the government itself.

To view the full article, please [click here](#).

Asian Human Rights Commission - Urgent Appeals Programme, 06.03.2013

Renewed pattern of targeted attacks on human rights and political activists

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) is deeply concerned that the pattern of targeted attacks on human rights and political activists, which was common in the past, has once again emerged. An activist had been killed, their relatives arrested over questionable, if not fabricated charges, and offices and colleagues robbed in a systematic manner targeting a particular group.

Please [click here](#) to view the complete Urgent Alert.

Asian Human Rights Commission, Urgent Appeals Programme, 07.03.2013

Daughter of detained political activist writes about delay in trial of her father on questionable charges

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) wishes to share with you the testimony of the daughter of a political activist. The man is now in jail and his daughter relates as to how he was arrested, deliberately kept from his family and how the trial of his case is being dragged out. [...]

To view the full testimony, please [click here](#).