



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

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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

Asia Times Online, 02.05.2014

Strong ties, loose ends in Philippine-US pact

By Richard Javad Heydarian

MANILA - Amid intensifying territorial disputes in the Western Pacific, US President Barack Obama embarked on a crucial tour where he sought to reassure allies in North and Southeast Asia that Washington is fully committed to the region's stability and prosperity. A new security pact signed with the Philippines will go some way in delivering the message that China's rising assertiveness will not go unchecked. Ahead of Obama's visit to Manila, the Philippines risked full-blown confrontation with China by filing a formal complaint on March 30 before a United Nations Arbitral Tribunal in The Hague over their territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Beijing vehemently opposed the move as a provocation that unnecessarily "internationalizes" an essentially bilateral dispute. At the same time, Filipino officials expedited their negotiations with the US for a new security pact, known as the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). Formally signed during Obama's visit, the EDCA will give US armed forces wider rotational access to Philippine military bases, including Subic and Clark, and allow for the positioning and storing of US military equipment on Philippine soil. Both Obama and Philippine President Benigno Aquino insisted the new security pact was [...] focusing [...] on the deal's humanitarian and disaster relief potential. But the two sides had before the signing already intensified their military cooperation vis-à-vis Beijing [...]

The EDCA calls for expanded Philippine-US joint military exercises and aid, with the ultimate aim of enhancing defense interoperability between the two countries, both in the realm of traditional and non-traditional security areas. Filipino officials hailed the new deal as a concrete reflection of strengthening Philippine-US defense cooperation, further strengthening a long-standing alliance amid rising security challenges in the region.[...]

Critics of the new pact argue it lacks sufficient transparency, may violate Philippine constitutional restrictions on foreign military bases, and disproportionately benefits the US by granting it inexpensive access to foreign bases in exchange for apparently limited military aid. [...] Many leading legal experts argue that the new security pact should have been subjected to Senate ratification, ensuring more comprehensive deliberation on the legality and strategic implications of the deal. The Philippine government, however, is yet to release the full details of the EDCA.

Strategic dependence

There is a lingering feeling among many Filipinos, especially the intelligentsia and progressive circles, that the new deal repre-

sents a huge step back from the independence asserted in the immediate aftermath of the post-Cold War, when the Philippines sought to chart its own destiny by building indigenous military capabilities.

But a combination of chronic corruption, a continued focus on fighting domestic insurgency in Muslim areas of Mindanao and communist-dominated rural areas, and a lack of strategic vision has undermined the Philippines' ability to effectively modernize its armed forces, which is among the weakest in the region. [...] Without a minimum deterrence capability, the Philippines has had little choice but to rely on external defense assistance, especially from the US. From domestic insurgency to humanitarian disasters, the US has been a major source of assistance in recent decades, despite relinquishing its major bases in the Philippines in 1992. Surveys have consistently suggested that the majority of Filipinos have a high approval rating of the US. [...] In his earlier trip to Tokyo, Obama made it clear that the US military was obliged to stand by Japan if a conflict were to erupt with China over the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the East China Sea. [...]

During his visit to the Philippines, despite the signing of the EDCA, Obama was not as overt about the US's obligations in the South China Sea. While restating Washington's commitment to freedom of navigation in the maritime area, he also sought to reassure China that the new EDCA was not directed against it [...]. Some analysts interpreted the comment as encouragement for Manila to seek a diplomatic compromise for the South China Sea disputes.

[...] Experts claim that Obama's ambivalence stems from the fact that the Philippine-US MDT, in contrast to the Japan-US MDT, is partly vague on mutual defense obligations regarding disputed territories in the South China Sea. Moreover, while Japan has been able to demonstrate its continuous and effective exercise of sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, the Philippines' has fallen short of consolidating its claims to many disputed features in the South China Sea. "With Obama reassuring the US's allies of protection in any conflict with China, it is now clear that Washington is no longer bothering to conceal its attempt to contain China's influence in the region," China's leading state-run newspaper, China Daily, stated in an editorial [...]. "For a considerably long period, Chinese have cherished the naive thought that Washington will rein in its unruly allies when they go too far. Obama's current trip should be a wake-up call that this is just wishful thinking."

The Philippine Star, 11.05.2014

EU interest in Phl increasing, says envoy

By Pia Lee-Brago

MANILA, Philippines - The significant increase in the number of visits of European political leaders to the Philippines confirms the increasing interest of the European Union in the country, EU Ambassador Guy Ledoux said over the weekend.

In his speech during the Europe Day reception, Ledoux said "the flow of bilateral visit of ministers from European member states as well as Philippine Cabinet members visiting European countries has been steady."

He also said that the significant increase in the number of visits by European political leaders to the Philippines is no accident as word of high economic growth and good governance has reached Europe, and European political leaders and businessmen are interested to see the changes taking place in the Philip-

pines.

The last 12 months, he said, witnessed remarkable developments in EU-Philippines relations.

Last June, Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario met European Council president Van Rompuy in Brussels.

Van Rompuy told Del Rosario that the EU acknowledged that the Philippines' decision to resolve maritime issues peacefully and within the framework of international law was the right path to take.

Ledoux also said that the lifting of the air ban for major Philippine air carriers is one of the major achievements in EU-Philippines relations.

The EU announced the lifting of the air ban for Philippine Air-



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lines last July, while the lifting of the ban for Cebu Pacific was announced last month. Philippine Airlines has resumed its direct flights to Europe.

Ledoux said last year, the number of European tourists visiting the Philippines increased by eight percent, reaching 376,000

Philippine Daily Inquirer, 14.05.2014

CHR: Torture still widely practiced by police in PH

By Julie M. Aurelio

MANILA, Philippines—Alfreda Disbarro, 32, a single mother and informant, was picked up by police in October last year in Parañaque City and accused of selling and possessing illegal drugs.

Her captors allegedly tortured her in a bid to make her confess. Her body still bears the bruises and welts she sustained.

A policeman had slammed her head against the wall six times and even stuffed her mouth with a dirty rag. At times, she would be on the receiving end of punches and blows.

Her case is just one of many allegations that Amnesty International is bringing to the fore as part of its global campaign against torture.

“One case is a case too many. Once you have succeeding incidents of torture, it will be a precedent for future abuses,” said Wilmer Papa, campaign coordinator of Amnesty International Philippines.

The Philippine Star, 19.05.2014

Churches clash over proposed mandatory HIV test

By Edu Punay

MANILA, Philippines - The proposal for mandatory human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) testing has triggered yet another debate between the Catholic and Protestant churches in the country.

A senior Catholic prelate yesterday expressed provisional support to the controversial measure, while an official of the national organization of Protestant churches stood firm against the proposal.

Jaro Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, former president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), said there is nothing wrong with the plan of the Department of Health (DOH) as long as protective measures will be in place [...].

The prelate said the only condition should be that the “proper care in handling of patients and cases proper to the human dignity will be exercised by the government.”

Bishop Ephraim Fajutagana, chair of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), disagreed.

He believes no condition could justify the proposal that violates the people's rights.

“Compulsory HIV tests are not only violative of people's rights but also heighten stigma and discrimination,” he said in a statement.

Instead of a reactive measure, the NCCP official said the DOH

Philippine Daily Inquirer, 21.05.2014

'Tagum Death Squad' killed 298 people, including kids, in 5 years – HRW

By Julie M. Aurelio

MANILA, Philippines—The Human Rights Watch bared on Wednesday, the existence of a “death squad” carrying out extrajudicial killings in Davao del Norte, allegedly backed by local officials including a former town mayor.

In a 71-page report, the HRW detailed the activities of the “Tagum Death Squad,” which carried out at least 298 extrajudicial killings of undesirables from 2007 to 2013, for which no one was prosecuted.

Among those murdered were children as young as nine and 12,

visitors and making Europe the fifth largest tourism market for the Philippines. [...]

“This is a very promising field for more cooperation between Europe and the Philippines,” Ledoux said. [...]

In a press conference, the international rights group with the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and the United against Torture Coalition launched its version of a global campaign against torture.

Disbarro's case is one of three cases presented on Tuesday, the other two being the secret detention center in Laguna discovered early this year and the torture incident in Manila caught on video in 2010.

Amnesty pointed out that despite the 2009 Anti-Torture Act, the abuses continue, perpetrated usually by the police and the military.

“It is not enough that the perpetrators are relieved from their duties, they should be investigated, prosecuted and made accountable,” said Hazel Galang-Folli, the group's researcher for Southeast Asia.

should come up with a more comprehensive and effective HIV awareness program to which churches can be of help.

“We call on the churches and other organizations to intensify the campaign on HIV and AIDS awareness. None is more essential than a united effort to promote an informed public, breaking myths and upholding the truth about HIV and AIDS,” said Fajutagana.

He suggested that the DOH, for instance, could prioritize medical treatment and other support mechanisms easily accessible for people living with HIV.

Fajutagana said HIV testing should remain voluntary.

“We do, however, encourage young people to go for HIV tests and we reiterate this encouragement on this occasion: protect yourself and your future,” Fajutagana said.

“The 934 new cases of HIV infection from January to February 2014 is 43 percent higher compared to the same period last year. It is also alarming that 83 percent of these new cases are in the National Capital Region not to mention that 59 percent of these belong to the 20-29 years age group. Our young people have become vulnerable to HIV,” he added.

Earlier, the DOH clarified that the plan to have mandatory HIV screening would not be for the general public but rather for high-risk groups such as female sex workers, males having sex with males (MSMs), injecting drug users (IDUs), those who undergo surgery or operation, and pregnant women. [...]

criminals, and those who didn't even fit the profile - such as a journalist and businessman.

Philem Kine, HRW deputy director for Asia, alleged that the Tagum Death Squad was backed by local officials, including ex-mayor Rey Uy who served from 1998 to 2013.

The human rights group had sent copies of its report, “One Shot to the Head: Death Squad Killings in Tagum City, Philippines” to Uy as well as the incumbent mayor and various government agencies, but received no reply.



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"The government's failure to act decisively against death squad killings has certainly contributed to the horrific death toll in Tagum City. President Aquino needs to send a loud and urgent message that deploying death squads as a 'crime control' measure is unlawful and needs to stop," Kine said.

The report included interviews of surviving victims, their families, police officers, as well as four ex-members of the death squad, who pointed to Uy's involvement in the vigilante group. "Tagum City's former mayor helped organize and finance a death squad linked to the murder of hundreds of residents," [...] Out of the 298 killings, which provincial police attributed to the death squad, the HRW was able to profile 12 killings from 2011 to 2013.

Of this figure, two were boys aged nine and 12, both killed separately on April 12, 2011. According to the report, the boys frequented the Freedom Park behind the Tagum City Hall and were accused of theft and other petty crimes. [...]

Kine noted that in one instance, the mother of one victim claimed to have been "warned" by Uy himself for the victim to get out of Tagum City.

The HRW also interviewed four self-proclaimed members of the Tagum Death Squad [...].

In a video presented in a press conference Wednesday, Minta

said they were sometimes ordered to get "two to three heads a week."

According to the report, the targets were from an "order of battle" of what Uy considered as "weeds" or undesirable elements. The weapon of choice was usually a caliber .45 pistol.

"They said they wanted to clean up Tagum, to bring change to Tagum, so that bad elements would think twice in coming in because they would end up dead in Tagum," Minta was quoted in the report as saying.

The report, quoting the ex-death squad members, alleged that the death squad worked under a cover of legitimacy as security aides of the city government's Civil Security Unit.

The 12 profiled cases were killings all done in broad daylight, by motorcycle-riding gunman.

Minta, a former member who eventually sought police protection after getting targeted himself, alleged that the orders came from the mayor and that on two occasions, he received payment from the mayor himself.

Kine lamented that the local police did not investigate some of the cases known to have been perpetrated by the death squad since they were "the mayor's men."

Although a new mayor had assumed office in 2013, some "death-squad style killings" happened, Kine added.

Sun.Star Cebu, 25.05.2014

NGO: Poor not feeling economic gains

POOR people, including underpaid workers and the unemployed, have nothing to gain from the World Economic Forum (WEF), held in the Philippines this week to explore developments in East Asia.

But the WEF "is not about people. It's all about corporations, their investments, and new market opportunities," said Dennis Derige, spokesperson of the Partido ng Manggagawa (PM) in Cebu.

He opined that even if President Benigno Aquino III praised the role of "ordinary Filipinos" in the country's economic turnaround, the WEF's agenda would remain dominated by "business elites and governments that practice crony capitalism."

Making growth more inclusive has surfaced as the key theme of the recently concluded WEF. [...]

'Unfair' ratio

Derige said that growth in Asia has created more billionaires, yet remains "highly unequal". Rather than celebrating the Philippines—whose economy grew the second-fastest in Asia in 2013, after China—as an economic miracle, Derige said he would rather see it as the same story of a handful of business elites controlling more than half of the economy.

Philippine Daily Inquirer, 27.05.2014

Napoles tags 120 lawmakers

By TJ A. Burgonio

MANILA, Philippines—"As far as I can remember, in my present condition at Ospital ng Makati, the following are the senators, congressmen and agents, as well as officials and employees of implementing agencies who dealt with me and received portions of the pork barrel."

Thus said Janet Lim-Napoles in her long-awaited 32-page affidavit submitted Monday afternoon to the Senate blue ribbon committee, in which she denied she was the mastermind of the P10-billion pork barrel scam and declared she learned the ropes from Budget Secretary Florencio Abad when he was a House member, and named 20 senators and 100 congressmen allegedly involved in her schemes to steal money meant to improve the nation's impoverished countryside.

[...] In fact, the agents of lawmakers were more knowledgeable of the scheme, Napoles said.

[...] In one affidavit, Napoles listed 12 incumbent senators,

He cited a PM study that reportedly showed the combined wealth for the Philippines's richest 10, estimated at US\$45.3 billion, is equal to the annual income of 21 million minimum wage earners.

"The Philippine Government cannot claim inclusive growth until this ratio of inequality is effectively reversed," said Derige. ILO estimate

If people were mentioned in the WEF at all, he added, it was in "the context of markets: open markets for corporate products and cut-price and flexible labor markets for their efficient operations."

"Thus, the WEF cannot brag about wonders and miracles when Asia remains the biggest home to the world's poorest people epitomized by workers in vulnerable employment," Derige said. He cited an International Labor Organization (ILO) estimate that 1.1 billion persons or 62.2 percent of all workers in Asia have only "vulnerable employment."

These, he added, include informal workers and workers with seasonal or contractual jobs.

including Juan Ponce Enrile, Jinggoy Estrada and Ramon Revilla Jr. who are fighting indictment for plunder and graft before the Sandiganbayan over the scam. [...]

An earlier Napoles list named 11 former and current senators among those who allegedly received kickbacks from her.

'The truth will set you free'

Sen. Teofisto Guingona III, chair of the committee, last night released copies of Napoles' two affidavits to the media [...].

[...] By telling the truth, Napoles said she expected to step on the toes of many. [...]

After months of prayer and reflection, Napoles said she wished to shed light on the pork scam and Malampaya Fund mess, referring to the P900 million she allegedly stole. The money was meant for victims of Storms "Ondoy" and "Pepeng" in 2009. She had been named in a complaint on the case involving the government share in the operation of natural gas wells off Palawan.



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[...]

25 senators in Luy files

[...] She [Napoles] is under police custody for serious illegal detention—not the pork barrel scam—on a case filed by her former finance officer, Benhur Luy.

Luy's hard disk drive, given to the Inquirer, named 25 senators

and 138 representatives—former and current—among many people Napoles dealt with in her PDAF [Priority Development Assistance Fund] activities. All of the senators named in the Luy files are included in the expanded Napoles list, except for Sen. Francis Escudero. [...]

CALAMITIES & CLIMATE CHANGE

The Philippine Star, 13.05.2014

Audit sought on foreign funds for Yolanda areas

By Paolo Romero

MANILA, Philippines - The leader of the independent bloc in the House of Representatives called yesterday for an audit of local and foreign funds allocated to areas that Super Typhoon Yolanda had devastated.

Leyte Rep. Ferdinand Martin Romualdez said people have not yet seen or heard of any breakdown on where the money and goods went. [...]

"We don't have any idea where the money and the goods are being kept, who are the custodians, how much has been disbursed or distributed and for whom or to where."

Romualdez criticized the administration for lack of a master rehabilitation plan.

"We will also ask for inventories and audit reports on the hundreds of billions of pesos in aid, both in cash and in kind, which were poured in internationally for the survivors," he said.

Romualdez said he sees no clear data on how many shelters have been built and for how many survivors.

"Most of all, we have not seen any assurance that the aid is not

being misplaced or diverted to the pockets or into some vested personal interests of other people instead of the survivors," he said.

Lacson speaks out

Presidential assistant on rehabilitation and recovery Panfilo Lacson [...] said rehabilitation work will start next month and construction of infrastructure in December.

Yolanda-hit areas will be classified as high risk, controlled and safe areas, he added.

Lacson said he will also push for the planting of high-yield, high-value crops suitable for the typhoon-devastated areas as part of livelihood assistance to typhoon victims. [...]

Before he assumed his post, one of his priorities was to strengthen intelligence networks at the grassroots so he would know what is happening, he added.

Lacson said substandard materials were used in some bunkhouses, and that he had discovered that protesters in Tacloban City are not typhoon victims. [...]

Inquirer.net, 17.05.2014

New solar plant in Negros expected to meet power demand, reduce CO2 emissions in Visayas

SAN CARLOS CITY, Negros Occidental - Leading German solar solution and service provider Conergy joins in the celebration of the inauguration of the [...] San Carlos Solar Energy Inc. (SaCaSol) solar plant, a ground mounted photovoltaic solar facility on a 350,000 square-meter area at the San Carlos City Economic Zone.

President Benigno Aquino III, guest of honor at the SaCaSol inauguration led the [...] ceremony [...].

The project is a joint venture between the local clean energy developer, Bronzeoak Philippines and leading global investment management group, ThomasLloyd.

In October 2013, Conergy was contracted by SaCaSol to carry out the planning, supply, engineering and construction of the

22-megawatt solar power plant, the largest solar farm in the country. [...]

Alexander Lenz, President for Conergy Asia & Middle East points out, "The conditions for solar projects in the country are very positive. This includes the Philippines' electricity rates - the country has the fifth highest electricity prices in the world today, and the second in Asia and also suffers from frequent blackouts. But thanks to high solar radiation of ~5kWh per square meter a day, and a 6-7% annual economic growth rate, solar energy can become a genuinely competitive and self-sustaining proposition in the country, especially if executed with the appropriate scale." [...]

[...] Project completion is expected by the first half of 2014.

INSTITUTIONS

Inquirer.net, 10.05.2014

Militant solons want 'no permit no rally' repealed

MANILA, Philippines—Militant lawmakers filed a bill that would repeal a Marcosian law of requiring a permit to rally in public places.

Bayan Muna representatives Neri Colmenares and Carlos Zarate filed House Bill [3668](#), which seeks to "strengthen the right of the people to free expression, peaceably assemble and petition the government for redress of grievances."

The bill seeks to junk Batas Pambansa [880](#), which requires a written permit for authorities to rally in public places and was passed during the Marcos administration.

[...] "The Marcos-period Batas Pambansa Bilang 880 has been the convenient excuse for state forces to suppress otherwise peaceful demonstrations, effectively curtailing the basic constitutional rights to assembly, free speech and petition of government for redress of grievances," Colmenares said.

Zarate also said under their bill, no persons could be arrested for

participating in a rally.

According to the bill, no permit will be required for anyone to hold a public assembly in [...] any open space of public ownership where people are allowed access.

The organizers and leaders, though, will be required to inform and coordinate with the mayor or local authority over the details of the rally.

The organizers will be required to prevent non-demonstrators from disrupting the rally. They will also need to police their ranks from harassing non-demonstrators.

The bill prohibits law enforcement authorities from interfering with the rally, but mandates them to ensure public safety by deploying a police contingent.

The contingent should be at least 200 meters away from the rally, the bill read.

The measure also bans dispersal of rallies unless it has become



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violent.

Violators may be penalized with seven years of imprisonment

Inquirer.net, 19.05.2014

FOI bill hearings like 'turtle on the ground'

MANILA, Philippines—After four meetings to discuss the 24 versions of the Freedom of Information (FOI) bills, a House of Representatives committee barely scratched the surface for the measure to hurdle the panel for the plenary.

The committee on public information is stuck at Section 7 that would list the exemptions from fully disclosing information. All in all, the bills have as much as 25 sections.

As of Monday, the committee has just gone past Sections 7a and 7b, which exempt documents from full disclosure information on national security and defense, as well as information that are kept confidential under the President's executive privilege.

Ifugao Representative Teddy Baguilat, one of the FOI supporters in Congress, likened their committee hearings to "a turtle on the ground."

He added that the confusion on presenting the matrix of the 24,

Philstar.com, 20.05.2014

Senator asks PNP to provide direct line to media amid killings

By Christina Mendez

MANILA, Philippines - Sen. Grace Poe on Tuesday called on the Philippine National Police (PNP) to provide media professionals a direct line to police authorities in the wake of the increasing crimes against journalists.

In a Senate hearing, Superintendent Henry Libay reported that out of the 48 incidents of media killings recorded since 2001, only six were resolved with convictions.

"Media should have a direct line to the PNP. So that if there is any threat, they will feel they have protection," Poe said during the hearing of the committee on public order and dangerous drugs with the committee on justice and human rights.

"Unfortunately, the police would be involved in some cases. It is important to establish a reliable direct line that the media can

InterAksyon.com, 23.05.2014

'Looser' anti-dynasty bill stands better chances of passage - Speaker

By Lira Dalangin-Fernandez

MANILA, Philippines -- Speaker Feliciano Belmonte Jr. said Friday that a "looser" version of the anti-political dynasty bill stands greater chances of being passed by the House of Representatives.

Caloocan Representative Edgar Erice, a sponsor of the bill that would allow only one member of a family to run in an election, acknowledged Belmonte's point and said he is willing, "for purposes of practicality," to support an amendment that would let two family members run.

The issue was raised as members of the chamber, many of whom have next of kin in elective positions, began discussing the measures.

House Bill 3587, or An Act Prohibiting the Establishment of Political Dynasties, reached the House plenary last month [...].

[...] Belmonte told InterAksyon.com [...] "My personal view is even a looser set is better than none, and already enforces the constitutional mandate, which has been ignored since 1987. Our successors can improve on it," [...].

Belmonte's daughter Joy is vice mayor of Quezon City [...].

Valenzuela Representative Sherwin Gatchalian said lawmakers have begun discussing the bill, usually huddling in small groups at the session hall.

"It's really been talked about among congressmen, and I see varying views," he said in an interview.

Gatchalian himself has close relatives in elective posts: one

and a disqualification from public office, the bill read.

the lack of a timeline on the next hearings, and the failure to extend meetings beyond 4 p.m. all contributed to the slow pace of the meetings. [...]

According to the committee, the technical working group formed to consolidate the bills met four times since it was formed in December 2012.

Reached for his side, Misamis Occidental Rep. Almonte [committee chairman] said he does not want a deadline so that they could focus on passing a "well-crafted" bill. Almonte has been criticized for sitting down on the bill under his chairmanship. [...]

The FOI bill, which ensures transparency and accountability in government transactions and data, continue to languish in the lower chamber even as its Senate counterpart has approved its version.

trust. [...]" the senator added.

Poe also called on the inter-agency commission on extrajudicial killings to submit a progress report to the committee and put a media representative to coordinate on its efforts.

Libay said 36 out of the 48 incidents of media killings have been filed in court: 12 on trial, six were archived, six were resolved with convictions, four were resolved with acquittal and five were dismissed by the courts. State counsel Herminia Angeles assured the Senate that the current administration has been working on the cases of extra-judicial killings in coordination with the various government agencies including the PNP's human rights unit and the National Bureau of Investigation.

brother is also a congressman, another is the mayor of Valenzuela. [...]

He also noted that, "there are a lot of clarificatory questions."

"For example, how do you treat politician couples who have parted ways, how about children of politicians with other partners? These things we need to clarify because they happen."

The bill defines a political dynasty as "the concentration, consolidation, or perpetuation of public office and political power by persons related to one another." [...]

Representative Sherwin Tugna of the Citizens Battle Against Corruption party-list [...] said there is a need to strike a balance between "promotion of police power for equal opportunity to be elected" on the one hand, and "the exercise of political right to present yourself as a candidate" on the other. [...]

He cited Supreme Court decisions in a number of cases that have said that, "for the State, through Congress, to curtail a right, [...] unequal opportunities to public office and virtual monopoly of a particular family to a public position must be shown by proof that it has resulted to deleterious effects to the country." [...]

Capiz Representative Fredenil Castro, chair of the committee on suffrage and electoral reforms and the principal sponsor of the bill, rallied his colleagues to perform their mandate and give life to the Constitution by passing the measure.

Article II, Section 26 of the 1987 Constitution states: "The state



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shall guarantee equal access to opportunities for public service, and prohibit political dynasties as may be defined by law."

Castro, in his sponsorship speech, said the measure is needed "to provide equal access to opportunities for public service to everybody, regardless of station in life [...]" [...]

Eastern Samar Representative Ben Evardone expressed support for the bill "as presently worded."

"In principle, I am for genuine democratic system of electing public official, but we have a flawed democracy, so I think I would welcome the anti-dynasty bill as presently worded unless

our democracy becomes more mature," he said.

But Quezon City Representative Winston Castelo said the people should be allowed to decide on the matter.

"I would not obstruct the legislative flow of discussions in plenary, but ultimately, it would be the people who would decide on it," he said.

Abakada party-list Representative Jonathan dela Cruz [...] [said] "We have to determine whether this is the best way to promote democratic rule and freedom of choice, which are both enshrined in the Constitution," [...]. [...]

Hronlineph.com, 28.05.2014

Reproductive Health Care for Indigenous Women

By Judy A. Pasimio / LILAK

As we celebrate the International Day of Action on Women's Health, LILAK (Purple Action for Indigenous Women's Rights) would like to profile the urgent issues that indigenous women in the Philippines face on access to safe, affordable, appropriate health care.

Imagine you are a pregnant B'laan woman living in the mountains [...]. You are due to give birth anytime now. The nearest health center is in the town proper [...]. To get there, you have to either walk 4 hours or ride a horse. At the foot of the mountain, you can take the habal-habal (motorcycle) and pay around P200 pesos to get to the health center in the town [...]. Upon reaching the health center, you are told that you are not yet ready and have to come back after 24 hours. You would not want to get back home to spend another 200P and walk another 4 hours, and do that all over again the next day. So you need a place to stay. Most likely, you have to pay - for space, and for food. Not just for yourself, but probably for 2 or 3 more companions, for a day or two. How much would that cost? And then when finally you are ready to give birth, you are asked to pay P1,500 for all sorts of things in the center, even if they say the birthing service is free. Easily, you will have to shell out P3,500 for basic expenses. Where will you get that? For a woman who could barely afford to feed her family regularly, this amount is [...] scandalous.

So you decide not to go to the health center, and instead, do what [...] mothers in your community have done for generations - homebirth. The traditional hilot or paltera or community midwife who has known you for a long time, takes care of you, until you give birth at home. She stays with you to see how you are, and prepares herbal bath for your body. She tells you how to take care of yourself, and your newborn baby. In return, you promise her a kilo of root crop from your next harvest.

Then comes the collection of the cash benefit from the 4Ps (Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program). You borrowed money so you could go to town and claim your cash benefit. But after hours of walking and taking the habal-habal with your newborn, you could not claim anything because of deductions made for not meeting the set conditions. You did not have your monthly checkup at the health center, and you did not give birth at the health center. Your children were also absent in their classes as you were not able to provide food for them to take to

school. With all these deductions, you were not able to claim anything at all.

Since you were already in town, you went to the health center to have your newborn get her free vaccines. But since you did not give birth in the center, your child is not eligible for free vaccines. [...]

This is the same story we hear from Mangyan, Dumagat, Subanen and other indigenous women in the two years that we have been having our community visits, as well as regional and national gatherings of indigenous women in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

In some communities, the women hilot are being threatened to be put in jail for doing what they have been doing for decades - take care of pregnant women in their community [...] and assist women give birth [...].

It is not safe, both for the mother and for the child - that's the main argument for prohibiting homebirth, criminalizing and penalizing, both the hilot and the mother. "Then make it safe for us," is the call of the indigenous women. Make it safe for them by not making them walk for several hours, up and down a rough mountain road, and ride a motorcycle to the nearest health center. Make it safe for them by having a local midwife present in the community on a regular basis, at least 5 days a week. Some indigenous women refuse to give birth in health centers because they are surrounded by strangers who look at and touch their bodies as if they are dolls. Make it safe for them by encouraging them to go to health centers by having culturally-appropriate health services, and environment. Most indigenous women feel safer with the community hilot because they are provided with care and attention that they are familiar with - using herbal and indigenous methods. Make it safe for them by integrating safe natural and indigenous methods with western and mainstream medicine. Penalizing indigenous women for their belief, and customary ways is a gross act of discrimination. Penalizing indigenous women for not being able to afford the health services of the government, which excludes them, is a form of violence, and an act of injustice.

Make childbirth and reproductive health care safe for the indigenous women by making reproductive health services accessible, free, and culturally-appropriate.

Alyansatigilmina.net, 30.05.2014

Government support for Binding Rules for TNCs sought

QUEZON CITY [...] - Civil society groups in the Philippines are urging the Philippine government to support a resolution filed by a group of countries led by Ecuador in the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) calling for a legally binding treaty on human rights and transnational corporations.

In a letter addressed to Secretary Alberto Del Rosario of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and Ambassador Cecilia B. Rebong of the Philippine Permanent Mission in Geneva, the groups asked the government to "once again demonstrate leadership and commitment to human rights at the June 2014 UN

Human Rights Council session by showing your support for a resolution that will seek to begin a process of developing an international treaty on business and human rights - the first binding international legal instrument to hold corporations accountable for their human rights violations."

The groups recalled the support by the Philippines in 2011 as a member of the UNHCR for the adoption of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework" proposed by UN Special Representative John Ruggie.



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The groups acknowledged the importance of the guiding principles [...] as it "affirmed the obligation and primary responsibility of the State to protect and promote human rights and recognized that corporations have the responsibility as well to respect human rights" but stressed the need at this time "to hold corporations accountable not only in the countries where they cause or contribute to violations, but also in other countries and internationally if required."

They urged the Philippines to join the broad range of States who have already shown their support for progressing international law to address corporate human rights abuses [...]. Furthermore,

CURRENT CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Asian Human Rights Commission, 05.05.2014

Serious concerns on targeted surveillance by armed men on Mr. Danilo Reyes, AHRC deputy director

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) expresses its grave concern that its deputy director, Mr. Danilo Reyes, had been overtly followed by two unidentified men, one of whom carrying a short firearm, [...] on April 30, 2014 [...] Quezon City, Metro Manila.

Mr. Reyes travelled to Manila to attend the National Consultation Workshop and Writeshop for the National Preventive Mechanism, on April 29 to 30 [...]. Mr. Reyes was attending on behalf of the AHRC upon the invitation of Ms. Loretta Ann Rosales, chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) of the Philippines. The workshop tackled proposed mechanisms on prevention of torture in the Philippines.

The AHRC has been reporting on the Philippines particularly on issues concerning the practice and the prevention of torture.

[...] The AHRC strongly suspects, after careful analysis of the circumstances that has happened before this incident, that it is an act targeted on Mr. Reyes for purposes of either causing him harm or to intimidate his person.

Firstly, the incident happened a day after Mr. Reyes attended and was introduced in person in public among the participants in the consultation. [...] it was surprising that officers from National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) were also present and invited in the consultation.

While the AHRC [...] could not understand why officials from NICA, a government agency whose mandate is on intelligence gathering, and neither is responsible for investigation of complaints of torture or has legal authority to keep, supervise and maintain detention facilities, would have to be present.

The AHRC is deeply concerned that the presence of NICA during the workshop [...] has undermined the security and safety of those documenting, exposing and assisting torture victims, like Mr. Reyes and the AHRC. [...]

Secondly, the incident could have been only targeted on Mr. Reyes's person due to the following reasons: First, the armed man on the motorcycle emerged only after Mr. Reyes was keenly observed by the man standing close to him. Second, if indeed the armed man on a motorcycle happened to have just passed by, he would have gone ahead of the jeepney where Mr. Reyes was riding on; but, suspiciously the armed man on the motorcycle later appeared tailing the *jeepney* Mr. Reyes was riding in; third-

they also asked that the Philippine government to "stand [...] against corporate human rights violations, and the associated impunity that is all too often to these abuses."

The groups earlier met with Commission on Human Rights Chairperson Loretta Ann Rosales to get the support of Commission [...] to exact greater corporate accountability in light of specific cases [...] particular in the extractive industry and mining sector. They are pushing for a dialogue with the DFA prior to the departure of the Philippine delegation to the upcoming UNHCR Session in June in Geneva. [...]

ly, the passenger jeepney where Mr. Reyes was traversing in the middle of a wide four-lane road; however, in overtaking the *jeepney* the armed man drove side by side with the *jeepney* right beside where Mr. Reyes was sitting inside the jeep. [...]

Thirdly, [...] Mr. Reyes has also asked the policeman recording his statement whether non-uniformed individuals are allowed to carry firearms openly, which the officer replied: "No, only the police in uniform." However, the armed man that Mr. Reyes had seen was not wearing a police uniform at all;

Fourthly, [...] Mr. Reyes [...] sought assistance from policemen at a local police outpost, who advised him to proceed to the Cubao Police Station 7, and he also promptly informed a staff of the CHR about the incident.

However, to Mr. Reyes knowledge, as of this writing, neither the police nor the CHR has investigated adequately, promptly and effectively his complaints. Apart from the extract of police report given to Mr. Reyes upon his request, there were no immediate security arrangements made to ensure his safety.

Fifthly, the AHRC therefore urges the CHR and the Philippine National Police (PNP) to take seriously Mr. Reyes' complaints. The AHRC is deeply concerned that despite Mr. Reyes' efforts in reporting the incident to the police, and his request for police assistance and to have his complaint investigated, the government agencies [...] has done nothing to ensure his safety and protection.

What happened to Mr. Reyes is part of a wider systematic, routine and renewed targeted attacks on human rights and political activists in the country. In recent months, the AHRC has documented cases of threats, intimidations, disappearance and extrajudicial killings. We are concerned that the lack of progress to these cases wherein the perpetrators are held to account emboldens them to continue committing these criminal activities with impunity. [...]

Finally, the AHRC urges the CHR to follow up with the police regarding the progress of its investigation concerning Mr. Reyes complaint. We are concerned that despite the detailed information provided to the police, they did not act promptly and take proportionate action in ensuring the life, safety and security of Mr. Reyes when he needed it most.

Philstar.com, 06.05.2014

Gov't condemns killing of broadcast journalist

MANILA, Philippines - The government today condemned the killing of a broadcast journalist in Tawi-Tawi.

Presidential Communication Operations Office Secretary Herminio Coloma, Jr. said the Philippine National Police (PNP) has been ordered to leave no stone unturned in bringing to justice the killers of Richard Najid, manager of radio station DXNN-FM.

"(The government) condemns the killing of Najid. [...]" Coloma said.

The 35-year-old journalist was shot dead by motorcycle gunmen in the capital town of Bongao late Sunday when he was heading home from a basketball game.

The National Union Journalists of the Philippines said Najid is the 27th mediaman killed under the government of Philippine

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President Benigno Aquino III and the second killed in Tawi-

Tawi province.

Appeal – Karapatan, 06.05.2014

Call for justice for the killing of Menelao "Boy" Barcia and for the persecution and harassment of Antonio Tolentino and other farmers of Hacienda Dolores, Porac, Pampanga

[...] *Killing of village councilor*

Initial reports from Karapatan-Central Luzon cited the killing of **Menelao "Boy" Barcia**, 57. Barcia was a Barangay councilor (*kagawad*) and an official of Alyansa ng Nagkakaisang Mamamayan ng Hacienda Dolores (Aniban or Alliance of United People of Hacienda Dolores).

On May 2, at around 10:00 p.m. Barcia picked up his wife **Maria** [...] in Angeles City where she worked. While driving their jeep back to Brgy. Hacienda Dolores, two motorcycles drove alongside them. There were two unidentified men on each of the motorcycles.

Suddenly, the men fired at Barcia's vehicle, killing him instantly. Barcia sustained four gunshot wounds [...]. Maria was also injured and was brought [...] to the Mt. Carmel Hospital in San Fernando, Pampanga. As of this writing, Maria's foot is scheduled for operation.

Witnesses of the incident are afraid to speak for fear of retaliation. Farmers of Hacienda Dolores believe that state security forces or goons hired by Triple L were involved in the killing.

Menelao Barcia had been monitoring of the administrative charges against Barangay captain Antonio Tolentino. With Tolentino, Barcia was also involved in uniting the farmers of Hacienda Dolores against the moves of the Triple L Company to grab their lands.

Harassment suits and trumped-up charges against ANIBAN members

Before Barcia was killed, on April 16, 2014, around 30 members of San Fernando City and Porac City PNP, all in combat gear, arrived at the barangay hall of Brgy. Hacienda Dolores and arrested village chief Antonio Tolentino.

Tolentino was talking with Barcia and the barangay treasurer when members of the PNP arrived. After briefly showing Tolentino a warrant of arrest for carnapping charge, the police grabbed and pulled Tolentino into a waiting police vehicle. Two

residents who were also at the barangay hall at that time accompanied Tolentino despite attempts of the police to ward them off.

Tolentino is currently detained at Angeles City District Jail for charges of carnapping and kidnapping with serious physical injuries. The village chief was also slapped with an administrative complaint for grave misconduct, oppression, abuse of authority and acts prejudicial to public service. [...]

Two days after, on April 18, the policemen returned to Brgy. Hacienda Dolores and surrounded several households in Sitio Balucboc, Purok 8, Brgy. Hacienda Dolores. The police operation was conducted to arrest all of Tolentino's sons, namely: Tirso, Ener, Ed, Erwin, Eddie. All were named in the carnapping charge but none were arrested at the time of the police operation. According to witnesses, some of the police were in full combat gear but without nameplates; while several others including Porac PNP Chief Miro were in civilian clothes. Some security personnel of Triple L accompanied the police.

Lucila Tolentino, wife of Tirso Tolentino, was in their house when the police arrived. She trembled in fear when she saw the armed policemen.

Antonio Tolentino was earlier arrested with his son Ener in January 13, a day after Triple L security guards shot and killed farmer **Arman Padiño** and injured **Noel Tumali**. The Tolentino's posted bail for charges of slight physical injuries and grave threats.

As early as October 2013, members of Aniban were subjected to harassment and intimidation, illegal arrests and detention. [...]

The farmers of Hacienda Dolores face threats of eviction from the land they tilled for generations as the Leonardo-Lachenal Leonio Holdings, Inc (LLL), FL Property Management Corporation (FL) and Ayala Land Inc. (ALI) eye the vast tracts of lands of the hacienda.

Urgent Alert – Karapatan, 15.05.2014

Environmental activist abducted and detained in Koronadal City, South Cotabato

[...] On May 3, the Eastern Mindanao Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), through its spokesperson Capt. Alberto Caber, released a statement to the media claiming it has captured the "notorious NPA front secretary Felix Armodia who operated in Davao del Sur, South Cotabato and Tulunan, North Cotabato."

Contrary to the claims of the AFP, they illegally arrested and detained 52 year-old Romeo Rivera, an environmental activist who is a co-convenor of the Tampakan Panalipdan (Defend Tampakan), an organization campaigning against large-scale and destructive mining in Tampakan, South Cotabato. Romeo Rivera was falsely charged with slight illegal detention, robbery with violence, murder and murder with frustrated murder. But the name Romeo Rivera does not appear on any arrest warrant presented by the authorities. Said warrants were issued against Armodia. The National Democratic Front in Southern Mindanao also issued a statement saying Rivera and Armodia is not the same person. On May 2, 2014, at around 1:30 p.m, Romeo Rivera, 52 was taking his nap on a hammock outside their house at Barangay San Roque, Koronadal City when some 20 armed men in plain clothes and bonnets on their faces arrived and surrounded Rivera.

With the guns pointed at him, Rivera was immediately hand-

cuffed and blindfolded. He pleaded that he be allowed to put his shirt on, but the men disregarded his request. The men seized his cellphone and took him inside a car. Romeo's son, Arel, was inside the house when he heard screaming and commotion outside. When he looked up, several armed men already entered their house. Arel was ordered to lie on his stomach. He was hit and ordered to crawl outside the house. According to witnesses, the armed men fled on board a grey Toyota Tamaraw FX (NIC316) and two Hilux vans with a "For Registration" card instead of a plate number. [...] The abductors forced Rivera to admit he is "Felix Armodia," allegedly the secretary of a guerrilla front of the New People's Army. One of his abductors told Rivera that his case would be reduced if he cooperated, while another threatened to kill him. After hours of travel, Rivera was transferred into another vehicle where the interrogation continued. At around 7:40 p.m. they reached Digos City. Rivera's blindfold was removed and he was turned over to the Digos City police by Capt. Anthony Albuera of the 39th Infantry Battalion- Philippine Army (IBPA). [...] Rivera is the third Karapatan-documented case of illegal arrest and false charges, because they were said to be mistaken for NPA leaders. There was security guard Rolly Panesa who was captured and tortured because he was mistaken to be "Ben-



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jamin Mendoza" allegedly a CPP leader in Southern Luzon. Karapatan secretary general Cristina Palabay also cited the case of farmer Olegario Sevas, 65, who was illegally arrested on December 25, 2011 in Negros Oriental by elements of the AFP and PNP because he was mistaken to be "Filemon Mendrez," purportedly a leader of the NPA. The warrant of arrest issued against Sevas did not bear his name. "Benjamin Mendoza" had Php 5.6 million and "Filemon Mendrez" Php 5.25 million on their heads as reward for their capture. The reward system is contained in a hitlist of the Department of National Defense and the Department of Interior and Local Governments known as Joint Order Number 14-2012.

Press Release - Asian Human Rights Commission, 16.05.2014

Armed men and landlord that use force against indigenous tribes must be held to account

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) is deeply concerned, and demands an investigation into the actions of the security guards and their employer landlord for shooting at, and holding at gunpoint, indigenous people who were to occupy their ancestral land in Quezon, Bukidnon.

In their [mission report](#), [...] prepared by Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, Northern Mindanao Sub-Region, it noted that the armed security guards indiscriminately shot at Manobo-Pulangihons tribes on April 23 purposely to drive them away from their land.

[...] On April 23, in support of their claim, the tribes were accompanied by officials from the national and local government agencies, notably the National Commission for the Indigenous People (NCIP), the municipal government, and the police.

But at around 1pm, armed security guards, reportedly working for Mr. Pablo "Poling" Lorenzo III, who claims to be the owner of Rancho Montalvan, were deployed, and allegedly indiscriminately shot at the group. They also held "12 individuals at gun point," five of whom were women, and three were minors.

The armed men deliberately concealed their identities by not wearing their uniforms. Most of them wore black long sleeves; their faces are [...] covered [...].

Bulatlat.com, 18.05.2014

Harassment continues, another Luisita farmer nabbed

By Ronalyn V. Olea

MANILA - Without being shown any warrant of arrest, a farmer in Hacienda Luisita was arrested by authorities May 16, according to Unyon ng Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (Uma).

Vicente Sambu, a member of Alyansa ng Magbubukid sa Asyenda Luisita (Ambala), was arrested by Tarlac City police between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. Friday from his home in Asturias village, Tarlac City. He is now detained at San Sebastian police station in Tarlac City.

Sambu, along with four others, was first arrested on December 21, 2013 when he and his colleagues attempted to stop the security guards hired by the Cojuangco-Aquinos from bulldozing agricultural lands in Balete village. They were charged with physical injury and detained at Camp Macabulos, provincial headquarters of the Philippine National Police (PNP). The five were released after two days; the prosecutor reverted the case to preliminary investigation for lack of probable cause.

In a previous interview with [Bulatlat.com](#), [Sambu said ten policemen beat him up and forced him inside the police vehicle](#). The charges filed by the Tarlac Development Corporation (Tadeco), a firm owned by the family of President Benigno Aquino III, were recently dismissed. A separate [charge of direct assault to persons in authority was filed against Sambu and his companions](#) January 2014 in relation to the Dec. 21, 2013 incident. Also charged were Jose Baldiviano, Ronald Sakay, Rod

Bulatlat.com, 20.05.2014

Karapatan believes that Rivera was targetted because of his work as leader of Tampakan Panalipdan [...] opposing the Tampakan Project operations of the Sagittarius Mines, Inc. The Tampakan project targets the 15 million tons of copper and 18 million ounces of gold in the area. SMI is largely operated by Anglo-swiss company Glencore-Xstrata and Australian Indophil Resources NL.

Karapatan has documented several cases of human rights violations in the Tampakan area including at least 10 victims of extrajudicial killings related to the operations of GlencoreXstrata-SMI. [...]

The AHRC is of the opinion that the use of force and intimidation [...] was done purposely to frighten and intimidate this group of indigenous people claiming their right to occupy their ancestral land.

It is reported that even though the NCIP has already declared the 623 hectares are the ancestral domain of the Manobo-Pulangihons, "only 70 hectares were allotted for use of the claimants. The rest were classified as forest reserves. Interestingly, what is supposed to be forest reserves are mostly planted with "sugarcane and pineapple."

The AHRC urges the government to hold accountable Ma. Shirlene D. Sario the provincial officer of the NCIP, for allegedly failing to fulfil the obligations required from her to ensure the indigenous people are properly install in their land.

The AHRC also expresses its disappointment at the lack of concern, notably by the local government officials in Quezon, Bukidnon, to failing to address the urgent needs of their own constituents.

The mission report indicated that "no government official from Quezon town to the Provincial government even visited the Manobo-Pulangihons."

Acosta and Mamerto Mandigma.

According to Uma, only two hearings on the case took place and the complainants failed to show up in the said hearings.

Luisita Watch, a network of supporters of Hacienda Luisita farmers, condemned the incident.

"Tadeco continues to grab land from the farmers despite the notice of coverage issued by the Department of Agrarian Reform and the Supreme Court decision ordering the distribution of land to the farmworker-beneficiaries," the network said.

Hundreds of farmers and their supporters are facing various criminal charges filed by Tadeco, Tarlac police and the DAR-hired survey firm. The charges include unlawful detainer, malicious mischief, grave coercion, physical injury, trespassing, threat, among others.

"We are only fighting for our right to our land and yet we are the ones being arrested and imprisoned," Florida Sibayan, Ambala chairwoman, told [Bulatlat.com](#) in a previous interview. Sibayan herself has been charged with malicious mischief, grave coercion, direct assault and threat.

[Members of Ambala filed countercharges](#) against the Cojuangco-Aquinos, members of the local police and Tadeco security guards before the Department of Justice (DOJ) in January this year. To this day, the DOJ has not acted upon the complaints filed by Hacienda Luisita farmers.

Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

NDFP consultant held incommunicado, denied of right to counsel

By Ronalyn V. Olea

MANILA – A consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) in the peace talks condemned the government for arresting him and allegedly denying him the right to counsel.

Roy Erecre, in a statement from prison [...], said his arrest is a violation of the [Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law \(CARHRIHL\)](#) Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (Jasig).

Erecre was [arrested by a composite team of intelligence operatives May 7](#) in Bajada village, Davao City. Earlier, the NDFP confirmed Erecre is one of its consultants covered by Jasig with document of identification number ND978243 under the assumed name Vide Alguna. Signed by both parties in 1995, Jasig provides those involved in the peace talks immunity from surveillance, arrest, threat and other forms of attack.

“Immediately after abducting me in my hometown, this government has kept me incommunicado by transferring me from one detention cell to another across the seas until finally jailing me in Bohol...” Erecre said in a statement dated May 14. “In the

crucial time following my abduction, government agents denied me the right to counsel, as they interrogated and threatened and manhandled me. While locked up from public scrutiny, I was accused of trumped-up charges and misrepresented as a guilty felon through trial by publicity.”

In a [report](#), Army Capt. Alberto Caber, spokesman for the Eastern Mindanao Command, said Erecre was arrested by virtue of several non-bailable warrants from Cebu and Bohol provinces since the 1990s. Caber said Erecre is allegedly responsible for the ambush that killed two army lieutenants in Bohol in separate incidents in March 2000 and March 2003. [...]

Erecre added that during the arrest, he was robbed of his personal belongings and his phone, journal, and flash drives have not been returned.

In a [report](#), Caber confirmed the arresting team confiscated from Erecre P352,000 cash, Nokia cellular phone, 16GB flash drive USB, and assorted documents and receipts. [...]

Fifteen NDFP consultants are detained in various detention facilities.

Inquirer Southern Luzon, 21.05.2014

Ex-Laguna town vice mayor fights for life after shooting

By Maricar Cinco

CAMP PACIANO RIZAL, Philippines – A former vice mayor of Famy, Laguna is in critical condition after being shot several times on Wednesday afternoon.

Amadeo Punio had just stepped out of a cockpit arena in Baran-gay (village) Tunhac in Famy around 2:30 p.m. when shot by motorcycle-riding gunmen, said Senior Superintendent Romulo Sapitula, Laguna police director, in a phone interview.

“(Punio) managed to run back inside (the cockpit) but the gunmen ran after him, still firing their guns,” Sapitula said.

Two other people sustained minor injuries in the shooting.

The gunmen escaped.

Sapitula said they have been looking into different angles, including politics, to determine the motive. Punio ran but lost in the last midterm elections, he said.

Karapatan.org, 21.05.2014

New-born of illegally arrested political prisoner Andrea Rosal died two days after birth

Andrea Rosal, a woman political prisoner and daughter of communist spokesperson Ka Roger Rosal, lost her first child two days after giving birth while in detention.

Andrea Rosal was arrested together with Edward Lazanas on March 27 by elements of the National Bureau of Investigation for trumped up charges of kidnapping with murder. Rosal was seven months pregnant during the arrest.

A decision granting Rosal's Urgent Motion for Hospitalization was issued by the Pasig Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 266 in the morning of May 15, just in time for Rosal's delivery.

The Pasig RTC's decision came out only after six long weeks since it was filed on April 2 at the Mauban Regional Trial Court Branch 64. The Mauban RTC did not decide on the petition but instead transferred the motion to the Pasig RTC.

Rosal gave birth at 8 a.m. on May 17. [...] Undergoing uterine contractions since the evening of May 15, Andrea was brought back and forth from Camp

Senate to look into Rosal baby's 'senseless death'

By Ayeec Macaraig

MANILA, Philippines – Following criticism over the [death of the baby of political prisoner Andrea Rosal](#), the Senate plans to investigate reports the government denied her access to immediate medical care.

Senate justice committee chairman Aquilino “Koko” Pimentel III called for an inquiry into the issue, saying media reports “don't give us the real picture, the unfiltered truth.”

Pimentel said that the investigation will focus on whether or not the conditions in Rosal's detention cell “were up to standards.” The senator said though that the probe is not meant “to pin the blame on anyone but to look for ways to avoid such a senseless death.”

“A death is a death. Whether it was preventable or not is something else. We would like to know if there were conditions in detention, or in the hospital, that may have combined to produce such a tragic result,” Pimentel said in a statement on Thursday, May 22.

[...] Pimentel said the investigation should be “exhaustive but very objective,” focus on the causes of the baby's death, and find out the protocols observed during the arrest and detention of pregnant women.

[...] [Senators Pia Cayetano](#) and Nancy Binay also lamented the baby's death, and the treatment of her mother while in detention. [...]

Maternal health, special treatment raised

The Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) [denied accusations](#) Andrea Rosal got poor treatment under its watch.

“She underwent physical, medical, and pre-natal examination and was in fact visited 4 times by the BJMP medical doctor prior to her delivery,” BJMP spokesperson Roy Valenzuela said in a statement.

The BJMP though admitted it did not find an available obstetrician from the hospital to visit Rosal in jail for pre-natal check-up, as ordered by the court. It also confirmed Karapatan's claim that Rosal was made to go back and forth from BJMP to the Philippine General Hospital the day before she gave birth. [...]

Senators Cayetano and Binay questioned the government's treatment of Rosal, contrasting it with the special treatment of alleged pork barrel scam mastermind Janet Lim Napoles. Napoles faces plunder charges for allegedly funneling millions of pesos in state development funds to her bogus non-governmental organizations.

“The right of a mother to reproductive health is universal and must be observed at all times, regardless of the detainee's political belief,” said Cayetano, a women's rights advocate. [...]

Rappler.com, 22.05.2014



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

Bagong Diwa in Taguig City to the Philippine General Hospital in Manila, almost 15 kilometers apart, because there were no available room for her according to the BJMP. Andrea Rosal was admitted only at the PGH on May 16. [...]

On May 18 at around 5:00 pm, Baby Diona expired due to pulmonary hypertension secondary to neonatal pneumonia and hypoxic encephalopathy, according to her death certificate. Right after she was born, Baby Diona was on artificial respirator. Baby Diona's lifeless body was already cold and blue when Andrea had the first and only opportunity to hold her in her arms. [...]

According to Dr. Beng Rivera-Reyes of the Health Alliance for Democracy (HEAD), the poor prison conditions which Andrea Rosal was in and the failure to provide regular pre-natal check-up may have contributed to the health condition of Baby Diona. During her detention at the National Bureau of Investigation in Manila, Rosal was brought to a cramped and extremely hot cell most unfit for a pregnant woman. Despite complaints of stomach cramps, Andrea was only allowed to see her doctor two days after her arrest. The doctor's prescription for hospital confinement and other laboratory procedures were ignored. Instead, she was transferred to the female dormitory for detainees in Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig City where jail condition was worse.

MindaNews.com, 22.05.2014

Lawyers condemn Marawi prosecutor's killing

By Violeta M. Gloria

ILIGAN CITY - Lawyers have condemned the ambush last Monday that killed Marawi City assistant prosecutor Saipal Alawi Sr.

Unnamed assailants fired bullets on the red Toyota driven by the 64-year-old Alawi while he was on his way home in Marawi. Lawyer Lagamar Latiph, chairperson of the Regional Commission on Human Rights of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), said their office condemns and calls for justice for the death of the prosecutor.

"We call for justice for the untimely death of Prosecutor Alawi Sr. The Commission also demands that the Philippine National Police, the National Bureau of Investigation and concerned law enforcement agencies must conduct a speedy and prompt investigation to bring justice and punish the perpetrators," he said.

Latiph said that the CHR supports Prosecutor General Claro Arellano of the Department of Justice (DOJ) who likewise condemned the "murder as a true indication of a despicable and senseless act of cowardice which has no place in a civilized society."

Rappler.com, 23.05.2014

Broadcaster shot dead in Digos City

By Karlos Manlupig

DAVAO CITY, Philippines - [...] a veteran radio broadcaster was shot dead by unknown assailants in Digos City on Friday morning, May 23.

Initial reports said Sammy Oliverio, [...] of Radyo Ukay, was traveling on a motorcycle along Del Pilar Street when armed men shot him.

Oliverio died instantly, the police said.

She did not receive any medical attention from jail authorities during her detention at Camp Bagong Diwa. Andrea shares the 5x10 meter cell with 31 other female detainees. Each cell has only a window built along the building's corridor; no window is built where fresh air and sunlight could get through.

Since her arrest, she stopped taking her supplements and has to make do with prison food rations, which is usually just rice and a meagre amount of fish or boiled vegetable. She was allergic to fish, but she was not allowed to cook her own food. She had to sleep on the floor because the sleeping cot assigned to her is on the third deck. Her request for an electric fan of her own was refused by jail authorities citing there is a limit to the number of fans in each cell.

Andrea is still mourning for the death of child. But the Court prohibited her to bury her own child for "security reasons". She is only allowed to visit the wake of Baby Diona for three hours.

Andrea Rosal and Lazanas must be immediately released for the cases charged against them are fabricated and baseless. The witness against Andrea Rosal was the same 'professional witness' used by the military against security guard Rolly Panesa, who was illegally arrested, detained and tortured on charges that he was a high-ranking official of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

RCHR also encouraged those in the human rights movement to help resolve the injustice and not to let the perpetrators "go unpunished."

Adom Aguam Macarambon, a lawyer based in Marawi, said that the incident might not be job-related because the fiscal is not handling sensational cases.

Macarambon noted that the victim was not involved in any controversial political issues and theorized that the incident could be related to a rido (clan feud).

[...] "The violence revived fear despite efforts to involve civilians in community affairs," she [Samira Gutoc-Tomawis, former assemblywoman of ARMM] said, adding that more legal education is needed among Marawi residents.

Tomawis said that Marawi Mayor Sultan Fahad Salic met the city prosecutor and other lawyers on Wednesday to discuss security management.

She said lawyers may not perform their roles well when there are threats to their lives. [...]

Oliverio was known to be vocal in condemning illegal drugs and gambling in the city.

The National Union of Journalist in the Philippines-Davao denounced the attack and lambasted the government for failing to address the existing culture of impunity in the country.

Oliverio was the 3rd journalist killed in Digos City since 2006.

Impunity index

Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists ranks the Philippines as the 3rd-worst in its "impunity index" of countries that fail to combat violence against the press.

As of middle of 2013, the committee said at least 72 journalists had been killed in the Philippines since 1992.

On November 23, 2009, a total of 32 journalists were among 58 people kidnapped and massacred in Maguindanao, allegedly by members of the powerful Ampatuan clan.

Of the 196 people charged in that case, 88 remain at large, and rights groups said [families of the victims](#) as well as witnesses remain under threat of retribution.

Four years after the killings, no one has yet been convicted. Despite recent moves to speed it up, the trial is expected to drag on for years in the country's overburdened court system.

Urgent Action – Task Force Detainees of the Philippines, 29.05.2014

2 suspects in radio blocktimer's slay charged

DAVAO CITY – Two suspects in the killing Friday (May 23) of a radio blocktimer in Digos City have been charged with murder Monday, a police official said.

In an interview Tuesday [...], Digos City police chief Supt. Querubin Manalang said they have filed charges against Rady Cabales and one John Doe for the killing of Samuel Oliverio.

Manalang said Oliverio's wife, Rowena Baylosis, positively identified Cabales as the triggerman, and the other suspect as the driver of the motorcycle used in the crime.

Reports said the killers were not wearing masks. Oliverio was driving his motorcycle from a market in Digos with Rowena onboard at the time of the incident.

The victim sustained a gunshot wound in the head. His wife was also wounded.

Manalang said they considered the case "cleared" since Oliverio's wife positively identified the suspects, who remain at large.

The police official called on the public to relay information to authorities on the suspects' whereabouts.

Police were also investigating if somebody had ordered the killing, and if the motive was personal or work related.

[...] Radyo Ukay station manager Ramon Sibya was quoted in a Philippine Information Agency-XI report as saying Oliverio was no longer anchoring the radio program due to health reasons. [...]

MindaNews, 27.05.2014

The Military Presence and their Unwanted Behavior Sow Fear and Restlessness in the Community of an Indigenous People in Pampanga -TFDP

[...] The Aeta community in Barangay Camias, Porac, Pampanga is continuously being threatened by the presence of government forces in the area and their unwarranted actions.

The military and paramilitary personnel manning the tribal community are currently deployed within the ancestral domain covering 18,067 hectares of land claimed by the Aetas. The former health center [...] is currently being occupied and utilized by the military allegedly under supervision of the 7th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army (PA) and Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) as one of their outposts.

The Aetas are usually confronted and questioned by the military about their activities. [...] Customary practices of their tribe are no longer observed since the military are barring them from doing so.

[...] For instance, when the Aetas hunt, they [...] blow a whistle so that birds will come down from the trees and are caught by the Aetas. The military suspected that this method was a secret signal to give information [to] rebels groups.

On several occasions, the Aetas are not allowed to go to the municipal proper to buy food supplies, medicines and things needed in their community. Worse, the military confiscate their rice and other food items. They also seize some of their livestock and kitchen utensils. They are accused of supporting the New People's Army (NPA) by giving them food.

[...] The education of the children is affected. It causes fear to the children and they are apparently traumatized.

The Military and militia personnel also barred the Aetas from gathering in groups. Often [...], the government forces fire their guns while they are under the influence of alcohol.

The military and CAFGU started deployment in Barangay Camias, Porac, Pampanga in 2008. Later on, the area was eventually declared as an insurgency free zone.

Around 1,800 families with 3,000 individuals are affected in Barangay Camias alone.

[...] The Aetas alleged that the deployment of government troops has something to do with the infrastructure and development projects funded by private corporation with consent

from both the national and local government. They alleged that the military are being mobilized to protect vested interests of investors as well as government officials who benefit from these projects. They added that soldiers might also be utilized to suppress the rights of people to express their sentiments and the right to oppose for they are the ones affected. According to the tribal group, the Aboitiz Power Corporation is currently in the process of exploring the geothermal power source in some 20,000 hectares of land in Pampanga that cover the Aetas' ancestral domain and nearby Zambales. [...]

The Aetas are fighting to defend their ancestral domain. Until now, the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) or a formal recognition of ownership has not been issued to the Aetas. The CADT or other certification such as the certificate of ancestral land title (CALT) shall be obtained from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP)-Ancestral Domains Office (ADO), or by securing a certificate of title by virtue of "Commonwealth Act 141, as amended, or the Land Registration Act 496."4.

Another private corporation, the Clark Development Corporation (CDC), is also involved in a dispute with the IP communities. The Aetas are accusing the company of land grabbing in establishing a golf course and water park inside the Freeport. [...] 5,000 hectares of supposed ancestral land are being occupied by CDC.

The third issue is the copper, gold and silver extraction project by the Shuley Mine Inc. (SMI) within the tribe's ancestral domain in Barangay Camias. The project covers 1,160 hectares of Aetas' ancestral land.

According to the tribal leaders, lowlanders would be affected when wastes from the mines drain down to Gumain River toward Lubao and Sasman towns and Manila Bay. The sites, they said, are used by Aetas for recreation, hunting, source of materials for weddings (tangan) and medicinal herbs.

Another entity, the developer LLL Holdings Inc. is said to have grabbed 18,000 hectares of the land tilled by the farmers and Aetas.

UPDATES ON CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS
Asian Human Rights Commission, 08.05.2014

The loss of two widows is everyone's loss

In November 2005, Jose Manegdeg, a staff member of a church-based non-governmental organisation, was killed soon after he

finished conducting a para-legal training in San Esteban, Ilocos Sur. Four years later, another 57 people, 32 of whom were jour-



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nalists, were murdered in what is now known as the Maguindanao massacre. One of them was Alejandro Reblando, a journalist from General Santos City.

Jose (Pepe) and Alejandro (Bong) are among the hundreds of human rights and political activists, journalists, witnesses or anyone who dared to challenge the local political structure, and were killed for their courage. [...] many years later hardly anybody would have much interest in other details, such as what happen to their wives, children and their family?

While others may have lost interest, the widows and their orphans, like the loved ones of Jose and Alejandro, continue to endure the pain and suffering on their own. [...]

Jose's widow, Florence; and Alejandro's widow, Myrna; are among the countless widows who have lost their loved ones due to senseless violence. [...] In the profound feeling of loss, pain and longing, it is the living, not the dead that suffer the most.

[...] Florence did not only lose Jose, but the Filipino society too lost a dedicated person educating people to protect their rights. Myrna did not only lose Alejandro, but we too lost a journalist who kept us informed.

While their husbands contributed to our society, their widows and children and those who care for them, had to come to terms on their own because neither the government nor our society were there to care and protect them.

In fact, as she prosecutes the soldier who killed her husband, Florence and her two children had to move from one place to another due to continuing threats in the absence of a State pro-

tection mechanism. Also, Myrna had to leave the Philippines to seek protection from another territory, Hong Kong, while prosecuting those involved in the Maguindanao massacre.

Their husbands, Jose and Alejandro, may have either been prepared or have chosen the lives they lived; however, their wives and their children had no choice.

In the case of Myrna and her children, the trauma that they suffered is deep, and beyond what anyone could imagine. [...] In fact, the loss that Florence and Myrna have experienced is what more and more widows and children are experiencing.

Since January this year, about 19 human rights and political activist have been killed, one of whom was Romeo Capalla, the younger brother of Bishop Fernando Capalla of Davao. He was killed on March 15, in Oton, Iloilo.

In our country today, stories of targeted extrajudicial killings and disappearances, like what has happened to Jose and Alejandro, have become so common that they hardly provoke anger, let alone any interest. Our anger, even if there is, say after the Maguindanao massacre, was short lived. Four years on, even the media hardly covers stories about it.

What is happening clearly shows as to how fast the absence of protection and security is degenerating, not only for the social activists and their families, but for anyone in our country. We may ignore who these victims and their families are, but we cannot ignore that anybody can become a victim.

In our society today, indifference and apathy is deeply profound. I am still looking for answers as to why that is.

Press Release - Desaparecidos, 13.05.2014

Defense in the Cadapan-Empeño case purposely delays court proceedings

"If the defense is delaying the court proceedings so the families of Karen Empeño and Sherlyn Cadapan will eventually grow tired of seeking justice, the defense will fail," said Aya Santos, Pamilya ng Desaparecidos para sa Katarungan (Desaparecidos) secretary general after the May 12 hearing at the Malolos Regional Trial Court of the criminal case of kidnapping and serious illegal detention against Retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan, Col. Felipe Anotado, Staff Sgt. Edgar Osorio and M/Sgt. Rizal Hilario.

"The defense, headed by Attys. Joey Cruz and Abner Torres have been repeatedly disregarding court processes by failing to submit judicial affidavits five days before the scheduled hearing as required under the law," said Santos. The two lawyers were already fined by the Court on February 10 for the same offense.

[...] The defense have previously manifested in court that their witnesses do not have fare to go to Bulacan and appear in court. The defense presented yesterday Staff Sgt. Edgar Osorio as their witness.

"The military is obviously giving lame reasons to evade the law. Subpoenas have already been served by the court to the witnesses. It is not true they do not have the budget to transport their witnesses. All the AFP has to do is require their officers to be present in court for a day but they delay the proceedings on

purpose either because they do not have witnesses to produce or they are still looking for fake witnesses to concoct stories [...]" added Santos.

The defense started presenting their witnesses on September 2013 and successively postponed the hearings due to the absence of witnesses. They have since presented two witnesses—the accused themselves, Anotado and Osorio.

Atty. Torres said five witnesses are still lined up to testify in court for Osorio and Anotado but the court and the prosecution reminded them that they have until June 23 to produce their witnesses. After June 23, the presentation of witnesses of the defense will be deemed waived and the case is submitted for resolution.

"Mothers will always be mothers to their children, alive or not. And it means seeking for justice and putting rapists and murderers behind bars even if it takes a lifetime," Santos said. "[...] Mrs. Empeño and Mrs. Cadapan will continue to seek justice," Santos said.

The case of kidnapping and Illegal detention was filed on December 2011 by Erlinda Cadapan and Concepcion Empeño for the disappearance of their daughters Karen Empeño and Sherlyn Cadapan in June 26, 2006 in Bulacan. Anotado and Osorio remain on trial while Jovito Palparan is still at large.

DavaoToday.com, 13.05.2014

IP leader to raise Manobo displacement issue in UN confab

By Tyrone A. Velez

DAVAO CITY — The issue of the Talaingod Manobo displacement would be raised by an indigenous peoples woman leader in the ongoing 13th United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York starting last May 12 to 23.

The indigenous leader, Norma Capuyan of the Tagabawa-Bagobo tribe from North Cotabato, is joining the forum as a representative of Lumad organizations particularly from Mindanao which has 18 ethnolinguistic tribes.

The high-level forum brings hundreds of indigenous peoples leaders and government officials for a 10-day meet to discuss

issues related to economic and social development, culture, environment, education, health and human rights.

Capuyan is vice-chair of the Mindanao indigenous alliance called Kalumaran and also heads provincial organizations Apo-Sandawa Lumadnong Panaghiusa sa Cotabato and PASAKA Southern Mindanao Lumad Confederation.

Capuyan said Kalumaran would raise to the forum the continuing human rights violations committed by the military against indigenous peoples, and would highlight the case of Talaingod Manobos from Davao del Norte. [...]



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Capuyan cited particular cases such as the disruption of classes of Lumad schoolchildren and the harassment on an elder lumad woman, Ubunay Batod Manlaon, who was molested, deprived of food and forced to act as a guide for the military for nearly a week.

"These are particular cases violating the rights of indigenous children and women," she said. "I will also include the cases of two pregnant women who gave birth during the evacuation. Of course, these cases not only occurred in Talaingod, but also in other places such as in Compostela Valley, Davao del Norte, North Cotabato, Bukidnon and Agusan del Sur."

She said in her town of Arakan and neighboring Magpet, soldiers have been conducting census with the purpose of tagging [...] people who are suspected to have relatives joining the New People's Army.

Capuyan said she hopes to have a dialogue with the special rapporteur on indigenous issues, Vicki Tauli-Corpus, a Filipina who will be installed as the rapporteur this year.

"[...] hopefully she may be invited to investigate these cases," said Capuyan. "I also hope that she would see cases of mining-related violations happening in our country," Capuyan added,

referring to the killing of anti-mining advocate Jimmy Liguyon in Bukidnon.

Special rapporteurs may only investigate cases of UN member countries through invitation of the government.

The previous special rapporteur, Rudolph Stavenhagen, visited the Philippines twice [...] and reported human rights violations of the military against indigenous peoples. He also said the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) [...] has been offset by conflicting laws such as the Mining Act. [...]

Officials from the government's National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) would be attending the forum. [...]

"[...] What we should discuss is why Lumad communities are against titling and selling their ancestral land, why they are opposed to mining, to forced recruitment to paramilitary groups. The point that indigenous peoples assert their rights should be discussed," Capuyan said.

Capuyan said she hopes that forum may file a resolution to express concern on human rights violations and to bring these cases to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples slated in September later this year. [...]

Inquirer.net, 14.05.2014

Military troops kill attackers of Sen. Guingona's mother

MANILA, Philippines—More than a year after the assassination attempt on Ruth Guingona, mother of Senator Teofisto "TG" Guingona III, government forces killed her suspected assailants on Monday.

According to a statement from the Philippine Army's 4th Infantry Division released Wednesday, troops from the 58th Infantry Battalion had a skirmish against members of the New People's Army at Sitio Mangilit, Barangay Bal-ason, Gingoog City killing

two rebels, believed to be Guingona's assailants.

NPA rebels ambushed Guingona, who was the former mayor of Gingoog, on April 20, 2013, wounding her and killing two of her bodyguards in the process.

"Military operations against the NPA bandits will continue with renewed vigor to protect the people of Gingoog and Misamis Oriental," Lieutenant Colonel Jose Eriel Niembra, commanding officer of the 58th Infantry Battalion, said. [...]

Inquirer Mindanao, 20.05.2014

Suspected gunman in 2010 killing of reporter Nestor Bedolido arrested

By Orlando B. Dinoy

DIGOS CITY, Philippines – One of the two suspects long sought by authorities for the July 2010 murder of journalist Nestor Bedolido here was arrested Tuesday.

Chief Insp. Francis Sonza, head of the police's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group in Eastern Mindanao, identified the arrested suspect as Henry Mirafuentes.

Sonza told the Philippine Daily Inquirer by phone that Mirafuentes was arrested around 1:30 p.m. inside a safe house in Mintal, Davao City. [...]

He said Mirafuentes was the object of a warrant issued by Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 19 Executive Judge Carmelita Sarno-Davin [...] for murder.

Senior Supt. Joel Pernito, head of the CIDG in Eastern Mindanao, said Mirafuentes was implicated in the Bedolido murder case by his own brother, Voltaire Mirafuentes.

Voltaire, the elder of the two, had surrendered to authorities in October 2010 and admitted to be among the three killers of the journalist. He identified his companions as his brother, Henry; and Artemio Timosan Jr.

Bedolido, 50, who was a reporter for the weekly tabloid

Kastigador, died from six bullet wounds outside of his karaoke bar [...].

Bedolido's death was later tied to "exposés" the paper had published during the 2010 elections.

Voltaire has accused then governor Douglas Cagas – the subject of the supposed exposés' – and Matanao, Davao del Sur Mayor Butch Fernandez of ordering Bedolido's killing.

Both Cagas and Fernandez repeatedly denied involvement in Bedolido's death and accused their political opponents of dragging them into the case to destroy their political careers. Fernandez is a known Cagas ally.

Cagas also tried to downplay Bedolido's death by saying he was never a journalist.

But a copy of the Digos Times, a weekly magazine that Cagas owned, showed Bedolido as among the staff, and later an editor. Cagas and Fernandez were later cleared of the accusations against them but the Bedolido family filed an appeal at the Court of Appeals.

The appeal has yet to be decided on.

Rappler.com, 24.05.2014

Endangered virgin forests, threatened indigenous peoples in Mindanao

By Clemente Bautista

The Pantaron Mountain Range swathes the provinces of Bukidnon, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Misamis Oriental, Agusan del Norte, and Agusan del Sur, covering 1.8 million hectares or 12.4% of the entire Mindanao region.

It is where one of the largest remaining virgin or primary forests in the Philippines is located, supplying the water of major rivers and their tributaries in Mindanao. [...]

[...] The Pantaron Range is arguably one of the most conserved and preserved forest ecosystems in the Philippines sustained



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through the self-governance and active resistance of the Talaingod Manobos.

Defending the ancestral land

In 1993, the Talaingod Manobo *datus* (leaders) established their indigenous people organization Salugpungan Ta Tanu Igkanugon (Salugpongong), which means "unity in defense of the ancestral domain."

Datu Doloman Dawsay, [...] spokesperson of Salugpongong, said their organization was established amidst their struggle against the encroaching logging operations of Alcantara and Sons (Alsons) through their Integrated Forest Management Agreement (IFMA).

Consequently, Datu Guibang Apoga, the Talaingod Manobo's overall tribal chieftain, declared a *pangayaw* or tribal war against Alsons to protect their communities, ancestral land, and resources from their operations.

[...] the Manobos were beginning to feel the negative effects of deforestation, mono-cropping, and the constant harassment from Alson's goons.

Since then, large forest areas in Pantaron Range, along with the Manobos' knowledge of its land and life, were preserved through the persistent and strong resistance and defence of the Talaingod Manobos.

Saving the indigenous community

MAGUINDANAO MASSACRE

InterAksyon.com, 27.05.2014

Media groups ask: 'Is govt rushing Ampatuan massacre trial for 2016?'

By Brian Maglungosod

MANILA, Philippines -- Several media organizations worry that the administration may be "rushing" the trial of suspects in the Ampatuan massacre not for justice but to "boost the chances of the 2016 presidential candidate of the present administration or the talked-about senatorial bid of some Cabinet members."

The concern was raised by the Freedom Fund of Filipino Journalists, a network that advocates press freedom and the protection of media workers [...]. [...]

The FFFJ's concern stems from the February 28 manifestation by the panel of Department of Justice prosecutors, which it said signaled their intent to rest not only the presentation of evidence in the bail proceedings of 28 of the accused, including principal accused Andal Ampatuan Jr., but also the "evidence-in-chief," which is needed to establish proof beyond reasonable doubt and ensure conviction.

Many media, press freedom and human rights groups continue to fret over the snail's pace progress of the prosecution of the more than 190 persons accused of the November 23, 2009 Ampatuan massacre, which claimed the lives of 58 persons, 32 of them media workers.

Close to 100 suspects remain at large. Of those arrested, including key members of the powerful Ampatuan clan, only more than 70 have thus far been arraigned, excluding the 28 seeking bail.

While the FFFJ welcomed "an end to the more than four years of presentation of prosecution evidence" to convince the court to deny bail to the 28 accused, it said it was dismayed that the

PEACE PROCESS

Rappler.com, 26.05.2014

Bangsamoro challenge: Open up the process

Johaira Wahab

Let me begin this address by asking the basic question that can easily get lost amid technicalities or propaganda: Does the [Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro](#) address injustices experienced by the various peoples in Mindanao - both histor-

Today, the indigenous peoples' way of life in the area is being disrupted by military presence.

Massive number of military troops were deployed in the Pantaron Range.

In March, a military campaign was conducted in the area by the 60th Infantry Battalion from the 10th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army entered Talaingod.

Datu Dawsay assessed that that the current "militarization" of their communities is part and parcel of the government's efforts to open up Talaingod and the forest to commercial logging, large-scale mining, and agricultural plantation.

There are several mining applications covering tens of thousands of hectares in Pantaron Range.

Illegal logging also continues to plunder its forests, particularly in areas that are not yet under the protection of Salugpongong.

Huge expanses of banana plantations are meanwhile creeping into the Bukidnon side of Pantaron.

In the face of despotic "development aggression" in the area, the Talaingod Manobos renewed their calls to defend Talaingod and Pantaron Range from the entry of destructive corporate projects, and to end the military operations.

Datu Apoga vowed that his people will not allow the government and corporations to displace them and destroy their forest once again - a resolve that environmental activists share and support. [...]

prosecutors are "not inclined" to present additional evidence." [...] The FFFJ said such a "wholesale" end to the presentation of evidence, even if the bail petitions remain unresolved by Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 221, which is trying to massacre case, "sends the message that the DOJ panel cares little about the quantum of evidence required to seek conviction."

It noted that Maguindanao Governor Esmel Mangudadatu, who lost his wife and several relatives and supporters in the massacre, has "objected to the resting of the case against the Ampatuans." [...]

Lawyers' groups have said that, given the sheer number of accused and the manner in which the cases were filed, the trial of the multiple murder charges against the suspects could take up to a decade before securing a conviction.

In the meantime, a number of key witnesses have been murdered while media groups keeping tabs on the case say other witnesses as well as victims' families continue to be threatened or receive offers to settle.

The FFFJ said it continues to hold President Benigno Aquino III and Justice Secretary Leila de Lima to their promise that there will be convictions before 2016, when Aquino's term ends.

However, it stressed that convicting all those accused of the mass murder "is possible only through the conscientious efforts of the government prosecutors to present evidence that would establish guilt beyond reasonable doubt."

"Anything less is tantamount to compromising their sworn duty as public servants," it added.

ical and current? The story of the peace process with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) begins with an understanding of the so-called "unacceptable status quo." [...]

Historical injustices have been depicted in various ways:

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There is injustice, according to many Moro writers, in the emergent relationship between the Philippine State and the Bangsamoro people, enshrined today in no less than the Philippine Constitution.

Such injustice saw its roots in the attempts to conquer and subjugate Moro communities at the time of the Spaniards, which communities already had their own political and social institutions with established political and economic links with neighboring principalities in Borneo, Java and other places [...]. Later on, according to these accounts, such injustice came to full execution in the 1898 Treaty of Paris, when these areas were lumped together with islands in Luzon and the Visayas, and then ceded to the US, as part of the Philippines.

From that time onwards, peoples in these areas [...] were placed under a government that had been for the most part alien to them, under laws and institutions that were seen to be inconsistent with many of their values, customs and beliefs.

Further, injustice also came in the form of denial of economic rights and deprivation of property long held and passed on through generations. By some accounts, these were made possible through laws and policies of resettlement and relocation of new communities, which forced communities of old to leave lands held by their ancestors, which did not only hold economic value, but also had profound links to their ultimate beliefs and identities.

Injustice, in the former sense, is further worsened by blatantly disparate access to other opportunities and disregard for certain rights, such as access to education and employment, which has put in a disadvantaged position by rendering them practically unable to assert many of their fundamental rights, against the abuses of those who have such access and are wont to take advantage.

In this context, those who are inclined to take advantage bring about other forms of injustices by primarily imposing their desires over others and consummating such an imposition through political dominance [...], economic dominance [...], or otherwise, dominance as control over the physical security of our communities [...].

These are some of the various forms of injustices, which are deemed to be the roots of social inequities we see today in our communities in Mindanao. These are the same injustices, which put the few in a position to decide the fate of many, without a genuine relationship of representation or consultation, or regard for the uniqueness of the conditions of people other than themselves. Also, the same injustices that deprive peoples of their rights, deny recognition of their identities and undermine the inherent equality of persons.

To my understanding, the imposition of laws and policies and even of narratives is unjust [...] because of the refusal to recognize the inherent agency of peoples in Mindanao to discern their conditions and decide their own affairs.

CAB's key features

The next question is, does the CAB or the Bangsamoro Basic Law address these various forms of injustices? [...]:

- The CAB reiterates the relationship of asymmetry, and the notion of autonomy and self-governance.
- It proposes a new structure for power sharing [...] through the parliamentary form of government.
- It presents a more sophisticated framework for sharing in revenues, wealth and access to natural re-

sources, with new modalities for preferential rights of inhabitants over natural resources.

- It reiterates basic rights and other entitlements, as well as services due from Government, not just for the dominant lot – but more so for IPs and other minorities.
- It provides a framework for decommissioning of armed groups and disbandment of private armies, coupled with more access to decision making on security matters.
- It recognizes the need for responsive transitional justice mechanisms for all affected stakeholders.

[...] Unfortunately, not everything we want to change in the unacceptable status quo can be effected by mere legislation or even by agreement between parties.

The challenge for the Bangsamoro peace process is to break free from the usual mode of negotiations that has been in place since 1997. This is one more change that needs to happen.

Open up the process

When the CAB was signed [...] that signaled [...] that the peace process has evolved anew.

FIRST. [...] The conversation is one that should now take place among members of the communities in the prospective Bangsamoro: A conversation where they can ask and discuss among themselves their aspirations, values, and institutions as individuals, and as a society, and ways to unite behind ideals that they commonly share, and how to accommodate those that they may not.

This peace process is [...] such an opportunity for our communities to decide for themselves matters that [...] were only later imposed for their submission, in the unacceptable status quo.

People need to feel that in their own process, that they can genuinely participate in its mechanisms, and not only to agree or express support.

SECOND. [...] Now, it is imperative that those who seek to lead must [...] appreciate legitimate grievances when held by others. [...] Those who want to govern need to be able to listen [...] to [...], those that oppose.

Road to sustainable peace

They need to show that they are able to demonstrate a fair appreciation of the concerns of other peoples, in the same way or in the same extent, and with the same vigor and fervor, that they represent and fight for their own grievances and the constituencies of which they are a part.

We need to be clear that in the prospective Bangsamoro, we can freely disagree and express our disagreements, and that this will not necessarily threaten the peace [...].

[...] Sustainable peace requires that we maintain institutions and systems of governance that are inclusive, participatory, transparent and accountable to the people. Accountability requires that the people are clear about their rights, entitlements and what they can expect and demand from people who govern them.

Today, we need to remind ourselves that we are past closed-door negotiations [...].

We need to open up those doors, [...] and listen to our people, because in these narratives of conflict in Mindanao [...] there are not just two sides to the story.