



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

HEADLINES NEWS REVIEW MAY 2013

Headlines & Politics

Labor groups set 8-point demand for Mendiola protest	2
Belmonte: 'More work' needed to solve labor issues	2
Tribal barricade forces Marcventures to shutdown mining operation in Cantilan	2
Gov't urged to protect rights of gays, lesbians	3
Endorsement for Tampakan project under new SouthCot execs unlikely	3
Army intelligence chief to be named	3
Aquino bares AFP buildup vs 'bullies in our backyard'	3
Folks assert 'no mining' policy in Kibungan	4
Form panel for claims now, Marcos victims urge	4
AI to elected execs: Act on rights abuses	4

Elections

DOJ to probe NPA crimes	5
Foreign observers report serious poll irregularities	5
Latest PNP tally: 51 dead, 65 wounded in poll violence	6
War on dynasties seen until 2016	6

Institutions

Unprecedented Saudi-PH labor pact seen to improve deal for household workers	6
'Judicial reforms priority of incoming Congress'	6

Current cases of Human Rights Violations

Activist youth leader bares alleged military surveillance, harassment	7
Harassment of Protesting Workers of a Telecommunications Company -TFDP	7
Leyte media group denounces threats	7
PH still 3 rd worst in media killings	8
Cop raid on Samar villages leaves residents terrified; media barred from coverage	8
Missing 60-year old farmer-organizer, surfaced, jailed in Dipolog	8
DND-DILG hit list legitimizes rights violation vs 60-year old peasant organizer	9
Soldiers prevent displaced indigenous villagers from access to their farms	9
Activists in N. Luzon decry intensifying surveillance, threats	9
Anakpawis coordinator killed in ComVal town	10

Updates on cases of Human Rights Violations

First Conviction for Extrajudicial Killing During Aquino Administration	10
Reyes brothers most likely still in PH, says CIDG chief	11
Alleged witnesses to killings surface	11
Kin of missing UP students oppose bail petition of accused soldiers	11
Benguet police chief admits lapses in Balao case probe	12
CHR probe on Fr. Pops' murder leads to 'missing link'	12
Military trained tribal warrior – say NBI, ex-gov Piñol	13
Another two falsely charged activists to be arraigned for robbery tomorrow	14
Soldier denies hand in Burgos abduction	14



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

Maguindanao Massacre

MAG78 massacre suspects face charges over 58th victim 15

Peace Talks

No end to violence, no talks with Reds' 15

Further Readings

UN-World Bank-MILF launch program to prepare for Bangsamoro governance 15

May 2013 poll bets who have been charged criminally 16

Thai palm oil factory to rise in North Cotabato 16

The Aquino administration at midterm 16

The right to vote and the UN Human Rights Committee 16

Tribe groups seek UN hand on rights violations 16

Disclaimer: The news articles available in this review are only collated from local newspapers. They were not written by the Action Network Human Rights- Philippines.



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

HEADLINES & POLITICS

Philstar.com, 01.05.2013

Labor groups set 8-point demand for Mendiola protest

By Camille Diola

MANILA, Philippines - Labor groups mostly in red shirts gathered along España Boulevard in Manila to demand increased workers' benefits from the government.

The protesters, including Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU), Trade Union Congress of the Philippines and Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino, assembled around Welcome Rotonda [...].

The groups echoed eight labor issues discussed in a dialogue between President Benigno Aquino III, government officials, businessmen and labor leaders from 19 organizations on Tuesday.

The passage of the Security of Tenure bill protecting independent contractors and the Freedom of Information Bill, resolution of extra-judicial killings of militant leaders, tax issues, agro-industrial plans as well as high power costs are among the matters raised by Labor Day movements.

Aquino had announced on Tuesday that will not certify the Security of Tenure bill as "urgent" as its provisions may be in contrast with his administration's goal to increase employment in the country.

Other issues pressed by the protesters are the welfare of migrant workers and rights of the urban poor whose informal houses are about to be seized. [...]

Manila Archbishop Luis Cardinal Tagle, meanwhile, will cele-

Belmonte: 'More work' needed to solve labor issues

MANILA, Philippines - House Speaker Feliciano Belmonte, Jr. on Wednesday admitted that more work "needs to be done" before the plight of Filipinos in the labor force can be completely alleviated.

In his message for Labor Day, Belmonte said that the 15th Congress have "filed and passed" measures addressing problems in the workforce but that the "dignity" of workers remain to be fully served.

"It is important, however, to know that steps have been taken and will continue to be taken," Belmonte said, saying that the 16th Congress, which will open this year, will be more willing to dialogue with workers.

Belmonte, meanwhile, urged workers to "cooperate" with the government's efforts to solve more labor-related issues.

"We have seen how much further cooperative efforts can lead us and it is my hope that today marks the start of our journey together," he said.

Belmonte added that the House of Representatives that he led examined the difficulties of Filipino workers including those abroad, recognizing that they have "greatly contributed" to the growing economy.

"It is this sector that has been recognized globally for the high quality of work that the Filipino has been known for today," Belmonte added.

He also expressed gratitude for workers for their "sweat and sacrifice" that keeps the country going.

Philstar.com, 01.05.2013

brate Mass dedicated for workers and commemorating Saint Joseph the Worker at Plaza Miranda in the morning. [...]

MindaNews.com, 04.05.2013

Tribal barricade forces Marcventures to shutdown mining operation in Cantilan

By Vanessa L. Almeda

CARRASCAL, Surigao del Sur - Besieged by tribal discontent and a strong Catholic Church-backed anti-mining opposition, Marcventures Mining and Development Corp. (MMDC) finally decided to temporarily shutdown its operation in Barangay Cabangahan in Cantilan town, Surigao del Sur.

Jegie Pereda, MMDC vice president for operations, confirmed Wednesday the company closed its Cabangahan operations but did not say for how long the suspension will last. [...]

Members of the Manobo tribe have been barricading the road in Barangay Cabangahan leading to the mining operations of MMDC in the past several weeks. [...]

This town's Mayor Vicente "Baby Boy" Pimentel separately confirmed that the mining firm shutdown its Cabangahan operations and has pulled out its equipment allegedly due to threats from Lumads to burn them.

Pimentel told MindaNews last Tuesday that it will be a "great loss" for the people of Cantilan to lose the investment of MMDC, accusing anti-mining groups, including the Cantilan local government unit, of depriving its people of the economic benefits of mining. [...]

Pimentel alleged that Bat-ao and his clan asked a very "unreasonable demand" of P50 million outside the one percent royalty fee mining firms are mandated to give to indigenous peoples.

The mayor disclosed that MMDC will transfer its mining operation in his town, which could further boost the municipality's income to an estimated P220 million in 2014 from P185 million in 2012. [...]

Get out of our land

[...] The Bat-ao and Hunanhanun clans of Barangay Cabangahan are claimants to areas covered by MMDC's mining operation.

Earlier, Bat-ao said they want MMDC out of their ancestral lands and to pay them damages amounting to P150 million for the

desecration of their burial grounds and other sacred places and the destruction of their main water source.

The "hawudon" or elder of the Bat-ao clan also reiterated an earlier stance that their demand is "just and based on our customary laws and constitutional rights."

[...] He denied the P50 million demand, as alleged by Pimentel, as well as demanding a royalty fee and a 10 percent share solely for their family.

[...] The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) requires companies operating in ancestral lands to obtain the Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of the tribe.

"Is it not written in the law that before anyone can use and exploit our lands, they (private companies) should [...] consult us?" Bat-ao said, noting they were not consulted in the FPIC process.

Bat-ao said they also wanted the mining company out of their ancestral lands because "the truth is that there is little that they have contributed to the welfare of the people in Cabangahan."

He cited that of the 1,000 Manobo residents in the village, the company employs only 137 individuals working on a contractual basis but allegedly out of jobs since last October.

The scholarships offered by MMDC also benefited a handful of youth only, Bat-ao said.

'Tulisan'

Mayor Pimentel, [...] is one of the stockholders of CTP Construction and Mining Corp. based in the town, [...].

The mayor also lambasted the anti-mining groups for displacing people from their work as a result of the stoppage of operation of MMDC in Cabangahan.

[...] Bat-ao [...] is already a signatory to another case filed against the mining firm that led to the issuance of a temporary environmental protection order.



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

The Philippine Star, 19.05.2013

Gov't urged to protect rights of gays, lesbians

By Pia Lee-Brago

MANILA, Philippines - Experts and youth from East and South-east Asia yesterday urged the government and authorities to protect the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

In a forum marking International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia at the University of the Philippines-Diliman, LGBT activists emphasized the importance of enacting anti-discrimination laws that protect LGBT people.

Convened by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and its Regional Development Mission for Asia and UP, the forum included discussions by panelists of the impacts of discrimination against LGBT people in education and employment where they suffer human rights violations.

"Anti-discrimination laws that protect LGBT people are long overdue in many countries," said Michael Tan, dean of the UP College of Social Sciences and Philosophy.

"They are an essential tool that enables marginalized and dis-

criminated groups to participate in the society on an equal basis as everyone else. This is good for LGBT people and for the societies around Asia," he added.

Achievements highlighted

The panelists also highlighted the progress made in politics and access to health services. They cited governments that have enacted laws and local ordinances prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Philippines was cited for passing anti-discrimination ordinances in Cebu, Davao and Naga recently.

[...] Social media and crowd-mapping were identified as facilitating the LGBT movement in Asia.

"The United Nations recognizes that human rights apply to everyone, including LGBT people. Therefore, this event helps us better understand how the rights of LGBT people can be better promoted in Asia," said Clifton Cortez, regional manager from the UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre in Bangkok. [...]

MindaNews, 20.05.2013

Endorsement for Tampakan project under new SouthCot execs unlikely

By Bong S. Sarmiento

KORONADAL CITY— The ban on open pit mining in South Cotabato will remain a major stumbling block to the effort of foreign-backed Sagittarius Mines, Inc. (SMI) to operate the Tampakan project with the election of the new set of provincial officials during the May 13 polls.

This after Rep. Daisy Avance-Fuentes (second district), who has been elected as the new governor, vowed to implement the ban on open-pit mining in the next three years, or until 2016.

It was Fuentes who signed the controversial Environment Code that bans open-pit mining before stepping down as governor in 2010 after completing three straight terms.

Fuentes (Nationalist People's Coalition) defeated incumbent Gov. Arthur Pingoy Jr. (United Nationalist Alliance) on Monday's elections [...].

[...] During Pingoy's term, he implemented the open-pit ban signed by Fuentes, despite lobbying from the company and pro-mining groups for him to disregard the prohibition.

[...] Efforts of SMI to develop the Tampakan copper, touted as the largest known undeveloped copper reserve in Southeast Asia, has been hobbled by the open-pit mining ban imposed by South Cotabato.

In December last year, the company announced that it was moving the start of commercial operation from 2016 to 2019. Among the major challenges the company cited facing its operation was the open-pit ban in South Cotabato.

Last February, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources granted SMI an environmental compliance certificate (ECC), after rejecting it twice last year on the ground of the open-pit mining prohibition of South Cotabato.

As set by the ECC, an endorsement from the provincial government is among the other requirements needed by the firm before it can proceed to commercial production. [...]

"With the passage of the Aquino Administration's National Mining Policy and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Memorandum directing that all local legislations be consistent with the national mining law, we hope that through continued dialogue with incoming Governor Fuentes and the rest of the South Cotabato provincial government officials, there will be a timely resolution to the open-pit ban in the South Cotabato Environment Code," he [SMI spokesman John Arnaldo] said. [...]

ManilaStandardToday.com, 20.05.2013

Army intelligence chief to be named

By Florante S. Solmerin

The Board of Generals (BOG) led by Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Emmanuel Bautista has a short-list of candidates to take over as Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, a powerful position in the military, sources said.

Brig. Gen. Roberto Detablan Domines, assistant commander of the 7th Infantry Division based in Fort Magsaysay in Nueva

Ecija, was a leading candidate, the sources said.

Domines is a member of the Philippine Military Academy Sandigan Class of 1982. He was former commander of the 1001 Infantry Brigade in Mindanao. The position Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence was left vacant when Maj. Gen. Francisco Cruz retired last Saturday.

Agence France-Press, 22.05.2013

Aquino bares AFP buildup vs 'bullies in our backyard'

[...] President Aquino on Tuesday announced a \$1.8-billion military upgrade to help defend the country's maritime territory against "bullies," amid an ever-worsening dispute with China. In thinly veiled comments referring to China, Aquino vowed during a speech to mark the Philippine Navy's 115th anniversary that the Armed Forces would be given the resources neces-

sary to protect Philippine sovereignty.

"We have a clear message to the world: The Philippines is for Filipinos, and we have the capability to resist bullies entering our backyard," Aquino told naval chiefs.

Aquino detailed a P75-billion (\$1.82 billion) military modernization program that gives priority to upgrading the Navy, which is



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

one of the weakest in Southeast Asia. [...]

“We will also improve our communications, intelligence and surveillance systems,” he said.

Aquino said the government had already spent P28 billion on military modernization over the past three years [...].

[...] The increasingly bitter territorial dispute with China is over competing claims to parts of the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea), which is believed to sit above vast amounts of oil and gas. It is home to rich fishing grounds.

Sun.Star, 24.05.2013

Folks assert ‘no mining’ policy in Kibungan

By Maria Elena Catajan

KIBUNGAN folks continue to shun mining activities in the highland town.

Locals are now battling for the exception of the entire area from large scale mining operations claiming the entirety of the town is part of an ancestral domain.

A dialog was pushed by local folk at the Bishop’s residence Thursday to thresh out concerns of the majority as well as to drum up support for the petition which has reached the Office of the President.

[...] The local folks are asking for an assurance for the protection of the entire municipality from large scale mining activities.

Recent mining uproar caused by Da Gamma Minerals united Kibungan folks anew in their advocacy to stop any mining activities in the area.

Years ago, Da Gamma was granted a 25-year Mining Lease Contract (MLC) Area which expired in 2012. A renewal of per-

Philippine Daily Inquirer, 27.03.2013

Form panel for claims now, Marcos victims urge

By Leila B. Salaverria

Saying the victims of martial law abuses have waited long enough, human rights groups are urging Malacañang to form immediately the panel that would process their claims for compensation.

Bayan Muna Rep. Neri Colmenares said Sunday there was no reason for the administration to delay the appointments to the nine-member Human Rights Victims’ Claims Board.

Colmenares, one of the authors of the Human Rights Victims Reparation and Recognition Act, said the government did not have to wait for any implementing rules or regulations to be formulated before naming the board members.

The board will draft the implementing rules for the compensation process, which is why its completion is crucial for the law to take full effect, Colmenares explained.

President Aquino signed the compensation measure into law on Feb. 25, the 27th anniversary of the EDSA People Power Revolution [...].

The law was intended to recognize the struggles of the people who fought the dictatorship and provide them remunerations for their sufferings. The money would come from a P10-billion fund out of the ill-gotten wealth recovered from Marcos.

“Until the board has been completed, the application period [for the victims’ compensation] could not begin,” Colmenares said in a phone interview.

Victims dying

[...] Samahan ng Ex-Detainees Laban sa Detensyon at sa Aresto (Selda), which earlier lamented the non-implementation of the

Sun.Star Cagayan de Oro, 29.05.2013

AI to elected execs: Act on rights abuses

By Abigail C. Malalis

AMNESTY International-Philippines (AIPh) challenged newly elected government officials to act further on the rising number

China insists it has sovereign rights to most of the West Philippine Sea, including waters approaching the coast of the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries. [...]

In the latest incident, the Philippines said Tuesday that three Chinese vessels—a warship and two maritime surveillance vessels—had established a presence near the Filipino-claimed Second Thomas Shoal, also known as Ayungin.

[...] China announced in March its defense budget for 2013 would be about \$115 billion. [...]

mits was not granted to the company but a new exploration permit has been forwarded to the DENR-MGB tagged as EXPA-105, which the agency has yet to grant.

The contract which was granted to Gamban Mining and Dev’t Corp covers 812 hectares but exploration activities will be concentrated in five lots covering less than 50 hectares.

Sacpa said the dialog was needed to get new information of the new mining executive order issued last year by the President Aquino to appease fears of the Kibungan folk on companies wanting to come into the community and explore mineral reserves.

Sacpa said the dialog has helped give guidelines on how to protect the area from large scale mining and prevent companies to enter the highland town.

Kibungan folk have consistently opposed exploration activities here, maintaining a no mining policy in the area.

measure, said that in the two and a half months after the measure was signed, some of the victims had died due to illnesses without seeing the law take effect.

“Martial law victims cannot afford to be disenfranchised, much more neglected again. The law was a victory for the victims. We cannot allow our efforts to go down the drain,” Selda national coordinator Roneo Clamor said in a statement.

Selda earlier also submitted nominees to the board. Its nominees included martial law victims who were involved in the filing of the class suit—around 9,000—against the Marcoses and in pursuing the enactment of the law to compensate the victims, as well as members of human rights organizations. [...]

Requirements

[...] The law itself states the requirements for the board members: persons of known probity, competence and integrity; must have a deep and thorough understanding and knowledge of human rights and involvement in efforts against abuses during the Marcos regime; and must have a clear and adequate understanding and commitment to human rights protection, promotion and advocacy.

At least three board members must be lawyers who have been practicing for at least 10 years.

[...] The martial law victims have six months from the effectivity of the rules to file applications for reparation.

The claims board has two years to complete its work of determining the amount of compensation for each victim.

of victims of human rights abuses in the country.

AIPh made the call on Tuesday as it launched the Amnesty



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

International Report 2013 in Cagayan de Oro City[...].

The AI Report compiled facts on the state of the world's human rights, covering 159 countries and territories.

Dr. Aurora Corazon A. Parong, AIPh director, said insecurities were observed even in areas where armed conflict is absent and the number of people living below poverty line is growing.

"The world is becoming increasingly dangerous especially for refugees and migrants including Filipinos. [...] The local government officials play a key role in turning around the situation of misery and insecurity," Parong said in a statement.

The group also reported, based on the SWS survey, an increase of hunger among families in the Visayas from 14.6 to 15 percent while poverty level in Mindanao increased from 26.3 to 29.2 percent.

"In the Regional Development Plan 2011-2016, the local gov-

ernment of Northern Mindanao has committed to doubling its efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty and hunger through a human rights based approach to development and governance," Parong said.

"We hope the LGU in the region will triple its efforts to make inclusive growth a reality where the poor and marginalized will also benefit from the growth within the region," she added.

Meanwhile, Parong also criticized the failure of the government to address the increasing numbers of victims of torture, killings and enforced disappearances despite promises to bring perpetrators to justice.

"The LGUs and the police at the cities, municipalities and provinces must not allow perpetrators to get away with their crimes.

They can play a key role in the delivery of justice," Parong added.

ELECTIONS

The Philippine Star, 02.05.2013

DOJ to probe NPA crimes

By Edu Punay

MANILA, Philippines - The government will pursue criminal investigation of armed attacks and extortion perpetrated by the New People's Army (NPA) on candidates in this election period. Secretary Leila de Lima said yesterday the Department of Justice (DOJ) would create a special task force to determine criminal liabilities of NPA guerrillas involved in a recent spate of election-related attacks and abuses.

De Lima said the team, composed of state prosecutors, state counsels and agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), would be tasked "to look into those alleged unlawful and irregular activities attributed to the NPA and recommend appropriate courses of action or measures to exact accountability and put a stop to said activities." [...]

[...] De Lima said the special task force should first determine the appropriate mechanisms to be used in the criminal investigation. [...]

Among the incidents to be probed by the DOJ task force is the

recent attack on Gingoog Mayor Ruth Guingona that wounded her and killed two of her aides.

The NPA owned up to the attack and regretted having killed two civilians.

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in a statement last April 23 admitted to a number of attacks against several politicians in the provinces. The NPA has also been putting up checkpoints and continue to collect revolutionary taxes or "permits to campaign" from politicians.

Administration senatorial candidate former Akbayan representative Risa Hontiveros on Tuesday called for an investigation of criminal offenses by the NPA.

Hontiveros urged the DOJ to act on what she described as a "pattern of abuse and gangsterism that threatens the chance to effect social change through democratic, peaceful and clean elections."

Manilatimes.net, 15.05.2013

Foreign observers report serious poll irregularities

By Joel Sy-Egco

VOTE-BUYING, intimidation and minors casting their votes were among the "serious irregularities" witnessed by members of the 2013 International Observers' Mission organized by the Compact for Peaceful and Democratic Elections (Compact).

The group's report covered the six areas it monitored during the conduct of the midterm elections on May 13.

"Based on the six areas we monitored, the elections were conducted in a relatively fair and orderly manner. Nevertheless, the problems we saw and documented, unless properly addressed by concerned government agencies and stakeholders, will undermine an electoral process reasonably credible by international standards," said Compact National Coordinator Arnold Tarobago.

[...] Tarobago said the observers from 30 countries divided themselves into six groups, with each group monitoring Pampanga, Cagayan, Camarines Sur and Masbate, Cebu, and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Vote buying, underage voting

The foreign observers also reported vote-buying incidents in the areas that they monitored.

"Although they did not personally or directly witness vote-buying, majority of those interviewed openly admitted that vote buying is happening, including paying people not to cast their votes in the areas controlled by the incumbent candidates and political clans," Tarobago said. [...]

Election-related violence

Compact also reported that the high presence of police and military personnel in the areas observed, particularly in Masbate and ARMM, failed to address the climate of fear in the voting areas.

[...] Foreign observers witnessed military and police presence near and even inside polling areas in the ARMM. [...]

No secrecy

Likewise, the election observers said one big issue that hounded the six areas they monitored concerned ballot secrecy.

"One common but extremely disturbing issue [...] concerned the voting public's right to ballot secrecy. In many polling precincts, there was a deficiency of ballot secrecy folders. Voters were also inserting their ballots to the PCOS machines without any attempt at concealment [...]" the Compact official stressed.

The aim of ballot secrecy, Tarobago explained, is to guarantee that the public voted free from intimidation and bribery. It also ensures that political views are not known to any other entity. [...]

Long lines

The group also said long queues were also observed in several areas. The voting process was difficult in some areas due to problematic voters lists and clustering of precincts. [...] He [Tarobago] said several PCOS machines stopped working.

In Pampanga, one PCOS machine printed no text during zero sum printing. Others just failed to function as expected. Un-

Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

sealed PCOS machines were also found in polling precincts in

Cagayan and Pampanga.

The Philippine Star, 15.05.2013

Latest PNP tally: 51 dead, 65 wounded in poll violence

By Alexis Romero

MANILA, Philippines - A total of 51 people were killed and 65 others wounded in 81 poll-related incidents since the start of the election period, police said yesterday.

The number of fatalities was slightly lower than the 56 recorded in the same period in 2007 and 54 in 2010, police data showed.

The number of wounded persons also went down slightly from 69 in 2007 and 74 in 2010. The figures covered incidents from Jan. 13, the start of the gun ban, until the May 13 election.

Philippine National Police (PNP) spokesman Chief Superintendent Generoso Cerbo Jr. said the figures could still change as

they are still receiving reports from the field. [...]

PNP said 62 of the 81 poll-related incidents are still under investigation, while 19 have been referred to the prosecutor's office.

The violent incidents this year seem to be scattered across the regions. The region with highest incidence of election violence was Calabarzon with nine, followed by Western Visayas and Zamboanga peninsula with eight each. [...]

Despite the violence that marred the elections, security forces claimed this year's election was "relatively peaceful." [...]

INSTITUTIONS

Philippine Daily Inquirer, 21.05.2013

War on dynasties seen until 2016

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Leaders of Movement Against Dynasties (MAD) said the group will continue to fight until 2016 for a law that would put flesh to a constitutional ban on political dynasties, encouraged by the rejection by voters of several members of powerful dynasties in the May 13 elections.

MAD chair Quintin San Diego said the best approach to ending political dynasties is still through a people's initiative. [...]

A petition calling for the end to the succession of rulers from the same family was launched by the group in February at Baclaran Church. The target is 5.2 million signatures, the minimum requirement for people's initiative-driven laws.

San Diego said while the Constitution explicitly prohibits political dynasties, no law in the last 25 years has been passed to make it operational.

In the absence of a law, he said MAD considers a family a political dynasty if two of its closely related members occupy national or local elective positions at the same time.

He said dynasties deny equal opportunity, control resources and worsen corruption and poverty in the country. [...]

MAD said at least 18 political dynasties have been hurt by the "growing antidynasty sentiment." [...]

InterAksyon.com, 21.05.2013

Unprecedented Saudi-PH labor pact seen to improve deal for household workers

By Stella Tomeldan

MANILA, Philippines - Amid the jitters caused by Saudi Arabia's crackdown on illegal foreign workers, a whiff of positive news: the kingdom has signed with the Philippines a labor agreement with unprecedented terms meant to ease the deployment of more Filipino household service workers (HSWs) and improve the situation of those already there.

[...] Minister Fakeih said the agreement is "very historic because this is the first time that Saudi Arabia is signing such a kind of agreement with a labor-sending country in the world."

The agreement will improve the situation of Filipino workers in Saudi and other Arab countries, said Baldoz who was in Jeddah recently, as she expects Saudi Arabia to circulate a copy of the agreement to members of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

[...] An estimated 60,000 HSWs of the estimated 670,000 overseas Filipino workers in Saudi are seen to benefit from the labor agreement.

Its key provisions are:

- a mutually acceptable recruitment and deployment system;
- recruitment of domestic workers through recruitment offices that practice ethical recruitment and are licensed by their respective governments;
- prohibition against charging or deducting from the salary of the domestic worker any cost attendant to recruitment and deployment nor impose any kind of unauthorized salary deductions;

- right of recourse to competent authorities in case of contractual disputes, in accordance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations;

- legal measures against recruitment offices, companies, or agencies for any violation of applicable laws, rules and regulations; and

- resolution of any issue arising from the implementation and enforcement of the Agreement.

According to Baldoz, the agreement ensures the following: the authenticity of the employment contract; opening of a bank account in the name of the domestic worker; a 24-hour mechanism for domestic workers' assistance; expeditious settlement of labor contract violation cases; and facilitation of exit visas for repatriation upon contract completion or during emergency situations.

Manila is expected to ensure that workers are qualified and medically fit with no derogatory record, and verify all employment contracts submitted by Saudi recruitment offices.

The agreement also specifies an entry-level minimum salary of SR 1,500 as well as weekly rest days and vacation leave with pay.

Saudi employers are barred from withholding the passports and work permits of their employees, so the workers have freedom of movement and a chance to freely communicate their sentiments.

The Philippine Star, 21.05.2013

'Judicial reforms priority of incoming Congress'

By Paolo Romero

MANILA, Philippines - Judicial reform will remain a priority of the incoming 16th Congress, following the results of elections

showing people's support for the Aquino government's reform agenda.



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

Speaker Feliciano Belmonte Jr., who is expected to be re-elected Speaker of the House of Representatives, yesterday cited President Aquino's commitment to judicial reforms.

"In early April of this year, during the 15th Congress, the President had signed statutes creating numerous new court branches. These were designed to de-clog court dockets all over the country and make justice more accessible to ordinary Filipinos, especially to the poor," the House leader said in a statement.

Based on congressional records, not less than 55 new branches of the regional trial court and not less than 33 new branches of the metropolitan trial court were established all over the country in

three years.

The new branches of the regional trial court are located in various areas, including General Santos City, Agusan del Sur, Negros Occidental, Cebu, Aurora Province, Batangas, Romblon, Kalinga, Davao City, Zamboanga City, Compostela Valley, Tacloban City, Bislig City, Cavite, Calamba, Navotas, Valenzuela City and Bogo City.

These do not include the creation of municipal trial court branches in Puerto Princesa in Palawan, Cagayan de Oro and Misamis Oriental. [...]

CURRENT CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

InterAksyon.com, 04.05.2013

Activist youth leader bares alleged military surveillance, harassment

MANILA, Philippines -- The chairman of the activist youth group Anakbayan has raised the alarm over what he said were "several incidents of suspected military surveillance and harassment against me."

[...] Vencer Crisostomo said he was preparing to leave his Quezon City home to join Labor Day protests on May 1 when, "at around 9 in the morning, a neighbor reported that a blue van was spotted slowing down in front of our house ... seemingly doing surveillance."

[...] Crisostomo said the neighbor reported the van to security guards of their housing village who confirmed that the driver "identified himself as MSgt Federico Sagun Tambacao, Jr. and presented an military ID card."

However, Crisostomo said the men in the van "did not know and could not tell the guards the exact address of their destination," which prompted a guard to follow the vehicle and eventually ask them to "turn back and leave the village."

After the May 1 rally in Mendiola, Crisostomo said he was talking to a colleague when "I noticed a man holding a cell-

phone who kept looking at me from a few feet away."

Suspecting the man was tailing him, the Anakbayan chairman said he approached the rally stage to get out of his follower's line of sight and then jumped onboard a jeepney ferrying other youth activists away.

The man he suspected of following him stood up, "anxiously searching, and looking at the direction where I initially went," Crisostomo said.

[...] A few months ago, suspected military agents broke into the venue of our youth leaders' meeting in the middle of the night and stole all our laptops and gadgets."

[...] Crisostomo said the government's recent moves to terminate peace talks with communist rebels "could also be an indication that it is planning to intensify military offensives and step up its attacks against activists."

Citing records from the human rights group Karapatan, Crisostomo said there have been 137 extrajudicial killings, 72 incidents of torture, 498 illegal arrests, and 30,260 victims of forced evacuation under President Benigno Aquino III.

Hronline.com, 03.05.2013, Urgen Appeal - Task Force Detainees of the Philippines

Harassment of Protesting Workers of a Telecommunications Company -TFDP

The Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP) is forwarding to you an appeal regarding the harassment and intimidation against leaders and members of the Digital Employees Union currently on labor strike, and is seeking your help to anticipate possible violence that may occur due to their continuous protest actions.

[...] Digital Workers are being harassed by personnel of the Makati Commercial Estate Association (MACEA), during their picket protest and camp-out outside the Ramon Cojuangco building located within Legaspi and Salcedo Village.

On April 27, 2013 [...] personnel from the Infra security agency came and presented a written order from MACEA. The directive stated that workers must remove their installed streamers and posters, and must immediately vacate the place. The order was relayed and presented by Mr. Eduardo Balagot, officer-in-charge of the MACEA. [...]

During their dialogue workers told them not to remove their campaign materials and asserted their right to freedom of expression and assembly.

At this point a heated argument took place. The supposed negotiation became confrontational. Mr. Balagot told the workers that 'if you want this to be forceful, then we will.' The MACEA personnel started to remove the streamers and placards while some police seemingly acted only as onlookers. To avoid violence, the

workers conceded and chose not to fight back against the MACEA personnel. [...]

On April 21, 2013, at 3:00am, around 100 security personnel of the building pushed them away from their camp to the sidewalk.

The workers are currently confronting the latest move of Digital for its supposed 'permanent closure', but allowing integration with Philippine Long Distance Telephone company (PLDT). On January 21, 2013, the Supreme Court already issued its decision with finality, that it has affirmed the directives of the Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the National Labor Relations Commission as follows; 1) For Digital to commence a collective bargaining with the DEU; 2) Reinstate affected workers with full back wages; 3) Pay each affected employees P10,000 moral damages and P5,000 exemplary damages for finding Digital guilty of unfair labor practice such as: a) The closure of its affiliate Digiserve and replaced it with i-tech; b) dismissal of employees mostly union members and officers; and, c) in violation of the Assumption Jurisdiction order.

At present, Digital Telecommunications Philippines Inc. made a manifestation before DOLE Secretary's office that it will not negotiate as the court's decision has already been superseded by supposed turn of events—closure and integration of operations to PLDT.

ManilaStandardToday.com, 04.05.2013

Leyte media group denounces threats

TACLOBAN City—Even as the world celebrates the World Press Freedom Day, Tacloban City mediamen on Friday con-

demned the blatant attempt of some individuals to silence a local AM radio station here.



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

A day after An Waray Partylist Representative Florencio "Bem" Noel, a mayoralty candidate of this city, stormed DYBR and tried to grab the microphone from Manuel Marta, a block timer, a male caller threatened to throw a grenade at the station if Marta would not stop talking about the incident.

Last April 26, 2013, Cong. Noel barged into the announcer's booth of DYBR and demanded that he be allowed to answer the issues raised against him by the block-time anchorman. When Marta refused, citing lack of material time, the lawmaker allegedly tried to grab the microphone from the radioman.

Marta had filed a case of harassment and intimidation against the partylist representative before the office of the Commission on Election.

DYBR tied black ribbons around its premises while its employees wore black armbands to condemn the attack on press freedom and to raise awareness on the importance of the fundamental right to freedom of expression.

[...] The Committee to Protect Journalists has meanwhile released its annual list of countries where journalists were murdered regularly and governments fail to solve the crimes. [...]

InterAksyon.com, 11.05.2013

Cop raid on Samar villages leaves residents terrified; media barred from coverage

By Eladio Perfecto

CATARMAN, Northern Samar -- Dozens of battle-ready policemen, ostensibly in search of firearms, swooped down on four villages in the Northern Samar town of Pambujan, some 40 kilometers east of the provincial capital Catarman, early Saturday morning, leaving residents terrified and local government and military officials wondering about the real purpose of the operation.

Journalists who rushed to cover the raid on Barangays Cabarian, Canjumadal, San Ramon and Manahaw found the road blocked by a police vehicle and were told they could not proceed.

Villagers returning home around 7 a.m. said they were surprised to find the police vehicle, with government license plate SF 647, blocking the road to Cabarian with two policemen who told them no one was allowed to enter or exit the villages.

When asked by reporters why they had blocked the road, the two policemen, whose nameplates were barely readable, said they had orders from their superiors not to talk to anyone.

When Jazmin Bonifacio, a radio reporter from Tacloban who had joined the local journalists, called up Eastern Visayas police director Chief Superintendent Elmer Soria, to ask about the blockade, he replied they were hunting for gunmen who were allegedly out to disrupt Monday's elections.

He also advised the journalists not to enter the blockaded villages.

Later in the day, reporters who asked Colonel Arvin Lagamon, commanding officer of the 63rd Infantry Battalion based in Catubig town, about the reported gunmen were told that he had not received any reports of private armed groups operating

DavaoToday.com, 09.05.2013

Missing 60-year old farmer-organizer, surfaced, jailed in Dipolog

By Marilou Aguirre-Tuburan

DAVAO CITY, Philippines – The 60-year old organizer of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas and Anakpawis Party believed to be abducted by military agents since April 27 was reportedly found in Dipolog City Jail.

Human Rights News May 2013

PH still 3rd worst in media killings

By Ronald Reyes

Celebration. Journalists fly kites at the University of the Philippines' grounds to toast World Press Freedom Day on Friday. Manny Palmero

Despite President Aquino's vow to solve the impunity in the murders of journalists, the Philippines ranked third worst worldwide for the fourth consecutive year, the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists said Friday to mark World Press Freedom Day.

In its annual Impunity Index, the media rights group ranked the Philippines third behind Iraq and Somalia, but ahead of Sri Lanka, Colombia, Afghanistan, Mexico, Pakistan, Russia, Brazil, Nigeria and India.

The Philippines actually has more cases of unsolved journalist murders than Somalia, but it scored higher because of its larger population. [...]

"Fifty-five journalist murders have gone unsolved in the past decade," the CPJ said in its item on the Philippines.

"The 2011 Ortega murder reflects the politically inspired nature of the large majority of Philippine killings, along with the general breakdown in the rule of law that has allowed the killings to continue," the group added.

Gerardo Ortega, a Palawan broadcaster who exposed corruption, was shot in the back of the head while shopping in Puerto Princesa City. Police arrested suspects and traced the murder weapon to an aide of Gov. Joel Reyes.

But the case suffered a severe blow earlier this year when an alleged conspirator who had turned state witness was killed in prison.

"The insecurity of witnesses is a key problem in addressing impunity. Authorities in the Philippines have yet to make headway in the prosecution of dozens of suspects in a politically motivated massacre in Maguindanao that claimed the lives of more than 50 people, including 32 journalists," it added.

Three witnesses in the Maguindanao case have themselves been murdered, one of them dismembered and mutilated.

Each time a witness is killed, "it affects the morale of other witnesses by showcasing how inept the government is in ensuring their safety," says Ortega's wife Michaella.

But presidential spokesman Edwin Lacierda said the Aquino administration has supposedly moves to stop the killing of journalists after the President created an inter-agency task force, headed by Justice Secretary Leila de Lima, to look into the killings.

"We will continue our efforts to stop the impunity against journalists, the extralegal killings," Lacierda said, adding that the government is also looking at the motives of the killings to determine whether they stem from a victim's work as a journalist. [...]

ManilaStandardToday.com, 03.05.2013

within his area of responsibility.

The blockade was finally lifted at noon, more than five hours after the lockdown, when the two policemen told the stranded villagers they could go home.

[...] When the journalists finally reached Cabarian, they saw a visibly shaken barangay captain Bert Sosing Palco, who said a company of policemen, led by Senior Inspector Joseph Abalos Imperial, entered the village and showed him a search warrant issued by Branch 19 of the Catarman Regional Trial Court.

Palco said the policemen searched his house but found no weapons.

He said eight other houses not covered by the warrant were also searched to no avail.

As this was going on, he said, Imperial ordered all the male villagers to come out of their homes and line up.

Pastora Ponce, 73, had to be rushed to the Pambujan health center after she suffered chills, apparently from fear, after five policemen armed with assault rifles and with a bomb-sniffing dog barged into her home, which was not covered by the warrant, and conducted a search.

An irate Pambujan Mayor Rogelio Tan, who is running for reelection, condemned the blockade of the villages and claimed the operation was politically motivated.

In a phone interview, Father Cristopher Ablon of rights group Karapatan-Northern Mindanao, confirmed it was Estelita Tacalan whose mug shots were furnished to them by the local media.

Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

"We're really happy that she's found and alive," Ablon told davaotoday.com. However, Ablon said that it took them more than 10 days to fear and worry for Tacalan, before the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) in Cagayan de Oro City confirmed of "arresting" her for murder and destructive arson charges.

"We've been asking the CIDG, a number of times, about Tacalan, but they repeatedly denied it. Now that the calls to surface her have been mounting, they were cornered and forced to admit the arrest," Ablon said.

He also thanked the media for helping them search on the whereabouts of the widowed mother of three.

"We condemn the authorities' move against Tacalan. It's a clear violation of human rights and even international humanitarian law," Ablon said.

He added if there were cases filed against her, like any accused, she should be treated humanely, and that appropriate papers should be presented. He added that she should not be hidden from their families and relatives.

Asian Human Rights Commission, Urgent Alert Programme, 23.05.2013

PHILIPPINES: Soldiers prevent displaced indigenous villagers from access to their farms

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has been informed that soldiers are harassing and preventing indigenous villagers, who were displaced en masse last month due to an armed conflict, from getting access to their farms to harvest crops. The soldiers imposed restriction on the villager's movements on the pretext of ensuring their safety; however, it is clear that their intentions are to repress them for not informing about the presence of rebels in their community.

CASE DETAILS:

On April 18, 2013, soldiers attached to the 39th Infantry Battalion, Philippine Army, under the command of Lt. Col. Norman Zuniega, figured in an armed encounter with the New People's Army (NPA) in Sitio Tah Canten, Malawanit, Magsaysay, Davao del Sur. A witness said that the soldiers allegedly used the villagers, namely Pedro Mandrial, Antonio Camag and Rey Mandrial, as their guides during the combat operation.

The three villagers were last known to be in the military custody at the headquarters in Santa Cruz, Davao del Sur.

The fighting between the rebels and soldiers resulted in the displacement of about 57 households (249 persons) [...]. The villagers fear [...] that the soldiers would target them on the suspicion that they are either supporters or rebels. Given below is the list of displaced persons.

After this massive displacement, when some of the villagers attempted to return to cultivate their land and to harvest their

Bulatlat.com, 24.05.2013

Activists in N. Luzon decry intensifying surveillance, threats

By Ronalyn V. Olea

MANILA - Human rights defenders and development workers in the Cordillera and Ilocos regions reported incidents of surveillance, red baiting and harassment by suspected state security forces.

In an urgent action alert, the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance (CHRA)-Karapatan raised concern over recent incidents be-

Karapatan Press Release, 05.11.2013

DND-DILG hit list legitimizes rights violation vs 60-year old peasant organizer

Karapatan deplored the enforced disappearance, illegal arrest and detention of Estelita T. Tacalan, a 60-year old peasant organizer and rural health worker in Misamis Oriental, as a "recent case of rights violation legitimized by the Joint Order No. 14-2012 of the Department of the Interior and Local Government and the Department of National Defense."

The DND-DILG Joint Order No. 14-2012 reportedly contains an updated list of alleged wanted Communist leaders and allocates Php 466,088,000.00 as reward money for their capture.

Secretary general of Karapatan, Cristina Palabay, said Tacalan was reported missing by its Northern Mindanao chapter since April 27. On May 7 Karapatan and Tacalan's family received information from an ABS-CBN reporter that confirmed the arrest of Tacalan through Supt. Cholijun Caduyac, Assistant Regional Chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG)-Philippine National Police (PNP) Region 10. [...] The CIDG claimed that Tacalan is among the list of wanted persons of the DND.

Tacalan was an organizer of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) and the Anakpawis partylist among farmers, indigenous peoples, women and children in rural communities. She engaged landowners and local governments in dialogues over the concerns of peasants.

Fondly called by many as "Nanay Neneng," she was also a rural nurse. Using her basic knowledge and broad field experiences on health care, she treated patients who never saw doctors and nurses. [...]

In an interview, Caduyac said Tacalan was transferred to the Zamboanga del Norte Provincial Jail on April 28. The CIDG also released copies of Tacalan's mugshot. According to latest reports, Tacalan is currently detained at the Dipolog City Jail.

"The DILG-DND Joint Order 14-2012 is a hitlist of activists and individuals that makes illegal arrests and detention legal. Based on trumped up charges, those in the hitlist, especially members and leaders of progressive partylists and organizations, may not only end up in jails but may become victims of enforced disappearance or extrajudicial killing. The list is definitely in support of the Aquino administration's Oplan Bayanihan," Palabay explained.

Karapatan called for the immediate release of Tacalan and held the DND, DILG, PNP and CIDG accountable for her enforced disappearance, illegal arrest and detention.

crops in order to support their families the soldiers deliberately prevented them.

The soldiers argued on pretext that it was to protect them because they might be caught in the crossfire between rebels and soldiers; however, even after the fighting ended the villagers were still refused permission to return home.

For example, on April 21 at 11am, returning villager Maria Batawan and her son, Richard, were inside their house where soldiers who had just arrived and were descending from a military operation in the mountains, pointed their weapons at her. [...]

On April 22 at 7am, another villager, Arsenia Manipe and her children had approached the soldiers to allow them to return home to collect the 12 sacks of corn, 30 sacks of charcoal and to be able to cultivate their land, but the soldiers refused. They told Arsenia that if she goes, she could be caught in crossfire. The soldiers also told her that she and other villagers had lied to them that there are no rebels in their community.

To address this problem, local NGOs on April 25 [wrote](#) to the town mayor, Jess Lumanog, requesting for a dialogue. However, their request was ignored because the mayor's representatives choose to have a dialogue with the soldiers instead of the villagers who made the request.

On April 26, when the villagers approached Mayor Lumanog they were unable to speak to him because he was inebriated. [...]

lieved to be perpetrated by elements and troops under the 86th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army (IBPA) and the 5th Infantry Division.

Since January this year, Jude Baggo, secretary general of the CHRA-Karapatan has been receiving text messages warning him to cease from his political activities otherwise he would be ar-



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

rested. One of the messages he received associated his presence and activities in Ifugao to the activities of the New People's Army (NPA). The NPA is the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). This April, he was threatened with imprisonment "just after the elections."

According to the CHRA, reliable sources validated that the messages were from state security forces.

Baggo and his colleagues also noted surveillance and monitoring of his whereabouts by suspicious individuals.

William Bugatti, a paralegal of the CHRA-Karapatan also reported incidents of surveillance and harassment against him. He was barred several times from visiting political detainees at the Ifugao Provincial Jail. The Jail warden claims that there is a "Regional Memorandum" stating that Bugatti is not allowed to enter the jail and visit the political detainees.

Both Baggo and Buggati were listed as #21 and #22 respectively and [tagged as "UTAK NG NPA"](#) (Brains of the NPA) in a document entitled "MUNICIPALITY OF TINOC (Target Persons)." The two-page document, a copy of which was obtained by CHRA-Karapatan in October 2012, bears the logos of the Charlie Company of the 86th Battalion (Highlander) of the 5th Infantry Division (North Star), Philippine Army. It contains names of individuals, their alleged association with the NPA, mobile phone numbers, organizations, and the remarks/assessment by the 86th IBPA and the 5th ID.

Among those in the list are members and leaders of legal people's organizations, human rights defenders and development workers from the Center for Development Programs in the Cordillera (CDPC), Montanosa Research and Development Center (MRDC) and the Ifugao Resources and Development Center (IRDC).

According to the CHRA, the 86th IBPA has been notorious in Northern Luzon for its human rights violations since President Benigno Aquino III came into office.

In 2012, the human rights group documented various human rights violations perpetrated by this particular Army unit such as illegal detention and torture, destruction and divestment of

properties, several counts of threats/harassment/intimidation.

An officer of the 86th IBPA, [Capt. Danilo Lalin is the primary suspect in a rape case involving a minor](#) in Mankayan, Benguet last March 2012.

[The same unit was also responsible for filing charges of murder](#), frustrated murder and attempted murder against youth leader Mildred Salang-ey in 2011. The charges were eventually dismissed due to lack of evidence.

This unit also filed murder charges against activists Grayson Naogsan, Rene Boy Abiva, Virgilio Corpuz, Randy Vegas and Raul Camposano who were [arrested in separate incidents](#).

[Abiva is organizer of ACT Teachers party list](#). Corpuz is the regional coordinator of Cagayan Valley for Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Opereytor Nationwide (Piston). Naogsan is the son of a rebel leader in the Cordillera.

They are detained at the Ifugao Provincial Jail.

Meanwhile, Vegas and Camposano are both long-time union organizers of the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government (COURAGE) who were arrested on December 3, 2012 in the National Capital Region. They are [now detained at the Camarines Norte Provincial Jail](#) for other fabricated charges.

Claudine Panayo and Fernando Alikes of the Ifugao Resources Development Center have also reported incidents of surveillance on them and their office especially this April and May. Willy Kuan, a development worker of the Regional Development Center - Katinnulong Daguiti Umili ti Amianan a Luzon (RDC-Kaduami) received threat messages through his mobile phone this April as well.

"We are alarmed and convinced that the intensity of threats and political vilification are serious warnings of actual arrest, detention and even graver forms of human rights violations," Audrey Beltran, CHRA deputy secretary general, said. [...]

"[...] It is condemnable that human rights workers are being silenced by the State that is mandated to uphold and defend human rights."

Davao.Today.com, 27.05.2013

Anakpawis coordinator killed in ComVal town

DAVAO CITY, Philippines - A coordinator of Anakpawis Party-list in Mawab town, Compostela Valley Province was gunned down by unidentified armed men "believed to be agents of the state" on Saturday morning, human rights group Karapatan-Southern Mindanao reported.

Eddie Cañon, 43, a resident of Sitio San Isidro was killed in Nuevo Iloco village.

"The victim allegedly sustained gunshot wounds on his head causing his death," said Senior Superintendent Camilo Cascolan, Compostela Valley Philippine National Police Provincial Director [...].

[...] Cañon reportedly sustained 13 multiple gunshot wounds in his head and body.

Based on the initial investigation conducted by the Mawab

Police Station, Cañon was on his way to the town proper to purchase some food items and to pay his electric bill when two unidentified men blocked his motorcycle and shot him several times using a .45 caliber pistol. The suspects fled onboard a black Yamaha STX motorcycle with no plate number.

Police authorities recovered one slug of .45 caliber pistol and three fired cartridge cases at the crime scene.

Hanimay Suazo of Karapatan-Southern Mindanao said that prior to Cañon's death, he was "frequently harassed" by elements of the Philippine Army's 66th Infantry Battalion led by one Sgt. Castillo, Dante Ramirez, a certain De Cuenca and Rey Santiago. These military men, she added, "vilified Cañon's affiliation with the progressive party-list."

UPDATES ON CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Press Release - Human Rights Watch, 10.05.2013

First Conviction for Extrajudicial Killing During Aquino Administration

(Manila) - Philippine authorities should ensure that those who planned and financed the killing of an environmental activist in 2011 are arrested and prosecuted, Human Rights Watch said today.

In the first conviction for an extrajudicial killing since President Benigno S. Aquino III came to office in 2010, a court in Palawan on May 7, 2013, sentenced Marlon Recamata to 40 years in prison for the January 24, 2011, killing of Gerry Ortega. Recamata had been arrested moments after shooting Ortega and subse-

quently confessed to the crime, implicating others.

"The conviction of the gunman in the killing of activist Gerry Ortega is an overdue milestone for the Aquino administration," said [Brad Adams](#), Asia director. "But the alleged mastermind is still at large and should not escape justice."

While in custody, Recamata identified his accomplices, among them Rodolfo Edrad, a former soldier who allegedly coordinated the plot. Edrad in turn accused Joel Reyes, who was governor of Palawan from 2003 to 2010, as the author of the crime. Ortega

Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

had hosted a radio program on environmental issues and corruption that frequently criticized Reyes. The gun used in the murder was later traced to a person who had served as Reyes' provincial administrator.

Seven other suspects in the case were taken into custody. Five are awaiting trial, one suspect died of natural causes while a second died under unclear circumstances.

In the past decade, government officials and members of the security forces in the [Philippines](#) have been implicated in several hundred politically motivated killings, but successive administrations have failed to obtain any convictions. The murder of Ortega, among the first extrajudicial killings during the Aquino administration, was one of the very few where the authorities gathered strong evidence and witnesses against the suspects.

In June 2011, a Department of Justice panel formed to investigate the case recommended the filing of charges against four suspects. But it removed Reyes, the former governor, his brother Mario, and five others, citing a lack of evidence.

After Ortega's family protested the failure to charge Reyes and others, the Justice Department created a new panel to re-investigate the case, which in March 2012 proposed filing charges against Reyes, his brother, and three others. After arrest warrants were issued against Reyes and his brother, they evaded arrest by fleeing the country. Their lawyers, meanwhile, went to the Court of Appeals, which ruled in March 2013 that the charges against the Reyes brothers and the others should be dropped, citing judicial overreach by the Justice Department. The case is now pending in the Supreme Court. [...]

Visayan Daily Star, 13.05.2013

Alleged witnesses to killings surface

By Lisa Gapac

Two former New People's Army rebels tagged Mayor Melecio "Beboy" Yap, suspected NPA leader Gregorio Tuayon and Bernardino "Toto" Patigas, as the alleged masterminds in the series of killings in Escalante City, Negros Occidental.

Ex-rebels Evonie Baynosa, with the aliases of "Morphy, Genie, Wewen, Morino, and Jean". and Irving Taberos, alias Errol, who claimed to be eyewitnesses to the spate of killings in Escalante, also alleged that Supt. Santiago Rapiz, former Escalante police chief, retired Army Maj. Arthur Tupas, former police officer Angel Sinadjan, acted as conspirators in the killings, at a press conference in Bacolod City Saturday.

However, Yap told the DAILY STAR yesterday that he is not a member of the NPA, and that he does not know Baynosa and Taberos.

[...] In their signed affidavit submitted before the Provincial Prosecutors Office in Bacolod City on April 29, copies of which were distributed to the media, Baynosa and Taberos said they were former members of the NPA Roslyn Jean Pelle Command in Northern Negros, and they received orders from Yap to kill those who are not supporting his cause.

"I am not a criminal," Yap said, as he dismissed the accusations against him as mere "political propaganda" and a desperate move of his political opponents.

The two former rebels also claimed that Yap is one of the officials of the Komiteng Tagapatuman-Larangan Gerilya, and the biggest financial supporter of the rebel group.

[...] "We will file counter charges against the complainants and witnesses once the election is over to show that our charges are serious, and not merely for political propaganda," Pondevilla

Bulatlat.com, 21.05.2013

Kin of missing UP students oppose bail petition of accused soldiers

By Ronalyn V. Olea

MANILA - Asher Cadapan had the opportunity to attend the hearing on the case filed against the suspected abductors of her

Reyes brothers most likely still in PH, says CIDG chief

By Abigail Kwok

MANILA, Philippines - Saying he was speaking on the basis of a "probability" and a "hunch," the chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) on Tuesday aired his belief that the Reyes brothers, high-profile fugitives from justice in the murder of broadcaster- environmentalist Gerry Ortega, are still in the country.

According to Director Francisco Uyami Jr., there was still no solid evidence that former Palawan Governor Joel Reyes and Coron Mayor Mario Reyes had fled abroad despite widespread speculation they went to Vietnam, and the sanctions imposed by the Bureau of Immigration on its personnel who were deemed to have allowed their exit.

The Reyes brothers were supposedly able to slip out of the country using fake passports. Recently, the BI ordered the dismissal of two of its employees over the purported escape of the Reyes brothers.

But Uyami said reports of the Reyes brothers' escape from the country could be a "technique" to divert the attention of authorities who are looking for them here.

[...] The Reyes brothers each have a P2-million reward for their arrest issued by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG).

17 tracker teams deployed

The CIDG has deployed 17 tracker teams nationwide to hunt for the Reyes brothers and others in the so-called Big 5 - fugitives Jovito Palparan, Ruben Ecleo Jr. and Delfin Lee. Each of the suspects has a P2-million bounty for their arrest. [...]

Uyami admitted that the hunt for the Big 5 remains difficult due to the influence of the fugitives. [...]

InterAksyon.com, 30.04.2013

[counsel of Yap] said.

Baynosa and Taberos also claimed that Tupas, Rapiz, and Sinadjan, a former policeman assigned in Escalante, participated in the killings so that policemen could not respond to the crime scene. They added that the firearms were provided by them.

Rapiz, who is now assigned as Operations Branch chief of the Negros Occidental Police Provincial Office, dismissed the accusations against him as politically-motivated, adding that it would be very difficult to prove that he joined in the planning of the assassination, as he was not yet the police chief of Escalante when the incident happened.

He said he received the subpoena on April 29, and his lawyer is now readying their counter affidavits.

[...] Baynosa and Taberos further claimed that all their meetings were being held at the house of Patigas.

Taberos also said they were not afraid if they will be included in the cases because they were then part of the planning. They just want to give justice, especially to the families of the victims, he added.

[...] Finally, after almost six years of search for the suspects in the series of extrajudicial killings in Escalante, there will justice," Barcelona [Escalante mayoral candidate] said.

He said majority of the victims were his supporters [...].

Patigas chairs the Negros Alliance of Human Rights Advocates, while Tuayon, who was arrested last month in Manapla for murder and robbery-in-band, homicide and murder, was reported by the military to be the regional finance bureau chief of the Komiteng Rehiyonal-Negros

daughter, Sherlyn, May 20. He has been working in the Visayas and so, his wife, Erlinda, often attend the hearings alone.



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

[...] It has been almost seven years since Sherlyn and Karen Empeño, both students of the University of the Philippines (UP) and farmer Manuel Merino, were forcibly taken by suspected state agents in Hagonoy, Bulacan.

"I really thought I would see my daughter after the Supreme Court ordered the military to surface her. Until now, she has not been found," Mr. Cadapan said.

[In a May 30, 2011 decision](#), the Supreme Court en banc ordered the military, headed by Ret. Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr., to immediately release the two UP students and Merino from their detention.

The high court found Palparan and five other elements of the 7th Infantry Division and the 24th Infantry Battalion as "responsible and accountable" for the abductions.

In the May 20 hearing, only two of the accused – Col. Felipe Anotado Jr. and Staff Sgt. Edgardo Osorio – were present. Two others – Palparan and Master Sgt. Rizal Hilario – have not been arrested despite warrants of arrest issued by the court in December 2011.

Through their counsels, both Anotado and Osorio have filed petitions for bail.

Julian Oliva Jr., counsel for the complainants, is confident that the Bulacan Regional Trial Court Branch 14 would junk the petitions.

"Our evidence is strong," Oliva, an officer of the National Union

of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL), told Bulatlat.com in an interview. "The two suspects were positively identified, again and again, by our two main witnesses."

Oliva was referring to [Raymond Manalo and Wilfredo Ramos](#). Raymond, who, along with his brother, Reynaldo, was held captive by the military for 18 months, identified Anotado in court as one of the military officers who talked to him in Limay, Bataan. In his testimony, Raymond said he saw how soldiers tortured Karen, Sherlyn and Merino in Limay, Bataan.

Ramos, on the other hand, [identified Osorio](#) as one of the men who took the two UP students and Merino from their house on June 26, 2006.

In more than a year of the court hearings, the prosecution presented five other witnesses and the mothers of the two UP students.

Oliva said the suspects only used denial and alibi as bases for their petitions for bail and would not even present any evidence. Oliva said alibi is much inferior to positive identification.

[...] The court would resolve the petition for bail by June after both parties filed their comments. The hearings for the main case would resume June 24.

Despite the frustrations, Cadapan's parents are holding on.

"It's painful. I miss my daughter so much," Mr. Cadapan said, his voice quivering.

Bulatlat.com, 22.05.2013

Benguet police chief admits lapses in Balao case probe

By Kimberlie Olmaya N. Quitasol

BAGUIO CITY – Benguet Provincial Police Office (PPO) Provincial Director Rodolfo Azurin admitted lapses in the investigations conducted in relation to the disappearance of activist James Moy Balao.

In an interview with [Northern Dispatch](#), Azurin pointed out that there were procedural lapses in the conduct of the investigations on the Balao case. One of the lapses he mentioned was the failure of the investigators to immediately verify the exchange of text messages between James and his family and colleagues as reported by the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA).

"The investigators should have verified with the Globe Telecoms if there really an exchange of text messages between James and his family," he said.

He also admitted that he had to study and familiarize himself with the case since he just assumed office this year.

Earlier, Branch 63 of the Regional Trial Court through a final report penned by Judge Jennifer Humiding [expressed disappointment over the police's failure to present new leads](#) in the enforced disappearance of Balao.

[...] The court added that despite the creation of Special Investigation Task Force Group-Balao, the police was not able to present any result except the recantation of a witness and unverified and unconfirmed identities of possible suspects.

The said report was submitted to the Supreme Court (SC) pursuant to the directive of the SC December 13, 2011 decision directing the Philippine National Police (PNP) and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to conduct impartial and substantial investigation and submit periodic reports to the RTC.

Azurin said the investigation on Balao's disappearance would take more time and patience given the length of time and recent developments. He added that the witness who helped producing a cartographic sketch of one of the suspects recently withdrew from the case. [...]

The provincial director also mentioned that cases like that of James really require thorough investigation that is not bound by deadlines. "The problem with giving deadlines is that it adds pressure to investigators which affects the quality of their work," he explained.

Azurin also said the investigation is now directly under the Department of Justice (DOJ) and that they are waiting for the reconstitution of the investigation team. He, however, mentioned that at the moment, the police is comparing the cartographic sketch with the roster of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

Balao was abducted by suspected state agents on September 17, 2008 in Tomay, La Trinidad, Benguet.

DavaoToday.com, 28.05.2013

CHR probe on Fr. Pops' murder leads to 'missing link'

By Ace R. Morandante

DAVAO CITY, Philippines – If there is one thing that's glaring with the recent public inquiry on the case of murdered Italian missionary Fausto 'Father Pops' Tentorio, it would be that the multi-agency body created by the Department of Justice to investigate the case has "failed."

This was according to Father Peter Geremia, of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions and parish priest of Arakan in Cotabato.

It has been almost two years since Tentorio was brutally killed inside the compound of his parish in Arakan town on October 17, 2011. Yet, the the Task Force Tentorio, which is composed of

the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the Philippine National Police, among others, has not yet come up with any solid conclusion.

"The opposite is happening instead. It's leading to a cover up. I don't think this case will be resolved," Geremia, a long-time colleague of Tentorio, said in exasperation.

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) led by Secretary Etta Rosales held the inquiry here from May 22 to 24. [...]

Who is Loloy?

For one, Geremia and members of the Justice for Father Pops Movement were surprised when one of the witnesses presented



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

by the NBI recanted his previous affidavit which charged brothers Jimmy and Robert Ato as the perpetrators.

[...] [Dominador] Damlayon explained how he was able to sign the affidavit, which he said he didn't understand in the first place because it was written in English.

He narrated that a relative, Roberto Mabilao, went to his house in Arakan town last February and asked him to go with him to Marilog, a village in Davao City. They were supposed to meet somebody.

Both of them traveled aboard a motorcycle rented by Mabilao. When they arrived in Marilog late afternoon, they met a man named "Loloy" who invited them to dinner.

After which, Damlayon said, "Loloy" brought them to Cagayan de Oro City (CDO). [...]

When they reached CDO, they were brought to the NBI office. Damlayon said "Loloy" taught him how to answer to the inquiry on Tentorio's killers. He was taken a few hours later to one of the rooms in the said office and was made to sign an affidavit.

Damlayon said he signed the affidavit, fearing that he could no longer return to Arakan.

"Loloy" allegedly gave him PHP 500 afterwards and another PHP 300 for his fare back to Arakan town from Marilog.

But the NBI denied Damlayon's statement. The agency said they never forced Damlayon to sign the affidavit. He was a credible witness to the killing of Tentorio, they added, and that his recantation has even puzzled them.

The same name was dropped by one of the primary suspects during the third day of the public inquiry.

Jimmy Ato, who appeared before the CHR panel, said "Loloy" and his men arrived at 5 AM of December 29, 2011 in Sitio Mahikhiwak, Kulaman village, Arakan town – more than a month after Tentorio was killed – and had him arrested and brought to the NBI office in CDO. [...]

Human rights lawyer Carlos Zarate, the legal counsel of Tentorio's case, said "Loloy" is the missing link and has urged the CHR to find him.

Roberto Ato, younger brother of Jimmy, as well as Jose Sultan Sampulna and Dima Maligudan Sampulna were also tagged as suspects in the killing of Tentorio. A "prime" witness of the case also named Jan Corbala or Kumander Iring of the armed fanatic group Bagani as responsible.

In March 2012, the New People's Army released an "indictment" which charged individuals and government institutions for the crime against the Italian priest.

Geremia hoped that the CHR panel could finally make a conclu-

Military trained tribal warrior – say NBI, ex-gov Piñol

By Keith Bacongco

DAVAO CITY – A lawyer of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) revealed before the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) that the military was the one that trained the baganis (tribal warriors) so they could help in the counter-insurgency campaign.

Even former North Cotabato governor Emmanuel Piñol corroborated the NBI lawyer's statement, but he stressed that the purpose of the bagani is to defend the territories of the indigenous people.

He admitted that the baganis were trained during his term as governor, from 1998 to 2007.

Wenceslao Galendez, agent of the NBI's North Eastern Mindanao Office based in Cagayan de Oro City, told the CHR panel that the bagani was led by Roelito Ayupat Gawilan, who is the barangay captain of Barangay Sinoda in Kitaotao, Bukidnon.

The CHR, led by chair Loretta Rosales, was in the city on May 22 to 24 for a three-day inquiry on the killing of Italian missionary Fausto Tentorio in Arakan, North Cotabato in October 2011.

"In our report, the term bagani, the lumad for warriors, was created, organized by the 73rd Infantry Battalion," Galendez said.

Citing a report obtained by the CHR, Rosales asked Galendez: "So who organized this group, the military?" "Yes your honor," the NBI agent confirmed.

Galendez added that the bagani was organized to assist the military in its counter-insurgency campaign.

Gawilan, who earlier appeared during the public inquiry on May 23, denied the accusation that he is the leader of the bagani group. He insisted he is a datu, not a bagani.

But Gawilan, who is the chair of the Federation of the Matigsalug and Manobo Council of Elders (FEMMATRICS), admitted that there are some members of his tribe who are part of the bagani.

[...] Gawilan said those who are on the side of the NPAs are known as "pulang bagani" (red warrior).

When asked by CHR Commissioner Norberto dela Cruz who is the leader of the bagani, Gawilan responded: "It depends. There are 'pulang baganis,' and there are baganis with the military."

The tribal leader was referring to the NPA's Pulang Bagani Command headed by Leoncio Pitao, also known as Commander Parago.

When Dela Cruz further asked what camp Gawilan belongs, the latter answered: "I am the datu of the tribe. The bagani is different from the datu."

But Gawilan admitted that some baganis were trained to become members of the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu).

He added that most of the bagani members who are also Cafgu members were the ones whose family members were killed by the NPA.

Bagani doesn't exist?

Brig. Gen. Cesar Sedillo, former commander of the Army's 602nd Infantry Brigade, said the lumad Cafgu members are not bagani.

"If a tribes folk became a member of the Cafgu, some people refer to them as bagani. They're not," Sedillo told the CHR panel. "The Cafgu is not associated with the bagani. It's just incidental," he added.

Arakan is part of the 602IB's area of responsibility.

Sedillo further said that there are private armed groups in the remote areas who are pro-NPA and there are those who are against the communist rebel group.

But during a congressional inquiry on Tentorio's killing in November last year, Sedillo said he was uncertain if bagani exists. He explained that during his term as commander of 602IB, which is based in Carmen, North Cotabato, there was no formal organization such as the bagani. [...]

At the same inquiry, a witness disclosed that he had attended a meeting with Jun Corbala, the alleged bagani leader, at Sitio Kamanagan, Barangay Ganatan in Arakan. The witness said the place is a local camp of the Army's 57th Infantry Battalion. It was allegedly in this meeting when the baganis plotted to kill Tentorio.

In his affidavit signed April 12 last year, the witness, whose identity was not revealed for security reasons, said Corbala alias Commander Iring is the known commander of the Bagani Special Force, which the witness said was organized by the elements of the 57IB.

NPA, military as suspects

For Piñol, there are only two groups that could be blamed for the killing of Tentorio because Arakan is controlled by two armed groups – the military and the NPA.

Piñol said it is impossible for the killers to escape without the knowledge of the military or the NPA. He said that if the military says they didn't notice the killers escape, it means that they have no control over Arakan. And vice versa.

[...] Piñol admitted that he used the province's peace and order funds to help organize the baganis. "We can't deny this fact; I was there. They were trained in Barangay Saging in Makilala town, inside a Special Forces camp. And I was there during the training," he revealed. [...]

MindaNews, 26.05.2013



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

sion on the case and make recommendations, possibly, for re-

investigation. [...]

Asian Human rights Commission – Urgent Appeals Programme, 27.05.2013

PHILIPPINES: Another two falsely charged activists to be arraigned for robbery tomorrow

Further to our earlier appeal, the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has been informed that two of the co-accused in a fabricated charge of robbery which included 31 human rights and political activists will be arraigned tomorrow, May 28, 2013. UPDATED INFORMATION:

In our previous appeal ([AHRC-UAC-152-2012](#)), we mentioned that 31 human rights and political activists have been charged with "Robbery in Band" at the Office of the City Prosecutor in Sagay City, Negros. One of whom is Ronald Ian Evidente, a trade union organizer and spokesperson of Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU). On August 23, 2012, Evidente was arraigned and entered a plea of 'not guilty'.

Apart from Evidente, his co-accused Zara Alvarez, a licensed school teacher and staff member of the Northern Negros Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (NNAHRA), and Anecita Rojo, a church worker, will be arraigned for the charge of robbery in band. NNAHRA is a local group advocating protection of human rights.

Alvarez and Rojo will be arraigned tomorrow, May 28, 2013 at 2pm at the Regional Trial Court (RTC), in Sagay City.

In our earlier appeal, we already questioned the heavy reliance by the prosecution on the testimony of Freddie Sanchez, a rebel returnee and witness for the military, in the identification of the 31 accused.

His [testimony](#) in no way would have passed the test of "positive identification", which could justify the inclusion of the names of

Sun.Star Baguio, 28.05.2013

Soldier denies hand in Burgos abduction

By JM Agreda

A MILITARY officer tagged as the team leader of a group that allegedly abducted Jonas Burgos vehemently denied allegations he is responsible for the activist's disappearance.

Major Harry Baliaga Jr. of the Philippine Army, in an interview Wednesday, belied a report of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) pinpointing him as the team leader in the abduction of Burgos claiming that CHR did not give him the chance to refute statements of alleged witnesses to his involvement in the case.

[...] The military officer [...] denied that he is hiding and stressed a case has not been filed against him to warrant his detainment.

Baliaga denied statements made by the state witness in an affidavit that he is the team leader who approached the bus boy in Quezon City on April 28, 2007 while Burgos was being apprehended inside a restaurant in Ever Gotesco, Quezon City.

In his counter affidavit, Baliaga said he was no longer connected to the 56th Infantry Battalion (IB) during the time of Burgos' abduction. Baliaga said he was relieved from the battalion on June 1, 2004 and was already connected to the Special Forces Operation Class.

He added that prior to Burgos' abduction, he went to school for the Basic Airborne Course Class which ended April 19, 2007 and after which went on administrative break.

He claimed he was on his way to Besao from the city on board a GL bus together with his aunt during Burgos' disappearance and stayed there until May 1.

According to Baliaga he only heard of Burgos in media reports. This, as he denied links to Colonel Melquiades Feliciano during his stint in 56th IB and another witness, a former soldier, who

the accused because he himself was not present at the crime scene.

Alvarez was arrested by the military without a warrant on October 30, 2012 at 6:15pm in front of Cadiz City Public Market. When she was arrested, a man wearing plainclothes get hold of her and about 30 others in military uniform surrounded her. When Alvarez asked for help, the military warned the onlookers not to interfere. She kept on asking why they were arresting her, the reason for her arrest and demanded that they show a warrant of arrest, but the military ignored her inquiries and handcuff her.

Apart from the case of robbery in band, Alvarez is also charged for murder. She was accused of being a member of the New People's Army (NPA) who killed 1LT Archie Polenzo of the Philippine Army during an armed encounter in March 7, 2010 at Sitio Aluyan, Barangay Caduhaan, Cadiz City, Negros Occidental.

While in the military's custody she demanded that she be taken to the police. Later, the police arrived and it was only this time that she was taken to the Cadiz City Police Station. At the police station, the military forcibly took her cell phone and other personal belonging.

Some of the soldiers also attempted to take her to a private room where they could question her but she refused. She remained overnight at the police station.

Alvarez is presently detained at the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology in Cadiz City.

identified him in the CHR report as a member of the 56th IB.

He also rebuffed statements of the witnesses that he was the same person they identified in a photo taken from the Facebook page of the Philippine Military Academy yearbook of Sanghaya Class 2000. He added to have been identified by the witness in court by deduction as he was the only new face in the court when the state witness testified.

The Philippine Army officer questioned how the witness was able to identify him based solely on the class picture as the team leader who allegedly abducted Burgos. He stressed the cartographic sketch of the suspect earlier submitted does not even resemble him.

A classmate also testified that the person encircled by the witness in the class picture is him and not the army major.

Meanwhile, the Court of Appeals (CA) 7th Division in its decision on March 18 this year granted the petition for Writ of Amparo of Mrs. Burgos for the AFP and CHR to produce documents in relation to the disappearance of her son.

CA also held Baliaga responsible as the team leader of the abduction and enforced disappearance of Burgos granting the petition for Writ of Amparo and Writ of Habeas Corpus.

The military officer said he is now waiting for the result of the investigation to be conducted by National Bureau of Investigation as ordered by President Benigno Aquino III to finally resolve the five year-long case. [...]

In her affidavit sent to the Department of Justice, Edita Burgos said she believes the witnesses' statements and is asking for the immediate surfacing of her son Jonas Burgos and also the prosecution of the military officers up to high ranking officers to pay for what they have done to her son.

MAGUINDANAO MASSACRE

Philippine Daily Inquirer, 26.05.2013

Human Rights News May 2013

Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

MAG78 massacre suspects face charges over 58th victim

By Julie M. Aurelio

A Quezon City court hearing the 2009 Maguindanao massacre case has ordered the arraignment of 78 suspects for the 58th murder case filed recently on behalf of a slain photojournalist whose remains were never recovered.

Judge Jocelyn Solis-Reyes of QC Regional Trial Court Branch 221 ruled that there was probable cause to continue with the case for the murder of photojournalist Reynaldo "Bebot" Momay.

The court set the arraignment of Andal Ampatuan Sr., former Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan, and 76 others on Wednesday at the Quezon City Jail Annex in Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig City.

The court, however, deferred the arraignment of former Datu Unsay Mayor Andal Ampatuan Jr. and five other Ampatuan family members who still have unresolved motions.

Last year, the Department of Justice found probable cause to file the 58th murder count for Momay, who was among the victims of the Nov. 23, 2009, Maguindanao massacre who included 32 journalists.

The body of Momay, a photojournalist for the *Midland Review*, was never found after the carnage although a forensic team recovered parts of his dentures.

In the same five-page order, Reyes also dismissed the 58th murder case filed against PO1 Johann Draper, who was released from detention after the court dropped the original 57 cases against him for lack of merit.

The court also issued new arrest warrants for 92 suspects still at large.

PEACE PROCESS

The Philippine Star, 02.05.2013

No end to violence, no talks with Reds'

By Aurea Calica

MANILA, Philippines - After a string of armed attacks by the New People's Army (NPA), Malacañang said yesterday it would resume peace talks with communist rebels only if they abandon their violent ways.

Presidential spokesman Edwin Lacierda said negotiations with the rebels will continue only if they pursue peace without resorting to armed struggle and drop the preconditions they have imposed.

Lacierda cited untenable demands made by the National Democratic Front (NDF), the umbrella organization representing the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the NPA, in talks with the government.

Government chief peace negotiator Alexander Padilla had lamented that the NDF virtually shot down the peace talks by demanding that the government abolish its peace and development efforts, including the conditional cash transfer, the PAMANA infrastructure upgrading in Samar and the military's Oplan Bayanihan outreach program.

The NDF is also demanding the release of its jailed leaders, claiming they are consultants in the peace talks and covered by a guarantee of immunity against arrest.

Taking note of the statements made by NDF chairman Luis Jalandoni that they were still willing to resume peace talks, Lacierda said this would only happen if the conditions they set would be dropped.

He said nothing had happened with the regular track and a new approach must be agreed upon.

Lacierda quoted Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Teresita Deles as saying that in their discussion with the Norwegian facilitator last month where Jalandoni was present, they mutually established that the NDF had "killed" the special track that they themselves had proposed.

CPP founder Jose Ma. Sison had proposed the special track to speed up the negotiations by imposing no preconditions that would skirt the protracted process of the regular track.

But the NDF made some proposals that backtracked from their

original position made by Sison. [...]

Lacierda said some confidence building measures would be pursued but "there is no way forward on the regular track."

On the other hand, the CPP said the government "has chosen the path of the purely military approach."

The communists also denied setting preconditions to allow the peace talks to continue.

"Contrary to the media spin of the Aquino regime, the NDF has never imposed any precondition for the resumption of formal peace negotiations with the (government). The release of NDF consultants is an obligation of the government under previous agreements," CPP said. [...]

Localized peace talks

The CPP also rejected the suggestion made by Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin to hold peace talks with the rebels at the local level.

"The pursuit of 'localized peace talks' further show that the Aquino regime has no intent of addressing the roots of the armed conflict which stem not from local problems but from the policies of the national government," the CPP said.

[...] Interior and Local Government Secretary [...] Roxas said the Office of the Presidential Adviser of the Peace Process (OPAPP) headed by Deles would likely take the initiative of pursuing localized peace talks with the rebels.

The military, on the other hand, said they are supporting efforts of pursuing peace talks with the rebels but is also prepared for any attacks. [...]

The military said close to 400 people have died in atrocities and clashes against the NPA since 2011. [...]

Sen. Teofisto Guingona III, chairman of the Senate committee on peace, unification and reconciliation, reiterated the need for the government to pursue the peace talks with the NPA.

[...] Guingona challenged the NPA leadership to turn over the gunmen involved in the ambush of his mother, guaranteeing that they will face a fair trial. [...]

FURTHER READINGS

MindaNews, 29.04.2013

UN-World Bank-MILF launch 3-year program to prepare for Bangsamoro governance

By Carolyn O. Arguillas

DARAPANAN, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao (MindaNews/29 April) - The United Nations and World Bank launched Monday in partnership with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) a three-year program that would provide on-demand technical assistance in the run-up to the establishment of the Bangsamoro, the new autonomous political entity that would replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao by June 30, 2016. [Read more](#)



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

Agence France-Presse, published at InterAksyon.com, 13.05.2013

May 2013 poll bets who have been charged criminally

Graft-tainted ex-presidents, a dictator's unrepentant wife and politicians charged with crimes such as murder and child rape are among the candidates in the Philippines' mid-term elections on Monday.

The Philippines has long endured a corrupt and violent brand of democracy in which politicians use their influence to avoid punishment for crimes, creating a so-called "culture of impunity" that enrages the masses.

Below are details on 10 politicians contesting the elections who are accused of corruption or criminal activities: [Read more](#)

InterAksyon.com, 16.05.2013

MINDANAO PEACE DIVIDEND | Thai palm oil factory to rise in North Cotabato

By Likha Cuevas-Miel

MANILA - The peace talks between the Aquino administration and Muslim rebels in Mindanao have opened the door wider for foreign investors into this region, with Thailand's leading palm oil producer set to build a mill in Northern Cotabato.

Aside from the good growing conditions, the peace talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have made Mindanao increasingly attractive for Univanich Palm Oil, according to a [report](#) in *The Nation*. [Read more](#)

Rappler.com, 23.05.2013

The Aquino administration at midterm

By Peter Koepfinger

MANILA, Philippines - In May 2010, Benigno Aquino III was elected on a huge wave of hope: that he would bring back honesty, put an end to violence, corruption, human rights violations and impunity, and that, in the absence of corruption, he would end poverty.

Three years later, what has been achieved. What are the perspectives?

The efforts to improve governance and the human rights situation have not been successful because the administration did not touch the source of the problems: the grip of powerful families with huge patronage structures on a weak state. [Read more](#)

ManilaStandardToday.com, 23.05.2013

The right to vote and the UN Human Rights Committee

By Atty. Harry Roque Jr.

Civil society groups filed this month an unprecedented Communication with the United Nations Human Rights Committee in Geneva alleging violation of their right to vote pursuant to Art. 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The said article provides that "every citizen shall have the right to vote which shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors." [Read more](#)

Bulatlat.com, 27.05.2013

Tribe groups seek UN hand on rights violations

By Kimberlie Ngabit -Quitapol

BAGUIO CITY – Indigenous peoples groups sought the intervention of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) on the escalating human rights violations against indigenous peoples in the country in the ongoing meeting of the 12th Session of the UNPFII in New York, USA this May 20 to May 31. [Read more](#)