



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

HEADLINES NEWS REVIEW JANUARY 2015

HEADLINES & POLITICS

EU increases PhI assistance to P17 B	2
PhI reaffirms commitment to fight impunity	2
Cause-oriented groups air appeals to Pope Francis	2
Pope Francis hopes for peace, dev't in Mindanao	3
The two Genasques	3
House to probe 'disappearance' of street kids during papal visit	3
PCID on Mamasapano Incident	4
5-year-old girl, 6 civilians died in Maguindanao clash – report	4

INSTITUTIONS

United States lifts restrictions on Philippines military aid	5
SC launches program to speed up justice	5

CURRENT CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Government told: Stop forcible entry of mining firms	5
IP school teachers barred from entering communities, schools in Kapalong	6
Creation of special court on media killings urged	7
Suspect in reporter's slay ordered released	7
Journalists back radioman getting threats	7
No resolution yet on victims of 'summary killings'	7
European 'legal eagles' call on Aquino government to end attacks on PH lawyers	7
Jail Warden faces complaints at courts for violation of political prisoners' rights	9

UPDATES ON CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

RTC judge inhibits self from Archival murder case	9
Pope asked to join calls for justice for murdered Italian priest	10
Court ordered political prisoner Miradel Torrs to return to Taguig Jail	10

MAGUINDANAO MASSACRE

50 more suspects indicted for Ampatuan massacre	10
NUJP slams decision to grant bail to Maguindanao massacre suspect	10

PEACE PROCESS

Bishops weigh in on Moro law	11
Karapatan slams arrest of NDFP consultant and Bautista's possible appointment	11
MILF after SAF killing: We reiterate full commitment to peace process	12
Gov't, MILF sign protocol for arms decommissioning	12

FURTHER READINGS

Aquino Should Act Decisively to Punish Perpetrators -HRW	12
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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).*



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

HEADLINES & POLITICS

The Philippine Star, 14.01.2015

EU increases Phl assistance to P17 B

By Pia Lee-Brago

MANILA, Philippines - The European Union (EU) has increased its assistance to the Philippines from 130 million euros (P7 billion) to 325 million euros (P17 billion) for 2014 to 2020, focusing on key areas of inclusive growth through sustainable energy, job creation and rule of law.

EU Ambassador Guy Ledoux and National Economic and Development Authority deputy director general Rolando Tungpalan signed yesterday a letter confirming the new seven-year EU support strategy to the Philippines.

"This increase is a recognition of improvement of governance in the Philippines," Ledoux said in a press conference at the launching of the EU delegation and EU member states embassies of the 2015 Joint EU-Philippine Development Report at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel.

"We feel that EU aid to the Philippines will have more impact in the context of an administration that has a policy of improving governance and management of the funds," he said. [...]

Ledoux said the emphasis would be on achieving concrete results and maximizing the impact of the EU funding to the benefit of Filipinos across the country.

He said EU cooperation is composed of development assistance

by EU institutions and contribution of individual EU member states.

EU in the last three years provided budget support for health, justice, trade-related technical assistance and livelihood activities in Mindanao, Typhoon Yolanda victims and the peace process with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Ledoux said the EU would continue to direct more funds as assistance to Mindanao as part of its contribution to the peace process.

"When you have a region in conflict then people are unhappy and who might be tempted to resort to terrorist activity... the fact the Philippine government has engaged in negotiation with the MILF, it is very encouraging and it is contributing to reducing the risk of radicalism so the EU and its member states have the support of the peace process on one side," he said.

The EU is the Philippines' largest grant development partner, with a total of 331 million euros (P19 billion) aid in 2013.

The decision to more than double EU development assistance to the Philippines came weeks after the granting of the GSP+ status to the Philippines in line with the EU's strategy to support poverty reduction through aid and trade.

The Philippine Star, 14.01.2015

Phl reaffirms commitment to fight impunity

By Pia Lee-Brago

MANILA, Philippines - The Philippines reaffirmed its commitment to fight impunity and pushed for rules-based international relations among states as Manila urged countries to ratify the Rome Statute, particularly nations from the Asia-Pacific region.

Philippine Ambassador to the Netherlands and head of the Philippine delegation to the Assembly Jaime Victor Ledda said the Philippines supports efforts to advance global peace in his statement during the 13th Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) held last Dec. 11 in New York.

"Modern international relations continue to mature from one that is power-based to one that should be rules-based. This is the power and majesty of the rule of law. Without it, there would not be international criminal justice, and without international criminal justice, global peace would not be possible," Ledda said.

"The Philippines affirms its commitment to fighting impunity. We condemn the most serious crimes of concern to the international community. Together, we should ensure that perpetrators account for their crimes," he added. [...]

Interaksyon.com, 15.01.2015

Cause-oriented groups air appeals to Pope Francis

MANILA - Cause-oriented groups are not about to lose their window of opportunity to air their concerns and make these known to Pope Francis, who begins his papal and state visit to the country on Thursday.

Representatives from Anakpawis Partylist joined landless farmers belonging to the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), Alyansa ng Manggagawang Bukid sa Hacienda Luisita (AMBALA), Coco Levy Ibalik sa Amin (CLAIM), and other peasant and human rights organizations currently on hunger strike at Liwasang Bonifacio, Manila and announced their plan to send Pope Francis an open letter "on the real state of the Filipino poor."

"We support the farmers who are confronting agrarian issues on their fasting for land, justice and peace, and we appeal to our beloved Pope Francis that he sees for himself the extent of poverty and oppression that the Filipino masses are being subjected to," Anakpawis representative Fernando "Ka Pando" Hicap said at Liwasang Bonifacio.

Anakpawis seeks to air four main concerns: the Yolanda calamity and Aquino government's negligence of the poor victims, Hacienda Luisita and the social injustice of landlessness, corruption and the worsening poverty of the masses, and the search for peace based on justice and human rights. The Kongreso ng Pagkakaisa ng Maralita ng Lungsod (KPML)

said: "Like everybody else, the poor, who are mostly Catholics, would also want to have a glimpse of the Pope as he traverses across the metropolis, since it is the only opportunity for us to see him in the flesh.

The group called on the Pope to break protocol as he always does, and insist on visiting the slum communities of the Metro Manila "to see and breathe for himself the cheap labor policies and unbridled deregulation and privatization of basic social services by the government."

[...] Karapatan, on the other hand, airs hope for "the institution of the Catholic Church to be among the poor and to stand for the poor and the oppressed, and to resonate among us human rights workers, especially as we bear witness to the continuing assault on the rights of the Filipino people under the Benigno S. Aquino regime."

Relatives of political prisoners and other victims of rights violations on Thursday are joined members of people's organizations to welcome Pope Francis in a "Misang Bayan" at the Liwasang Bonifacio. [...]

Almost 500 political prisoners in 43 jails nationwide are to start their hunger strike-fast Thursday as they also light candles to welcome the Pope and highlight the call to release all political prisoners, and for Pope Francis to intercede on their behalf and to "hear the calls of political prisoners and their kin for their



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

freedom, and the cry for justice of relatives of the desaparecidos and the victims of political killings. Theirs are voices that cannot be silenced, even by the most brutal forms of repression." The landless farmers sector, for its part, reiterate their call for President Aquino to heed the pontiff's call to make land reform "not only a political necessity" but also "a moral obligation." "Pope Francis statement on making land reform both a requirement and a commitment [...] is a timely and fitting call for Philippine government leaders led by President Benigno Aquino III, who have been slipping and sliding away from their promise to empower and uplift the lives of farmers via CARP," said Alberto

Jayme, president of national peasant federation Task Force Mapalad (TFM)-Negros chapter. Task Force Mapalad said Aquino's 2012 promise of completing CARP before his term ends is fast becoming "mere lip service as the Department of Agrarian Reform's performance in acquiring and distributing agricultural landholdings to farmers remains dismal and disappointing." The landless farmers say they are thankful that they have found another ally in Pope Francis. They are also grateful that the Catholic Church, through its bishops and cardinals, has continued to support the farmers' struggle.

The Philippine Star, 17.01.2015

Pope Francis hopes for peace, dev't in Mindanao

By Aurea Calica

MANILA, Philippines - Pope Francis expressed hope yesterday for the dawning of lasting peace and development in Mindanao.

"In a particular way, I express my trust that the progress made in bringing peace to the south of the country will result in just solutions in accord with the nation's founding principles and respectful of the inalienable rights of all, including the indigenous peoples and religious minorities," Francis said in a speech delivered after his one-on-one meeting with President Aquino at Malacañang Palace. "Upon all of you, and upon all the men, women and children of this beloved nation, I cordially invoke God's abundant blessings," he added.

Congress is deliberating on the Bangsamoro Basic Law, which if approved, will give greater autonomy to Muslim regions in Mindanao. The law also seeks to replace the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Muslim groups in the Philippines have expressed their solidarity with the pope in his call for peace. His message of peace, religious tolerance and inter-faith dialogue has resonated among Muslims who want his imprimatur on the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

The Bangsamoro Basic Law is one of the measures on the President's priority list.

House to probe 'disappearance' of street kids during papal visit

By Paolo Romero

MANILA, Philippines - The House committee on Metro Manila development is set to conduct an inquiry into reports that the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) forcibly removed street children from Manila during the visit of Pope Francis last week.

The probe was prompted by Kabataan party-list Rep. Terry Ridon, who said there is a need to look into media reports that the government rounded up street children in Manila and locked them in municipal detention centers or in resorts in the provinces to temporarily "clear the streets" of the country's capital during the five-day papal visit.

Ridon said the panel is expected to summon Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman to appear before the House and explain the actions of her agency.

A report published in British tabloid Daily Mail Online quoted Fr. Shay Cullen, founder of non-government organization Preda Foundation, as saying that detained children were "locked up in a dungeon" and kept under dire circumstances.

Another report released by TIME quoted Soliman, noting that about a hundred homeless families were indeed taken off Roxas Boulevard and brought to Chateau Royal Resort in Batangas province under DSWD's modified conditional cash transfer (CCT) program.

These families remained in the resort for the whole duration of the papal visit, TIME reported.

Ridon said reports on DSWD's "clearing operations" are "truly horrendous, given the fact that Pope Francis visited our country to - first and foremost - see and talk to the poor."

"Secretary Soliman's admission that her agency indeed hid some 100 families in a resort in Batangas reeks of hypocrisy," he added.

"In an effort to look good while under the international limelight, the government just swept the problems it cannot solve under the rug. Jailing street children or stashing their families away in a resort speaks volumes of the Aquino administration's stage-managed style of leadership," he said.

The lawmaker also said it is "deplorable" for DSWD to spend money under the modified CCT to whitewash poverty.

"Back when they were asking for funds in Congress, DSWD extolled the supposed benefit that the CCT gives to poor families. Is this the multi-billion anti-poverty measure the government boasts about? No wonder poverty and inequality has - in the pope's own words - reached scandalous levels in the country," he said.

The Philippine Star, 17.01.2015

Bulatlat.com 24.01.2015

The two Genasques

By Dee Ayroso

MANILA - [...] Father and son Genasque Enriquez Senior and Junior are both children of the Andap Valley, the ancestral territory of the Manobos in Surigao del Sur province. Rich in timber and mineral resources, the area is much-coveted by logging and mining companies, and is fiercely defended by its indigenous communities. Among them are the two Genasques.

Senior, or Genasque, is 41, the secretary general of the Caraga-wide Lumad group Kahugpong sa Lumadnong Organisasyon (Kasalo). Genasque is also the national vice chair of Katribu partylist and its second nominee. The third among his four kids and his Junior, nicknamed Apad, is 12, a grade 6 student of the Tribal Filipino (Trifpss) in Diatagon village, Lianga. [...]

Trumped-up

Genasque was arrested in Surigao City, Surigao del Norte on August 22, 2014, [on trumped-up charges of frustrated murder in connection to a military action by the New People's Army.](#)

"My father is a good leader of our community," Apad said, speaking in Filipino. "They make up stories and cases against him. Because they couldn't stop my father from doing his work [...]"

Genasque was released after posting bail the next day, as supporters from the communities and the religious massed up outside police headquarters in Surigao City. It was the second time in two years that he and dozens of progressive leaders were falsely charged with criminal cases.

"They did stop him," Apad said. "For 24 hours."

Genasque still speaks out against mining, human rights violations and other issues through a radio program in Surigao del Sur. [...]

On March 6, 2009, Genasque had just come from a meeting of the Kalumaran from Davao City, when he was accosted at a military checkpoint in Diatagon. The soldiers took his bag,



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

which carried campaign materials against mining and militarization, and affidavits of victims of human rights violations. Soldiers interrogated him for four hours.

"They called me a subversive, that I was among those who ambushed them, that I was an NPA organizer. Wait until you get arrested, they said. Because they said they have an arrest warrant against me, for rebellion and multiple murder," Genasque said in the EMJP interview. [...]

Andap Valley

Karapatan-Caraga says that the repeated, intensive military operations are meant to pave the way for coal mining in Andap valley.

Andap Valley Complex lies in the mountains in the towns of Lianga, San Agustin, Marihatag, Cagwait, Tago and San Miguel towns in Surigao del Sur. It covers 59,000 hectares of rich coal and ore reserves.

The unpublished study by EMJP said that in the 80s, the New People's Army established a stronghold in the area, which limited extractive operations and consequently preserved the forest resources. At present, several logging companies operate in Andap Valley, but the area's mineral resources, such as gold, copper, chromites and other minerals, remain untouched, said the EMJP study.

In 2009, the Department of Energy awarded Lodestar Consolidated Holdings the rights to mine 6,000 has. in Andap Valley. It was opposed by 22 Lumad communities under the Malahutayong Pakigbisog Alang sa Sumusunod (Mapasu), a member group of Kasalo. There was massive military deployment and operations, to supposedly purge rebels.

That year, as in the past, communities fled to escape the bombing, strafing, abduction and harassment.

Five times a 'bakwet'

Apad, like many villagers in Andap Valley, had been forced to repeatedly evacuate to evade soldiers.

"Five times already," Apad enumerated the two-year-skip pattern of evacuations triggered by massive military operations:

HRonlineph.com, 29.01.2015

PCID on Mamasapano Incident

We at the Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy (PCID) express our deepest sympathies to the families of the members of the Philippine National Police Special Action Force, who sacrificed life and limb in the service of our nation. We likewise extend our condolences and sympathies to the other victims of the deadly firefight between the PNP and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters/Moro Islamic Liberation Front that rocked the town of Mamasapano, Maguindanao last Sunday.

The disastrous encounter had resulted not only in the tragic deaths and casualties from both sides, including the displacement of families forced to flee their homes, but have shaken the trust and confidence reposed in the ongoing peace process.

This misencounter and the recent bombings in other areas in Mindanao unveil the urgency of addressing the myriad of issues underpinning the Bangsamoro problem. These critical issues, if left unresolved, could tear asunder the tenuous peace hardily wrought through years of fractious negotiations. We fervently pray that this terrible incident will not derail the ongoing peace process.

Protocols have been set for the conduct of military and police operations in the areas identified

2005, 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2014. They usually seek safety in the nearest village center.

"This time, we evacuated carrying the body of our leader, Henry Alameda," he said, morosely.

Mapasu leader Henry Alameda was shot dead at his home on October 22, 2014 [by suspected paramilitary men led by Datu Calpit Egua](#). Paramilitary forces had been trying to recruit other Lumads, to serve as augmentation force to soldiers during combat operations.

Genasque's arrest and Alameda's killing increased Apad's worries for his father. [...]

In his own community, Apad has seen and heard about soldiers harassing the datos, forcibly encamping in schools and homes, interrogating students. He had heard the sound of bombs, the military helicopters, the gunfires. In different evacuation sites, Apad had endured the cramped space, damp sleeping area, and lack of food. Then when evacuees return home, they find their crops rotten, their homes ransacked and vandalized, their schools destroyed. In October 2014, two farmers who were caught in military operations went missing. Four farmers also went missing in 2005.

Beyond the hardship, Apad has also seen the power of the community, of the tribe, as they performed traditional rites, moved as a collective to find sanctuary, and in mass actions to assert their rights.

To be a leader

"We want to tell the President to scrap the trumped-up charges against our leaders, and to stop militarization in our community, and to stop the big mining in Mindanao, because they destroy our forests. And if we lose our lands, we lose our life," Apad recited, in the grim and determined, activist tone. In the Manilakbayan protest actions, he called for the scrapping of the Mining Act of 1995, and enumerated their demands in a manner apparently learned from older, more experienced activists. [...]

5-year-old girl, 6 civilians died in Maguindanao clash - report

By Karlos Manlupig

DAVAO CITY, Philippines - A Moro group said that at least 7 civilians were killed while 3 others were wounded during the [January 25 clash](#) in Mamasapano town in Maguindanao between policemen and Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebels.

Jerome Succor Aba, national spokesperson of the Suara Bangsamoro, said residents of Barangay Tukanalipao were already preparing for their morning prayers when police commandos allegedly entered the community and opened fire at the house of the Panangulon family.

Parents Tots and Samrah were wounded but their 5-year-old daughter Sarah died after sustaining gunshot wounds, Aba said.

A farmer identified as Badrudin Langalan was found hogtied and dead at the wooden bridge of the village. "His body was riddled with bullets and his eyes were gouged out," Aba said.

Aba said that according to Langalan's wife, he passed through the bridge to go to the nearby community to have his mobile phone charged. "The wife suspected he was chanced upon by the SAF during the encounter," Aba said, referring to the elite Special Action Force of the Philippine National Police that launched the attack to arrest top terrorist and bomb maker [Zulkifli Abdhir](#), better known as "Marwan."

Several residents said that they saw the SAF commandos bring with them a hogtied man.

Aba added that 5 people also died in a masjid or Islamic center in Sitio Inugog when the SAF allegedly chanced upon them while going out for the morning prayer.

Three civilians were also wounded in the incident, Suara Bangsamoro reported.

Aba said a thorough and impartial investigation must be done not only to shed light on what happened but also to give justice to the civilian casualties. "Civilians bore the brunt of the botched operations, they were made to suffer on suspicion that they were harboring terrorists. Suara calls for justice and recognition of the true victims and accountability of the Aquino administration," Aba said.

At least 1,500 residents are still displaced and are afraid to go back to their homes for fear of renewed fighting.

Rappler.com, 30.01.2015



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

as MILF camps, specifically to prevent misencounters. The protocols, which include use of joint MILF-Government forces, have been highly instrumental in the capture of wanted criminals. Why the non-observance of such protocols? The lack of coordination with the concerned authorities following the agreed protocol and particularly the AFP, a vital government partner in defense and security of the country, is perplexing. This deficiency underscores the need to revisit the framework for cooperation between and among military, police and civilian authorities in undertaking highly sensitive operations.

We therefore welcome the creation of a Board of Special Inquiry and the MILF internal investigation. However, to remove any hint of bias, we join the call for an impartial inquiry to be conducted by an independent body represented by key sectors and stakeholders, comprised of persons of unquestionable probity and integrity, with established records for advocating peace and development in Mindanao.

We acknowledge the efforts of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front "to work for the restoration of normalcy within the area" through the GPH-MILF Coordinating Committees on Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) and the International Monitoring Team, existing transitional mechanisms established by virtue of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB).

We call upon the MILF leaders to cooperate in the investigation, and to submit to the findings. [...] If trust and confidence is to be strengthened, there must be an unequivocal commitment to the rule of law by all.

While we await the release of findings of both the government constituted board and the MILF internal investigation, we call for sobriety and urge our legislators and officials to exercise prudence in their statements. We believe the peace process cannot and should not be held hostage by the Mamasapano incident, tragic though it may be. Incendiary statements are reckless and serve no purpose but to unnecessarily fan the flames in an extremely tense environment.

We know that the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) cannot be the panacea to the complicated and deeply-rooted problem in the region. But we firmly believe that the BBL is the transformative medium that sets in place the vital foundation for establishing sustainable peace and inclusive development to a much-marginalized and severely neglected sector of the Philippine society. We reiterate our support for the passage of the BBL and urge our legislators and officials to continue with its review. We further exhort all advocates for peace and democracy to call for sobriety and temperance in this period fraught with emotion and sentiment [...] [...]

INSTITUTIONS

The Philippine Star, 23.01.2015

United States lifts restrictions on Philippines military aid

By Pia Lee-Brago

MANILA, Philippines - The United States government has lifted restrictions on its military assistance to the Philippines, but the \$15 million it withheld for the past five years is not retroactive.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) yesterday said the removal of the "withholding element" on US aid was due to the improvement in the human rights situation in the Philippines, including the arrest of retired major general and former congressman Jovito Palparan.

Palparan, arrested by agents of the National Bureau of Investigation in Manila in August 2014, is accused of executing suspected members of the New People's Army and being involved in the disappearances of activist Jonas Burgos and University of the Philippines students Sherlyn Cadapan and Karen Empeño.

The US Congress had withheld \$3 million in yearly foreign military financing to the Philippines because of the govern-

ment's failure to solve and prosecute cases of unexplained killings in past years.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario said that this year, the Philippines would get \$3 million, but not the military assistance withheld for the five past years.

However, US Assistant Secretary for Defense David Shear said on Wednesday at a press conference after the Fifth Philippines-United States Bilateral Strategic Dialogue in Manila that the US is giving the Philippines a total of \$40 million in military assistance for 2015. [...]

He said the US would coordinate with the Department of Defense, Armed Forces of the Philippines and the US Pacific Command to strengthen and broaden cooperation between the two countries.

The Philippine Star, 26.01.2015

SC launches program to speed up justice

By Edu Punay

MANILA, Philippines - The Supreme Court (SC) has launched another program to speed up the wheels of justice in the country through the "Assisting Courts System," the latest project under the high court's judicial reform agenda.

The new scheme is meant to address the disproportionate allocation of cases in various courts around the country.

During its launch last Jan. 22 at the Diamond Hotel in Manila, Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno said the SC approved the new project under A.M. No. 14-11-393-RTC to reduce court congestion and case delays.

"It has come to the point where the justices of the Supreme Court are already discussing a system where those with lighter

dockets are willing to absorb more in order to ensure that justice really moves forward, at all levels in this country," she revealed.

Under the order, the SC designated assisting courts from stations that have light case loads to help courts in adjacent stations with heavy case loads. [...]

The mechanics of the system will be released to the public under OCA guidelines and its implementation would begin on Feb. 2.

Sereno stressed that teamwork would be needed for the success of the new project, addressing the judges from first-level courts in Makati, Manila and Quezon City led by Manila Metropolitan Trial Court Executive Judge Glenda Ramos, who attended the event.

CURRENT CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Sun.Star Cagayan de Oro, 30.01.2015

Government told: Stop forcible entry of mining firms

By Jigger J. Jerusalem

A TRIBAL group leader is pressing on the government to stop coercing the indigenous people (IP) of San Luis, Agusan del Sur

to sign the document that would pave the way for the entry of mining companies, which he said could destroy not just the



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

environment but the culture of the lumad communities.

Rogelio Plana, secretary-general of the lumad group Kalumbay, said Friday the Banwaon tribe members living in hinterland areas in San Luis are being pressured to sign the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT).

The signing of the CADT, Plana said, would give mining firms the legitimate reason to enter the ancestral domain and mine the areas for precious minerals especially gold.

This coercion, he added, has prompted the more than a thousand Banwaons to leave their homes as they fear for their lives due to the presence of state agents and the "bagani force" or armed tribal warriors in their communities.

Aside from that, Plana said Kalumbay is also dismayed by the government for providing their fellow lumads with weapons to

drive away their fellow lumads, most of them their relatives.

"This arming of the lumads and the violence that would ensue will be called a tribal war, but it's not. It's instigated by outsiders who want to destroy them so these mining companies can operate inside their lands," he told Sun.Star Cagayan de Oro Friday.

Also, more than a dozen students from Northern Mindanao embarked on a trip to Agusan del Sur to be with the lumads for two days.

At the sendoff Friday, Vennel Chenfoo, spokesman of Youth Act Now, said the students are from various organizations such as the League of Filipino Students, Liga ng Kabataang Moro, Student Christian Movement of the Philippines, and some representatives from Anakbayan. [...]

DavaoToday.com, 12.01.2015

IP school teachers barred from entering communities, schools in Kapalong

John Rizle L. Saligumba

DAVAO CITY - Classes were disrupted in a Davao del Norte indigenous peoples schools as its teachers were allegedly restricted by a fanatic paramilitary group.

Pre-school and elementary classes of more than 200 Manobo children in the villages of Lunoluno, Tawongatok, Ngan, Maguimon, Banwalay, Mansalinaw, and Muling, all in Barangay Gupitan, Kapalong failed to resume after the Christmas break when its teachers were "forbidden" by Alamara, a paramilitary tribal group, from entering their campus.

"We have paid the Mayor a courtesy call. We also talked with barangay officials and the tribal chieftain himself but they just would not allow us to go back to our schools. How can we resume our classes?" said Ricky Balilid, a teacher of the Mindanao Interfaith Services Foundation Incorporated (MISFI) Academy.

Balilid said that they talked with the Kapalong Mayor Edgardo Timbol last January 6, "and he said all is okay and that we do not need his endorsement."

"We then proceeded to talk with Captain Ebanghelyo Warag of Barangay Gupitan but he was on leave so we talked with several barangay officials present instead," he said.

Balilid said that as a matter of procedure they also signed the logbook and took pictures with the officials.

The teachers and two administrative staff of MISFI Academy then went to Sitio Patil of the same barangay to talk with known Alamara leader Larris Masaloon.

Masaloon, however, asked for a signed endorsement from the Mayor.

"Datu Larris said if we still wanted to proceed, we should sign an agreement with them saying they should not be held accountable if something bad will happen to us along the way," said Balilid.

Balilid said that the arrangement with Masaloon "fuelled the fears of the teachers who have already heard of earlier rumors that the Alamara would not allow teachers who have taken their Christmas vacation to re-enter the community."

Balilid also said that the sheer distance of Sitio Muling from Sitio Patil (about two-day walk) already makes them "fearful of what may happen."

Larris then said to Balilid that they had to inform the Army detachment in the area to talk to a certain Sergeant JR Nailgas.

But when the teachers met with Ongging Masaloon, they were told "the Mayor's laws are his, but ours will be followed."

Ongging said he "didn't like our group."

"The Alamara surrounded our vehicle and brandished their blade and Ongging said they would tie us like carabaos if we choose to proceed," said Balilid.

Dominaline Basagan, one of MISFI's administrative officers, said the teachers chose not to proceed out of fear and, instead, asked

Datu Larris that they be allowed to stay for the night at the house of a local businesswoman.

"All throughout the night, the Alamara members were checking on them almost every hour," said Basagan.

Basagan said the MISFI administrative staff left Barangay Gupitan the same day and secured a written endorsement from Municipal Administrator Gaspar Balingao, a copy of which they brought with them when they returned the next day.

The admin officers also brought Municipal IP Representative Art Dabaw to the area to help them.

"Although Art Dabaw, Datu Larris and Datu Ongging talked among themselves, Dabaw only said that we are not allowed to enter," said Balilid.

The teachers and admin officers opted to leave the area and went back to Office of Mayor Timbol last January 7 for help; the latter promised to act on it and will relay the result on January 10, Saturday.

Basagan said they asked for extension up to Wednesday, January 14.

Asked by the media if they only experienced of such incident recently, Balilid said the incident was a first for MISFI since it built the schools in 2006.

Alamara is a paramilitary group formed by the Army in the late 90s to early 2000s to fight with New People's Army guerrillas.

The Alamara (also a Manobo term for extensive armed indigenous warfare against invaders) was revived and employed as members of the paramilitary Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (Cafgu) in July last year.

IP Group Karadyawan accused the Army and the Mayor Timbol of training and supporting the Alamara.

In October, the Alamara allegedly shot two students from the school who went to fetch school supplies.

Basagan said that since 2007, the MISFI Academy developed from serving only a pre-school nursery to now Grade 5 students in the area wherein they now have 248 students.

MISFI schools in Kapalong were built through a funding of the European Union under the latter's disaster aid project in 2007.

"We are also a member of the Municipal Peace and Order Council (MPOC) and the town's Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council," Basagan said.

Meanwhile, last January 8, the teachers received a text message from the Parent-Teacher-Community-Association (PTCA) that the Army's 72nd and 60th Infantry Battalions have allegedly arrested a minor student.

Balilid said Bryan Moluhinday, 17, and a Grade 4 student in their school and three other pupils were set to fetch them in Sitio Kapatagan and to accompany them in the long walk.

"We have no news yet if Bryan had been released or if he is safe," said Balilid.



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Lindy Trinilla from the Save Our Schools (SOS) Network called the barring of the teachers as "violation of the development rights of the child."

Trinilla also said that a previous dialogue between MISFI Academy, the Department of Education and the 1003rd Infantry Bri-

gade of the Philippine Army has declared that schools "should not be made targets of attack."

"We call on the local government, the DepEd and the Army officers to be sincere in what they have promised and conduct an immediate investigation on the matter," said Trinilla.

Sun.Star.com, 13.01.2015

Creation of special court on media killings urged

By Ruth Abbey Gita

SENATOR Paolo Benigno Aquino IV sought Tuesday for the creation of a special court that will hear crimes against media practitioners.

"Journalists will continue to suffer if we will not show resolve in putting an end to this impunity immediately," Aquino said.

On January 8, tabloid reporter Nerlita Ledesma was gunned down by motorcycle-riding men in Balanga, Bataan.

Ledesma, 47, died on the spot after sustaining four bullet wounds.

Aquino said justice must be served to Ledesma, the first journalist killed this year.

"We must ensure that the perpetrator and the brains behind the killing of Ledesma will be punished for their crime," he said.

No resolution yet on victims of 'summary killings'

By Jigger J. Jerusalem

THERE is no assurance that the complaint filed by the family of former police assets who were killed last December will be resolved by the Cagayan de City Prosecutor's Office within the month. [...]

The panel is still conducting investigation on the murder of Harold and Roland Jamaca and Maria Erica Yabut, whose live-in partner Jim Jamaca survived the alleged summary executions. The Jamaca brothers were shot to death last December 10, 2014, while Yabut was killed on December 11 in a separate area.

Based on a document submitted by the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG)-Northern Mindanao to the City Prosecutor's Office, the suspects in the alleged killing of the Jamacas were identified as PO1 Manuel Quipanes and PO1 Jun Reil Barrientos.

The CIDG also tagged Inspector Arnel Gighe and Senior Inspector Ludwig Charles Espera as allegedly behind the shooting of Yabut and Jim. [...]

All the suspected police officers are now in the custody of Cocpo. [...]

He [City Prosecutor Fidel Macauyag] ordered the panel to fast track the proceedings considering that most of the suspects are law enforcers. [...]

Sun.Star Cagayan de Oro, 05.01.2015

Sun.Star Cagayan de Oro, 15.01.2015

Journalists back radioman getting threats

By Froilan Gallardo

JOURNALISTS in Cagayan de Oro City have banded together after a Bombo Radio broadcaster received threatening text messages for his commentaries on extra-judicial killings involving police officers of the Cagayan de Oro Police Office (Cocpo).

Cagayan de Oro Press Club president Jerry Orcullo is holding the entire police in the city accountable if any attempt will be made on the staff of DXIF Bombo radio station.

"We are not taking the threats lightly. The police are suspects in the series of 'salvagings' [summary executions] so it left me with no option but to suspect that the threats come from them," Orcullo said.

Orcullo and the COPC will hold a Media Safety Dialogue at the Archbishop's residence on January 20 with the officers of Cocpo.

The meeting will be attended by concerned government agencies and to be presided by Monsignors Elmer Abacahin, Rey Manuel Monsanto and Tex Legitimas of the Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro.

"A threat against any member of the press is a major concern for the Archdiocese," said Abacahin, who heads the Archdiocese communications department.

He said aside from Bombo Radio, another radio station, Radio Ultra, received similar threatening text messages after commenting against illegal drugs-related killings in the city.

Mark Martinez of DXIF Bombo Radyo said their news director, Junel Ucat, received two text messages after his program, warning him against commenting further on the killings of three individuals last December 10 and 11.

Suspect in reporter's slay ordered released

By Ric Sapnu

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga, Philippines - A prosecutor ordered on Monday the release of the suspected killer of journalist Nerlie Ledesma after the evidence presented against him was found to be insufficient.

Suspect Inocencio Bendo was presented yesterday for inquest proceedings before the Balanga City Prosecutor's Office.

After Judge Oscar Lasam evaluated the evidence and directly questioned the witnesses, the prosecutor found the evidence to be insufficient to hold the suspect, Bataan police director Senior Superintendent Rodel Sermonia said.

The city prosecutor directed the arresting officers and the complainant to submit additional evidence within 15 days from Monday before the next preliminary investigation would be set, he added.

Another suspect, Juan Fulo, a tanod of Barangay Tuyoy, is still in police custody, Sermonia said.

Fulo was implicated in the shooting of Pedlejandro Payumo, Ledesma's predecessor as president of the Tagnai Homeowners Association.

Police arrested Fulo for trying to kill Payumo, who was able to flee.

Police are investigating the possible participation of Fulo in Ledesma's killing since several people saw him with Bendo a few days before the killing last Thursday.

Ledesma was shot and killed while waiting for a tricycle to take her to work at the Bataan Provincial Capitol.

The Philippine Star, 14.01.2015

Four police officers were arrested and tagged as suspects for killing brothers Harold and Roland Jamaca, and Maria Erica Yabut, in Barangay F.S. Catanico here last December 11. [...]

JB Deveza, of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) Mindanao Safety Office, said Ucat told him that he had asked protection from the Army's 4th Infantry Division (4ID) because he was being tailed by unidentified men.

Major. Christian Uy, 4ID public information officer, said an Army team sent to protect Ucat spotted two men with hidden guns tailing the journalist before the New Year.

Uy said the soldiers, seeing the situation as critical, decided to get Ucat to their vehicle for his protection.

Bulatlat.com, 23.01.2015

European 'legal eagles' call on Aquino government to end attacks on PH lawyers



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

By Janess Ann J. Ellao

MANILA – On Jan. 23, the Day of the Endangered Lawyer, groups of law practitioners all over Europe held protest actions to decry the continuing human rights violations committed against lawyers, judges and even law students in the Philippines.

A petition signed by three European lawyers groups called on President Aquino to end impunity by prosecuting perpetrators of rights violations. The appeal had long been made to the Philippine government.

“But in the last year, the situation has again deteriorated,” said the petition, signed by the European Democratic Lawyers, the European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and the World Human Rights and the European Bar Human Rights Institute.

The European lawyers also called on the Aquino government “to guarantee safety for legal practitioners, as provided in the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers.” The Philippines was present when the UN adopted the document in 1990.

The Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers provides that governments of member states shall ensure that lawyers “are able to perform all their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference, are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.”

The petition also called for the immediate release of lawyers who are being detained in performance of their duties.

The groups said the government must even publicly recognize the work of human rights defenders, including lawyers, and to impose sanctions on public officials and politicians who harass and stigmatize them.

Simultaneous protest actions by the three groups were held in Austria, Belgium, England, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and Turkey.

Attacks on attorneys

Number of People Recorded			
Number of Lawyers	77-'01	01-'14	TOTAL
Attacked	43	57	100
Killed	9	41	50
TOTAL	52	98	150
Number of Judges	77-'01	01-'14	TOTAL
Attacked	0	1	1
Killed	1	18	19
TOTAL	1	19	20

Source: National Union of Peoples’ Lawyers

From 1977 to present, there were 69 lawyers and judges killed while 101 were threatened or harassed. The National Union of Peoples’ Lawyers (NUPL) noted that there are 35 lawyers under surveillance and 37 maliciously labeled from 2001 to the present, which is more than in the previous years.

Edre Olalia, secretary general of the NUPL, noted in a statement that since 2001, 22 percent of lawyers killed came from the ranks of those involved in human rights cases.

Type of Attack	1977-2001			2001-Present			1977-Present
	Lawyers	Judges	TOTAL	Lawyers	Judges	TOTAL	TOTAL
Murder	9	1	10	41	18	59	69
Attempted/ Frustrated Murder	3	0	3	7	1	8	11
Threat/Harassment/Intimidation	47	0	47	52	2	54	101
Illegal Search/Seizure	9	0	9	1	0	1	10
Abducted/Disappeared	2	0	2	3	0	3	5
Surveillance	16	0	16	35	0	35	51
Labelling	7	0	7	37	0	37	44
Illegal Arrest/Detention	2	0	2	5	0	5	7
TOTAL	95	1	96	181	21	201	298

Source: National Union of Peoples’ Lawyers

“The records would show that under the present administration of President Aquino, the situation appears to have deteriorated. Documented reports show no abatement, but in fact, an apparent increase in the number of attacks,” Olalia said.

In Manila, the NUPL met with Theodore Te, spokesman of Supreme Court, to discuss means to protect lawyers. They submitted documented cases of attacks on lawyers.

Asked how the discussion went, Maria Catherine Dannug-Salucon, a lawyer based in Cordillera and among those harassed by state security forces, said Te suggested to the NUPL to collaborate with other lawyers’ groups to create a mechanism to make the judiciary proactive in addressing the issue.

Killed and harassed under Aquino

European lawyers, in their petition, said that Aquino’s pronouncements not to tolerate killings and enforced disappearances and the strengthening of the judicial system “seem to have been hollow promises” as evident in new attacks documented against lawyers.

In the last two years, the NUPL has documented the killing of the following lawyers and judges: Rodolfo Felicio, Reynerio Estacio Sr., Noel Archival, John Mark Espera, Ian Vela Cruz, Jubian Achas, Sulpicio Landicho, Lazaro Gayo and Cristobal Fernandez.

In Feb. 18 2014, Archival was killed in an ambush along with his security aide. His killing is believed to be in retaliation for a complaint he filed before the Office of the Ombudsman. Some 10 days later, Judge Estacio of Zamboanga Regional Trial Court Branch 14 was killed.

Fernandez was killed on Aug. 8, 2014 in San Fabian, Pangasinan by motorcycle-riding men. Two weeks later, Felicio, was killed on Aug. 24, when gunmen peppered the campsite where he and his urban poor clients were staying in Tanay, Rizal.

Espera, who lawyers for political detainees, was killed on Aug. 31, 2013 in Hamtic, Antique province. Gayo was killed in Agoo, La Union on Oct. 30, 2012.

Landicho and Vela Cruz were both killed by motorcycle-riding men on Nov. 14, 2012 and May 17, 2013, respectively.

Others, the lawyers group said, were also threatened and labeled as supporters of the Communist Party of the Philippines or were slapped with false charges.

Salucon, for her part, said the surveillance and harassment against her have subsided, [following strong condemnations on such attacks](#). However, she added that her clients who are in detention, even those whose cases are not political, are being interrogated by suspected military intelligence agents, who asked questions about her. Meanwhile, the investigation in the case of the killing of paralegal William Buggatti, who worked closely with Salucon, has not budged even though the perpetrators were already identified as a member of a paramilitary group deployed in their community. Olalia was among those charged by the Quezon City police for holding a “rally without a permit” during Aquino’s State of the Nation Address in 2013. He was also red-tagged and has been under surveillance for handling human rights cases. Jose Begil was charged for participating in an anti-pork barrel rally held in



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Surigao City on Sept. 21, 2013.

Vicente Jayme Topacio, an NUPL member and a professor at the University of Santo Tomas, was harassed by a motorcycle-riding men while stuck in traffic. He provides legal services to trade union workers and is one of the lawyers under surveillance.

In the Bicol region, NUPL officers Bartolome Rayco and Madonna Gay Escio were hustled and arrested by the police when they intervened in the dispersal of a rally of activists in front of a local power utility company on Feb. 24, 2014. Rayco was charged with coercion and malicious mischief and was consequently released.

The law office of Michael Ajoc was strafed on Dec. 11, 2012 in Dipolog City. The NUPL, in its report, believed that the strafing was intended to harass him.

Apart from the attacks on individuals, the NUPL was also referred to as an "enemy" by Army chief Noel Coballes in 2013 after the group issued a statement on the promotion of Lt. Gen. Aurelio Baladad, one of the ranking military officials involved in

Karapatan Press Statement, 30.01.2015

Jail Warden faces complaints at Taguig courts for violation of political prisoners' rights

Male political prisoners of Special Intensive Care Area 1 – Metro Manila District Jail in Camp Bagong Diwa filed on January 27 a Joint Manifestation at the Taguig Regional Trial Court Branch 266 and Branch 271 to require S/Supt. Michelle Ng Bonto to explain violations of the rights of political prisoners. Bonto is the current warden of the Special Intensive Care Area-1 at Camp Bagong Diwa.

"By blaming the political prisoners for the suspension of the right of the detainees to visits and thereby provoking violent division among all the detainees of SICA-1, Warden Bonto is putting the life and security of the political prisoners in danger," the manifestation stated. [...]

The Joint Manifestation was submitted by lawyers from Public Interest Law Center (PILC) as counsels of the political prisoners in SICA-1.

PILC said on January 9, 2015, male political prisoners wrote the BJMP National headquarters through its OIC Director, J/Chief Supt. Diony Mamaril and SICA 1 OIC Warden Bonto, about their intention to stage a symbolic fasting/hunger strike from January 10 to 19, 2015, in time for the Papal visit. The letter also asked that the hunger strike/fasting be respected and should not be subjected to punishment or reprisal. However, the political prisoners, in the course of the hunger strike/fasting faced reprisals, violating their rights enshrined in the law on the Rights of Detained Persons (Republic Act 7438) and international human rights conventions.

The Manifestation enumerated, among others, the following

UPDATES ON CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Sun.Star Cebu, 13.01.2015

RTC judge inhibits self from Archival murder case

By Kevin A. Lagunda

ARGAO Regional Trial Court Branch 26 Judge Maximo Perez inhibited himself from handling the cases against three former Highway Patrol Group (HPG) 7 policemen who are tagged in the killing of lawyer Noel Archival and his two aides.

In his one-page order issued last Monday, Perez said he wants to avoid "claims of bias or prejudice" in the trial.

The resolution on the prosecution's motion to set arraignment for accused Senior Supt. Senior Supt. Romualdo Iglesia, Senior Insp. Joselito Lerion and PO1 Alex Bacani and other motions will not be resolved pending the designation of another judge.

Defense lawyer Inocencio de la Cerna Jr. and prosecution lawyer Democrito Barcenás said they did not file a motion asking Perez

InterAksyon.com, 14.01.2015

the illegal arrest and torture of the 43 health workers in 2010. **Ampatuan massacre**

Lawyers Concepcion Brizuela, a founding member of the NUPL, and Cynthia Oquendo, were among the 58 killed in the infamous Ampatuan massacre in 2009, of which 32 victims were journalists and media workers.

Five years since the carnage, the trial is still on the bail proceedings against Zaldy Ampatuan, one of the primary suspects. The Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 221 even granted the bail of 41 accused and dismissed one petition for bail. [...]

Olalia said, "government must simply do its job: protect its citizens, categorically condemn these attacks on lawyers as human rights defenders; seriously and credibly investigate, prosecute, and punish perpetrators; and uphold human rights." He said that the violations are not just on the individual lawyer but also on the "rights and interests of the mostly poor and oppressed in our country."

curtailment of prisoners' rights:

- The streamer the political prisoners hanged on their wing declaring their hunger strike and call for freedom, justice and human rights was pulled down on orders of Bonto.
- Dr. Julie Caguait, a regular visitor and attending physician of most of the political prisoners, and human rights workers and advocates were not allowed to visit the detainees. Some of the detainees were already weak due to the hunger strike.
- The right to daily exercise and sunning privilege were cancelled and suspended for all detainees.
- No jail visitor was allowed entry in SICA-1 on January 14. "As a result, the other detainees, especially the members of certain hail gangs such as the Sputnik gang, blamed the political prisoners for the prohibition of the visits to them."

[...] Through the manifestation, the political prisoners asked the Taguig courts to order Jail Warden Bonto to respect the rights of the political prisoners, especially the right to be visited by doctors and religious ministers of their choice, lawyers, relatives and human rights organizations. They also asked the court to enjoin Bonto from committing further violations of rights of the political prisoners, including transferring their custody without any court order, and for the court to ensure the safety and security of the political prisoners.

to inhibit.[...]

Lerion, Iglesia, and Bacani were relieved from their posts in HPG 7 last April 16, while they were facing cases of multiple murder and frustrated murder, which are non-bailable offenses. [...]

Last Dec. 11, Perez issued warrant of arrest against Iglesia, Lerion, and Bacani.

The warrant was not served because the three policemen were no longer found in the holding center in Camp Crame in Manila last Dec. 12.

The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) is conducting a manhunt for the three.



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

Pope asked to join calls for justice for murdered Italian priest, Dutch development worker

MANILA, Philippines -- People whose lives they touched have asked Pope Francis, who is arriving in the country tomorrow, to join them in calling for justice for two foreigners -- an Italian priest and a Dutch development worker -- they believe were murdered by state security forces for the work they did among the marginalized.

Fr. Fausto "Pops" Tenorio, a PIME (Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions) missionary, was shot dead on October 17, 2011 in his convent in Arakan Valley, North Cotabato, where he had spent 25 years serving indigenous peoples communities.

On July 3, 2012 Wilhelmus Geertman, executive director of Alay

Bayan Luson, was gunned down in front of the development organization's office in San Fernando, Pampanga. His friends and colleagues said his killers were assassins hired by the military.

Both Tenorio and Geertman had been openly vilified by the military as supporters of the communist New People's Army.

No one has yet to be convicted for their murders. [...]

Although a suspect in the Dutchman's killing, Marvin Marzan Muguid, is in police custody on murder charges, the gunman, identified as Harold dela Cruz, and four others remain at large. [...]

MAGUINDANAO MASSACRE

Sun.Star Cagayan de Oro, 10.01.2015

50 more suspects indicted for Ampatuan massacre

COTABATO CITY -- Fifty individuals have been included as suspects in the 2009 Ampatuan massacre for their alleged participation in the planning and execution of what is considered the bloodiest political violence in recent history.

Forty-three complainants along with witnesses said the suspects were involved either in the planning, execution, or covering up of the bloodbath. [...]

It is said to be "the final wave" of the prosecution's undertaking in the massacre trial, which Ronda will immediately relay to Justice Secretary Leila De Lima.

The complaint sheet read: "In the course of the Ampatuan, Maguindanao massacre case, the witnesses presented in court have testified that several other persons who were not charged were involved in the planning, execution, and cover-up of what is known as the worst election-related case in the Philippines."

It added, "To attain full justice, we, the heirs of the Ampatuan, Maguindanao massacre victims file the multiple murder case against the (mentioned) persons who participated in the gruesome commission of the crime," the complainants said in their manifestation.

But Maguindanao Governor Esmel Mangudadatu, whose wife and other family members died in the massacre, expressed concern about the security of the remaining witnesses, noting that many witnesses have been killed or threatened.

He cited the case of former Datu Salibo town mayor Akmad Ampatuan who survived an ambush a few weeks ago. Armed men also reportedly went to his house and that of his son in Shariff Aguak town to harass them. [...]

"Akmad's statement is the complete picture of all the previous statement of witnesses. There are new revelations that told the untold versions during the carnage and the background of accused Ampatuans," Mangudadatu said.

Akmad, a close relative and trusted man of Andal Ampatuan Sr., turned his back against his former boss after he decided to

NUJP slams decision to grant bail to Maguindanao massacre suspect

MANILA, Philippines - The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines expressed disgust at the decision to grant bail to Sajid Islam Ampatuan, who is accused of taking part in the Maguindanao massacre in 2009.

Sajid Islam is charged with multiple murder in connection with the country's most dreadful political killing in recent memory.

"The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines is appalled at the decision to grant bail to Sajid Islam Ampatuan, one of those accused of the November 23, 2009 Ampatuan massacre and son of clan patriarch Andal Sr.," in a statement released by the union on Sunday headed by its chairperson Rowena Paraan.

"While we may understand last year's grant of bail to 41 policemen accused of the slaughter that claimed the lives of 58 persons, including 32 of our colleagues, we find it incredulous that a key member of the clan whose presence at the meetings during which the massacre was planned has been established could be accorded the same privilege," the statement read.

The union also found it absurd that Sajid Islam had no involvement in the "planning" and "execution" of the murders.

"It is stretching credulity to think that Sajid Islam, who was then acting Maguindanao governor, had absolutely no participation in the planning and execution of what was obviously a major operation in his domain, involving a veritable army of retainers and police personnel."

The NUJP also blasted the P11.6 million bail required of Sajid Islam.

"Given the vast resources, much of it ill-gotten, amassed by the Ampatuans during their decade of almost absolute rule over Maguindanao province, the bail of 11.6 million, or P200,000 for each of the 58 counts of murder, required of Sajid Islam is peanuts to the family," the group said.

Regional Trial Court Judge Jocelyn Solis-Reyes awarded the bail to Sajid Islam on Saturday.

"But what is utterly dismaying is Judge Jocelyn Solis-Reyes' observation that the prosecution panel failed to establish strong enough evidence to ensure Sajid Islam's continued detention over the course of the trial" the statement said.

"This can only mean that those tasked and, more important, pledged to ensure justice for the victims of the worst incident of electoral violence in the country's recent history and the single deadliest attack on the press ever, have betrayed their mandate."

The union also urged Justice Secretary Leila de Lima, who oversees the Maguindanao Massacre case, "to make good on her word." [...]

Inquirer.net, 11.01.2015

become a prosecution witness.

Mangudadatu is also concerned that some of the private armed groups, which harassed massacre witnesses such as Akmad Ampatuan, have allied with the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

But the BIFF denied the allegation [...].

Meanwhile, Cotabato City Administrator Atty. Cynthia Guiani-Sayadi, one of the 50 new suspects, said the case against her is "politically motivated" because of her plan to run for Congress in 2016. [...]

Karapatan - Press Release, 28.01.2015 Court ordered nursing mother and political prisoner Miradel Torrs to return to Taguig Jail

"Now, more than ever, Miradel Torres should be immediately released on humanitarian ground. We appeal to the Court to

grant the motion to dismiss the false charges against Torres, and in the immediate, grant her request to be brought back to the



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Philippine General Hospital," said Karapatan Secretary General Cristina Palabay.

Torres was brought back to the Taguig City Jail yesterday morning, January 27, with her two-month-old son. Sadly, male inmates at the jail jeered an innocent baby with "Batang City jail! Batang city jail!" said Palabay.

On January 26, the Regional Trial Court Branch 65 of Infanta, Quezon ordered the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) to bring back Miradel Torres, a political prisoner, to Taguig City Jail from a two-month hospital confinement at the Philippine General Hospital after her delivery, where she recuperated from post-natal ailment and to be able to breastfeed and care for her baby in a relatively conducive environment for the mother's and baby's well-being.

Her lawyers had asked the court, where Torres is facing charges of murder and frustrated murder, for an extension of the hospital confinement until April 30, 2015 for her to continue breast-

feeding her baby. A motion to quash the false charges against Torres was earlier filed in the same court.

Torres was arrested last June 20, 2014 in Lucena City, Quezon Province, when she was four-months pregnant. She had a threatened abortion and was advised by her doctor to bed rest. Instead, her arresting officers forced her to travel from Quezon Province to Taguig City while profusely bleeding. Torres has had series of bleeding while in detention and was confined at Taguig Hospital months before giving birth. She gave birth at the Philippine General Hospital on November 19, 2014.

Pending court resolution on both motions, Miradel is back in prison with her baby. "The situation could not be more inhuman for both Torres and her baby. Torres is charged with trumped-up criminal charges and her child is made to suffer for this. It is only human to release a mother so she can raise her child in a non-coercive environment," Palabay ended.

PEACE PROCESS

ManilaStandardToday.com, 23.01.2015

Bishops weigh in on Moro law

By Sara Susanne D. Fabunan

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines said Thursday it would soon submit a position letter to Congress for the inclusion of "ethical and moral perspective" in the drafting of the Bangsamoro Basic Law.

In an interview, CBCP president and Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Socrates Villegas said that the position letter will contain three points that the lawmakers might consider in drafting the Bangsamoro Basic Law.

"We will submit to the Congress and Senate our position as Bishops regarding the draft Bangsamoro Basic Law. [...]" Villegas said hours after the closing of CBCP's 110th Plenary Assembly on Thursday.

The House of Representatives has created a 75-man ad hoc committee to review the draft law, which aims to create the new Bangsamoro juridical entity that will replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao by 2016.

The bishops demand massive consultation among all the people involved in the peace pact particularly the marginalized sectors, Villegas said.

The CBCP also wanted everybody to take part -- the indigenous people, Muslims and Christians who seek peace for Mindanao.

"And thirdly, we hope that the Bangsamoro Basic Law will be a

step in the direction of lasting peace in Mindanao. But at the same time we want to ensure that this pursuit of self determination also take into consideration the territorial integrity of our country that we should make sure that no secession result from this law," Villegas said.

The CBCP feels that there are issues lacking in the draft of the Bangsamoro Basic Law on the welfare of the marginalized sectors.

Villegas said the Church will not meddle in the government's action on drafting the law since it is the job and right of the legislature to craft the law.

"We will just submit recommendation so the ethical and moral dimension will not be forgotten while our legislature is formulating the draft," he added. [...]

Villegas said they have proposed the same point last year, and this statement is just an "update" from their earlier recommendation.

Asked if the bishops have discussed the pope's call to end poverty and corruption, Villegas said that they did not tackle the matter but said this aspect is a continuing mission of the CBCP. [...]

Karapatan - Press Statement, 27.01.2015

Karapatan slams arrest of NDFP consultant and Bautista's possible appointment as GPH peace panel chief

"Actions speak louder than words. The arrest of another the peace consultant Rogelio Posadas and Gen. Emmanuel Bautista's possible appointment as chair of Aquino's peace panel with the National Democratic Front of the Philippine contradict whatever hints of openness Aquino is trying to put on with regards to peace," Karapatan Secretary General Cristina Palabay said.

Karapatan demanded from the BS Aquino government to release immediately NDFP peace consultant Rogelio Posadas.

Posadas was illegally arrested on January 9, 2015, less than a week before Pope Francis' arrival in Manila and at a time when political prisoners all over the country were gearing for the nationwide hunger strike. Posadas is covered by the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) with NDFP Identification Number ND978313 under the assumed name "Angel Jose."

Posadas, 57, was travelling with two companions when a pick-up car overtook their motorcycle and flagged them down along the bio-ethanol plant in Brgy. Punao, San Carlos City, Negros

Occidental. Some 12 members of the Regional Public Safety Battalion of Philippine National Police showed up and at commanded, at gunpoint, Posadas and his companions to raise their arms. Led by Captain Tony Benitez, members of the arresting unit searched Posadas but found nothing. They were then brought to PNP headquarters of San Carlos City.

The police interrogated Posadas in a conference room. He was told his two companions would be immediately released if he admits he is Rogelio Posadas. At around 3:30 am, he told the police he was Rogelio Posadas. By 4:00a.m., the PNP released his companions. Posadas was later brought to Cadiz PNP Headquarters.

The authorities arrested Posadas using the same warrant used against human rights worker Zara Alvarez, a former political prisoner. Posadas is charged with murder, robbery in band, and homicide.

Bautista: a rights violator, knows nopeace



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

"As the brains of Oplan Bayanihan, the counter-insurgency program of BS Aquino, Ret. Gen. Bautista is the last person fit to sit as chair of GPIH's peace panel with the NDFP," Palabay commented. [...]

With Gen. Bautista at the helm, we dread that not one of the three remaining substantive agenda will be tackled. As a militarist, Gen. Bautista seems uninterested in tackling the roots of the

Philstar.com, 28.01.2015

MILF after SAF killing: We reiterate full commitment to peace process

By Patricia Lourdes Viray

MANILA, Philippines - The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) maintained its full commitment to the government's peace process.

In a statement released on Wednesday, MILF expressed sympathy to the families and friends of the 44 slain police commandos during the bloody encounter at Mamasapano, Maguindanao.

"An enduring peace and justice remain to be our primary objective. In this regard, all actions and pronouncements of our political and military units of the MILF should advance and adhere to this primary objective as much as possible and with due regard to the safety and security to our people and communities," MILF Chairman Al-Haj Murad Ebrahim said.

Murad stressed that they have been in negotiations with the Philippine government and have established protocols to keep

Rappler.com, 30.01.2015

Gov't, MILF sign protocol for arms decommissioning

By Angela Casauay

MANILA, Philippines - The government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on Thursday, January 29, signed a protocol for the [decommissioning of rebel firearms](#) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 4 days after a deadly clash that threatens to end [the peace process](#). [...]

A joint statement was released Thursday night reaffirming the commitment of the two parties to "the attainment of peace that has long eluded Mindanao," echoing earlier statements from [President Benigno Aquino III](#) and [MILF chairman Murad Ebrahim](#).

The statement said Thursday's meeting opened by "expressing deep sympathy and grief for the loss of lives in the early morning of January 25, 2015 in Mamasapano, Maguindanao." [...] Malaysia serves as the third-party facilitator the peace process.

The protocol provides details on how storage areas for decommissioned rebel firearms would be secured. [...]

The panels earlier said [Camp Iranun, formerly known as Camp Abubakar](#), was being eyed as a storage facility.

The document also details the duties and responsibilities of the 7-member Independent Decommissioning Body (IDB) tasked to oversee and implement the decommissioning process, including how firearms will be audited.

Under the peace accord, MILF firearms would be put "beyond use" and stored in secure facilities but they would not be decommissioned in one go.

FURTHER READINGS

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End Police Torture, Killings! Aquino Should Act Decisively to Punish Perpetrators -HRW

The Philippine government of President Benigno Aquino III should take decisive action against torture and extrajudicial killings by the police and other state security forces, Human Rights Watch said today in its World Report 2015.

The Aquino administration took some important steps in 2014 to improve rule of law, but the government's overall record in addressing serious human rights violations remained poor. [...]

With less than two years left in his term, President Aquino continues to send mixed signals about his commitment to tackling longstanding human rights problems in the Philippines. [...]

Please click [here](#) to view the Human Rights Watch's World Report 2015 chapter on the Philippines.

armed conflict, like Aquino, and has consistently employed militarist means in addressing them through Oplan Bayanihan," Palabay said.

"The possibility of Gen. Bautista heading the panel does not encourage good will for the peace talks to continue. We call for a resumption of the talks that would tackle the substantive agenda and not a circus," Palabay concluded.

peace.

Adherence to the said mechanisms resulted to a peaceful environment through the years, the MILF leader added.

"It is unfortunate but not entirely surprising that when parties do not follow established protocols lives are placed in harm's way. We therefore recommit ourselves to follow these processes and protocols," Murad said.

The [MILF created a Special Investigative Commission](#) that would investigate the armed encounter at Mamasapano, Maguindanao last Sunday.

[Senate President Franklin Drilon earlier challenged the MILF](#) to surrender Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters commander Basit Usman to prove their commitment to the peace process.

MILF combatants agreed to decommission a specific number of firearms in exchange for political commitments towards the creation of the proposed Bangsamoro autonomous region.

A total of 30% of MILF firearms will be decommissioned once the Bangsamoro Basic Law is ratified.

Another 35% will be turned over when the Bangsamoro government and its police force have been established, and the final 35% will be decommissioned once the exit agreement signifying that all commitments have been fulfilled is signed.

A ceremonial turnover of 20 crew-served firearms and 55 high-powered firearms is expected to be held in February to mark the beginning of the decommissioning process.

How storage areas will be secured

There will be 6 to 12 processing areas for MILF combatants and firearms that would also include storage areas for the weapons.

Each site will be under the supervision of an IDB-assigned commander. [...]

The government and the MILF hope to finish decommissioning arms by 2016 once the proposed Bangsamoro government is already in place. [...]

The IDB is headed by Ambassador Haydar Berk who formerly served as Turkish representative to the North Atlantic Council (NATO) and current advisor of Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [...]