

## Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

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**Disclaimer:** The news articles available in this review are only collated from local newspapers. They were not written by the Action Network Human Rights- Philippines.

**The Action Network Human Rights - Philippines** advocates the sustainable improvement of the human rights situation in the Philippines. Members are: Amnesty International, Bread for the World – Church Development Service, Misereor, Missio Munich, philippinenbüro e.V., the International Peace Observers Network (IPON) and the United Evangelical Mission (UEM).

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HEADLINES & POLITICS

The Philippine Star, 03.01.2013

### Phl second most dangerous country for journalists in 2013

By Artemio Dumlao

BAGUIO CITY, Philippines - The Philippines tied with India in second place in the list of the "World's Most Dangerous Country for Journalists" in 2013 that was topped by war-torn Syria.

The International News Safety Institute (INSI) reported that the Philippines and India each recorded the killings of 12 journalists and one media worker.

INSI said the Most Dangerous Country for Journalists remains to be Syria that recorded 19 journalists killed in 2013. Syria also topped the INSI list in 2012. [...]

INSI is a safety organization that records all deaths - whether deliberate, accidental or health-related - of all news media staff, support staff and freelancers while on assignment or as a result of their news organization being attacked because of their work.

The group recorded [126 journalists and other media workers killed in 29 countries last year](#).

INSI said that the global death toll for journalists was down by 17 percent compared to last year. [...]

INSI noted that in the Philippines, unknown assailants murdered nine journalists, and so far the cases remain unsolved.

Those who were killed doing their jobs this year in the Philippines, the INSI said, included four journalists killed while covering Super Typhoon Yolanda. [...]

#### Different parameters

Another group, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said in its 2013 yearend report that the Philippines was no longer among the countries tagged as Most Deadly Places for Journalists.

CPJ said Syria remained as the Most Deadly Place for Journalists on the Job in 2013. [...]

CPJ maintains a database of all journalists [killed since 1992](#).

But like the INSI report, the Paris-based press freedom watchdog Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) also known as Reporters

The Philippine Star, 14.01.2014

### More Pinoys rate themselves poor in 2013 - SWS survey

By Helen Flores

MANILA, Philippines - More than half of Filipinos claimed being poor or "food poor" in the last quarter of 2013, according to the latest Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey.

The poll, conducted from Dec. 11 to 16, found 55 percent of Filipino adults - about 11.8 million households - consider themselves poor, up from 50 percent (equivalent to 10.8 million households) in September. [...]

The poll also showed 41 percent or an estimated 8.8 million households claiming to be poor in terms of food, higher by four points from 37 percent in September.

"Both self-rated poverty and self-rated food poverty rose from the previous quarter, and are above their four-quarter averages

Rappler.com, 17.01.2014

### PH military grappling with insurgency amid China tension

By Carmela Fonbuena

MANILA, Philippines - The Philippine military has declared it will shift its focus to territorial defense as tension from maritime disputes with China is fast escalating. It is proving to be a difficult task, however.

The military continues to grapple with insurgency at home, especially with the communist Left, which recently declared it is abandoning peace talks with the government.

Armed Forces of the Philippines chief General Emmanuel Bautista on Friday, January 17, led a closed-door command conference with senior military leaders to discuss the country's securi-

### MONTHS 38 | Malacanang tells police to work double time to solve journalist killings

By Dexter San Pedro

MANILA - On the 38th month of the Ampatuan massacre, the Aquino administration on Thursday called on law enforcement agencies to work doubly hard in resolving the surging number of journalist killings in the country.

"We continue to work with concerned agencies who will work double time and doubly harder to find those who committed these crimes," Presidential Communications Operations Office Secretary Herminio Coloma said in a briefing aired over state-run Radyo ng Bayan on Thursday.

Coloma cited government efforts to control the proliferation of loose firearms as a "solution to a systemic problem."

According to Human Rights Watch, 12 Filipino journalists were killed in 2013, bringing the total number of media workers killed to 26 since President Benigno Aquino III took office in June 2010.

In only six of the 26 cases have police arrested suspects. [...]

"The body count of Filipino journalists speaks volumes for the wide gap between the Aquino government's rhetoric in addressing rights problems and the reality on the ground," said HRW deputy Asia director Phelim Kine said.

The government's failure to bring to justice those responsible for the killing of journalists highlights the climate of impunity for rights abusers in the Philippines, HRW said.

"The Aquino administration has said all the right things about ending abuses in the Philippines, but what's missing is the political will to translate those promises into action," Kine said.

InterAksyon, 23.01.2014

Without Borders in its annual roundup placed the Philippines in fifth place in the group's "Worst 5 Deadliest Countries for Media in 2013."

RSF said the on top of their list is Syria, Somalia, Pakistan, and India.

for 2013," it said. Increases in both self-rated poverty and food poverty were reported in all areas except in Mindanao, the SWS said. [...]

The survey also said "poor families have been lowering their living standards, i.e., belt-tightening."

The SWS fourth quarter poll used face-to-face interviews with 1,550 adult Filipinos nationwide.

The survey was conducted after two deadly natural disasters - the magnitude-7.2 earthquake in Bohol and Cebu and the Super Typhoon Yolanda in Eastern Visayas - struck the country in October and November.

ty environment. They discussed both the internal and external security environments, according to military spokesperson Major General Domingo Tutaan. [...]

Citing national security, he refused to discuss external security issues.

China has a new law requiring foreigners to seek its permission if they want to fish in certain areas that include the West Philippine Sea. This happened after China angered Japan over its Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) requiring foreign aircraft to also seek its permission if they fly over an area that includes



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### Communist party denies Pampanga is 'insurgency-free'

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO -- The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) denied the claim of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) that Pampanga is "insurgency-free." [...] In a statement, the CPP said "The fact is, since 2010, the NPA in Central Luzon tactically shifted its forces to focus on building its guerrilla base areas in the mountainous areas of the region. Its forces in the Pampanga plains were temporarily redeployed, not so much as a result of AFP operations, but as a planned course of action in line with building the base areas."

These bases include the Sierra Madre Mountain Range straddling Eastern Bulacan, Aurora and Nueva Ecija, the Zambales-Tarlac-Pangasinan mountain ranges as well as the mountainous and coastal areas of Bataan to Bulacan.

The communist movement added, "Using the guerrilla base areas as rear, and with the help of the peasant masses in the plains, the NPA command in the Central Luzon can launch regular and special tactical offensives in Pampanga and elsewhere when the enemy least expects it, starting with weak and detached units of the AFP and PNP, the armed goons and security agencies of the big landlords and big compradors in order to disarm these and disable them from further causing harm against the people." [...]

Sun.Star, 17.01.2014

Japanese-controlled islands.

The Philippines declared it is ignoring China's fishing rules. Security officials committed to escort local fishermen "if necessary." [...]

### NPA the biggest threat

The New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), remains the biggest threat. "The CPP-NPA is still the most potent challenge," Tutaan said. Asia's longest-running insurgency in Asia celebrated its 45th anniversary in December 2013. Unofficial estimates put the NPA's numbers to "less than 4,000" following the "neutralization" (deaths, arrests, or surrenders) of 824 members last year. The military claims it's making headway in achieving its goal to make [insurgency irrelevant by 2016](#) even as the communist

### CALAMITIES & CLIMATE CHANGE

Rappler.com, 14.01.2014

## Climate change threatens economy of 4 PH cities

By Pia Ranada

MANILA, Philippines – The worsening effects of climate change can cripple the economy of 4 Philippine cities, a study conducted by Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) Philippines and BPI Foundation found.

The latest chapter of the *Business Risk Assessment and the Management of Climate Impacts* assessed the climate change preparedness of Tacloban City in Leyte, Naga City in Camarines Sur, Batangas City in Batangas, and Angeles City in Pampanga. The results were released on Tuesday, January 14.

Based on 20 years of data from each city, the study showed how climate change is taking a toll on the cities' major sources of economic growth. Climate change causes extreme droughts, stronger storms, rise in sea levels, aggravated flooding and landslides.

The report analyzed the cities' exposure to climate change, the sensitivity of their economy and society to climate change impacts, and their ability to adapt to these impacts.

### Vulnerable economies

In **Tacloban City**, major economic drivers – its port and fishing industry – are vulnerable to sea level rise and ocean acidification, both of which are effects of climate change.

Sea level rise due to the melting of icecaps in the world's northern hemisphere can eventually submerge the port. Tacloban's proximity to the Pacific Ocean, a major source of tropical storms, exposes its port and fishermen to extreme weather events like

rebels have abandoned peace talks under the administration of President Benigno Aquino III and threatened to grow their numbers back to 25,000. [...]

Pampanga was declared "insurgency-free" on January 15, Wednesday. It is the 43rd province and the last of the 22 provinces under the Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) to be declared insurgency-free.

Security operations have become the concern of the police. A total of 75 provinces used to have insurgency problems. [...]

The phrase "insurgency-free" tag is making others uncomfortable, however, because it might only invite "NPA remnants" to attack the province.

The NPA activities have been concentrated in Eastern Mindanao, according to Eastern Mindanao Command (Eastmincom) chief Major Ricardo Rainer Cruz III. He estimated the NPA presence in his area at 2,000 fighters, or around half of the current strength of the movement.

### Other threats

The other threats to the country's internal security include the following:

- Rogue Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) members, a bulk of whom the military clashed with in the September 2013 Zamboanga City Crisis. The military claims it is confident the rebels were diminished, following the death of 200, capture of 270, and surrender of 24.
- Abu Sayyaf Group
- Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), a splinter group of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) that opposes the ongoing peace negotiations with the Philippine government
- Royal Security Force of the late Sulu Sultan Jamalul Kiram III. The group figured in a standoff in Sabah in March 2013. Kiram has since died but the fighters are facing criminal charges in Malaysia and Sabah [...]

storms. Super Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) in November brought storm surges, which destroyed the port and crippled the fishing industry.

In **Naga City**, tourism is one of the primary drivers of economic growth. Most of its tourists travel by land and not by air, meaning it will need all-weather and highly accessible roads if it wants to continue to reap benefits from tourism.

But Naga is flanked by Mount Isarog, perennially covered by rain-producing clouds, and the Bicol river basin. Climate change will intensify the rains and resulting floods. Thus, effective drainage systems and alternative road routes must be built so that tourists can still keep visiting the city.

**Batangas City** is highly dependent on its sea routes for economic growth. It has become a trade hub because of the Batangas Port, which connects the province to other regions and businesses. Good thing it is shielded by its orientation from the Pacific Ocean's storms.

**Angeles City** is similar. Its trade hub status depends on Clark Air Base and the Freeport Zone. Being situated inland, it is protected from sea level rise, storm surges, and storms from the Pacific Ocean.

However, Batangas and Angeles cities need major roads, like the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) and South Luzon Expressway (SLEX), to keep trading with other cities. The study showed that these vital roads are submerged by floods during major storms,



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rendering them impassable. [...]

### Ready for the next Yolanda?

The assessment of the 4 cities is the latest phase of a bigger study spanning other Philippine cities.

Previous phases conducted from 2011 to 2012 assessed 8 cities: Baguio, Cagayan de Oro, Cebu, Davao, Dagupan, Iloilo, Laoag,

and Zamboanga.

You can download the entire study [here](#). [...]

The Philippines is the 3rd most vulnerable country to climate change, according to the United Nations. It is visited by an average of 20 storms a year. [...]

InterAksyon.com, 17.01.2014

## Solons propose permanent evacuation centers

By Lira Dalangin-Fernandez

MANILA, Philippines -- Battered by natural calamities every year, the Philippines should have permanent evacuation centers in barangays to accommodate displaced families, two lawmakers said.

House Bill 3648 filed by Bayan Muna partylist representatives Neri Javier Colmenares and Carlos Zarate proposes the establishment of an evacuation center in every two to three contiguous barangays.

The proponents said each center should provide sufficient space for the target population and be strong enough to withstand natural calamities.

"It is a fact we have to accept and live by that climate change has transformed natural calamities into more disastrous and more deadly types. Thus we have to start adjusting to this reality and take positive steps to mitigate, to the least possible, effects of disasters that might be even worse than we could imagine," the lawmakers said. [...]

During natural disasters, schools are often being used as evacuation centers. But Colmenares and Zarate said schools are not equipped with necessary facilities such as comfort rooms, kitchens, and sleeping quarters to ease the discomfort of affected families.

Using schools as evacuation centers also disrupt the classes of students and affect the school calendar, they said. Under the bill, the evacuation centers would be designed to withstand super typhoons, or calamity-resilient and built at a distance safe from waters or landslide-prone areas. Each location would be chosen by the local government units in coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Mines and Geosciences Bureau. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council would be the lead agency in the implementation of the proposed measure.

Pinoyweekly.org, 29.01.2014

## Historic 'surge': Storm survivors demand justice, relief and rehabilitation

By Ilang-Ilang Quijano and Macky Macaspac

Almost three months after typhoon Yolanda (international name: Haiyan) hit the country, thousands of survivors "surged" through the streets of Tacloban City in the biggest protest that Eastern Visayas has seen in decades.

Hailing from remote barrios to coastal villages, an estimated 12,000 people marched around the devastated city last January 25 to seek justice for the Aquino administration's "criminal negligence" and to lay down demands to the government for their relief and rehabilitation.

Homeless, hungry, and without livelihood, the survivors led by a newly-formed alliance People Surge (Alliance for the Victims of Typhoon Yolanda) are seeking for P40,000 financial relief for each family, housing, jobs and livelihood assistance, price controls, speedy rehabilitation of hospitals and schools, and restoration of water and electricity.

### 'Proof of discontent'

[...] Most of them [protestors] were farmers and fisher folk who traveled or walked for hours.

Estelita Ragmac, 64, said that her family fled to Manila in December because relief came only twice in her village Bulaw in Basey, Samar. They came back a week ago to try to start anew. "It has been difficult. We still have no crops, nothing to eat. I came to this protest to ask for the government's help," she said.

In a unity statement, People Surge assailed President Aquino's slow-to-non-existent relief and rehabilitation efforts, corruption of aid, and the implementation of "pro-big business" policies such as the No-Build Zone. [...]

Latest estimates from the National Disaster and Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC) reveal Yolanda's damages in infrastructure amounted to P18.3 Billion, and damages in agri-

culture amounted to P18.4-B in affected areas.

The official NDRRMC death toll is currently at 6,201, though thousands remain missing and more bodies are being collected each day.

### No homes, livelihoods

Storm survivors say that relief mostly comes from international organizations and private institutions. [...]

Peasant groups who joined the alliance say that relief does not come at all for farmers in far-flung areas that are equally devastated.

"Even before Yolanda, majority of landless farmers in Leyte and Samar are already poor. But our situation worsened after the storm," said Nestor Lebico, secretary-general of the peasant group Sagupa-Sinirangang Bisaya. [...]

While the Department of Agriculture gave out seeds in some areas, "farmers couldn't plant these seeds because they were high-yielding varieties and needed costly farm inputs," Lebico revealed.

For the protest, the survivors in coastal areas of Tacloban City carried placards made out of rice sacks that read "No-Build Zone, Anti-People". They are opposed to the government's prohibition of the construction of homes within 40 meters of the shoreline. [...]

Joel Reyes, a member of Alyansa han mga Biktima han Bagyo Yolanda ha Tacloban or Alliance of Typhoon Yolanda Victims in Tacloban (ABBAT), said that they have nowhere else to go. "Most of us make a living as fishermen. Why doesn't the government build a strong seawall to protect us, or devise an evacuation system instead?" he said. [...]

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He further complained that prices have been skyrocketing in Tacloban. "The prices were low only in the beginning. Now, one

### Bad weather worsens condition of Eastern Visayas evacuees

By Rowel C. Montes

ABOUT 30 percent of tents collapsed and over 1,000 people were evacuated in Guiuan, Eastern Samar due to Tropical Depression Agaton, which was recently downgraded to a Low Pressure Area.

Last January 18, four out of five evacuation centers were forced to close and 295 families were evacuated from the ESSU Tent City to unoccupied bunkhouses and private warehouses.

Some evacuation centers in Tacloban City, one of the Typhoon Yolanda-ravaged areas, are likewise experiencing flooding.

The stormy weather also hampered relief operations, including the processing of commodities in the Tacloban and Guiuan ports for onward distribution through partners.

According to the Shelter Cluster, the storm has damaged or destroyed emergency shelter materials, which will need to be replaced.

The storm also affected health provision, and floodwaters contaminated water supplies in some areas.

The bad weather also flooded and damaged several temporary learning sites, adversely affecting school attendance for the week, particularly in Eastern Visayas, the weekly situation report released by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs stated.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development said shelter concerns remain paramount, especially for the 26,000 people who are still in evacuation centers across Western Visayas, Central Visayas, and Eastern Visayas.

The evacuees have been accommodated in schools as they are from "no-build" zones or areas prone to flooding.

With this, more guidance and clarity on "no-build zones" in the above-mentioned regions has been requested, while humanitarian partners are working with local authorities to advice on standards, shelter design and beneficiary selection.

*Sun.Star, 22.01.2014*

Rappler.com, 31.01.2014

## The calamity of mistrust

By Pia Ranada

[...] The refusal to follow authority even in the time of calamity is not unique to the Yolanda-hit areas where these incidents were reported. In almost every news coverage about Philippine disasters, there always seems to be at least one report about residents refusing to leave homes beside steadily overflowing rivers or landslide-prone hills. [...]

But during a forum on Typhoon Yolanda and rehabilitation, sociologist Dr Emma Porio pointed out that their hard-headedness - frustrating and exasperating as it is to hear about - could simply be due to a lack of trust.

"We are a society of limited social trust," she said during the January 28 forum in which she discussed how vital "social capital" is to disaster preparedness and risk reduction.

Social capital refers to the relationships and norms that determine the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. The central premise of social capital is that social networks have value.

### Bonding, bridging

[...] Bonding capital is a type of social capital that refers to horizontal associations. This means relationships among family members, friends, people in your immediate circle. It is the solidarity between like-minded people that reinforces similarity and homogeneity.

[...] If Philippine society abounds in bonding capital, it is limited in bridging capital, a second type of social capital that refers to connections between people from different walks of life.

Though bridging capital leads to connections that are more fragile, it is said to be more valuable than bonding capital because it fosters social inclusion. Only through bridging capital can different groups reach out and cooperate.

kilo of rice can cost up to P70," he said.

Most residents of Tacloban City are now without jobs, as most establishments remain closed and electricity and water services have yet to be restored to the entire city.

"Without the government providing housing and livelihood, the 'No-Build Zone' only serves the interests of big businesses who are interested in land grabbing," said Paul Isalona, chairperson of Bayan-Tacloban.

He said that the victims, and not big businesses, should be at the core of the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts of the government.

### Other demands

[...] Before the protest, the survivors gathered at the Eastern Visayas State University for the People Surge assembly. The alliance is composed of survivors as well as volunteers from the religious sector, academe, professionals, lawyers, and small entrepreneurs. [...]

"People Surge believes that natural disasters may be inevitable, but people's lives can be spared and massive damage may be prevented or minimized if the government takes adequate preparedness and prompt action in the face of natural calamities," the alliance said.

Other demands include a one-year tax moratorium to help local businesses and small entrepreneurs and public consultations in crafting rehabilitation and reconstruction plans to ensure that victims, "not the big businesses and landlords," are at the core of such plans.

The alliance is also pushing for long-term demands. These include a review of environmentally-destructive policies such as mining and laws on disaster risk preparedness and response, as well as genuine agrarian reform and a national industrialization program "as a key solution to mass poverty and its consequent people's vulnerability to disasters and climate change impacts."

[Sociologist Ricardo] Abad found that bridging capital in the Philippines is much higher [...] among the privileged.

Conversely, bridging capital is lowest in the marginal and vulnerable populations.

The lack of bridging capital among the poor means they are less likely to trust and seek help from authorities who, in the Philippine setting, are usually wealthier, have received higher education, live in gated communities, enjoy better quality of living - in short, people far removed from the realities of the poor. People "not like them."

### More trust, fewer casualties

[...] If there is trust among all sectors and groups in society, no matter how different they may seem to each other, more lives can be saved even amid the chaos of calamity.

### Trust networks

[...] Some model communities have already accomplished this.

[Sociologist Dr Emma] Porio cited Pasig City which in 2011 won a Galing Pook Award for its Green City Program. The program enlisted 500 "green police" volunteers from 30 barangays as implementors of the program. Commercial and business establishments joined in by incorporating green practices.

The mayor at the time, Robert Eusebio, was able to create and connect extensive networks under the banner of the program. He tapped all groups - from the Catholic Church to the jeepney drivers association - to help the city attain the goals of the program.

"Good mayors have mastered what you call network governance strategy. You build networks in each of the sectors, connect them horizontally and vertically," observed Porio.

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She also mentioned the leadership of Albay Governor Joey Salceda who was able to turn his province's weakness – vulnerability to typhoons – into a strength. Today, Albay is known all over the world as one of the most disaster-ready and climate-resilient communities.

So how do we build trust in a country that is always one day closer to the next typhoon?

Porio used the example of a tiny town beside Sendai city in Japan.

Lacking a sea wall, the mayor enforced monthly evacuation drills in case of tsunamis and earthquakes that have been known to occur in those parts.

### INSTITUTIONS

Rappler.com, 04.01.2014

## UN okays PH-sponsored reso on violence vs migrant workers

MANILA, Philippines – [...]

The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on violence against women migrant workers initiated by the Philippines and Indonesia on Dec 18, 2013.

Co-sponsored by 53 other countries, the resolution advised governments to “strongly encourage all stakeholders, especially the private sector, including employment agencies involved in recruiting migrant workers, to strengthen the focus on and funding support for the prevention of violence against women migrant workers.”

The measure particularly urged governments to legally allow women migrant workers who are victims of violence to seek residency permits independently of abusive employers or spouses.

It also aimed to end sponsorship systems that abuse women migrant workers.

The [Palace earlier praised the adoption](#) [...].

### Vulnerabilities during migration

Rappler.com, 07.01.2014

## As population grows, Aquino pushes anew for RH law

By Natasha Gutierrez

MANILA, Philippines – With the Philippine population predicted to hit 100 million this year, President Benigno Aquino III made another push for the stalled reproductive health law, saying responsible parenthood is all the more important.

The Aquino administration broke the 15-year impasse on the measure strongly opposed by the Catholic Church, and passed the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012 in time for Christmas that year.

Before the law could be implemented in 2013, however, the Supreme Court suspended it in March, upon the petition of several Catholic-affiliated groups and individuals who [questioned its constitutionality](#). [...]

### Government measures

Malacañang earlier acknowledged the challenge of a growing population, but also said it would be a good opportunity for the Philippines. [...]

Aside from the RH law, Aquino said it is also essential to provide quality education to the growing population as one million

Philippine Daily Inquirer, 17.01.2014

## Church to join fight vs political dynasties

By Jerome Aning

MANILA, Philippines – It’s about time the Church became more involved in the crusade against political dynasties, according to lay Catholic groups.

With the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) set to hold its plenary assembly next week, the lay organizations are calling on the Church hierarchy to get behind a people’s

The monthly evacuation drills forced the townspeople to meet each other, get to know each other, as they ran up to the evacuation site and stayed together until the end of the drill. They knew where the other lived and how vulnerable their neighbors were to future tsunamis.

On March 11, 2011, the East Japan Earthquake shook the country with 9.0-magnitude shocks. Resulting tsunami waves as high as 10.35 meters (34 feet) also caused massive damage and loss of lives.

The number of casualties in the town? Zero.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) welcomed the adoptions, expressing optimism that government programs around the world, particularly the Philippines, will also be improved and made more responsive to the plight of migrant workers.

The vulnerabilities of women to discrimination, exploitation, sexual harassment, and sexual abuse increases during migration, the PCW said.

The UN session on December 18 also approved the following resolutions that benefit women:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Improvement of the situation of women in rural areas
- Follow-up to the 4th World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

people are added to the country's labor pool each year.

He said increasing opportunities for everybody is important in making the country's economic growth inclusive and felt by all classes. A good education, he said, leads to skills development that would get more people employed.

In line with this, he pointed to the value of training brought by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, which produced over 500,000 graduates – 62% of whom found jobs. In the past, only 20 to 26% of TESDA graduates got employed.

[...] He [Presidential Communications Operations Office Secretary Herminio Coloma] said even without the RH Law, the government would continue other programs focused on a growing population, as allowed by law.

The government has since increased its social development budget. [...]

initiative being organized for the adoption of a national law to implement the antipolitical dynasty prohibition in the Constitution.

According to sources in the CBCP and the lay groups themselves, the antidynasty initiative will be a topic in the assembly, and that they are “almost sure” that the bishops would support



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a move to start the signature-gathering process and hold the plebiscite for the initiative within the year. [...] The CBCP issued a pastoral statement on Jan. 28 last year which spoke about the "widening practice" of political dynasties. "As monopolies in business, monopolies in politics limit the entry that can bring in new ideas and offer better services. Political dynasties breed corruption and ineptitude. We are aggrieved that lawmakers themselves defy the supreme law of the land by

Rappler.com, 18.01.2014

### Palace: Cybercrime law will help curb online sex abuse

By Buena Bernal

MANILA, Philippines – Malacañang vowed on Saturday, January 18, continued action against the growing cash-for-cybersex scheme in the Philippines that targets mostly minors.

In a dzRB interview, Presidential Spokesman Edwin Lacierda said an anti-cybercrime law – passed in September 2012 but blocked by the Supreme Court (SC) a month after – could have helped the country in its efforts to curb online prostitution.

Lacierda disapproved of the country being known as [a global source of child pornography](#).

[...] A legal debate over the law's provisions on online libel, the state's power to shut down websites and monitor online activities, and liability on data transmitted is being tackled by the High Court.

Lacierda described the debate as "a ticklish issue." Telecommunications companies and state officials could hopefully reach an agreement, he said.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) earlier said that its cybercrime unit couldn't go on "full blast," as it awaits the SC ruling.

#### Cybercrime law needed?

The High Tribunal is set to rule on the country's cybercrime law, whose first version was filed in the Philippine Congress [11 years before a law was eventually passed](#).

Currently, apprehended online traffickers and child pornography pimps are charged in violation of various other Philippine laws. These include: [...]

- RA 9775 or the Anti-Child Pornography Act

While the Cybercrime law adopts the RA 9775 definition of child pornography, it differs in its penal provision tackling the crime. The penalty imposed by the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 for child pornography is one degree higher.

Rappler.com, 19.01.2014

### Senate to prioritize FOI, creation of new disaster agency

By Angela Casauay

MANILA, Philippines – What bills will the Senate prioritize when session resumes on Monday, January 20 after the holiday break?

Among those on top of the agenda are the Freedom of Information (FOI) bill and a measure seeking to create a "fully independent" disaster agency.

Senate President Franklin Drilon gave assurances Sunday, January 19, the FOI bill – which seeks to institutionalize fast procedures in accessing documents of high public interest – will be given priority. [FOI has traditionally moved fast in the Senate](#), unlike in the [House of Representatives](#). [...]

Drilon's statements came a week after the [Social Weather Stations released its 2013 Survey of Enterprises on Corruption](#), which showed that 88% of businessmen believe the passage of a

Sun.Star, 20.01.2014

### Lawmaker alarmed over LGBT discrimination in schools

By Kathrina Alvarez

A HOUSE member is seeking a congressional investigation into the supposed "prejudicial, discriminatory, and unjust practices

not following the mandate of our Philippine Constitution given 26 years ago to make an enabling law to ban political dynasties," the CBCP said in the pastoral statement.

The position of the Church, according to the CBCP, is that political authority exists for the common good and should therefore not be exercised "for the sake of private and family interests or simply for the interests of a political party." [...]

Meanwhile, Senator Loren Legarda said [...] in October 2013 filed Senate Bill No. 532 or the Anti-Computer Pornography bill, which penalizes the transmission of "indecent and immoral material" to minors through electronic mail and other electronic media. [...]

#### Work being done

For its part, the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) has implemented preventive measures given the "threat that these cybercrimes pose especially in developing countries."

In 2013, the council created the IACAT Cyber Trafficking Unit (ICTU). ICTU serves as the foreign liaison with the United States Homeland Security Investigation, which provides assistance in busting cybercrime syndicates or groups in the Philippines.

Five successful entrapment and rescue operations since April 2013 led to the capture of 6 alleged cybercriminals now facing charges.

Two April 2013 operations led to the rescue of 8 victims, 5 of them minors. The entrapments were prompted by online advertisements posted by two pimps with Internet pseudonyms "Mhaelaq" and "whoreboy."

In November, ICTU's monitoring tool dubbed "Cyber Trafficking Cop" took notice of an internet website "Play Gurl Bunnies" that appeared to be used for online prostitution. An entrapment led to the rescue of 3 victims, one of them a minor.

IACAT is primarily tasked to tackle human trafficking in the country. It is headed by the DOJ and the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and is composed of 6 other member-agencies.

strong FOI law will reduce corruption. [...]

The FOI bill is up for discussion before the Senate plenary. Meanwhile, its counterpart measures in the House of Representatives are expected to be consolidated before February 14.

#### New disaster agency

As the Visayas recovers from Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan), senators will also prioritize [Senate Bill No. 819](#) to create a "fully independent" agency to replace the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC).

Under the proposed law, the new disaster agency will be directly under the Office of the President and will have its own funds, unlike the NDRRMC which gets its budget from the Department of National Defense. [...]

and policies" against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community in educational institutions.



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Kabataan party-list Representative Terry Ridon filed a House resolution seeking an inquiry, in aid of legislation that will ensure full respect for the rights of all students, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

"As a consequence of prevailing misconceptions about the LGBT sector, coupled with the absence of government measures to combat homophobia and transphobia, LGBTs are confronted with prejudicial practices and policies in schools, workplaces, commercial establishments, the civil service and security services and thus, are faced with difficulty in the exercise and enjoyment of their basic and fundamental rights and freedoms," Ridon said in House Resolution 629.

Ridon said LGBT groups have reported discriminatory practices inside schools, among which are the humiliation by classmates, teachers and other school personnel, the prohibition and even

expulsion of LGBTs who cross dress.

Another reported discriminatory practice is the conduct of arbitrary examinations intended to measure the "masculinity" of applicants for some schools, with the intention of weeding out gay students.

Those failing the said examinations face unjust probation, and discrimination in memberships in school organizations, fraternities and sororities, Ridon said.

"The education system in the country generally remains to be sexist, homophobic and transphobic as many schools implement rules and regulations that force LGBTs to suppress their sexual orientation and gender identity. [...]" Ridon said.

The lawmaker added that correcting existing discriminatory policies and practices should also be applied in communities, workplaces, churches, and civil and security services.

Press Statement - Karapatan, 27.01.2014

## AFP, DepEd engage in doubletalk in guidelines on military activities in schools to justify AFP attacks vs children - Karapatan

[...] From July 2010 to December 2013, Karapatan has documented 18 minors who were victims of extrajudicial killing and 132,633 victims of rights violations with the use of schools, medical, religious and other public places for military purposes. Local and international human rights groups and children's advocacy organizations have decried such rising number of rights violations against children under the Aquino government. We have repeatedly demanded for the immediate pull out of all military personnel from communities and schools, and that the killings, torture and other rights violations should be stopped.

Yet, instead of heeding this legitimate call, the Aquino administration came out with AFP guidelines/letter directive #25 and DepEd memorandum 221 series of 2013 which legitimize such attacks against children by continuing to allow the use of schools/educational institutions for military purposes, sugarcoating such operations as "civil-military operations."

[...] The AFP has extolled [...] Aquino's counter-insurgency program, for utilizing combat and "non-combat" strategies, which included CMOs, as means to defeat rebel groups. Thus, CMOs in the guise of humanitarian activities, are within the framework and operations of the AFP's ongoing war and cannot be devoid of any military objective.

The following cases documented by Karapatan would reveal this pattern of rights abuses, even under the guise of "civil-military operations," among several other cases:

□□□ Grade VI and high school students participated in the counter-insurgency lectures conducted by the AFP during class hours by virtue of Memorandum no. 68 allowing "The [...] 5th Infantry Division, Philippine Army in coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd), to conduct a counter-insurgency campaign, a 1-hour symposium, in all public elementary and high schools in this Division starting July 1, 2012 [...]. This is to enhance pupils'/students' consciousness about the lies, deception and clandestine operation of the Communist Terrorist Movement."

□□□ On June 28, 2013, soldiers belonging to the 81st Infantry Battalion Philippine Army (IBPA) led by Cpl. Domingo arrived

at Brgy. Nagtenga Ilocos Sur and met with brgy officials. They explained that their presence was part of Aquino's counter-insurgency program, Oplan Bayanihan. The soldiers encamped at the barangay hall of Nagtenga, where the health center and day care center are located. Despite the objection of the residents, the military still encamped in the barangay hall.

□□□ A similar incident happened in Brgy. Sampaguita, Municipality of Kibawe, Province of Bukidnon when 18 military men from the 8th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army (IBPA) arrived in Brgy. Sampaguita on March 21, 2012. They immediately went to Sampaguita elementary school and used it as a military camp without permission from the head of the community.

[...] Such operations have resulted to the continuing killings, torture and other rights violations, especially trained against those perceived to be the government's enemies, and in the process have likewise resulted to direct attacks against children's rights.

Even after the guidelines were released by the AFP in July 2013, Karapatan continued to receive reports of attacks against schools and children's rights. One such incident occurred in Lopez Quezon, when the 85th Infantry Battalion of the Armed Forces of the Philippines arrived at Polytechnic University of the Philippines and conducted a "Symposium for Peace" on August 2013. Mark Anda, a member of the student council was not able to attend the said symposium due to his exams. He later learned that the military tagged him as a recruiter of the NPA in the presence of his fellow students. This was done by the AFP despite the issuance of the guidelines and the Prudente-Ramos Memorandum of agreement prohibiting the presence of the police and the military inside school campuses.

Thus, Karapatan strongly opposes the AFP and DepEd guidelines for violating domestic and international laws relating to the rights of the child, specifically Republic Act No. 7610 also known as the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). [...]

CURRENT CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Rappler.com, 03.01.2014

## Pablo survivor group's leader shot dead in ComVal

By Karlos Manlupig

CAGAYAN DE ORO, Philippines - On the 3rd day of the year, a tribal leader and council member of Indug Katawhan - a group of [Typhoon Pablo \(Bopha\)](#) survivors - was shot dead in Compostela Valley.

Marcelo Monterona, 41, was killed outside his house in Barangay Elizalde in the town of Maco Friday noon, January 3. Sheena Duazo, spokesperson of Bagong Alyansang Makabayan-Southern Mindanao, said they believe state agents were behind



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the killing.  
Another tribal leader Pedro Tinga was shot dead in the area last year.

Indug Katawhan led massive protests in the region to demand for rapid, and quality relief and rehabilitation services after

Sun.Star Cebu, 04.01.2014

### Barangay councilor shot dead

By Davinci S. Maru

A BARANGAY councilor died while his neighbor was wounded after they were shot by two men on a motorcycle in Barangay Polog, Consolacion, Cebu late Thursday afternoon.

Rey Balaba, 50, died from multiple gunshot wounds, police said. [...] PO3 Arthur Ariate, investigator of Consolacion Police Station, said the attack took place around 5:40 p.m. [...].

#### Injured

[...] Balaba [...] died at 10 p.m. Capao received first-aid treatment for his wounds. [...]

#### Motive

[...] Ariate, when interviewed by Sun.Star Cebu, said they're

Davao Today.com, 06.01.2014

### Daughter saw activist father shot to death

By Earl Condeza

MACO, Compostela Valley – Jay-jay, 12, saw a man pulling a gun against her father Marcelo Monterona last January 3. Her instinct was to throw a stone against her dad's attacker, but as fear overwhelmed her, she scampered to get home.

[...] Her mother, Teresita, remembered seeing Marcelo driving off their multicab jeepney after fixing it.

"Then we heard an explosion. At first, we thought it was merely a firecracker but the explosions were actually shots, several shots. We went out to check and we saw his bloody body," Teresita, in tears, told Davao Today.

Colleagues at Hugpong sa mga Mag uuma sa Walog Kompostela (Humawak), a farmers organization, believed the military singled out Monterona for his role in the anti-mining and human rights campaign in the area.

Humawak spokesperson Renante Mantos said Monterona was killed by members of the 71<sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion of the Philippine

Davao Today.com, 09.01.2014

### Bayan spokesperson bares threat

By John Rizle L. Saligumba

DAVAO CITY – The spokesperson of the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) took to the media to make public the threats she has been receiving from a man claiming to be a "government national security consultant" of an organization working for the government.

Sheena Duazo said that someone called her number up last December 23 but chose not to answer it when the number was not registered in her phone. She then received a series of text messages afterwards from a certain Ian Rod Tan. [...]

Tan allegedly offered Duazo help.

"You have an (a)teanean blood, so am I, we can aid and protect each other, things are going to be rough for the next 12 months. [...]" said Tan in the text message shown to Davao Today by Duazo.

However, Duazo believed that the whole message carried an undertone.

"Regardless of the intention and authenticity of the message it is a clear attempt to scare not only me but progressive individuals and organizations. It aims to mum us from exposing corruption in government and the numerous human rights violations that are happening," Duazo said.

Duazo said it is a "desperate move of the State in its implemen-

Typhoon Pablo struck the region in December 2012, leaving more than 1,000 dead.

The group also staged [a rally outside a big mining corporation](#) to demand reparation to the damage on the environment allegedly caused by its operations.

looking at two motives for the shooting: politics or personal grudge.

[...] During the barangay elections last October, Balaba garnered the third most number of votes. He had been a barangay captain for three terms.

According to Balaba's wife, her husband had a conflict with a relative but this was a long time ago.

Based on how the shooting was carried out, police believe the attackers are guns-for-hire.

They invited someone yesterday for questioning.

Army, the same Army unit to whom human rights advocates tagged as the unit responsible for killing Tinga, a 57-year old Mansaka tribal leader in Barangay Malamodao, in an operation last Dec 6.

Mantos said that Monterona called for the pull-out of 71<sup>st</sup> IB following Tinga's death.

Monterona was also part of the negotiating panel of Indug Kautawan (People Uprise), a Pablo-survivors group which fought the indemnification of P3.6 million and 300 sacks of rice by the APEX Mining. [...]

Junjun one of Monterona's children, called on the local government and the police to act, conduct speedy probe and arrest the perpetrators.

Mantos slammed the local police for ignoring the incident and not acting immediately.

tation of its internal security plan Bayanihan. [...]

Duazo said she received the last text message from Tan on January 5, two days after Marcelo Monterona, a survivor of typhoon Pablo and human rights activist, who was killed in Maco, Davao del Norte.

Duazo was part of the quick response team who went to the hospital where she took pictures of Monterona's body and posted it on Facebook.

Incidentally, Monterona's death was also a topic of Tan's last message to Duazo.

[...] For Hanimay Suazo of the human rights group Karapatan, the threat to Duazo's life is very real.

"It follows the pattern of monitoring, vilification and ultimately neutralization. It means you are scared, killed, converted [to turn government agent] to force you to stop what you are doing especially in acting as critics of the government" Duazo said.[...] For Suazo, extrajudicial killings and threats to activists intensified as they also struggle against "development aggression."

"These killings and threats are part of the people's resistance to the entry and operation of foreign large-mining operations and the expansion of mono-crop plantations which the state protects through the military," she said. [...]



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Bulatlat.com, 13.01.2014

### Activist couple nabbed

By Ronalyn V. Olea

MANILA – An ailing activist and his wife were arrested by state agents, at around 7 p.m. January 9.

Joel Amonte, 56, and his wife, Gloria Pritargue Almonte, 52, were forcibly taken from an apartment in Valenzuela City. According to their daughter, the couple was handcuffed and then forced into a vehicle. The arresting team is believed to be elements of the Philippine National Police-Intelligence Group. The daughter was told to just visit her parents at Camp Crame.

Joel is a known organizer of fisherfolk in Laguna province. According to Karapatan-Southern Tagalog, Joel is being treated for diabetes. The couple left their home in Pagsanjan, Laguna to seek medical treatment for Joel.

Glendhyl Malabanan, Karapatan-Southern Tagalog secretary general, condemned the arrest. “[...] Clearly, this is a case of illegal arrest.”

Almonte’s daughter also appealed to authorities to release her parents. Joel has difficulty walking because of complications to diabetes.

Karapatan-Southern Tagalog said the Almonte couple must be released immediately based on humanitarian grounds.

Malabanan added the recent arrest is another threat to peace talks.

As of press time, the couple is detained at Camp Vicente Lim [...].

Bulatlat.com, 13.01.2014

### 3 farmers shot at in Porac, Pampanga

By Ronalyn V. Olea

MANILA – Three farmers were shot at by gunmen, Jan. 12 in Hacienda Dolores, Porac, Pampanga.

According to Alyansa ng Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon (AMGL), at around 4 a.m., father and son Noel and Reynold Tumali and Arman Pardino were on their way to the farm when they were shot at by suspected security guards and goons of Leonardo-Lachenal Holdings, Inc. (LHI), FL Property Management Corp. (FL PMC). The two companies, in partnership with Ayala Land Inc., plans to build a ‘Nuvali’-like residential area. Nuvali is an upscale residential subdivision [...]. More than 350 farmers and 1,000 families stand to lose their livelihood if the project pushes through.

Local village officials who heard the gunshots responded and went to the scene but they were also fired at by the armed men.

The three were brought to Jose B. Lingad Memorial Hospital in San Fernando, Pampanga. Padino sustained gunshot wound in the head.

Mario Franco, chairman of local peasant group Aguman Dareng Maglalautang Capampangan (AMC) said in a statement, “These corporations have no interest but to kill us, threaten us or imprison us so they can grab our land.”

Four days before, on January 8, another farmer, Ener Angeles Tolentino, was arrested by two policemen and 12 security guards. Tolentino was gathering coal from his farm in Upper Balukbuk when he was barred by security guards.

Franco said that last year, some of their colleagues were subjected to [various forms of harassment](#).

On December 11, 2013, Modesto Posadas was shot at by two men on board a motorcycle. On December 6, 2013, unidentified men threw a grenade at the house of Jessel Orgas in purok 5, Hacienda Dolores. On November 29, unidentified men also hit Orgas’s house with a burning arrow, setting on fire the wooden walls.

“For eight months, we have not been allowed to work in our farms; they even destroyed our crops. We are enraged because they deprived us of our right to livelihood and now we are experiencing poverty and hunger,” Franco said.

The AMGL recorded 26 other cases of destruction and divest-

#### Groups enraged over farmer’s slay

By Reynaldo G. Navales

PORAC -- Several people’s organizations condemned and were enraged over the recent killing of a farmer in Hacienda Dolores in this agricultural town. [...]

Padino, along with father-and-son Noel and Reynold Tumali, were shot Sunday morning while on their way to their farms by alleged security guards of a big property developer in the area.

The 33-year-old Padino and elder Tumali were critically wounded and brought to Jose B. Lingad Regional Memorial Hospital in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga.

Padino however succumbed to a gunshot wound on the head at around 2 pm on Monday.

Militant groups like the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan – Central Luzon (Bayan – CL), Workers Alliance in Region 3 (War 3), Anakbayan – Central Luzon also conveyed their utmost condemnation of the attack against the farmers. [...]

When barangay officials led by Antonio Tolentino, also chairman of ANMHID, responded to the incident, they were also fired upon by the guards.

When they filed charges against the security guards, Tolentino and his group were surprised upon learning that they were being charged with malicious mischief and carnapping by the developer. Canlas [the regional coordinator of Anakpawis Party-list] lamented that he is being accused and blamed on the attack of 30 heavily armed men on the firm’s guard outpost. [...]

“We assert our call that Hacienda Dolores should be distributed immediately to the farmers as their ancestors have developed them since the Spanish colonial times. We demand justice for Arman Padino, Noel and Reynold Tumali, as well as other victims of abuses. We vow on Padino’s body to resolutely continue the struggle for genuine land reform in Hacienda Dolores,” Canlas added.

Sun.Star Pampanga, 15.01.2014

ment of properties, illegal arrest and detention of 13 farmers in November 2011 and July 2013 and other cases of harassment, threat and intimidation and coercion.

“We will not waver in fighting for our right to our land and livelihood,” Franco said. [...]

Sun.Star Pampanga, 15.01.2014

### Macabebe village chief shot dead

By Kristine Venet Q. Andal

MACABEBE, Pampanga – A barangay chairman was shot dead by motorcycle-riding gunmen on Wednesday.

Chief Inspector John Lopez Clark, Macabebe chief of police, identified the victim as Danilo Manalang, 60, married and incumbent barangay chairman of barangay San Jose of this town.

Reports said that at around 12:00 noon Tuesday, while the victim was buying food at the canteen with his companions when the suspect [...] arrived and shot the village chief three times at close-range.

Clark told Sun.Star Pampanga that the lone gunman was wear-



## Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

ing a bonnet and clad with a black jacket.

The suspect immediately fled and boarded a getaway motorcycle towards the direction of barangay San Rafael with an unidentified companion.

The victim who bore three gunshot wounds was rushed to the

Asian Human Rights Commission - Urgent Alert, 24.01.2014

### A senior police officer threatens to kill activists protesting against human rights abuse in Burma if 'they don't behave'

Dear friends,

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has been informed that a senior police officer has threatened to kill an activist and his group, who were holding protest against human rights abuses in Burma, if 'they do not behave.' [...] The police officer who made threats was neither subjected to an investigation nor held accountable a month after the incident.

CASE NARRATIVE:

On December 5, 2013, Rasti Delizo, the Political Affairs Coordinator of Sanlakas, a broad multi-sectoral organization, together with members of the Free Burma Coalition (FBC) held a peaceful protest action in front of the main gate of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) building at 2330 Roxas Boulevard in Pasay City, Metro Manila. Delizo acted as the rally's lead negotiator representing the civil society group.

The FBC organized the mass action in response to the three-day state visit of Burma's President Thein Sein in Manila from December 4 to 6. [...] Specifically, the FBC's intention was to further highlight Burma's continuing human rights violations by the country's military-dominated regime. Also, the FBC aimed to urge the Philippine

Amnesty International, 27.01.2014

### Philippines: Officers in secret police detention cell play 'torture roulette' with inmates

By Hazel Galang-Folli of Amnesty International

The discovery of a secret torture cell in a police intelligence facility in the Philippines where officers physically abused inmates for fun in a game of "roulette" shows the authorities' pitiful lack of control over the police force in the country, Amnesty International said today. The organization is calling on the Aquino administration to act immediately to put an end to routine torture under their watch. "For police officers to use torture 'for fun' is despicable. These are abhorrent acts. Suspending officers is not enough. Errant police personnel and their commanding officers should be held accountable in a court of law," said Hazel Galang-Folli, Amnesty International's Philippines Researcher. "Torture is a criminal act, and the leadership of the Philippine National Police must end its practice within its ranks. The authorities must ensure that torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment is not tolerated." The Philippines' Commission on Human Rights (CHR) discovered the 'torture roulette' table during a routine visit to the facility. The officers have a list of different torture positions or

HRonlineph.com, 28.01.2014

### [Urgent Appeal] Harassment of a Radio Broadcaster-TFDP

[...] Arthur "Jun" Sapanghari, Jr., 39, based in Valencia City, Bukidnon and a radio broadcaster of dxDB Bandilyo Bukidnon - Radio Veritas has received death threats from unidentified persons.

As one of the field reporters and commentators of the sub-station in Valencia City, Sapanghari has divulged stories on sensitive issues like barangay corruption, illegal logging, and human trafficking.

On December 7, 2013, Sapanghari started receiving threats

Holy Rosary Hospital but was pronounced dead-on-arrival.

Police theorized afternoon that the motive in Manalang's killing could have connection with his controversial victory during last year's barangay election which he won by only 8 votes and is still under protest at the Commission on Elections. [...]

Government to push for the immediate release of all of Burma's political prisoners, and to urgently advance a much-needed democratization agenda within Southeast Asia.

Toward the end of the rally, at 11:35 a.m., Delizo happened to be talking with Senior Inspector Charito Estrada. Sr. Insp. Estrada is the Precinct Commander of the Pasay City Police Station's PCP-1/with operational jurisdiction over the DFA's premises; [...]

[...] Delizo was explaining to Sr. Insp. Estrada the rally's peaceful nature, as well as its political intentions and democratic aims. Unfortunately, however, Sr. Insp. Estrada reacted badly to Delizo's assertions. Wearing the full uniform of a PNP Sr. Inspector and on official duty at the time, Estrada told Delizo, in the presence of Mr. De Leon of the DFA, said: "If your group misbehaves, then we will kill you." He first pointed his finger in the direction of rally, then shifted his finger and pointed directly to Delizo's face.

[...] Delizo told him that he could inform some of Estrada's officers of his arrogant behavior. At this point, Estrada pleaded with him not to report the incident. [...]

'torture consequences' which are chosen by spinning a roulette wheel. A '30 second bat position' for example, meant that the detainee would be hung upside down like a bat for 30 seconds. A '20 second Manny Pacquiao' meant that a detainee would be punched non-stop for twenty seconds. The CHR reported that 44 detainees at the Philippine National Police Laguna Provincial Intelligence facility in Biñan had accused at least 10 law enforcement officers of torture and extortion.

[...] The CHR said that the detention cell within the police facility was not in the Philippine National Police's legally-required updated list of all its detention facilities, making it a de facto secret detention facility. According to the Commission the detainees, who were mostly arrested on drugs-related cases, complained of being tortured from the day they were arrested to force them to give information.

Following an investigation, ten police officers were reportedly relieved of their posts. [...]

through text messages. One of the messages sent to him was, "[...] You did not answer my call, your days are numbered".

On December 10, he received another message, "[...] I am listening to your program. Conceited! You will be gone before Christmas. You will suffer the same fate as Dignos]. Joas Dignos was a hard-hitting commentator in Maramag, Bukidnon who was gunned down by two motorcycle-riding assailants in Valencia City last November 29, 2013.

One of the latest threats he received was on January 21, 2014. He

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received a message saying, "[...] I saw your wife and daughter. I will kill them".

He went to Valencia City police station to file a police blotter.

On December 18, 2013 at around 8:00 P.M., while at home, Sapanghari saw three men get down from a motorcycle. One of them who was wearing a cap walked towards the kitchen door. Sapanghari saw the man getting something from his sling bag. Alarmed that it might be a gun, Sapanghari pushed his daughter to a corner of the house and closed the kitchen door. He then dashed towards their front door to close it, and then he turned off the lights. As he gathered his family in their room, he heard approaching footsteps from outside their house. He called the police for help, but when they arrived, the three men have gone.

On January 17, 2014, at around 8:00 A.M., a man aboard a motorcycle went to his house and asked his wife about his whereabouts. When his wife answered, "[...] he is not here", the man went away. [...] his wife told him about the man who was looking for him. [...] The motorcycle [...] had no plate number. From the description given by his wife, Sapanghari remembered one of the suspects in the killing of a number of people in Valencia City and Maramag.

After Sapanghari was done with his field work, he boarded a bus to Musuan to get his motorcycle. As he was about to get down from the bus, he saw six persons on board three motorcy-

cles near the spot where his motorcycle was parked. Uneasy, he went directly to Valencia City and called a friend to get his motorcycle. When his friend reached Sapanghari's motorcycle, his friend noticed a gray pickup truck without plate number and two other motorcycles in the area. When his friend started Sapanghari's motorcycle and went on, the pickup truck followed him. It only stopped when he was about to enter Valencia City proper.

Sapanghari [...] wrote a letter to the Police Provincial Director in Bukidnon and requested for police backup. The director responded to his request and ordered the Valencia City Police Chief to send Sapanghari two police officers who stayed with him for one week. After a week, the police backup was discontinued.

Sapanghari fears for his family's safety. [...] But he said that his work obliges him to expose the truth and fight for what is right. Meanwhile, Randie Makipotin, also from the media and Sapanghari's friend, also received text messages last January 21. He was threatened to be killed after Sapanghari is done with. Makipotin also received a message that read, "[...] So, you helped Jun Bandilyo? I will kill you. Because of you, my life has become messed up." [...]

The threat started when Makipotin offered his multicab as the vehicle for Sapanghari to use instead of the latter's motorcycle.

### UPDATES ON CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Asian Human Rights Commission, 09.01.2014

## PHILIPPINES: Some comments on the murder trial of Temogen Tulawie

On December 18, 2013, the Regional Trial Court (RTC), Branch 19 in Manila City, commenced the trial of Temogen "Cocoy" Tulawie, an indigenous activist, who is being prosecuted for [fabricated charges of attempted murder](#), in connection with a bombing incident on May 13, 2009 in Patikul, Sulu.

After the [transfer of the trial](#) of his case in Manila over a year ago, it was Tulawie's first hearing on which private prosecutors presented their witnesses. Tulawie and four others are on trial for allegedly 'masterminding' and 'plotting' to assassinate Abdusakur Tan, present vice governor of Sulu, in the same bombing incident. Seven of Tan's security escorts and four other people were injured.

The AHRC, along with other international court observers, attended the first trial. Mr. Danilo Reyes, the AHRC's deputy executive director, noted with concern the testimonies of the witnesses for the prosecution, and the procedures applied, in the admission of its witness to the Witness Protection Programme (WPP).

Firstly, the private prosecutors presented an expert witness, a police officer who claimed to have conducted a crime scene investigation of over thousands of bomb sites, formerly designated in Patikul, Sulu.

In the criminal complaint, it noted that the explosive material used by the perpetrators in the bomb attack was 'powerful'; however, when this expert witness was cross-examined by the defense counsel, she admitted a lack of expertise on the extent of destruction a bomb could cause, and on how 'powerful' a bomb could be.

Secondly, without prior knowledge of the court and of Tulawie's legal counsel, it was revealed that Muhammad Sali Gani, one of the accused indicted by the prosecutors on August 22, 2013, had

already been admitted under the WPP. In a letter dated November 21, 2013, to Gani, Atty. Martin Menez, WPP program director, informed him that his application for admission to the WPP "has been approved."

Gani's admission to the WPP gives rise to procedural questions of the prosecution panel in the admittance of witnesses. Prior to Gani's admission to WPP, the private prosecutors also petitioned the court to defer the issuance of arrest orders for him, and to conduct a preliminary investigation on the charges against him. The court had previously rejected Gani's appeal to defer the issuance of the arrest order, but the private prosecutors appealed the court's ruling.

However, even before the court could rule on this with finality, the private prosecutors again filed another petition after having been informed that the WPP had approved Gani's application to be admitted in the WPP. This time, they are asking the court for Gani to be discharged, which means he should be relieved from being one of the accused. Under the law, the court could take judicial jurisdiction over an accused after she/he was arraigned. But Gani was neither arraigned, nor was he present in court during the trial.

Also, the claim of the private prosecutors' that Gani's testimony, if admitted as the state witness, "can be no doubt...one of absolute necessity," has not been tested. To the best of our knowledge neither the AHRC nor Tulawie's defense counsels, are aware of the details or content of Gani's testimony; thus, giving rise to procedural questions and arbitrariness of his admission to the WPP.

The AHRC has covered the incident, the arrest and trial to-date of Tulawie and further information may be found at the links provided below.

Sun.Star Cagayan de Oro, 14.01.2014

## Marcos-era human rights victims to get P50,000

By Nicole J. Managbanag

AROUND 7,000 victims of human rights violation during the martial law period under the late President Ferdinand Marcos will be receiving their second settlement fund from the Hawaii Federal Court in February, according to American lawyer Robert

A. Swift, lead legal counsel of the claimants [...].

Judge Manuel L. Real who presided over the litigation has approved the second distribution of P50,000 to all claimants eligible for payment on November 6, 2013.



## Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

Claimants are set to receive the amount on February 7, 2014. [...] However, Swift added that if the claimant has been deceased, the direct family members will present a death certificate.

### No payment for counsels

Swift also warned that claimants' legal counsels receive compensation only through the court, thus claimants have no individual obligations to these counsels.

No human rights organizations or other groups are entitled to any portion of the claimants' payment, he added.

Meanwhile, Samahan ng mga Ex-detainees Laban sa Detensyon at Aresto (Selda-10) chairman Jerry Orcullo is grateful over the Hawaii Federal Court decision for acknowledging their effort to compensate those who were victims of human rights violation during the Marcos regime. [...]

Rappler.com, 16.01.2014

## Luisita farmers ask SC: Stop 'bulldozing activities'

By Buena Bernal

MANILA, Philippines - The most famous case study of the country's land reform law faces more enforcement problems.

Farmworker-beneficiaries (FWBs) of the vast Hacienda Luisita cried foul over alleged "illegal acts" done by the Tarlac Development Corporation (TADECO). President Benigno Aquino III belongs to the Cojuangco-Aquino clan owning TADECO. [...]

Farmers' group Alyansa ng mga Manggagawang Bukid sa Asyenda Luisita (AMBALA) petitioned on Thursday, January 16, the Supreme Court (SC) to order a stop to TADECO's "bulldozing and fencing activities" of what they claimed to be farmlands.

The FWBs sought for a legal remedy after [eviction notices were issued to them](#) by TADECO - copies of which were provided to the Court.

The lots in question are residential on paper, with titles named to TADECO.

### 'Land should be ours'

Petitioners, however, insist that the lands are agricultural and should be covered by the [SC's final ruling in 2012 ordering land distribution](#) to 6,000 farmer beneficiaries.

This is because the SC ruling also ordered the Department of

Bulatlat.com, 17.01.2014

## Political prisoner's conviction, a violation of due process - rights advocates

By Ronalyn V. Olea

MANILA - Lawyers and human rights advocates criticized a local court for convicting political prisoner Eduardo Sarmiento for charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives.

Sarmiento's lawyers from the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL) and the Public Interest Law Center (PILC) filed a motion for reconsideration seeking the reversal of the court's decision. Judge Myra Bayot-Quimbao of the Muntinlupa Regional Trial Court Branch 203 sentenced Sarmiento to 20 to 40 years imprisonment.

Sarmiento, a consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) who represented the Eastern Visayas Region in the peace negotiations with the Government of Philippines (GPH), was arrested on February 23, 2009 in Metro Manila.

Sarmiento's lawyers argued that the court committed serious errors of [facts and law in finding Sarmiento guilty of violating Presidential Decree 1866](#) despite the failure of the prosecution to prove the offense charged beyond reasonable doubt, failure of the prosecution to establish the chain of custody of the fragmented grenade, and blindly relying on the presumption of regularity in the performance of official duties over the constitutional right of the accused to be presumed innocent.

The NUPL and PILC also filed second motion for inhibition against Bayot-Quimbao, raising questions on the judge's impartiality.

Orcullo said that "it is sad that while we continue receiving the compensation, the Aquino regime, despite the human rights compensation, recognition and reparation law, has continued to ignore our claims."

[...] Orcullo said they didn't expect this claim, "but we are very thankful for the gesture."

"But in as much as there is the law, we better be serious in implementing it so as not to do another injustice to the victims," Orcullo said.

On the part of the Hawaii Federal Court, Swift assured that if there are more funds that can be collected from the Marcos estate, there is a probability of additional distribution of compensation.

Agrarian Reform (DAR) to determine whether there are other agricultural lands - apart from the 4,335.60 hectares ordered distributed - that are still appropriate for agrarian reform coverage.

Farmers were faced with ejection cases due to the alleged failure of DAR to cover all other agricultural lands of the hacienda.

[...] "Crops, some of them ripe for harvest, were destroyed by TADECO," said AMBALA.

The eviction tactics of TADECO, they told the Court, led to the destruction of the agricultural character of the land. This, they said, was tantamount to premature and illegal conversion. [...]

TADECO is expected to submit to the Court its reply to these charges.

### 'DAR lied to the Court'

AMBALA also filed direct contempt charges against DAR for failing to live up to the SC ruling ordering land distribution, which was twice affirmed. [...]

AMBALA's complaint was prompted by a July 12, 2013 report that stated 4,099 hectares were covered for distribution, instead of the 4,335.60 hectares as ordered by the Court. [...]

Bayot-Quimbao served as Senior State Prosecutor from 2002 to 2009, and was included in the GPH team created by then Justice Secretary Agnes Devanadera tasked to look into the cases of consultants to the peace process.

Thus, "having participated in some discussions on the consultants' cases in the peace process and having taken the position of the government, the presiding judge should have inhibited herself when she was asked for the first time to recuse herself in hearing the case," the counsels argued.[...]

The NUPL said that Sarmiento, being a Joint Agreement on Security and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) holder, is supposedly protected from arrest and detention or persecution to be able to perform his duties in the peace process.

[...] "Sarmiento's conviction, despite glaring evidence to the contrary, may be a sign of government's bad faith in fulfilling its purported commitment to address the peace situation in the country. In the concrete, with such illegal, unfair, and unjust arrests, detention, and conviction of peace consultants - most of whom were tortured - how can we expect to encourage well-meaning people to volunteer and come forward to help in the peace process?" [NUPL secretary-general Edre U. ] Olalia added.

Two other charges against Sarmiento - use of fictitious name and arson - have been dismissed for lack of evidence. [...]

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Sun.Star Davao, 21.01.2014

### Human Rights Body to probe Duterte

By Arianne Caryl N. Casas

DAVAO -- The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) formally informed Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte that it is set to conduct "a fact-finding investigation and legal review" on a series of events said to have violated human rights policy.

In a letter addressed to Duterte dated January 10, CHR chair Loretta Ann Rosales said they have taken note not only of the "I-will-kill-you" statements of Duterte against rice smugglers, but also his "shoot-to-kill" order to police authorities against all criminals entering Davao City, specifically the shootout on the suspected kidnappers of Sally Chua, and summary killings allegedly perpetrated by the so-called "Davao Death Squad."

President Benigno Aquino III, Ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales, Department of Interior and Local Government Secretary Mar Roxas, and Philippine National Police (PNP) Chief Director General Alan Purisima were also furnished with the same letter.

"Accordingly, the Legal and Investigation Office (LIO) of the Commission has been directed to conduct a fact-finding investigation and legal review of this matter, with a view to the filing of charges, if warranted by facts and law, in the Office of the Ombudsman and Office of the President," the two-page letter reads.

[...]

The CHR also included the admission of Duterte on issuing a "[shoot-to-kill" order](#) to law enforcement agencies in Davao City

during the shootout with suspected kidnappers on July last year. "The use of lethal force by the police in that incident is the subject of a separate investigation," Rosales wrote.

[...]

"Simply put, ordering law enforcement officers to 'shoot-to-kill' suspects, or threatening smugglers to leave your area out of their operations, or 'I will kill you' is a no way for a local chief executive to lead. Such comments are sending the wrong signals that invite vigilantism," Rosales added.

Lastly, the LIO, according to Rosales, will look into the progress of the case on the so-called Davao Death Squad killings as per CHR Case Resolution dated June 28, 2012, which was previously referred to the Office of the Ombudsman for proper disposition.

[...]

Duterte fired back and said he is [ready to be sent to jail](#) for the Filipino farmers than "losing billions and billions of pesos and reducing the Filipino farmer to poverty" due to proliferation of rice smuggling.

Duterte on Sunday also hit Justice Secretary Leila de Lima for failing to build a case against suspected smuggler David Tan and insisting that the man is a resident of Davao.

[...] Davao City Vice Mayor Paulo Duterte, for his part, defended his father and told Rosales to just do her job and "shut up."

[...]

## MAGUINDANAO MASSACRE

Sun.Star, 24.01.2014

### Court to release alleged massacre suspect

By Third Anne Peralta

AFTER almost three years of being jailed, a man who was allegedly involved in the high-profile Maguindanao massacre will soon be free as the Quezon City Regional Trial Court (RTC) has issued the order for his release on Thursday.

Jun Aliman, the accused who was previously identified as Sahid Guiamadel, will soon be out of Quezon City Jail Annex as QC RTC branch 221 Judge Jocelyn Solis Reyes instructed the jail warden to release Aliman due to mistaken identity.

Reyes said investigation showed that Aliman is not the same person as Guiamadel.

Guiamadel was among those charged with 58 counts of murder in connection with the massacre in Maguindanao on November 23, 2009.

"Given the value of the undisputed evidence on record emanating from the CIDG officer who at this instance, regularly performed their duties, and who admitted that concerned CIDG personnel erred in effecting the arrest, the court so concludes that the movant (Aliman) is not the accused Guiamadel," read the order.

On November 23, 2013, the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) sent a letter to Reyes stating that Aliman is innocent of any crime and that the real person involved in the Maguindanao massacre was named Arnel Abdullah, who was

separately arrested for the alleged illegal possession of firearms in Sultan Kudarat on February 22, 2012.

Superintendent Benjamin Silo, acting chief of the CIDG investigation division, explained that the PO3 Edgar Dingcong of the Philippine National Police Region 12 (Soccsksargen) who arrested Aliman admitted that he was misled and fooled by his informant. The informant had alleged personal interests and motives against Aliman.

"The arrest of Aliman was anchored primarily on the picture and warrant of arrest against Sahid Guiamadel. It was not supported by any affidavit of identification or any other pertinent documents of identification that Jun P. Aliman and Sahid Guiamadel is one and the same person," Silo said.

Moreover, the investigators said that there were pieces of evidence including sworn statements of various persons supporting that Abdullah is the real Guiamadel.

The prosecution panel [...] said the lack of coordination among various government agencies resulted to the arrest of a wrong person. [...]

Aliman, was arrested on December 14, 2013 in Kidapawan City but was not arraigned for the multiple murder charge since then as he kept on filing motions saying that he is not Guiamadel.

[...]

## PEACE PROCESS

Rappler.com, 09.01.2014

### Aquino seeks Norway's help in peace talks

MANILA, Philippines – President Benigno Aquino III on Thursday, December 9, sought Norway's help in reviving failed peace talks with communist guerrillas, a senior presidential aide said, nearly a year after peace talks hosted by Oslo fell apart.

Aquino met Norwegian Foreign Minister Borge Brende in Manila after the visiting diplomat said Norway remained commit-

ted to mediating negotiations between the government and the National Democratic Front (NDF) in a bid to end the decades-long insurgency.

"While serious problems have confronted and continue to challenge this particular peace process, the president affirmed the government's commitment to pursue a peaceful settlement of all



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internal armed conflict," presidential adviser on the peace process Teresita Deles said after the meeting. [...]

### 'Collapsed' talks

In April 2013, the Aquino government announced that the peace talks being brokered by Norway had collapsed, dampening hopes of a political settlement before the president's 6-year term ends in mid-2016.

Speaking to reporters earlier Thursday, Brende urged the Philippine government and communist rebels to consider returning to the negotiating table in the coming months. [...]

On Sunday, January 5, Luis Jalandoni, the Netherlands-based

MindaNews, 26.01.2014

## Britain, EU, Japan welcome conclusion of GPH-MILF peace talks

MALAYBALAY CITY – The signing on Saturday of the Annex on Normalization and Addendum on Bangsamoro Waters to the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) has continued to gain support from the international community.

After Switzerland, Britain, the European Union (EU) and Japan today issued statements commending the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front for the conclusion of the peace negotiations that is expected to end decades of armed struggle in Mindanao for Moro self-rule.

"The successful conclusion of negotiations between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front for a comprehensive peace agreement is a significant step towards lasting peace and development for Mindanao," British Foreign Secretary William Hague said in a message of congratulation to the Philippines. [...]

The secretary encourages all parties to work toward a "quick and full implementation" of the agreement.

The UK had been attending the talks as a member of the International Contact Group, a support group that includes Japan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey and four international NGOs.

For her part, EU High Representative Catherine Ashton said: "[The] signing of the Annex on Normalization marks the end of a long and difficult process of peace negotiations. It is a truly historic moment, demonstrating the Parties' commitment to achieving long lasting peace on the Philippines' island of Mindanao through a unique and holistic concept of normalization that encompasses the gradual decommissioning of arms, overall demilitarization, and its economic and social development."

"The EU, as a member of the International Monitoring Team and major development partner in Mindanao since 1990, will continue to fully support the implementation of the process. Sustainable peace in Mindanao requires an inclusive approach and all stakeholders, including the Moro National Liberation Front, need to demonstrate their goodwill for long lasting results," Ashton said.

The Foreign Affairs Ministry of Japan likewise commended the successful conclusion of the talks.

"Japan strongly hopes that the parties concerned will continue their efforts to steadily implement the transition process including the enactment of the Bangsamoro Basic Law and the establishment of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority towards the realization of the Bangsamoro Government," it said in a state-

InterAksyon.com, 30.01.2014

## 'PUT DOWN YOUR ARMS' | BIFF rebels invited to join peace process

MANILA – The government peace panel negotiating with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front is inviting members and leaders of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), an MILF splinter group, to take part in the peace process even as [the peace talks were concluded last Saturday](#).

In a statement, Miriam Coronel-Ferrer, head of the government peace panel, said: "We call on the members and the leaders of

chief rebel negotiator, said in a statement to news organisations that the communists held the Aquino government "responsible for stopping the peace process."

He accused the Philippine government of failing to honor agreements between the negotiators, including the release of detained communist rebels.

"Because of the Aquino government's refusal to comply...the prospects this year of the peace negotiations between the Aquino administration and the (rebels) are dim," he said. [...]

### Militant lawmakers air different views on Bangsamoro peace deal

By John Carlo Cahinhinan

TWO party-list lawmakers in the House of Representatives on Tuesday have expressed different views regarding the recently completed peace negotiations between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Akbayan party-list Representative Barry Gutierrez lauded the recent completion of the Bangsamoro framework agreement and noted that the move "is a crucial first step" towards the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the region [...]

The lawmaker said that they are hoping the agreement will soon lead to a conclusion that will end years of unrest and will initiate a sustainable growth and development for the people of Bangsamoro and the entire Mindanao.

He added that they are ready in Congress to take up the challenge of providing the necessary legislative intervention that will provide statutory "teeth" to this historic agreement and flesh to the framework. [...]

Meanwhile, Bayan Muna party-list Representative Carlo Isagani Zarate said that though they are supporting the Aquino Administration's effort in promoting long lasting peace in the southern part of the country, he expressed some doubts that the on-going peace process can be used as a "Trojan horse" by some alleged proponents of the charter change (Chacha) in amending the 1987 Constitution.

"While the GPH (government of the Philippines) and the MILF hailed the completion and signing of the final annex of the framework agreement, we view this development with critical caution as we still have to examine closely the text and context of the present agreement and the proposed basic law that will be submitted to Congress by the Transitional Commission," Zarate said.

He pointed out that the people should guard monitor the proceedings so that the peace deal may not become a stepping stone in amending crucial parts of the constitution.

Sun.Star, 28.01.2014

ment. [...]

The last Annex and the Addendum were signed Saturday in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 15 months after the signing of the FAB in Malacanang.

The Annex on Normalization provides measures for the eventual demobilization of the MILF as a fighting force, and the Addendum on Bangsamoro Waters outlines the delineation and jurisdiction of Bangsamoro waters in the region.

the BIFF to put down their arms and be part of the process. We ask them to listen to the plea of their own brothers and sisters to give peace a chance."

Encounters between military and BIFF forces escalated as soon as news of the conclusion of the peace talks in Kuala Lumpur reached the Philippines.

**How could BIFF forces join in the peace process?**

## Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

"Local government officials are ready to receive those who would like to silence their guns and participate in the different programs we will be undertaking as part of the implementation of the peace agreements," Ferrer said. [...]

Ferrer explained that the ongoing military operations "are geared at degrading the BIFF's capability to continue to cause harm to the government forces, civilians, and the peace process."

In an interview with reporters Tuesday night, she said that the escalation of hostilities was expected.

"Prior to the conduct of the operations, the ceasefire mechanisms of the GPH and the MILF have ensured the safety of civilians in surrounding areas. Relief provisions have been on standby to meet the basic needs of those who have been temporarily displaced," she said in the statement issued Thursday.

"Government and the MILF have taken the necessary steps to ensure that the operations will not spill over to involve MILF combatants or cause unnecessary or prolonged hardship to civilians," she said. [...]

### Mindanao NGO to military: End operations vs BIFF soon

By Angela Casauay

MANILA, Philippines - With thousands displaced by the firefight between government forces and a breakaway group of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a Mindanao-based human rights organization on Thursday, January 30, appealed to authorities to conclude operations as soon as possible.

In a statement, the Mindanao Human Rights Action Center (MinHRAC) said:

"Given the need to cause as little disruption to the lives of civilians and to minimize their anxiety, we appeal that this "police action" be wrapped up immediately or that more proportionate military measures be adopted to undertake this "police action" to address civilian apprehensions about a police action that involves intense artillery shelling for several days."

Based on its ground monitoring operations, MinHRAC said the exchange of gunfire at the checkpoint of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in Bgy Magaslong in Datu Piang has forced residents living in barangays near the town center to evacuate on Thursday.

Close to 4,000 people have been forced to flee their homes due to the military offensive against the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), the [Department of Social Welfare and Development \(DSWD\)](#) said.

As of Thursday, the [military said it had captured the strongholds of the BIFF in Maguindanao](#). At least 40 rebels and 1 soldier have been killed in the firefight.

However, authorities are extending their operation, which was supposed to have ended Wednesday, January 29, to Saturday, February 1, to run after remaining members.

[Fighting erupted between the military and the BIFF](#) hours after the [government signed a peace deal with the MILF in Kuala Lumpur](#). The BIFF wants to pursue an "independent Islamic state."

#### More aid packs needed

MinHRAC also called on authorities to provide additional aid to residents who have been displaced since Monday.

[...] The local government unit of Pikit in North Cotabato has made its calamity funds available for the purchase of relief goods, according to DSWD. [...]

The group also called on authorities to iron out the logistics of distributing relief for displaced families after some families reportedly failed to receive aid packs. [...]

MinHRAC is a member of the Civilian Protection Component of the International Monitoring Team, which monitors the ceasefire agreement between the government and the MILF.

*Rappler.com, 30.01.2014*

#### FURTHER READINGS

Human Rights Watch

### The 2014 World Report: The World's Rights Struggles

On Tuesday, Human Rights Watch released its 2014 World Report, which summarizes key human rights issues in more than 90 countries and territories worldwide. Click [here](#) to view the Philippine Chapter.