

PERMANENT PEOPLES' TRIBUNAL  
Founder: LELIO BASSO (Italy)

President:  
SALVATORE SENESE (ITALY)

General Secretary:  
GIANNI TOGNONI (ITALY)

H.E. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo  
President of the Republic  
Malacaang Palace,  
JP Laurel St., San Miguel  
Manila Philippines  
Voice: (+632) 564 1451 to 80  
Fax: (+632) 742-1641 / 929-3968  
Cell#: (+ 63) 919 898 4622 / (+63) 917 839 8462  
E-mail: [corres@op.gov.ph](mailto:corres@op.gov.ph) / [opnet@ops.gov.ph](mailto:opnet@ops.gov.ph)

H.E. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo  
President of the Republic of the Philippines,

As Jurors of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal, and as part of the larger human family, we recognize that the dramatic and worsening human rights situation in the Philippines is the responsibility for us all. During the PPT's Second Session on the Philippines held in The Hague in March 2007, we expressed our commitment to defeat those powers which, under the pretext of the so-called war on terrorism, deprive the marginalized peoples of a life in justice, dignity and peace.

We sympathize greatly with the plight of the Filipino people who suffer from poverty and who cannot afford medical care. That is why we admire and fully support health professionals who can volunteer their talents and time to help the more needy. Forsaking private gain, they teach their skills to community volunteers and provide their health services for free. They should be treated as heroes of the Filipino people, worthy of our esteem and emulation.

It was thus with great alarm that we received the news about the questionable arrest and detention of 43 volunteer health workers in Rizal province in your country. The victims include two medical doctors, one registered nurse, one midwife and 39 community health workers.

We are greatly dismayed to hear that in the morning of 6 February 2010, combined elements of your government's Philippine National Police and Armed Forces of the

Philippines barged into the private home of Dr. Melecia Velmonte in Morong, Rizal. Without showing any legal cause nor mandate, your security forces proceeded to conduct an illegal search of the premises and illegally took into custody the 43 volunteer health workers. They were handcuffed, blindfolded, manhandled and taken, not to prison, but to a military camp.

We are appalled to hear that as of this writing, that they are still in detention in the military camp, even undergoing interrogation. Relatives, lawyers and human rights organizations have not been allowed to visit them. Initial reports from the Commission on Human Rights and non-government human rights organizations said that the victims remained in handcuffs and blindfolded for more than 36 hours; they were denied food and bathroom privileges confined in dark cells, forced to listen to sounds of gunfire and slapped several times during the night. They were not allowed to speak to each other and they were forced to admit that they were members of the New People's Army. And today, your military officers arrogantly did not heed the orders of the Supreme court to bring all the 43 to court.

As the Chief Executive and Commander in Chief of the Republic of the Philippines, you have the obligation to uphold and defend the rights of Filipino citizens. We see in this lamentable episode that the citizens' inviolable right to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects against searches and seizure has been violated. The victims are clearly suffering physical and psychological torture, their right to be informed of their alleged offenses is being trampled and they have been denied access to legal counsel of their choice.

As the Chief Executive and Commander in Chief of the Republic of the Philippines, you also have the obligation to enforce the law. Those who attack the inviolable rights of the citizens must be brought to justice. For starters, Colonel Aurelio Baladad of the 202nd Infantry Brigade of the Philippine Army and Superintendent Marion Balonglong of the Rizal province PNP, should be relieved of their duties and undergo judicial investigation for gross ignorance and violation of the Bill of Rights.

We pray that your government would put an immediate end to this deplorable situation. Release the 43 volunteer health workers. Return all their private belongings and the belongings of Dr. Melecia Velmonte.

Thank you for your attention and prompt action.

Salvatore Senese (Italy ) PPT President

Gianni Tognoni (Italy) PPT General Secretary

Francois Houtart (Belgium) Session President

Irene Fernandez (Malaysia) Session Judge

Ties Prakken (The Netherlands) Session Judge

Lilia Solano (Colombia) Session Judge

ystein Tveter (Norway) Session Judge

With copy to:

Gen. Avelino Razon, Ret. PNP

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process

Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP)

7th Floor Agustin Building I

Emerald Avenue

Pasig City 1605

Voice:+63 (2) 636 0701 to 066

Fax:+63 (2) 638 2216

[osec@opapp.gov.ph](mailto:osec@opapp.gov.ph)

Norberto Gonzales

Secretary, Department of National Defense

Room 301 DND Building, Camp Emilio Aguinaldo,

E. de los Santos Avenue, Quezon City

Voice:+63(2) 911-9281 / 911-0488

Fax:+63(2) 911 6213

Email: [osnd@philonline.com](mailto:osnd@philonline.com)

Atty. Agnes Devanadera

Secretary, Department of Justice

Padre Faura St., Manila

Direct Line 521-8344; 5213721

Trunkline 523-84-81 loc.214

Fax: (+632) 521-1614

Email: [soj@doj.gov.ph](mailto:soj@doj.gov.ph)

Atty. Leila De Lima

Chairperson, Commission on Human Rights

SAAC Bldg., UP Complex

Commonwealth Avenue

Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines

Voice: (+632) 928-5655, 926-6188

Fax: (+632) 929 0102

Email: [chr.delima@yahoo.com](mailto:chr.delima@yahoo.com)