



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

HEADLINES NEWS REVIEW MARCH 2014

Headlines & Politics

WOMEN'S DAY Little to celebrate, say militants as Palace hails women's role	2
Tiamzon couple not on list with safe-conduct passes, cannot be released	2
Duterte, Bello to gov't: honor JASIG	3
Minda Catholic bishops urge Aquino to stop Tampakan mining project	3
PH, Germany strengthen ties	3

Calamities & Climate Change

Philippines underscore need to Address Climate Change	4
Keeping an eye on Philippine climate money	4
No-build zone policy displaces 10.8 million people	5

Institutions

Ombudsman orders suspension of CHR Commissioner	5
Poe calls for review of gov't effort to address media killings	6
Anti-mining advocates slam Charter Change	6
Lawmakers eye watered down anti-political dynasty bill	7
Phil's bid for seat in UN Human Rights Council hit	7
Ecumenical group to report gov't neglect of typhoon victims to UN	7
FOI bill passed by Senate	7
'Tedious legal proceedings contribute to impunity'	8
Anti-disappearance law, a failure—Desaparecidos	9

Current Cases of Human Rights Violations

TUMANDOKS RALLY FOR LIFE	9
NPA admits fault in wounding rescuers in Bansalan	9
Landmine attack victim wants NPA to apologize on TV	10
Rights lawyers condemn attacks on brethren	10
Abra probes Ligiw massacre	10
Four arrested and suffered injuries during a forced eviction	11
Rebel's kin slam military's breach of humanitarian law	11
Int'l trade groups condemn killing of Capalla	12
Arrested Bayan sec-gen filing raps against police	12
Activist killed in Cordillera, rights group demands justice	12
Killings, illegal arrest and detention	13
PHILIPPINES: Overt surveillance on a labour leader	13

Updates on Cases of Human Rights Violations

Suspect in murder of Ati tribal leader arrested	14
Dutch's slay case upgraded from homicide to murder	14

Maguindanao Massacre

Prosecution rests case vs Andal Ampatuan Jr, 27 others	14
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Peace Process

Gov't open to resuming peace talks with NDF, but...?	15
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Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

Key points of the CAB	15
Hopes, fears aired on signing of Bangsamoro peace pact	16

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

InterAksyon.com, 08.03.2014

WOMEN'S DAY | Little to celebrate, say militants as Palace hails women's role

MANILA, Philippines - Women found different ways of observing International Women's Day on Saturday (March 8), with militant group Gabriela and the People Surge Alliance of Yolanda Victims marching to the Times Street home of President Benigno Aquino III, thousands forming the feminist symbol at Rizal Park, and rights-oriented groups assailing the administration's "anti-poor" policies that impact women.

In contrast to the militants' combative stance, Malacanang on Saturday acknowledged the role of Filipino women in nation-building, especially in serving as catalysts of hope in times of tragedy. [...]

That upbeat tone aside, at least 200 demonstrators mostly from urban poor areas and the storm-ravaged towns in Leyte swarmed the frontage of the Aquinos' ancestral home in Quezon City to hold Mr. Aquino accountable for what they described the gross government neglect that leaves "multitudes of disaster victims in Leyte" suffering, four months after super typhoon Yolanda.

The protesters also highlighted the "calculated refusal of the President and his cabinet officers" in engaging them when they submitted their 18-point petition last week at Malacañang Palace and the Department of Social Welfare and Development. The typhoon victims were demanding the immediate release of P 40,000 in the petition signed by 17,000 people. [...]

Harder, more dangerous lives

The Aquino presidency "has made lives harder and more dangerous for women, especially those who speak out against rights violations and his anti-poor policies," according to Cristina Palabay, Karapatan secretary general and Tanggol Bayi convenor, on the commemoration of International Women's Day.

Palabay said that "despite the Aquino government's much-ballyhooed declarations on economic growth under his presidency and on the promotion of equality by his administration,

the joblessness rate among women remains high at 35.9% of the labor force, according to the December 2013 survey of the Social Weather Station." These figures, she said, may be higher because many of the unpaid and family workers are women.

She assailed the Public-Private Partnership program's resulting in forced evictions of poor women and their families from the urban poor communities where such projects were implemented. "Poor women also bear the brunt of poverty, as the number of families experiencing hunger in the past years under Aquino has risen," she added.

Kiri Dalena, co-convenor of Tanggol Bayi said, "18 women activists, most of them human rights defenders, have been killed under the Aquino administration. The loss of these women who have valiantly struggled for genuine pro-people change is unforgivable." [...]

Palace cites women in nation-building

[...] Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) Secretary Herminio B. Coloma Jr., in an interview on state-run Radyo ng Bayan, said they not only serve as a foundation to their families but to the communities as well.

[...] He cited how Filipino women have made significant achievements in the country as shown in the World Economic Forum (WEF) where the Philippines was ranked fifth among the countries that support women's rights.

[...] The PCOO chief cited data from the National Statistics Coordination Board which showed that women have higher employment rate than men with 93.8 percent and 92.7 percent, respectively.

He noted there are now more women professionals at 63.8 percent compared to men with 31.7 percent. There are also 52.1 percent of women administrators and executives in their respective companies and agencies.

InterAksyon.com, 24.03.2014

Tiamzon couple not on list with safe-conduct passes, cannot be released - govt peace panel chief

MANILA - Captured top-ranking communist couple Benito and Wilma Tiamzon cannot be released as they are not among those on the list with safe-conduct passes, said Alexander Padilla, head of the government peace panel negotiating with the National Democratic Front.

In an interview over dzMM, Padilla said the NDF, together with the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed group the New People's Army, has terminated peace negotiations with the government. Nevertheless, he said, the government is still open to negotiating with the group.

"[...] They have said that they will wait for the next administration to restart the negotiating process," Padilla said.

He said that this pronouncement was made as late as December 2013, during the CPP's anniversary.

"[...] The government is always ready to talk if the talks are true and serious," he said.

On demand for Tiamzons' release

On the demand of the NDF to release the Tiamzons as a requisite to a return to the negotiating table, Padilla said that over the 27 years of dealing with the NDF, the government has learned not to negotiate this way.

"[...] We cannot always talk only after an arrest...It will not happen," he said.

Padilla said the NDF cannot invoke the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (Jasig) because the lists of CPP-NPA-NDF personalities with safe-conduct passes do not include

the couple.

"[...] There not even the shadow of Wilma and Benito Tiamzon during the negotiations even as we know that they hold top positions in the CPP-NPA," he said.

There are two lists for those with safe-conduct passes: one with real names and the other with aliases; the second list contains pictures and needs verification. Padilla said. The couple's names are not on both lists.

'Tiamzons have only themselves to blame'

In July 2011, both parties agreed to verify the true identities of several dozen alleged NDF consultants on the list of Jasig-protected individuals carrying aliases, Padilla said.

But through no fault of government, the NDF failed to open their own files that purportedly contained the photos and true identities of the said NDF consultants, he said.

This rendered the Jasig inoperative for those using aliases and those who are not directly involved in the peace process.

In a statement issued Sunday, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process said: "If indeed Benito Tiamzon was listed under an alias, he is no longer covered by the Jasig."

"Wilma Austria Tiamzon, on the other hand, jumped bail when she escaped from detention on December 26, 1989, when there were no peace talks, and six years before the Jasig came into effect," it added.

This makes Wilma Tiamzon ineligible for Jasig protection, even if she used her real name on the Jasig protection list.

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Benito Tiamzon is said to be CPP chairman, while Wilma Tiamzon is its secretary-general.

Davao Today.com, 26.03.2014

Minda Catholic bishops, archbishops urge Aquino to stop Tampakan mining project

By Mart d. Sambalud

DAVAO CITY—Catholic prelates in Mindanao have reiterated its opposition to the \$5.9 billion Tampakan mining project in South Cotabato.

Marbel Bishop Dinualdo D. Gutierrez told DavaoToday that “the prelates of Mindanao are hoping that President Aquino will now heed our calls to stop the Tampakan project, discerning on the protection and preservation of the environment and the life of the Lumad inhabitants in South Cotabato.”

“South Cotabato can survive without mining, contrary to government’s claim of economic growth. I am hoping that our letter will get Aquino’s attention,” Gutierrez said. [...]

In the said letter, the Mindanao Bishops said that “the Tampakan project will cause the dislocation of almost 6,000 surface dwellers, mostly B’laans, from their ancestral land is against human right.”

The Bishops also opposed the project because “the threat to food security and human life through the use of cyanide and heavy metals for processing ores is very real.” [...]

Aside from the Roman Catholic Church and anti-mining groups opposing the Tampakan mining project, an online petition on Change.org initiated by Bishop Broderick Pabillo is continuously gaining supporters from netizens.

The “STOP TAMPAKAN MINING PROJECT” marked today its more than 10, 000 individuals who signed the online petition to call on the Aquino government to stop its implementation.

[...] The Tampakan open-pit mining project operated by Sagittarius Mines Inc. will explore 13.5 million metric tons of copper and 15.8 million ounces of gold. The company claimed it can provide P134 billion to the Philippine economy each year.

Anti-mining groups have consistently appealed to halt the project but the Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Philippine Daily Inquirer, 28.03.2014

PH, Germany strengthen ties

By Jerome Aning

MANILA, Philippines—German Minister of State Maria Böhmer called on Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario on Thursday and both discussed bilateral political and economic issues ahead of the 60th anniversary later this year of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Germany and the Philippines.

Böhmer, who is on a visit from March 26 to 28, was one of the foreign dignitaries invited to the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro at Malacañang Thursday.

The Department of Foreign Affairs said this was Böhmer’s first trip to the Philippines, the third country she has visited since assuming her post in December.

Del Rosario and Böhmer “noted with satisfaction” the burgeoning bilateral political and economic relations between their two countries, the DFA said.

Germany is the Philippines’ eighth top trading partner and the top in Europe with \$4.5 billion (about P203 billion) in total trade

Duterte, Bello to gov’t: honor JASIG

By John Rizle L. Saligumba

DAVAO CITY – Mayor Rodrigo Duterte and a former head of the government’s peace panel said that if senior communist leaders Benito Tiamzon and Wilma Austria who were arrested Saturday showed genuine immunity papers, they “should be released” because the government should “honor what we have committed to the people and to the CPP (Communist Party of the Philippines).”

[...] in a phone interview, former government negotiating panel chairman Silvestre H. Bello III, told Davao Today “there is no change in the JASIG because it is still the agreement that governs.”

Asked if the JASIG is only in effect if there is an ongoing peace talks, Bello, now Congress representative of 1-Bap partylist said “the JASIG took effect upon signing by the parties and will be in effect until it is terminated by either party through a written notice.”

“The idea is for them to consult with their forces, so that they go around to talk with their people because they conduct their negotiation with us. In order for them not to be arrested while they are going around, we issued them of a safe conduct pass,” he said.

Bello added that “(i)f somebody is arrested who is a member of their group, and he shows his (safe) conduct pass, then he is covered by the JASIG. If he is illegally arrested, he should be released and government should help in his release.” [...]

Bello said that the NDFP has two lists: one with members bearing real names and another bearing assumed names or aliases.

“With the assumed names, verification is still required but for Wilma, it’s her real name so she is covered by the safe conduct pass,” said Bello.

Earlier, NDFP Negotiating Panel Chairperson Luis Jalandoni said that Austria is a holder of NDFP Document of Identification ND978226 under her real name. Austria holds a Letter of Acknowledgment signed by Bello, which provided that “The above named person is entitled to the safety and immunity guarantees as provided under the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) for the duration of the peace negotiations. You are hereby required to facilitate the safe conduct and free passage of the above named person.”

Jalandoni also said Benito Tiamzon is, likewise, the holder of NDFP Document of Identification ND 978227 under the assumed name “Crising Banaag.” [...]

No leadership vacuum

Meanwhile, the New People’s Army Southern Mindanao Regional Command refuted claims by the AFP that the capture of purported CPP top leaders would mean “doom” for the revolutionary organization as there would be a “leadership vacuum.” NPA-Southern Mindanao Spokesperson Rigoberto F. Sanchez said that they have “(m)ore reasons to advance the people’s war in Southern Mindanao.” [...]

Pursue peace talks

Bello said that in his experience, there had been “withdrawals and postponement” in the peace talks.

“But we were able to revive the talks. On the part of the government, my position is we should continue to pursue the talks to its logical conclusion and that is lasting peace for our country. We should never abandon the talks,” he said.

For his part, Duterte said that communist leaders “are still citizens of this republic (but) who is at war with us.”

has issued an environmental compliance certificate to Sagittarius, a unit of Xstrata, in February last year.

in 2013.

The two officials reaffirmed their commitment to bilateral engagement and cooperation not only in the political field but also in areas such as labor, people-to-people exchanges, investments and the maritime sector.

Germany controls more than 40 percent of the world’s container shipping market, over 50 percent of which is manned by Filipino seamen. The country has been supportive of the Philippines’ efforts to comply with the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping Convention.

Del Rosario expressed the Philippines’ gratitude to Germany for its humanitarian assistance of over 176 million euros (about P 11 billion), noting that 144 million euros (about P8.7 billion) was sourced from private donations.

On labor cooperation, both sides agreed to promote the smooth implementation of the Agreement on the Deployment of Philip-



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pine Healthcare Professionals.

[...] Diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Germany

were formally established on Oct. 8, 1954.

CALAMITIES & CLIMATE CHANGE

Coalition against Trafficking in Women (CATW) - Press Release, 15.03.2014

Philippines underscore need to Address Climate Change as well as Sex Trafficking at UN - CATW-AP

New York – Major stumbling blocks in the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) are climate change and the trafficking in women and children. This was the focus of a jampacked Side Event organized by the Philippine Permanent Mission in New York today, March 12, in cooperation with the Philippines Commission on Women (PCW). In time for the 58th UN Commission on the Status of Women Meeting, the Side Event included speakers from the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) in Asia and Latin America, as well as from the Women's Front (Kvinnefronten) of Norway.

"While climate change affects the entire world, countries in the global South are disproportionately victimized. As in the past, another saddening result of recent disasters in the Philippines is the reported increase in different forms of violence against women, including sex trafficking," according to Jean Enriquez, Executive Director of CATW-Asia Pacific.

This discussion of climate change as part of the context of trafficking is particularly relevant as the UN conference on climate change is also going on right now in Bonn, Germany. "This is relevant because trafficked persons, especially sexually trafficked, ones mostly come from the devastated rural areas, added Enriquez. "They went with recruiters because they have lost their sources of livelihood. It has to be said that the devastated areas were also historically the biggest source of trafficked women and girls in the country as they rank relatively low in human development indices. Poverty, lack of education, lack of job, displacement of farming communities and indigenous ones in Mindanao all form parts of the context of trafficking."

Trafficking in women, in particular, are directed towards the urban areas as well as countries in the North. However, policies to address trafficking are not harmonized around the world. In many South countries, some laws continue to criminalize victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation. On the other hand, many countries in the North legalized the sex industry which receives many trafficked women, thus tolerating the perpetration of abuse against women.

Aurora De Dios, Philippine Representative to the ASEAN Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) emphasized the need to curb the demand as the Philippines figure in the top ten of producers of child pornography. [...] She asserted that the Nordic Model of punishing the buyers has to be legislated in countries in Southeast Asia in envisioning an alternative region.

Agnete Stroem, International Coordinator of Kvinnefronten, which was at the forefront of the decade-long struggle to pass the law punishing prostitution buyers cited the success of the model, "During the ten years implementation of the law in Sweden, a decreasing number of men over 18 years of age have purchased sexual services: from 13,6 % in 1996 to 7,8 % in 2008." In Norway, 334 buyers were arrested, charged and fined in 2009, and 259 buyers were arrested, charged and fined in 2010.

Meanwhile, in the Netherlands and Germany, which legalized buying and pimping, findings show that neither have prostituted women got better conditions in prostitution, nor have more women been able to leave prostitution.

Teresa Ulloa of Mexico reinforced the the assertion that trafficking is exacerbated by disasters, as shown in Haiti. Ulloa presented strategies modeled after CATW-AP projects in the Philippines, to counter the demand side of trafficking, which includes educating young men on sexuality and gender issues.

"If we are to address trafficking therefore, legislation punishing not only the business but also the buyers who dictate the existence of the industry, is imperative," according to Enriquez. "We also have to address the root causes of poverty, landlessness, joblessness, lack of access to public services that are now being privatized such as health and education. We have to address the climate crisis, transform our energy systems. Include violence against women and trafficking in discussing development goals. [...] The fundamentals of inequalities – across regions – on consumption patterns, on asset distribution, on jobs and wages, and on the commodification of women's bodies by patriarchal consciousness and practice." [...]

InterAksyon.com, 17.03.2014

FOLLOWING THE NUMBERS | Keeping an eye on Philippine climate money

By Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities (special to InterAksyon.com)

PART 1 OF A SERIES

The Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities (iCSC) is a non-profit group working on sustainable energy solutions and fair climate policy. iCSC with the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), World Resources Institute (WRI), and Oxfam started the Adaptation Finance Accountability Initiative (AFAI) to track international adaptation finance flows in the Philippines. AFAI is also being implemented in Uganda, Nepal, and Zambia. iCSC also played a critical role in the passage of the People's Survival Fund (PSF), the Philippine national climate fund that will finance adaptation initiatives from local government units and communities.

For many years, the Philippines has consistently been among the countries considered highly vulnerable to climate change.

Ostensibly in order to reduce vulnerability and to increase its ability to adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis, international climate change-related funding has been coursed to the Philippines through national government agencies and non-government organizations.

Also known as adaptation finance, climate funds for adaptation initiatives in the country have increased steadily since 2009. Unfortunately, just like other important funding sources, adaptation finance is limited.

Setting the right priorities is therefore key. [...]

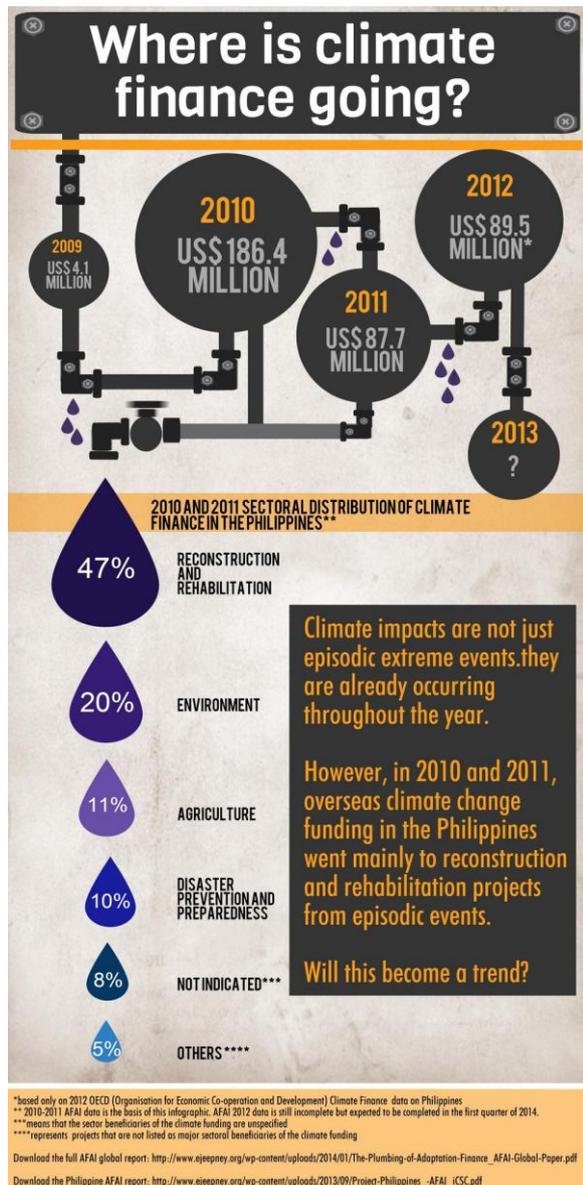
These questions, and more, are the focus of the Adaptation Finance Accountability Initiative in the Philippines.

Led by the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities, in partnership with the World Resources Institute, Overseas Development Institute and Oxfam, the AFAI project examines international adaptation-tagged funding channeled to the country by analyzing allocation and spending patterns, tagging practices, and tracking the deployment of resources down to the local level. [...]

But what activities were supported? Who were the contributing countries and institutions? Which national agency or organization received adaptation funding?

These are important questions.

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MANILA -- The no-build zone policy of rehabilitation chief Panfilo Lacson is a "nightmare" to 100,000 fishermen in Yolanda-affected areas, keeping at least 800,000 people dependent on fishing from their source of livelihood, the fishermen's alliance Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) said in a news release Sunday.

The policy bans the construction of houses 40 meters from sea coasts.

Pamalakaya is thus asking Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Manuel Roxas II to stop Lacson from carrying out the policy intended to keep coastal residents safe from tsunamis and storm surges.

"Secretary Roxas should stop the Office of the President and Ping Lacson from carrying out this all-time high brutality and wholesale disregard of people's rights and welfare. The DILG chief should rise above the occasion and take a decisive stand on

INSTITUTIONS

HRonlinephilippines.com, 28.02.2014

Ombudsman orders suspension of CHR Commissioner-PAHRA

On [...] Feb. 14, 2014, the Office of the Ombudsman ordered an immediate execution of a Preventive Suspension of CHR Com-

[...] These funds were reported by contributor (also called "donor") countries through the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and multilateral and bilateral banks as sources for climate change adaptation initiative funding in the country.

Adaptation to climate change is defined as adjustments made in natural systems to address the potential effects of climate change [...] Interestingly, the current sectoral distribution of climate finance in the Philippines in 2010 and 2011 shows that almost half of the fund has gone to reconstruction and rehabilitation projects, soon after episodic disasters such as typhoon Ondoy in 2009.

The immediate delivery of services after disasters is critical but climatic impacts comprise more than just episodic extreme events.

Slow onset impacts such as changes in a locality's hydrology, incremental increases or reduction in precipitation and average temperatures, sea level rise, and ocean acidification -- these already take place throughout the year in many localities. Mostly unfelt, without the drama of a calamity, these types of impacts are usually neglected.

The result: equal, if not more devastating, long-term effects that can be irreparable based on the magnitude and duration of the effect. [...]

InterAksyon.com, 23.03.2014

No-build zone policy displaces 10.8 million people in Yolanda, non-Yolanda areas - Pamalakaya

the no-dwell zone, no-build zone policy to protect the farmers, the fishermen, and other marginalized people," Pamalakaya said in a statement.

In Panay Island alone, the policy would forcibly dislocate at least 70,000 families or 350,000 people. [...]

Beyond 'Yolanda' areas

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) through the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) would expand the coverage of no-build zone policy from 40 meters to 200 meters to pave the way for eco-tourism projects under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) program, said Pamalakaya chairperson and Anakpawis partylist Rep. Fernando Hicap.

This way, Hicap said, the policy will be carried out to give way to corporate takeover by local and foreign private enterprises and businesses involved in rehabilitation programs and cause severe damage to livelihood and environment.

The policy will also be carried out in Laguna Lake and Manila Bay to justify the construction of a new international airport and other big-time PPP projects in the 90,000-hectare Laguna Lake and provide premium to large-scale and widespread reclamation projects in Manila Bay, Pamalakaya said.

In Laguna Lake, the no-build zone policy will dislocate around 3.9 million people, while in Manila Bay, about 6 million people will be evicted to pave way for big land reclamation projects of the Public Reclamation Authority (PRA), the fishermen's group said.

[...] Last week, Hicap filed a resolution directing the House Committees on Aquaculture and Fisheries and Public Works and Highways to conduct a joint inquiry to investigate the impact of the No Build Zone, No Dwell Zone policy on coastal areas affected by super typhoon Yolanda last year. [...]

missioner Cecilia Rachel V. Quisumbing without pay for the period of six (6) months pending investigation of cases filed



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against her. According to the Ombudsman, preventive suspension can be meted if the evidence of guilt is strong and that the charges involved oppression and grave misconduct which may eventually warrant removal from office. The order shall not be uninterrupted within the prescribed period notwithstanding appeal, motion of petition that may be filed by Com. Quisumbing.

The Office of the Ombudsman is investigating Com. Quisumbing for administrative and criminal cases which stemmed from a formal complaint filed by Ms. Regina Eugenio last September 24, 2013 against her former employer Com. Quisumbing [...]. The complaints were corroborated by three (3) other former co-personnel of Ms. Eugenio.

Another Commissioner of the CHR, Com. Norberto dela Cruz is also facing several complaints from his former driver, Mr. Nemesio Mendoza filed with the Office of Chairperson last 2013 and August 2013 but until now, no substantive actions have been taken by the Commission. The complaints earlier include alleged unfair labor practice and immorality. Later, an incident wherein the Commissioner supposedly punched the complainant in the face within the compound of the Commission. Mr. Mendoza is preparing to file another charge against Com. Dela Cruz.

Philstar.com, 05.03.2014

Poe calls for review of gov't effort to address media killings

By Christina Mendez

MANILA, Philippines - Sen. Grace Poe has filed a resolution calling for a review of government efforts to end media violence in the country.

"Media killings have no place in a democratic country like the Philippines," said Poe in Senate Resolution No. 533.

Under the resolution, the Senate committee on public information and mass media and the committee on justice and human rights are tasked to inquire into government interventions to address media killings and protect journalists.

The senator cited statistics from France-based Reporters Sans

DavaoToday.com, 05.03.2014

Anti-mining advocates slam Charter Change

By John Rizle L. Saligumba

DAVAO CITY – Groups commemorating the 19th year of the passage of the country's law on large-scale mining opposed a Congress bill passed yesterday which allowed changes in the Philippine Constitution such as lifting foreign ownership restrictions.

Save Pantukan Alliance spokesperson Belen Galleto said the Charter change will encourage more foreign large-scale mining projects and "pave the way for foreign control over our natural resources."

For his part, Rep. Neri Colmenares of Bayan Muna partylist said that government should instead "provide capital to local industries, agriculture and businesses because we cannot compete with transnational companies who have large capital and subsidies from their governments."

"[...] Cha-cha will destroy the country with the entry of big foreign mining firms. This would have adverse implications on areas and communities affected by extractive industries, such as mining and logging," said Colmenares.

[...] The Save Pantukan Alliance also marked Wednesday's anniversary with a protest rally in front of the office of US-owned large-scale mining firm St. Augustine Gold & Copper Ltd. The mining firm is operating a 1,656-hectare MPSA (Mineral Production Sharing Agreement) gold and copper concession

The Philippine Star, 07.03.2014

The Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) had been assisting the complainants on their quest for justice against the alleged human rights violations [...].

Max de Mesa, Chairperson of PAHRA, said: "Such incidences of violations, though alleged, by avowed promoters and protectors of human rights, cannot but erode the credibility of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR)."

PAHRA firmly reiterates its call [...]:

- To designate an independent committee of inquiry especially regarding the case against Com. Norberto dela Cruz as well as to recommend measures and actions that would strengthen the CHR;
- To certify as urgent the passage of the new Charter of the CHR with the added provisions on the selection process of the Commissioners and the Mechanism for Transparency and Accountability of the Commissioners and Directors;
- To create a committee that would propose a process of selection for the next new members of the CHR similar to the selection of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

Frontières (Reporters Without Borders) that showed the Philippines ranked 149th out of 180 countries in its Global Press Freedom Index for 2014.

[...] Twelve media practitioners were killed in the Philippines in 2013 alone, bringing a total of 72 deaths since 1992, according to non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch.

In 2009, 32 journalists were among the 58 people kidnapped and massacred in what is now known as the "Maguindanao Massacre," denounced as the single-most horrifying incident of violence against media. The case remains pending in court.

in Pantukan town.

In a statement obtained by Davao Today, the company said that they are "committed to continuing the constant dialogues with the Pantukan community [...], and all those who share our genuine concern for the welfare of Pantukan and its residents."

With regards to the protest, the company "[...] [has] been conducting extensive public consultations in and around Pantukan in order to get the thoughts and opinions of those who will be affected by the proposed operation."

The company also said that they "will be providing opportunities for skills training, livelihood, employment, and even business partnerships" for the small-scale miners who may be affected by their operations "so that they too may benefit from this \$2billion dollar project just as much as the Pantukan community and the country."

In 2010, US-based St. Augustine Gold and Copper Ltd (SAGC) and Russell Mining and Minerals, Inc. (RMMI) was tapped by the National Development Corporation (Nadecor) to fund the \$2-billion Kingking gold and copper project. In 2012, Queensberry Mining & Development Corporation, which is reportedly owned by former Philippine Senator Manuel Villar, invested \$11 million to St. Augustine. [...]

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Lawmakers eye watered down anti-political dynasty bill

By Jess Diaz

MANILA, Philippines - Congressmen-proponents of the ban on political dynasties are watering down their proposal to get it approved by the House of Representatives even before the chamber could start floor debates on it.

"We are eyeing a compromise that would be acceptable to our colleagues so that the bill will have a fighting chance, a better prospect of approval," Caloocan City Rep. Edgar Erice, one of the measure's authors, told a news forum yesterday.

He said the bill, as endorsed by the committee on suffrage and electoral reform, would adversely affect at least 150 or more than half of the 289 House members.

"That is because the proposed dynasty ban covers the spouse, children, sisters and brothers, and grandchildren of an incumbent elective official, whether national or local. With at least 150 House members affected, we are facing a difficult battle," he said.

He said while the bill has been in the list of measures the House is ready to open floor debates on for two weeks now, plenary consideration has not started.

He added that the chamber's leadership is apparently trying to avoid divisive discussions on an admittedly controversial meas-

ure.

Erice revealed that the watered-down version would limit the proposed dynasty ban's coverage by allowing "two members of a political family to occupy elective posts at the same time."

"We will have to define those terms, who are the two family members allowed to be elected and who are the relatives banned from seeking elective office," he said.

He cited the Binays as an example.

Erice, a member of the ruling Liberal Party, said there are four Binays presently occupying elective positions: Vice President Jejomar Binay, Sen. Nancy Binay, Rep. Abigail Binay, and Makati Mayor Junjun Binay.

"Under the present version of the bill, only one of them would be allowed to run. The planned compromise version would allow two," he said.

[...] Erice has asked his party's titular head, President Aquino, to certify the measure as urgent to expedite its approval. However, Aquino has not positively responded to his request.

[...] Erice said their proposal seeks to enforce the provision of the Constitution banning political dynasties. [...]

The Philippine Star, 08.03.2014

Phl's bid for seat in UN Human Rights Council hit

By Artemio Dumlaog

BAGUIO CITY, Philippines - Human rights group Karapatan yesterday slammed the Philippine government's bid for a seat in the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) from 2016 to 2018.

In a statement, Karapatan said the government has no right to be in any mechanism that deals with human rights.

"It has not done anything substantial to improve the country's human rights situation," the group said.

The UNHRC monitors how UN-member states comply with their obligations on international treaties and agreements on human rights.

"The Philippine government has nothing to be proud about its 'superbody' tasked to investigate extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and other rights violations," Karapatan secretary-general Cristina Palabay said.

[...] She cited that when the superbody was created in the last quarter of 2012, there were reportedly 114 documented victims of unexplained killings.

"Now, there are 169 documented cases of extrajudicial killings and 179 frustrated killings," she said.

Inquirer.net, 10.03.2014

FOI bill passed by Senate

MANILA, Philippines - The Senate on Monday passed on third and final reading the Freedom of Information (FOI) bill, Inquirer Radio 990AM said.

Reports said all 21 senators present voted for the approval of Senate Bill no. 1733 or the People's Freedom of Information Act of 2013.

Senator Grace Poe, who sponsored the bill on the plenary floor as chair of the committee on public information, was among the first to announce the news on social media.

"Senate Bill NO 1733 or People's FOI is hereby approved on third and final reading!" she wrote [...].

Senate President Franklin Drilon last year said they would pass the FOI bill by March, after months of interpellation.

Karapatan added that for the first six weeks of this year, there had been seven victims of unexplained killings and "not one perpetrator was punished for these crimes."

EcuVoice - Press Release, 05.03.2014

Ecumenical group to report killings, govt neglect of typhoon victims in PH to UN

The Ecumenical Voice for Human Rights and Peace in the Philippines (EcuVoice), a network of human rights and faith-based organizations, will be participating in the 25th sessions of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland from March 9-20, 2014 to raise the pressing human rights concerns in the Philippines, including the unabated extrajudicial killing of political activists and the Aquino administration's incompetence in addressing the needs of typhoon Yolanda victims.

Pastor Jerome Baris, national coordinator of the justice, peace and human rights program of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, and Atty. Ephraim Cortez, deputy secretary general of the National Union of People's Lawyers, will represent the network in the said UN sessions.

Baris and Cortez are also set to report on the increasing attacks against activists and rights defenders via fabricated charges filed against them by state security forces; killings of children and attacks against schools; on the violent and forced eviction of urban poor dwellers in San Roque, Quezon City and in San Juan City; and the harassment and threats against typhoon victims in the Panay region by units of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

"The human rights situation under the Aquino administration is as worrisome as the situation during the Macapagal-Arroyo administration. Perpetrators from state security forces are not made accountable for their crimes, and much worse, they get juicy promotions, thereby keeping and perpetuating themselves in power. Instead of addressing the people's urgent concerns and needs such as housing, relief and rehabilitation for typhoon victims, education, and livelihood, the Aquino administration suppresses the people's voices through various schemes," Baris and Cortez said.

Under the Aquino administration, human rights group Karapatan recorded 169 victims of extrajudicial killing, 825 victims of illegal arrest, 13,528 victims of demolition and 63,077 victims of threats and harassment. [...]

The delegation is a follow-up engagement to the Universal Periodic Review of the Philippines in 2012 and the review of the Philippine government's compliance to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

However, the FOI bill still has a long way to go before it is passed into law since its counterpart version in the House of Representatives remains stalled at the committee level.

Speaker Feliciano Belmonte promised that the lower chamber would pass the bill before his term ends in 2016.

Advocates of the FOI bill believe it will help improve transpar-



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

ency and accountability in government.

Bulatlat.com, 14.03.2014

'Tedious legal proceedings contribute to impunity' - human rights lawyers

By Janess Ann J. Ellao

MANILA — Former chief justice Reynato Puno, along with human rights advocates and lawyers, said tedious legal proceedings in the country contribute largely to the lack of prosecution and delivering justice to various cases of human rights violations in the country.

The forum, funded by the European Union's Philippine Justice and Support Program II (EPJUST II), looked into the legal proceedings and socio-economic conditions in the country that, they deemed, have contributed to the impunity that persists in cases of human rights violations.

Pamela Fahey of the EPJUST II said the criminal justice system is a network that includes the police investigating the case, the prosecutor that would file the case and the court to deliver justice. "If one would fail," she said, "all the others would fail."

[...] "Not only do you have innocent people in jail but also perpetrators who are free to do other crimes," she added.

Bo Astrom of EPJUST, who joined the fact finding mission to the Philippines back in 2008, said they have noted the varying numbers of human rights violations per organization, the huge backlog in the cases prosecuted, distrust on government forces, how investigation of cases has not followed up on strong evidences needed to ensure prosecution and how no one has been held accountable for the crimes.

"The current situation continues because someone is letting it go," Astrom said.

'Linear' criminal justice system

[...] The Supreme Court, Puno said, has been given great powers to check abuses of other branches of the government and to protect the rights of the people. But a trend, he added, arises as a shift of power from elected government officials to the appointed justices of the judiciary.

Yet, the very same tedious legal proceedings have left many victims and families of victims of human rights violations unable to get the justice they long for.

Fahey, for one, noted that prosecutors in the Philippines are not directly working with police officers investigating the case. Such practice, she said, have resulted to a passing of the buck between the two while the person is in jail waiting for the decision.

If prosecutors would be allowed to work directly with the police, Fahey said, the probable cause needed for a case to prosper could be determined in minutes. Preliminary hearings, which are conducted by the prosecutors to determine probable cause, are no longer needed and this would shorten the legal proceedings.

Bayan Muna Rep. Neri Colmenares said preliminary hearings would not work in cases such as extrajudicial killings as its alleged perpetrators, military enlisted men, usually does not respond to subpoenas, citing the case of Benjamin Bayles, an activist murdered on June 14, 2010.

Bayles was murdered by two suspects who claimed that they were Roger Bahon and Ronnie Caurino. The two claimed they were soldiers when they were apprehended by the police shortly after Bayles was shot. The military, for its part, denied they were soldiers.

"During a budget hearing (in 2011), the AFP was forced to admit that the suspects were members of the military," Colmenares said.

Subpoenas were repeatedly issued to the AFP but, Colmenares said, it was only in 2013 when Adjutant General Alexis Gopico

and Lt. Col. Ricardo Bayhon [testified before the court and identified the suspects as military enlisted men.](#)

Poor investigation

Edra Olalia of the National Union of People's Lawyers said police officers are often "sloppy" in their investigation and that they would even pass on the blame to the victims.

Astrom said that in many cases of human rights violations, there were no evidences to back up the case. The police, he added, also did not receive sufficient training when it comes to the proper conduct of investigating a crime scene.

[...] The common practice of the police, he said, is to merely collect the empty shells used in the killing.

Finding the motive for killing the person, he added, should also guide investigators of the case. [...]

As for the killing of journalists, National Union of Journalists of the Philippines chairperson Rowena Paraan said Task Force Usig is "toothless" as it does not have men of its own to look into cases on the ground.

As a result, the investigation of journalist killings, under Task Force Usig, is only as good as the work done by the police on the ground, Paraan said, adding that, so far, only the hired killers, not the masterminds of journalist killings, have been charged before the court.

The EPJUST II, Astrom said, has provided police investigators with cameras and computers with corresponding software to help them investigate cases. He said that this should give the Philippine National Police no reason not to do its job.

Political will

Olalia said legal proceedings are expensive and inaccessible to the poor [...].

Puno said 95 percent of the problems encountered by victims and families of victims of human rights violations arise from the executive department as shown by the incompetence of the police and the prosecutor not working with the police, which, he added, could be changed by a circular from the Department of Justice.

Colmenares noted that former president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's administration was marred with the following: cheating, stealing and killing. Yet, he added, President Aquino never mentioned his human rights agenda in his four previous state of the nation addresses.

The only time Aquino mentioned human rights, he said, was in 2010, when the president claimed that 50 percent of extrajudicial killings were already on its way to resolution. But, Colmenares said, he was only referring to six cases and that charges for the three cases were already filed before courts.

[...] Colmenares said the problem of violations of human rights emanates from how the elite class has control over the government and that its desire to protect their vested interests would include enacting "anti-people policies."

"These policies would result to dissent. And a government that is intolerant of dissent would violate the rights of the people to protect its policies. Repressing rights is essential in protecting their policies" Colmenares said.

To end human rights violations, Colmenares said, it is important to look into meta-legal actions such as campaigns conducted by progressive organizations and pressures from the international community. [...]

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Desaparecidos – Press Release, 17.03.2014

Anti-disappearance law, a failure – Desaparecidos

"That dog doesn't hunt," said Lorena P. Santos, secretary general of Families of Desaparecidos for Justice, referring to the Anti-Enforced and Involuntary Disappearance Law as another farmer-activist in Roxas City, Isabela was reported missing since February 28.

Romulo de la Cruz is the sixth victim of enforced disappearance since the law was enacted in December 2012. "BS Aquino should also apologize to the public for the persistence of this heinous crime despite the law," Santos said. Based on Karapatan's documentation, there are now 20 victims enforced disappearances under the BS Aquino regime.

Dela Cruz was a member of Agbiag Matusalem Association-Roxas Isabela (AMA-RI), a local farmers' organization affiliated with a progressive Danggayan Dagiti Mannalon iti (Dagami) based in Isabela.

De la Cruz's son and relatives, with the assistance of AMA-RI members, immediately reported the abduction to the San Manuel police station. The police inspected the site of the incident and declared that the case is "outside their jurisdiction because Dagami has 'several rival organizations'.

"Where else will victims and their families seek help when government authorities are not cooperating? The authorities don't

seem to know the law," Santos said.

"The Aquino government takes pride on the Anti-Enforced and Involuntary Disappearance Law as the first in Asia. Yet, not one perpetrator has been prosecuted. Not even the poster boy of impunity, Gen. Jovito Palparan who was already served with a warrant of arrest more than two years ago," Santos added.

Coming from his son's wedding, de la Cruz was driving a motorcycle together with one of the wedding sponsors. His son Romy and his wife were on another motorcycle behind Romulo's when a van suddenly cut them. A man, whose face was covered with a handkerchief, alighted the van and pulled Romulo off the motorcycle. The man said he was a member of the National Bureau of Investigation. The man pushed Romulo inside the van and sped away. Dela Cruz remains missing as of this writing.

Santos noted the BS Aquino government, despite the anti-enforced disappearance law, has not yet signed and ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICCPED), an instrument of the United Nations to prevent enforced disappearances. The ICCPED was adopted in 2006 by the UN General Assembly.

CURRENT CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

PAMANGGAS – Press Release, 27.02.2014

TUMANDOKS RALLY FOR LIFE

By John Ian Alenciaga

ILOILO CITY, PHILIPPINES - Indigenous peoples under TUMANDUK (Indigenous Farmers in Defense of Land and Life) organization held a picket yesterday morning in front of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) office [...], Iloilo City in opposition to the [...] Jalaur mega dam project. [...] the group was joined by members of Panay and Guimaras wide peasant alliance PAMANGGAS, women's group GABRIELA, urban poor settlers KADAMAY, all under the Panay wide alliance of BAYAN-Panay. "We do not need the dam. What will be left of us when our areas are submerged in waters? Where do we live? What will we plant on waters? And how do we live when our life, culture and livelihood is already gone?," cried Reynaldo Giganto, a TUMANDUK council member.

According to Giganto, the project is never and will never favor the indigenous peoples. "The offered 17,000 jobs are just temporary. After that, what is left of us is our land floating on waters." "And if the jobs come, what jobs are we getting but solely odd jobs like masonry, carpentry, and other low-paying jobs that need not college or high school education," he added. On her part, Marevic Aguirre, TUMANDUK chairperson, said that NIA has consistently hidden, limited information and even distorted it in favor of their personal interests.

DavaoToday.com, 05.03.2014

NPA admits fault in wounding rescuers in Bansalan

By John Rizle L. Saligumba

DAVAO CITY - The New People's Army in a statement admitted fault in the wounding of four provincial rescuers in their latest offensive against military forces in Bansalan, Davao del Sur.

In a statement by Spokesperson Rigoberto Sanchez, the New People's Army Southern Mindanao Regional Command issued an "apology" for having "hit an ambulance and injured four rescuers" when it launched a "counter-offensive ambush against the 39th Infantry Battalion March 2 at 7pm."

"We express our deep regret and commiserate with the victims

"In their Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) or in any other meetings, they (NIA) never discussed the issue that tumandok areas will be submerged. But in their submitted feasibility study report to the Korean Export-Import Bank in November 2011, it indicated submerged areas."

The administration's counter arguments were heard yesterday afternoon after the Supreme Court issued a Writ of Kalikasan in October 2013. The high court found the petitioner's case of former Cong. Augusto Syjuco Jr, "sufficient in form and substance". Respondents in the petition were the officials from NIA, NCIP, DENR, NEDA, DA, DAR, DPWH and Sen. Frank Drilon, among others.

"While this office is steady-strong in pursuing the project, they will also expect strong and growing opposition not just from us tumandoks, but the entire Ilonggo and Filipino people as well," Giganto ended.

The hearing made a recess after more than an hour of counter argument presentation. The proponent's group even tried to nullify and dismiss the case but the Court of Appeals stand by its decision that the petitioner's case remains legitimate. The hearing will resume on March 14 in a debate exercise of both sides, in time also for the International Day of Action for Rivers.

from the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council namely Genaro Doronio Dumayas (driver), Bonita dela Cruz (nurse), Arnel Comandante Veloroso and Alberto Simbajon Cabual," said Sanchez.

Sanchez said that "the medical staff and mobile medical units should not have been made target of any attack and whose protection and/or safety is guaranteed under the international humanitarian law."

He also said that they have ordered a "full investigation" and "promise to undertake appropriate measures and impose disci-



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

plinary actions against the responsible NPA unit."

Sanchez said that NPA operatives tasked to discharge the command detonated explosives "failed to distinguish the ambulance from its target, the two military trucks."

[...] Sanchez said that the NPA Regional Command "ordered to extend necessary assistance to civilian victims for their speedy recovery and so that they can get back to their medical/rescue profession in haste."

The NPA, also "assures" that "civilian and/or medical volunteers are not targets of attack and should not be punished in the course of their neutral and humanitarian duties."

But the NPA warns civilian authorities, the medical and rescue individuals and institutions to "refrain from carrying out other tasks that grants advantageous positions to the enemy and adversely forces the Red fighters to assume in active defense."

"We maintain that medical personnel are only guaranteed absolute protection in so far as they remain neutral in the armed conflict. Medical personnel and medical transport should have fixed distinctive signs recognizable at a distance like siren and appropriate lighting, to prevent breach of their protective status whenever they enter areas of armed conflict," Sanchez said.

NUPL - Press Statement, 05.03.2014

Who is safe out there?

Rights lawyers condemn attacks on brethren in the legal profession

The National Union of People's Lawyers (NUPL) expresses its condemnation and serious concern over the killing of three members of the legal profession in just a period of two weeks from February 19 to March 4, 2014 as it relays its heartfelt condolences to the families of Atty. Noel Archival of Cebu City, Judge Reynerio Estacio of Zamboanga City and retired prosecutor Issan Sawadjaan also of Zamboanga City.

All three brethren died violently, a raging manifestation of the impunity in the killings also of judges and lawyers and a shameless indication of the failure of the State to prevent or eradicate the continuing climate of impunity despite official disavowals to the contrary.

Atty. Noel Archival together with his staff were killed reportedly in an ambush on February 19, 2014 while returning to Cebu City from a robbery case hearing he attended in Dumaguete City. They suffered multiple gunshot wounds and the car carrying them had 31 bullet holes. Atty. Archival's family and colleagues believe that the ruthless killing was perpetrated on account of his profession as a practicing lawyer.

Then on February 28, Zamboanga City Regional Trial Court Judge Reynerio Estacio Sr. was attacked and killed reportedly by motorcycle-riding gunmen at Barangay Tugbungan, Zamboanga City while inside his car and was about to leave for work. Judge Estacio sustained four gunshot wounds and died in the hospital. His car bore seven bullet holes.

Only two days ago, yet another member of the profession, retired prosecutor Issan Sawadjaan and his brother were gunned down reportedly by unidentified assailants while laying their sister to rest at a local cemetery in Indanan, Sulu.

All three cold-blooded murders were brazen and perpetrated

Sun.Star Baguio, 11.03.2014

Abra probes Ligiw massacre

By Maria Elena Catajan

ABRA police chief Benjamin Lusad has ordered a thorough investigation on the deaths of the Ligiw clan.

Lusad said the death of Licuben Ligiw, and his sons, Freddie "Fermin" and Edie is an isolated incident and not hampering peace efforts for the province.

The Abra top cop said as soon as the family reported the three Ligiws missing, police immediately went to the area to confirm

Landmine attack victim wants NPA to apologize on TV

By Carmela Fonbuena

DIGOS CITY, Philippines - A civilian victim of the [landmine attack staged by the New People's Army \(NPA\)](#) in Davao Del Sur is not satisfied with the [statement of apology](#) by the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

"I want a TV apology," said Arnel Valleroso, 42, a responder for the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (PDRRMC) who was among the 5 civilians hurt in the landmine attack.

"I want the spokesperson to apologize on TV so that the message is clear. Why did they do that to us? They signed an agreement that they will not hurt civilians," he said on Friday, March 7.

Valleroso was aboard a PDRRMC ambulance, the worst hit among 3 ambulances hit by NPA landmines in Davao Del Sur. Shrapnels hit his neck.

The 2 other vehicles were a Red Cross ambulance and a military ambulance that were on their way to assist soldiers earlier hit by landmines on Sunday, March 2. [...]

Rhoderick Parayno of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Human Rights Office said: "It is shocking. This is a clear violation of the international humanitarian law. We have the law RA 9851. It specifies the protection of civilians." (READ: [Landmines: A poor man's weapon](#))

The [Commission on Human Rights](#) and the Office of the Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process (OPAPP) have also condemned the attack.

Rappler.com, 07.03.2014

with the use of guns in broad daylight and most likely carried out in connection with the exercise of their profession. The killings and the manner in which they were executed not only sends a chilling effect to the members of the bar and of the bench, it also yet again reveals the inability of the government to suppress lawlessness and to protect judges and lawyers.

The killings must really end. Impunity must be met with strong resolve to hold those responsible accountable. Towards this end and in order to send a clear and determined message to the perpetrators and their masterminds, all pending cases of killings of lawyers and judges must be thoroughly investigated and tenaciously prosecuted with dispatch and those accountable be held to account.

We shall cooperate with the Supreme Court, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines Peers Committee as well as the Lawyers for Lawyers, Judges for Judges and the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL), among others, in exploring more effective ways to confront these attacks. Since the time of the Counsels for the Defense of Lawyers (CODAL) in 2005 up to the formation of the NUPL in 2007, the running list of attacks on lawyers and judges remains a source of renewed concern.

We ourselves who are exposed to daily conflicts especially between the high and mighty and the poor and oppressed have periodically been the target of vicious attacks in many forms. [...] Yet it is no comfort that we have been gratuitously called "an enemy of the state" by a sore Army general in reaction to our valid criticism. [...] Our fallen colleagues must be given justice and justice must be swift so that those who rely on the profession in the pursuit of justice will not lose faith. [...]

reports and the next day found the graves of where the three were buried.

According to a report by the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance (CHRA), the Ligiws were reported missing by their family on March 6, and were found after a search on March 7, buried in a shallow grave near their hut at Baay-Licuan, Abra. The family is a member of the Binongan tribe.

Lusad said the Abra Cordillera Laboratory as well as the CIDG and



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

the Philippine Army have combined forces to locate the gravesite and conduct an investigation.

The CHRA report meanwhile said, "They were bound and gagged, and placed unceremoniously on top of one another and has tagged members of the (Army's) 41st IB (Infantry Battalion) as suspect in the killings who are said to be conducting operations in the area when the Ligiws were last sighted on March 2." Lusad said an investigation on the death of the Ligiws is ongoing gathering witnesses as well as dialogs with the elders of the town.

Kalipunan ng mga Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas (KAMP) spokesperson Piya Macling Malayao in a statement said, [...] "The Ligiws are civilians, but are a thorn in their side, because of the family's involvement in organizations that condemned the militarization and human rights violations exacted

by the AFP to the people in the province,"[...].

KAMP said Fermin Ligiw was due to file on March 4 a human rights violation report to the CHRA after he was used as a guide to aid the military in pursuing members of the New People's Army.

"These slays top the headcount of extrajudicial killings of indigenous peoples. There is no end to the military's brutality against the indigenous peoples and the Filipino people fighting for their rights. We condemn the massacre of the Ligiw family, and demand the pullout of the military in indigenous communities in Abra," added Malayao.

[...] Fermin [was] a member of activist group Anakbayan while all of the three are members of KASTAN (Kakailian Salakniban Tay Amin ti Nagtaudan), the provincial chapter of Cordillera Peoples' Alliance (CPA) in Abra. [...]

HRonlineph.com, 14.03.2014

Four members of a local community organization were arrested and suffered injuries during a forced eviction

[...] **Account of the Incident:**

Four members of a local community organization were arrested and suffered injuries during a forced eviction of around 21 families last March 12, 2014, 8:00am, in Muntinlupa City.

Dondito Albasin, Sr., 56; Michael Poticar, 39; Alberto Jojo Llantada, 21; Virginia Barrios, 28, were arrested arbitrarily and charged with obstruction of justice by the police.

Before they were arrested at around 8:30am, Albasin the current president of the neighborhood association (affiliated with the national organization of 'urban-poor' communities named, Kongreso ng Pagkakaisa ng mga Maralitang taga-Lungsod), together with other officers and residents [...], were negotiating with the demolition team and the police to postpone the eviction of houses [...]. Albasin asserted that they already talked and discussed the matter with the city officials and representatives of the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (PCUP). Albasin claimed that based on agreement, authorities allowed them to have an ample time to prepare for their eventual relocation. In fact according to Albasin, all stakeholders agreed that the demolition will push through on April 7, 2014. [...]

While the negotiation still ongoing, several stones and debris were thrown by unidentified persons at the location where the said dialogue was being held. At that very moment, the police around 200 of them including members of the Special Weapons And Tactics (SWAT) which were carrying automatic rifles reacted aggressively which started the violence, according to the residents.

Albasin was grabbed by his shoulders and shirt by police officers and pushed towards the pavement. He was kicked on his legs. Another police hit Albasin using the muzzle of the rifle to his chest and armpit. Llantada on the other hand was punched on his lips and hit using a hard object at the back of the head.

Meanwhile, Poticar was pulled and held inside a police patrol car where he was beaten by an intelligence officer, said by witnesses. Barrios (Virginia) while pacifying and calming her parents, was grabbed and pulled by a police. She fainted during the scuffle. The four of them were handcuffed and brought to the Muntinlupa City police station at around 10am.

Several other residents were hurt and also suffered injuries [...].

[...] According to the victims, most of the police had no name tags for their identification. They only identified a few [...].

[...] the demolition crew eventually started the tearing down of shanties but exceeded to other houses installed not covered with the supposed court order.

Upon Intervention

At the Police station, Albasin, Poticar, Llantada and Barrios were first brought to the intelligence section office, but were later on transferred to the investigation unit. According to them, they were not given food nor allowed to buy for themselves. Until, the staff of Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP) came at 3:30pm and bought them food for their late lunch.

[...] The police only removed their handcuffs around 10:00pm. Small abrasion markings were seen due to tight handcuffs made. Early on, the TFDP staff pleaded for the provisional release of Albasin, Poticar, Llantada and Barrios since there were no complainants and their case has not been recorded yet. The police denied the request. [...]

TFDP staff reminded the duty officers that [...] arrested person(s) shall be presented for some legal ground to the proper judicial authorities within the periods of twelve (12) hours. [...]

Their case was only booked past 10:00pm. Later on they were brought inside a detention cell.

The inquest only proceeded the following day March 13, 2014 and a case of obstruction of justice is filed against the four.

Bulatlat.com, 14.03.2014

Rebel's kin slam military's breach of humanitarian law

By Janess Ann J. Ellao

MANILA — [...]

How and why Roberto decided to become a member of the New People's Army, the armed wing of the Communist Party of Philippines, Gene [Campaner, his brother,] said he does not know.

On March 1, 2014, Roberto was shot in front of a house in Sto. Nino Ibaba, Lopez, Quezon at around 9:00 a.m., following a confrontation with three men who introduced themselves as soldiers.

Witnesses said Roberto has already signaled his surrender when he put down his gun but one of the three soldiers continued to

fire at him. The gunshot wounds Roberto sustained, witnesses said, were not fatal. But his remains were soon found in a hospital morgue bearing more wounds than what witnesses saw. Roberto was 42 years old.

"[...] when we learned that he was still alive when he was taken by the soldiers and the police and ended up dead while in their custody, we are determined to fight for justice," Gene said.

In a press conference, Gene, along with members of human rights group Karapatan - Southern Tagalog, slammed the military's violation of International Humanitarian Law and the rights of persons hors de combat. International Humanitarian



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Law prohibits attacks on persons recognized as hors de combat:
a) anyone who is in the power of an adverse party;
b) anyone who is defenceless because of unconsciousness, shipwreck, wounds or sickness; or
c) anyone who clearly expresses an intention to surrender;
Gene said his brother should have been brought to the hospital. "He should have been given the chance to face the charges that would be filed against him. But he was not given that chance," Gene said. [...]

IHL violation

Inquirer Visayas, 21.03.2014

Int'l trade groups condemn killing of Capalla

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.

ILOILO CITY – International fair trade groups have condemned the killing of the head of the Panay Fair Trade Center (PFTC) and expressed support to his family and friends' quest for justice for him.

Rudi Dalvai, president of the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO), said he was shocked and saddened by the killing of Romeo Capalla.

"Our dear friend Romeo has given his life fighting for the civil and human rights of small farmers and their families. We are with you in this time of deep sorrow and hope that the death of Romeo will be given legal justice," he said in a letter to the PFTC.

The Netherlands-based WFTO is the global organization of more than 200 fair trade groups including producers, marketers, exporters, importers, wholesalers and retailers.

In a statement posted on their websites, the Altromercato consortium, Italy's leading fair trade organization and the Assembla Generale Italiana Del Commercio Equivo E Solidale (Association of Fair Trade Organizations in Italy or Agices) also condemned Capalla's killing and voiced support for his family and those being served by the PFTC.

Unidentified men gunned down Capalla on March 15, in front of the public market of Oton town in Iloilo, about 7 kilometers south of Iloilo City.

Visayan Daily Star, 24.03.2014

Arrested Bayan sec-gen filing raps against police

By Shiela Gelera

The secretary general of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan will file charges against policemen who arrested him Wednesday and those who failed to serve him the subpoena from the court for his maltreatment charges.

Christian Tuayon, and several progressive organizations in Negros Occidental, said yesterday in a press conference [...] that they condemn the continued arrests of their members.

Tuayon said they want to sue those who neglected their duty that resulted in his arrest on Wednesday, which caused his about 29 hours detention at the Police Station 2.

He also said they [...] are still preparing the charges to file against them.

He claimed that the officer who served him the bench warrant at the Hall of Justice in Bacolod, and arrested him afterwards, had not told him his rights, and that they did not present him immediately in court.

Bulatlat.com, 26.03.2014

Activist killed in Cordillera, rights group demands justice

By Janess Ann J. Ellao

MANILA – Activist William Bugatti was killed at around 7 p.m. along the Ifugao Highway in Bolog, Kiangan. He sustained three gunshot wounds.

As of this writing, the circumstances regarding the killing of

[...] Glen Malabanan of Karapatan-Southern Tagalog said they have already informed the Commission on Human Rights about the incident.

Malabanan said, "We will file charges against the 85th IBPA for violating the rights of a person hors de combat. No matter who that person is, even if he is a member of NPA or whatever his affiliations are, his or her rights should always be protected." [...]

Policemen, who were in the municipal police station 50 meters from the market, failed to catch the gunmen who fled on motorcycles along with several others believed to be lookouts.

Capalla, 65, and younger brother of Davao Archbishop Emeritus Fernando Capalla, was chair of the PFTC and had served as its manager for 12 years.

Investigators have still not identified the assailants and determined the motive of the killing but militant groups have accused "death squads" operated by the military as behind the killing especially because Capalla has been repeatedly tagged as a top leader of the New People's Army.

This allegation has been repeatedly denied by military officials who have offered help in investigating the killing.

In its statement, the Altromercato and Agices said Capalla's killing was the latest in a string of murders that target human and civil rights advocates in the Philippines. They also cited the continued killing of journalists in the country as a sign of impunity.

The Hong Kong-based Fair-and-Healthy of the FM International Resources Ltd. also expressed solidarity with and offered prayer for Capalla's family.

In a separate letter to the PFTC, the Seoul-based iCOOP Korea said it supports the center in the call to "arrest criminals who have committed atrocious acts." [...]

Station 2 chief, Senior Insp. Jovil Sedel, meanwhile told the DAILY STAR that the document given to them to be served to Tuayon was a "warrant of arrest".

They temporarily detained him at their lock-up cell while waiting for the action to be taken by his lawyer, who was still filing the motion for reconsideration then, Sedel added.

Kilusang Mayo Uno-Negros leader Ronald Ian Evidente, who was at the press conference, said that a person arrested by virtue of a bench warrant, should be presented to the court that has jurisdiction over his case, so he can manifest that he will attend future hearings, not jail him.

Tuayon's lawyer, Cesar Beloria Sr., had filed a motion to quash the warrant of arrest and a motion for reconsideration before the Municipal Trial Court in Cities Branch 1.

Tuayon was released Thursday afternoon [...].

Bugatti is not yet clear.

Bugatti is the 12th activist killed this year. [...]

Bugatti's name appeared in a military document titled "Municipality of Tinoc (Target Persons)," which the Cordillera Human



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

Rights Alliance [managed to secure a copy of in October 2012](#).

The two-page document, which bears the logo of the 86th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army and the 5th Infantry Division, contains 28 civilian names, their addresses, their organizations or affiliations and their alleged role in the armed struggle. These include "nagbibigay ng pagkain sa NPA" (gives food to NPA), "tulugan ng NPA ang kanilang bahay" (where members of NPA sleep), "imbakan ng baril" (storage place for guns), "kumander ng NPA" (NPA commander), among others.

Bugatti, whose name was 21st in the list, was listed a human rights officer and tagged as "utak ng NPA" (brains of the NPA). The Cordillera Human Rights Alliance (CHRA) said in its statement that Bugatti was a Tuwali and a human rights advocate. He was a regional council member of the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance-Karapatan and of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance. Bugatti was the provincial coordinator of Bayan Muna partylist.

Cristina Palabay, secretary general of Karapatan, said Bugatti

hosted the visit in Ifugao of international delegates of the International Conference on Human Rights and Peace last July 2013.

Harassment

[In a previous *Bulatlat.com* report](#), Bugatti revealed that there were incidents of surveillance and harassment against him.

Bugatti, the paralegal officer of Cordillera Human Rights Alliance, was "barred several times from visiting political detainees at the Ifugao Provincial Jail. The jail warden claimed that there is a 'Regional Memorandum' stating that Bugatti is not allowed to enter the jail and visit the political detainees."

Aside from Bugatti, Jude Baggio, secretary general of the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance, was also receiving text messages warning him that he would be arrested if he will not stop joining political activities.

[The Cordillera Human Rights Alliance said in the report](#) that they have reliable sources that verified that these messages were from state security forces. [...]

Karapatan-Press Release, 28.03.2014

Killings, illegal arrest and detention: BS Aquino's kind of peace – Karapatan

January 03, 2014 – MONTERONA, Marcelo, 41, Farmer, Indug Kautawan, Maco, Compostela Valley

January 12, 2014 – TOLENTINO, Antonio, 62, Farmer, Aniban, Hacienda Dolores, Porac, Pampanga

January 30, 2014 – ORBINA, Henry, Worker, Cabadian, Sorsogon

January 31, 2014 – AMBONGAN, Datu Rolando, 39, Higaonon tribe, Katribu Partylist member, Buenavista, Agusan del Norte

February 05, 2014 – LAURON, Julieta, 41, Farmer, Kasama - Bukidnon, Valencia, Bukidnon

February 06, 2014 – RAYTERAN, Rosaldo, Driver, Albay People's Org, Libon, Albay

February 06, 2014 – RAYTERAN, Rasty, 18, Youth, Libon, Albay

February 18, 2014 – ARCHIVAL, Noel, 53, Lawyer, Dalaguette, Cebu

February 18, 2014 – MIÑOZA, Candido, 47, Archival's aide, Dalaguette, Cebu

February 18, 2014 – JAYME, Alejandro, 45, Archival's driver, Dalaguette, Cebu

March 03, 2014 – LIGIW, Fermin, 29, Binongan-Tinguian tribe, Anakbayan/Kastan (CPA provincial chapter), Baay-Licuan, Abra

March 03, 2014 – LIGIW, Eddie, 45, Binongan-Tinguian tribe, Kastan, Baay-Licuan, Abra

March 03, 2014 – LIGIW, Licuben, 77, Binongan-Tinguian tribe,

Kastan, Baay-Licuan, Abra

March 15, 2014 – CAPALLA, Romeo, 65, entrepreneur, PFTC, SELDA, Oton, Iloilo

March 22, 2014 – LUBIANO, Julio, 31, Small-scale miner, Caramoan, Camarines Sur

March 22, 2014 – LUBIANO, Rene, 28, Small-scale miner, Caramoan, Camarines Sur

March 22, 2014 – VIRTUS, Salem, 24, Small-scale miner, Caramoan, Camarines Sur

March 22, 2014 – BRONDIA, Jesse, 35, Small-scale miner, Caramoan, Camarines Sur

March 25, 2014 – BUGATTI, William, 43, CHRA, CPA, BM provincial coordinator, Kiangan, Ifugao

"These are names of 19 people killed as a result of BS Aquino government's killing frenzy in the first 13 weeks of 2014. This is the kind of peace the Aquino government pursues desperately to silence the vocal critics of his anti-people governance," said Karapatan secretary general Cristina Palabay.

Palabay said, for the same period Karapatan also documented 43 victims of illegal arrests and detention based on fabricated criminal charges, "but the BS Aquino and his cohorts never ever acknowledged these human rights violations committed by the armed forces. Instead, the Aquino government continues to brag about and propagate lies that peace means people keeping mum and submitting to its policies and programs that spell death to the majority of the poor Filipinos." [...]

Asian Human Rights Commission - Urgent Alert Programme, 28.03.2014

PHILIPPINES: Overt surveillance on a labour leader

Dear Friends,

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) writes to inform you that a labour leader has been under surveillance. The person concerned is actively involved in the campaign for justice for the illegally dismissed workers of Toyota. The perpetrators introduce themselves as agents of the National Bureau of Investigation.

CASE DETAILS: (Based on the documentation by Defend Job Philippines -DJP-)

On 18 March 2014 at 2pm, Ed Cubelo's nephew, Mark Christopher (MC) Nolos, informed him that a man was looking for someone from Toyota. Ed told his daughter, Jenny, to go downstairs to check and then followed her because it might be a mail messenger who occasionally delivers letters or documents from the International Labour Organization or from [...] members of

the Toyota Motor Philippines Corporation Workers Association (TMPCWA), union of Toyota Motor Workers.

When Ed was downstairs he saw a man, age 45-50 years old, with tough and big body. The man was talking to Jenny and to Mark. The man asked Jenny if there was someone from Toyota in their house. Jenny asked the man for the name of the person he was looking for. Then another man of the same physique went near at the gate of the house.

Ed asked the two men what they wanted. Then the man called another man who was standing at the store and another one went near at the gate. There were four men wearing civilian clothes but armed with pistols who were standing in front of the gate. [...]

Ed then asked the men who are they and they answered that they were from the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI). [...] When the men asked yet again Ed replied that there had been



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

someone who was formerly from Toyota. [...] Ed replied that the person's name was Ed. Then the man firmly said "Ahh, it's you! Yes, it's you." [...] The four men kept on looking at Ed while slowly moving away from the house. [...]

More than a week before the incident, four men were also caught doing surveillance during a protest action of TMPCWA and Defend Job Philippines at the Department of Labor and Employment, Intramuros, Manila on March 5, 2014

Ed Cubelo believes that this recent incident aims to stop him, TMPCWA and Defend Job Philippines in the continuing campaign for justice for the 237 illegally dismissed workers of Toyota. It also aims to stop the strengthening and broadening unity of other workers who have the same experience and struggle against precarious work and all forms of persecution such as in Philippine Airlines, ABS CBN, Advan Shoes, Print Town, Pepsi Cola, Carina Apparel and others. [...]

The Defend Job Philippines has denounced the recent harassment to Ed Cubelo and believe that this is part of the criminalization of trade union leaders and human rights defenders. [...]

Previously, Renante Gamara, Roy Velez and Amelita Bravante of KMU NCR, Randy Vegas at Raul Camposano of COURAGE are facing trumped up charges. Gamara, Vegas and Camposano are currently detained. Such fabricated charges are also experi-

enced by many human rights defenders from various sectors. The DJP is highly concerned that this harassment against Ed Cubelo will lead to another fabricated charges and warrant of arrest or possible his extrajudicial killing. [...]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Sometime in year 2000 at the height of organizing and struggling for a union inside Toyota factory, Ed Cubelo first experienced threat, harassment and intimidation. Armed men who identified themselves as PSG or Presidential Security Group went to his house and asked for his whereabouts. It was followed sometime in 2007 and 2008 by persons riding in tandem motorcycles roaming around at his place and looking for him.

Also, sometime in 2008, the 202nd infantry unifier brigade camped beside the office of TMPCWA in Sta. Rosa, Laguna. Every day, the military were looking for Ed and other leaders of the union. During the International Labor Organization High Level Mission in the Philippines on 2009, the harassment against Ed Cubelo and to TMPCWA was one of the major agenda of the mission. Months after the ILO HLM, a recommendation to the Philippine Government was issued to ensure the safety and protection of Ed Cubelo and TMPCWA against all forms police and military harassment, criminalization and persecution.

UPDATES ON CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Rappler.com, 05.03.2014

Suspect in murder of Ati tribal leader arrested

MANILA, Philippines – The manhunt for the suspected killer of Ati tribal leader Dexter Condez ended Monday, March 3, after members of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Commission (PAOCC) arrested the suspect in Laguna.

In a statement released Wednesday, March 5, PAOCC executive director Chief Superintendent Reginald D. Villasanta said the suspect, identified as Daniel Celestino, was nabbed as he was about to leave his hideout in Barangay Palasan, Sta. Cruz, Laguna.

Celestino, a security guard of a Boracay hotel, is currently being held at the Laguna Police Provincial Office.

[Celestino allegedly shot dead Condez, spokesman of the Boracay Ati Tribal Organization, on February 22, 2013](#), while the latter was on his way home from a meeting.

Murder charges were filed against Celestino after an investigation of Aklan police. Judge Domingo L. Casiple of the Kalibo Regional Trial Court Branch 7 did not recommend bail when he

issued the warrant for Celestino's arrest.

Security guards spreading terror

A PAOCC investigation revealed that Condez' murder may be linked to the dispute over prime Boracay Island property.

The Ati tribe has been fighting for their rights to over 2.1 hectares of land in Brgy Manoc-Manoc in Boracay. Three families – the Banicos, the Sansons, and the Gelitos – are also staking a claim on the land.

The National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP) has already awarded the tribe with a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title over the land but [armed security guards of a businessman allegedly wrecked a perimeter fence surrounding the community](#). The PNP has since dispatched more policemen to the area.

The PAOCC earlier reported acts of violence and harassment against the Ati tribe, usually by armed security guards. The owner of the hotel where Celestino used to work is believed to be one of the claimants of the land. [...]

Philippine Daily Inquirer, 19.03.2014

Dutch's slay case upgraded from homicide to murder

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO, Philippines – The Department of Justice (DOJ) has approved the upgrade of the case filed in the 2012 killing of Dutch activist Wilhelmus Geertman from robbery and homicide to murder and robbery.

In a resolution on March 10 and received by the National Union of People's Lawyers (NUPL) on March 17, Justice Undersecretary Leah Tanodra-Armamento directed the city prosecutor here to withdraw the information for robbery and homicide.

Armamento also ordered the filing of corresponding information for the separate crimes of murder and robbery against Harold de la Cruz, Marvin Marzan and several unidentified suspects in the killing of Geertman, 67. Geertman was shot and

killed at his office in the L&S Subdivision here on July 3, 2012.

The change in the nature of the cases came as a response to a petition for review by Geertman's girlfriend, Aurora Santiago, who is assisted by the NUPL.

The alleged involvement of policemen in the murder was referred to the National Bureau of Investigation for further investigation.

The arrest of a man identified as Marvin Marzan Nuguid was expected to move the case forward, said lawyer Edre Olalia, NUPL president.

Olalia said Marzan and Nuguid were "one and the same." [...]

MAGUINDANAO MASSACRE

Rappler.com, 04.03.2014

Prosecution rests case vs Andal Ampatuan Jr, 27 others

By Buena Bernal

MANILA, Philippines – The trial against alleged perpetrators of

the infamous Maguindanao massacre is one step closer to reso-



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

lution.

In a manifestation released Tuesday, March 4, the prosecution rested its case against Datu Andal "Unsay" Ampatuan Jr and 27 other suspects in the brutal killing of media men, lawyers, relatives, and supporters of an Ampatuan political rival, Esmal Mangudadatu.

Andal Ampatuan Jr allegedly led the gunning down on November 23, 2009, of at least 58 victims, including 32 journalists. Their bodies were dug out in a mass grave in Sitio Masalay, Ampatuan, Maguindanao.

The prosecution terminated the presentation of its primary evidence in support of the cases against [...] Datu Andal "Unsay" Ampatuan, Jr [and 27 others] [...].

The panel of prosecutors, however, said it is not ready to rest its case against 76 other accused due to pending appeals to have the testimonies of certain "vital" witnesses to be admitted in court

and pending the resolution of a motion to have a police inspector as state witness.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) is [under marching orders from President Benigno Aquino III](#) to have the suspects in the massacre convicted before his term ends in 2016.

Justice Secretary Leila de Lima earlier said the Ampatuan massacre is seen "as the single most important case" needed to be resolved to show the public the government is serious in putting an end to the culture of impunity afflicting the country. [...]

A 2014 survey shows the Aquino administration registered a -26% net satisfaction ratings in resolving the massacre, [considered a sore point](#) in his "unchartered popularity" of +51% in over-all satisfaction ratings.

The Ampatuans has been the ruling clan in Maguindanao for decades, allegedly expanding their influence by rigging elections in favor of former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

PEACE PROCESS

The Philippine Star, 27.03.2014

Gov't open to resuming peace talks with NDF, but...'

By Sheila Crisostomo

MANILA, Philippines - Government peace panel chief Alexander Padilla clarified yesterday that the Aquino administration is open to resuming the peace talks with the communist-led National Democratic Front (NDF), provided it would not be about the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG).

"We are always open but they should have a concrete and serious initiative. [...]," Padilla told The STAR.

Padilla noted that he had a "very informal" talk with NDF founder Luis Jalandoni when the rebel leader was in the country last month regarding the possibility of resuming the peace talks. But Jalandoni, he claimed, was seeking the reconstruction of the JASIG list.

"That's what they want to happen since the JASIG list is now

inoperative. They want to talk about a new list. Right there and then I rejected it because I knew what would happen. They would include in the list those who have already been arrested," Padilla added.

He said the government would go back to the negotiating table only if the talks will be on ceasefire or reduction of violence and rehabilitation projects in the community.

"What we want to achieve is a ceasefire, you can call it also a truce, whatever. Whether they can retain their firearms or they will surrender, whatever. But we want the violence minimized. We have been asking them to stop using landmines ... and to stop attacking civilians and stop putting buses on fire," he added. [...]

InterAksyon.com, 27.03.2014

Key points of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro

MANILA, Philippines -- The Moro Islamic Liberation Front is set to end four decades of armed struggle when it signed the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro with the government on Thursday.

Here are key facts about the peace pact:

MILF:

The MILF has about 10,000 armed followers, according to the military [...].

It has long fought for an independent homeland for the nation's Muslim minority to be carved out of the southern Philippines.

It split in the 1970s from the then main rebel group, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The MNLF had agreed to autonomy, and founding MILF leader Hashim Salamat was intent on fighting for independence. Internal rivalries were another reason for the split.

PEACE PACT:

The "Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro."

The Bangsamoro refers to people who at the time of Spanish conquest and colonization were considered natives or original inhabitants of the southern Philippines. Their descendants and spouses are recognized as Bangsamoro.

Bangsa means nation. Moro derives from the term "Moors" used by Spanish colonialists to refer to Muslims.

AUTONOMY:

The MILF has dropped its claims for a separate state in Mindanao and will settle for parliamentary self-rule in the Bangsamoro autonomous region. This will be established by 2016.

The Bangsamoro will replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which was created through the peace agreement

with the Moro National Liberation Front but which government says has failed.

DISARMAMENT:

The MILF will "gradually" decommission its forces and put the weapons "beyond use." A local Bangsamoro police force will assume law enforcement functions from the Philippine National Police and military.

POWERS:

The Philippine government will retain exclusive powers over defense, foreign policy, currency and citizenship matters.

TAXES/REVENUES:

The autonomous government will receive 75 percent of all local taxes, fees and charges, 75 percent of revenues from metallic minerals and control of fishing areas up to 12 nautical miles from the coastline.

ISLAMIC LAW:

The region will [...] be [...] a secular government. Sharia law will apply only to Muslims and only for civil cases, not for criminal offences. All residents are guaranteed basic rights to life, movement, privacy, and freedom of religion and speech.

TERRITORY:

To cover five provinces [...] comprising about 10 percent of the Philippines' total land area.

ENABLING LAW:

Aquino will ask Congress to pass the "Bangsamoro Basic Law" for the autonomous region by the end of this year.

PLEBISCITE:

People living in areas to be included in the Bangsamoro will need to ratify the Bangsamoro Basic Law in a plebiscite to be



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

held in 2015.

TRANSITIONAL AUTHORITY:

After the basic law is approved and ratified by the plebiscite, a 15-member "Bangsamoro Transition Authority" will govern the region until a regional parliament is elected. Aquino appoints

MindaNews, 27.03.2014

Hopes, fears aired on signing of Bangsamoro peace pact

By Carolyn O. Arguillas

DATU PIANG, Maguindanao - The signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) on Thursday in Malacañang after 17 years of on-and-off peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), comes at a most insecure time for Mindanao's 27 provinces and 33 cities.

Government troops in Mindanao are on red alert as the communist New People's Army, which is celebrating its 45th anniversary on March 29, has vowed more offensives against the Aquino administration. The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters' silence is making observers uneasy. [...]

The many factions of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLFF) are waiting on the side. The usually media-savvy Nur Misuari, MNLFF founding chair who is facing criminal charges, has not been heard from since the 21-day standoff between government and MNLFF forces in Zamboanga City in September. [...] For Muslimen Sema, former secretary general of Misuari and now chair of one of the MNLFF factions, told MindaNews "we have nothing to lose and fear."

The indigenous peoples in the proposed Bangsamoro core territory, who asserted in December that they want to be referred to as "tribal peoples" to maintain their distinct identity as IPs within the Bangsamoro area, are restless over still unresolved issues on ancestral domain.

Just a piece of paper

"At the end of the day," said Amina Rasul, President of the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy, told MindaNews, "a peace agreement is only a piece of paper. It will be made real by people."

Rasul said she hopes leaders "have learned from the mistakes committed during the implementation of the 1996 FPA (Final Peace Agreement) and will truly work for the benefit of the Bangsamoro."

Her fear? That leaders "will manipulate the GPH-MILF agreement for their own interests."

Sittie Anida Tomawis, an Iranun from Maguindanao who is pursuing a law degree at the Notre Dame University in Cotabato City, told MindaNews [...] that she fears "there may be more conflicts that will arise" when the agreement is signed, referring to other armed groups in the area such as the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, a breakaway group from the MILF.

[...] Tomawis is also concerned over the rights of indigenous peoples within the future Bangsamoro and hopes the new political entity won't end up like the ARMM (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) that it is replacing.

Benefit future generations

Saidamen Mambayao of C-CARE (Citizens Coalition for ARMM Electoral Reforms) envisions a Bangsamoro that will have a Ministry of Youth Affairs and a seat in the Bangsamoro Assembly so they can participate in the affairs of the new entity which will be a ministerial form of government. [...]

But Mambayao fears the agreement will not be implemented "because of spoilers and many other negative factors."

Jinggoy Mokudéf, a Teduray youth leader, said he hopes the agreement would respect the rights of the IPs like him in the Bangsamoro and that they would be represented in the Assembly.

Jerome Sutor Aba, acting spokesperson of Suara Bangsamoro-

the members of the transitional authority, but the MILF will have a majority and the chairman.

ELECTIONS:

A regional parliament, expected to have 50 seats, is to be elected in conjunction with national elections in May 2016.

Cotabato, maintains that peace must be based on justice and that whatever agreement is signed would bring "totoong autonomy" (genuine autonomy). [...]

Danger zones

Sam Maulana, who represented the Samahan ng Ex-Detainees Laban sa Detensyon at para sa Amnestiya (SELDA) at the rally, told MindaNews that the peace agreement is "a compromise."

"It can work but I am still very worried about the danger zones ahead," he said, among them the fact that the Bangsamoro Basic Law drafted by the Bangsamoro Transition Commission may be revised by Congress.

He also hopes that those who will be appointed by President Aquino to the Bangsamoro Transition Authority will not end up as puppets of the administration.

But Maulana acknowledges the "sincerity and honesty" of government and how the panels worked to craft the CAB.

Kidapawan Bishop Romulo dela Cruz, the Archbishop-elect of Zamboanga, told MindaNews [...] that he hopes the CAB "will succeed" but fears other armed groups would emerge and cause trouble.

Dela Cruz, however, hopes for a leadership in the Bangsamoro that would ensure the interests of the people are served.

Fraught with dangerous twists and turns

Former GPH peace panel member Irene Santiago (2001 to 2003) said [...] "I am particularly pleased with the strong participation of women toward the end of the negotiations. But the road ahead is fraught with dangerous twists and turns. The Filipino people must stand together with the Bangsamoro for indeed we are one state but many 'nationals' and today we declare this diversity as our treasure and not the source of devastating conflict," Santiago said.

Caloy Manlupig of Balay Mindanaw in Cagayan de Oro said he hopes to see a "small victory, a simple success story - that will inspire the people that it is possible to achieve harmony, progress and peace in Mindanao."

His greatest fear is that [...] "this will just be a continuation of the cycle of abusive, dirty and corrupt governance - from RAG, ORC, ARMM. Cycle of abuse, corruption and that would make life more difficult for the majority".

Greater Jihad

Gus Miclat, Executive Director of the Initiatives for International Dialogue, hopes that both GPH and MILF "don't drop the ball, enter into a meaningful and collaborative partnership; do projects, programs show themselves TOGETHER, reach out to and dialogue with groups such as IPs (Indigenous Peoples), MNLFF (Moro National Liberation Front), local politicians, Visayas and Luzon peoples, deliver high impact, sustainable and visible projects ASAP."

Miclat fears that "IPs are cavalierly shunted aside, too much accommodation for local *trapos* (traditional politicians), both administration and opposition will use this for their respective political agendas, and the masses will not feel the significance."

Mussolini Lidasan, Executive Director of the Al Qalam Institute at the Ateneo de Davao University, said the signing of the CAB is "the start of the Greater Jihad (struggle), a jihad against one's inner desires and greed." [...]