

Aktionsbündnis Menschenrechte - Philippinen

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## Abduction of Dyan Gumanao and Armand Dayoha

The Aktionsbündnis Menschenrechte – Philippinen (AMP, German Action Network Human Rights-Philippines) strongly condemns the recent abduction of development worker Dyan Gumanao and labor rights activist Armand Dayoha in Cebu City, Philippines.

On January 10, 2023, Gumanao and Dayoha were forcibly abducted by alleged state security forces in broad daylight in Cebu City. The two were reported missing by their families on January 13 as they haven't heard from them. A video of the incident was shared with the victims' families by a concerned citizen after the news of the missing activists circulated online. It shows that multiple witnesses observed the two being forced into a vehicle by men in plainclothes inside the Cebu City port.

Presumably, strong public pressure and the joint efforts of various organizations contributed to the release of Gumanao and Dayoha in the morning of January 16 in Carmen Town, Northern Cebu. Both were found physically unharmed but traumatized. The two reportedly gave accounts that the kidnappers identified themselves as police officers. They also said they were blindfolded, detained incommunicado, and separately interrogated. Gumanao and Dayoha are willing to file criminal charges against their kidnappers and the state agencies involved.

Dyan Gumanao is a long-term staff and coordinator at Community Empowerment Resource Network, Inc. (CERNET), a partner organization of one of AMP's members. She is also a volunteer for the Alliance of Concerned Teachers. Her partner, Armand Dayoha, is a labor rights organizer of Alyansa sa Mamumuo sa Sugbo (AMA Sugbo) and coordinator of the Alliance of Health Workers. Dayoha also works as a capacity building program coordinator at Visayas Human Development Agency, Inc. (VIHDA), an AMP member's partner organization.

Prior to their abduction both have experienced surveillance, harassment, and threats from security forces. The AMP has repeatedly highlighted the Philippine government's crackdown on human rights defenders, development workers, journalists, unionists, and church workers under the guise of fighting terrorist groups. Over the years, security forces accused CERNET of being a front organization of the communist insurgency in the Philippines without providing evidence. This practice, often called "red-tagging", aims to delegitimize the work of organizations fighting for the promotion of human rights, justice, environmental protection, and peace. VIHDA's employees were also repeatedly red-tagged and threatened by security forces.

The abduction of Gumanao and Dayoha is yet another incident which sheds light on the severe situation of human rights defenders in the Philippines and the failure of the Philippine government to protect them from threats, harassment, vilifications, enforced disappearances, and killings.



The AMP is highly concerned about the resurgence of cases of enforced disappearances of human rights defenders and political activists in the Philippines. In June 2020, development worker Elena Tijamo was forcefully disappeared north of Cebu City. A year later, Tijamo resurfaced dead in a hospital in Quezon City. Another such case is the enforced disappearance of Iver Larit in Negros Occidental, an urban poor organizer and education officer of KADAMAY Negros who remains missing since April 2022. Until today, the government has failed to carry out impartial and timely investigations in the two cases. This lack of accountability is also evident in many cases of extrajudicial killings of human rights defenders in the Philippines.

The AMP calls upon the Philippine government under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to immediately and impartially investigate the circumstances that led to the abduction of Dyan Gumanao and Armand Dayoha and prosecute the perpetrators. We also urge the Philippine Government to immediately initiate impartial investigations into all cases of enforced disappearances, including the cases of Elena Tijamo and Iver Larit.

*The Aktionsbündnis Menschenrechte – Philippinen (AMP – Action Network Human Rights - Philippines) is an initiative of seven major German church-based agencies and human rights organizations to promote advocacy and information work in Germany and the EU regarding the human rights situation in the Philippines. Member Organizations of the AMP are Amnesty International Germany, Brot für die Welt (BfdW), International Peace Observers Network (IPON), MISEREOR, Missio Munich, philippinenbüro e.V., and the United Evangelical Mission (UEM). The main focus of the network lies on the core human rights issues of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and fabricated charges against political activists.*

