

## **APPEAL FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION**

### **Call for justice for the victims of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines**

The Government of the Philippines, in its efforts to improve the country's economic growth, is accelerating the implementation of Public-Private Partnership (P3) projects. The goal of this strategy is to increase foreign trade and investments and involves Constitutional amendments in the lower house of the Philippine Legislative assembly that will allow for 100% foreign ownership of domestic businesses.

Resistance to this economic strategy has met with resistance. The government has put in place Operation Plan Bayanihan ("Oplan Bayanihan"), a counterinsurgency program which our partners tell us has led to the silencing and criminalizing of the peoples' legitimate resistance to an economic policy that favours and protects foreign trade and investment. Peoples and communities, in particular Indigenous communities, working to protect their land, water, sources of food and livelihood, are being targeted and killed. Leaders of community and faith based organizations, progressive groups and ordinary citizens are being vilified, harassed and their rights violated simply for demanding increased human rights and environmental protection in the face of foreign, large scale mining and resource extraction.

Please join us in calling for justice for the extrajudicial killings of human rights defenders, Indigenous peoples and community leaders, members of progressive organizations, and civilians in the Philippines.

Express your profound concern about these acts of violence, and strongly condemn these grave violations of the Filipino peoples' rights.

Express your disappointment and frustration over the Philippine government's slow and ineffective response to these killings, the brazenness of the crimes, and the denial of justice for the victims and their families. These incidents violate the government's international and local human rights obligations, and perpetuate the climate of impunity that the perpetrators continue to enjoy.

Demand that the government account for the recent political killings, and that it ensures that justice prevails.

Demand that the Philippine government stop the National Internal Security Plan (Operation Plan Solidarity), or "Oplan Bayanihan", the counterinsurgency program that has led to the militarization of many of the communities in the Cordilleras and other regions of the Philippines. This increased military presence has led to human rights

violations such as torture, divestment and destruction of property, political vilification, threats, harassment and intimidation, and summary execution.

According to KARAPATAN, the national alliance of human rights organizations in the Philippines, 169 men and women had been victims of extrajudicial killings under the current government of President Benigno Simeon Aquino III (July 2010 to December 2013.) From January to March this year, 19 people were killed -- 9 of these in March 2014 alone.

Some of the victims include:

**William Bugatti, 43**, is a human rights worker and regional council member of the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance-KARAPATAN. He has represented the Ifugao Peasant Movement in the regional council of the Cordillera Peoples' Alliance, and was provincial coordinator of Bayan Muna partylist. He was killed March 27 at Bolog, Kiangan, Ifugao

William was on his way home at around 7 p.m. in Bolog, Kiangan, Ifugao when unidentified assassins shot him in the back. He left behind a wife and three children.

William had received threats to his life and security from the Philippine military and its agents since Oplan Bayanihan began in the Cordillera. This situation worsened after the Armed Forces of the Philippines, particularly the 5th Infantry Division (ID) and the 86th Infantry Battalion (IB), released a Target List in Tinoc, Ifugao in October 2012. William was No. 21 on the list 28 people identified as members or supporters of the New People's Army (NPA). All these people are vulnerable to attack by State security forces and their agents. From then on, William has been accused of being an NPA member, and has been subjected to surveillance and harassment.

Small-scale miners **Julio Labiano, 31**, **Rene Labiano, 28**, **Salem Virtus, 24**, and **Jessie Brondia, 35** were reportedly killed by Bantay Kalikasan Task Force, a unit under the provincial government of Camarines Sur, on March 22 in Gata, Caramoan, Camarines Sur.

**Romeo (Romy) Capalla, 65**, chairperson of the Board of Directors and former manager of the Panay Fair Trade Center (PFTC), a member organization of the International Federation of Alternative Trade that exports certified-organic *muscovado* sugar and banana chips, was killed March 15 in Oton, Iloilo. He was a member of Samahan ng mga Ex-detainee Laban sa Detensyon at Aresto (SELDA).

Romy was shot by unidentified gunmen at the Oton Public Market around 6:30 p.m. His arrest on 3 August 2005 was based on trumped up charges of arson. The co-accused in the case, Aklan councilor Fernando Baldomero, became the first victim of extrajudicial killing under the BS Aquino regime. Baldomero was killed five days after Aquino was sworn into office in 2010.

Despite the dismissal of the false charges against him, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police did not stop harassing Romy. He was identified as a commander in the New People's Army. He was included in the Order of Battle drawn up by the 3<sup>rd</sup> ID of the Philippine Army in 2004.

Romy Capalla is the brother of Archbishop Fernando Capalla, former chairperson of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP).

**Ama Licuben Ligiw, 70**, and his sons **Eddie** and **Fermin**, were brutally killed and buried in a shallow grave. They went missing on 3 March, their grave was found on 7 March, and their bodies were recovered on 8 March. There was evidence of torture.

People in the community believe this crime was committed by the 41<sup>st</sup> IBPA, which has been conducting military operations against the New People's Army (NPA) since 16 February 2014 in the areas of the Lacub, Licuan Baay and Malibcong municipalities.

On 22 February, they investigated and coerced Fermin to serve as their guide. His close relatives say that afterwardst, Fermin told them that the soldiers accused him of aiding the NPA in the area and threatened to harm him if he continued to do so. He was instructed by the AFP not to go out of Sucao.

The Ligiw family has played a significant role in resisting the entry of the Olympus Mining Company in Baay Licuan, Abra and other large-scale mining interests in the area. Ligiw family members belong to BALITOK (Baay Licuan Takderan Umno a Karbengan) and KASTAN (Kakailian Salakniban tay Amin a Nagtaudan) – the provincial chapter of Cordillera Peoples' Alliance (CPA). These organizations have long been targets of the AFP's political vilification campaign, and have been identified as "enemies of the State".

## **Recommended Action:**

Send letters, emails or faxes calling for justice for the victims of extrajudicial killings.

1. Immediately creating of an independent fact-finding team comprised of representatives from human rights groups, the Church, local government, and the Commission on Human Rights, to investigate these human rights violations, and arrest and prosecute the perpetrators.
2. Ending Operation Plan Bayanihan, the counterinsurgency program that gives state agents the authority to target human rights defenders and citizens, victimizes innocent and unarmed civilians;
3. Upholding Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and all the major international human rights instruments that the Government of the Philippines has ratified;
4. Resuming formal peace talks between the Government of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines;
5. Ending the militarization of communities.

Please send your letters to:

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