



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

HEADLINES NEWS REVIEW OCTOBER 2013

HEADLINES & POLITICS	2
Farmers' group files plunder rap vs. Aquino	2
Golden Rice: The next GMO battleground	2
World Food Day Statement By National Food Coalition	2
QUAKE AID AND POLITICS Roxas orders probe as rivals trade barbs on slow, selective relief ops	3
INSTITUTIONS	3
House bill seeks to criminalize discrimination	3
PH signs UN treaty against mercury	4
Solon files bill on journalist accreditation	4
House panel finally meets for FOI bill	5
CURRENT CASES OF HR VIOLATIONS	5
Military claims 'captured' UP physicist is communist rebel	5
Media group hit AFP for red-baiting	5
Military presence triggers evacuation in Compostela	6
Another activist faces threats in Davao del Sur	6
Labour leader disappeared after he was followed by persons believed to be military personnel in Cavite	7
140,000 modern slaves in PH - report	7
Second farmer leader killed in Agusan del Sur	7
Missionary nun condemns latest surveillance perpetrated against her organization	8
2 peace advocates shot	8
NPA accused of publicly executing palm oil plantation security chief	9
PNP: cases of violence against women and children high during the first semester of the year	9
PNoy vows probe on videos showing soldiers firing at Zambo hostages	9
UPDATES ON CASES OF HR VIOLATIONS	10
Reyes brothers still wanted - DOJ	10
Karapatan scores CA for clearing ex-Gov. Reyes on Ortega slay, likens to Gen. Año and Gen. Palparan	10
No prosecution two years after Fr. Pops' murder	10



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines	
DAR completes Hacienda Luisita distribution	11
Farmers: DAR keeping prime Hacienda Luisita lots	11
Prosecutor's dismissal of case against accused soldiers in Capion massacre slammed	12
Burgos family slams military for paying bail of alleged rights violator	12
After 365 Days of unjust Imprisonment Zara Alvarez seeks justice	13
MAGUINDANAO MASSACRE	13
Ampatuan grandsons plead 'not guilty'	13
CA won't drop witness' testimony against Ampatuans	14
PEACE PROCESS	14
De Lima wants captured MNLF rebels tried in Manila for security reasons	14
No GPH-MILF deal yet on power-sharing	15
FURTHER READINGS	16
Corporate Human Rights Abuses in ASEAN: Civil Society Calls for Corporate Accountability and Compliance with International Human Rights Law	16
Free Prior and Informed Consent in the Philippines Regulations and Realities	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.

The Action Network Human Rights - Philippines advocates the sustainable improvement of the human rights situation in the Philippines. Members are: Amnesty International, Bread for the World - Church Development Service, Misereor, Missio Munich, philippinenbüro e.V., the International Peace Observers Network (IPON) and the United Evangelical Mission (UEM).

HEADLINES & POLITICS

Rappler.com, 05.10.2013

Golden Rice: The next GMO battleground

By Pia Ranada

MANILA, Philippines - The Philippines is the final battleground for genetically-modified organisms or GMOs.

With the banning of field trials of GM eggplant - known as Bt eggplant - by the Court of Appeals, both anti- and pro-GMO lobbyists are gearing up for the next battle, the imminent approval of Golden Rice currently being developed in the Philippines.

"The global spotlight is now in the Philippines to see what's going to happen with Golden Rice. There's a clear perception that if Golden Rice is approved, it will be very hard to stop the technology in other parts of the world," said Wayne Parrot, a scientist flown into the Philippines last September by the US embassy to make a rallying call for GMOs. [...]

'Golden boy' of GMOs

Golden Rice is rice genetically-engineered to contain beta carotene extracted from corn and a soil micro-organism. Beta carotene is a precursor of Vitamin A which is needed for healthy eyesight. [...]

Golden Rice is currently being developed by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Los Baños, Laguna. Having passed testing in the laboratory, screenhouse and confined field test, it is now undergoing multi-location field trials in different parts of the Philippines.

It needs to pass 3 more tests before it can reach the plates of consumers: regulatory safety assessment, market test, and nutrition study.[...]

Once it is approved for planting as crops and human consumption, Golden Rice seeds will be turned over to the Philippine Rice Research Institute of the Department of Agriculture, which will in turn, distribute it to seed companies who will develop the rice and sell to farmers, Boncodin added.

Vested interests?

But only last August, the anti-GMO group Masipag composed of farmers and scientists uprooted a Golden Rice test field in Pili, Camarines Sur.

Many of the anti-GMO faction are not convinced by the "golden boy" image of Golden Rice as a solution to Vitamin A deficiency, a condition that has caused blindness in 500,000 children globally according to the World Health Organization.

"Golden Rice is a poster boy or Trojan horse for GMOs. In the guise of humanitarian objectives, it wants to make GMOs more acceptable to the general public," said Chito Medina, a scientist and National Coordinator of Masipag (Magsasaka at Siyentipiko sa Pagpapaunlad ng Agrikultura), a coalition of farmers and scientists opposing GMOs in the Philippines.

GMO opponents fear the possible health and environmental impacts of planting and eating GM crops. They also allege that companies developing GMOs like Monsanto and Syngenta are out to control the world's agricultural system with more expen-

HRonlineph.com, 17.10.2013

World Food Day Statement By National Food Coalition

By National Food Coalition

On the occasion of World Food Day, 16 October 2013, the National Food Coalition renews its call for the adoption of a comprehensive [food policy](#) by [the Philippines](#). There is an

Farmers' group files plunder rap vs. Aquino

By Tech Torres

Peasant group Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) on Wednesday filed a plunder complaint in the Office of the Ombudsman against President Aquino and several others, including Janet Lim-Napoles, over the misuse of the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF).

The complaint said "the respondent President Benigno Simeon Aquino III is being charged in this case by virtue of the doctrine of qualified political agency. The acts committed by the department secretaries under the executive department are deemed acts of the President." [...]

The KMP complaint came a few weeks after the National Bureau of Investigation filed plunder and other charges against 38 people, including three senators and Napoles, in connection with the P10-billion pork barrel scam.

[Business woman Janet] Napoles is the alleged mastermind of the scam in which the PDAF of lawmakers were channeled to bogus nongovernment organizations that she had set up. A lawmaker received kickbacks equivalent to 50 percent of a project funded by his PDAF, according to whistle-blower Benhur Luy. Forty-percent went to Napoles and the remaining 10 percent to government "conduits." [...]

The KMP also urged Ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales to prosecute the President and the other officials for violation of the Anti-Graft Law, Government Procurement Reform Act, and Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees, as well as commission of malversation of public funds and grave and serious misconduct. [...]

They said that instead of ensuring that government funds were safeguarded following the fertilizer scam during the Arroyo administration, "nothing has changed. In fact it has become worst."

"Worst, those involved in the scam were using the hapless farmers and their miserable situation as justification for the release of the public funds they have squandered. Equally revolting is the fact that the agencies of the government, in one way or another, facilitated, abetted and even directly twisted rules and regulations to ensure the successful pillage of public funds," the complainants said.

Inquirer.net, 03.10.2013

sive seeds and lucrative patents of GMOs.

"Seeds are a US\$32-billion business per year. You can imagine the interest behind that," said Medina.

But Parrot counters that patents expire and that the patent for Golden Rice was given to IRRI by developer Syngenta for free for the benefit of farmers worldwide.

The Philippines is the USA's largest market for GMOs in Southeast Asia, according to Agricultural Counselor of the US embassy Philip Shull.

At the same time, the US "took about 30% of Philippine food and agricultural exports. [...]

Regulating GMOs

Medina laments how the Philippines has become one of the countries with the most GMO-friendly regulations. More than 44 GMOs have been approved by the government for direct consumption, food processing, and planting as crops. [...]

But GMO supporters celebrate the approvals, saying they allow Filipinos to be among the first to benefit from GMOs like Golden Rice.

"In the Philippines, two million women and children are affected by Vitamin A deficiency," said Bruce Tolentino, deputy director of IRRI.

[...] "We need science to solve the food security problems brought about by rapid population growth. We need to solve the problems brought about by climate change and what is happening to the environment. We need science to make sure that our family, friends and children have nutritious food that they need. [...]"

urgent need for a framework law on the right to adequate [food](#) to give expression to this policy, and such a law should adopt a rights-based approach. The [right to food](#) is the right of the peo-



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

ple to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access, either directly or through purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food, which corresponds to their cultural traditions, and which ensure a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life that is free of fear. The framework law should ensure people's participation, accountability of those who violate it, [non-discrimination](#) on account of sex, age or any other basis, transparency or open access to information, respect for [human dignity](#), empowerment of the people, and respect for the rule of law. It must develop indicators for determining levels of improvement in the enjoyment of the right to adequate food, and it should provide for effective remedies in cases of violations, including criminal, civil and administrative liabilities on the part of violators.

We reiterate this call, at this crucial time, when public demand is growing for the abolition of the [pork barrel](#), which members of

the Philippine Congress have been dispensing as if it were their own money. This fund has been abused, and public outrage has grown over reports of corruption arising from misuse of these funds. Any new form of pork that retains the basic feature of being discretionary and lacking in transparency will just perpetuate corruption that drains resources away from public services needed by the people.

The amounts from the pork barrel that have found their way to the pockets of unscrupulous government officials and their cohorts are precious funds that could have been used to provide for the people's basic needs, to promote their [fundamental human rights](#), and to advance the cause of their human dignity. Rather than continue the pork barrel, the Philippine Government should consider more worthwhile measures. These include a comprehensive program to end hunger in the Philippines. The Government should provide for the necessary financial and other support to realize zero-hunger in the Philippines.

InterAksyon.com, 22.10.2013

QUAKE AID AND POLITICS | Roxas orders probe as rivals trade barbs on slow, selective relief ops

By Lira Dalangin-Fernandez

MANILA, Philippines - Politics appears to have gotten in the way of delivering humanitarian aid to earthquake victims in the Visayas region amid reports of slow, selective assistance to two towns in the province of Bohol whose local officials are not administration allies.

As this developed, Secretary Manuel "Mar Roxas II of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) ordered the Philippine National Police to investigate reports that some local executives in Bohol have been hoarding relief goods delivered to their offices by disaster officials. Roxas also directed Chief Superintendent Danilo Constantino, PNP director for Region 7, to ensure that relief good delivered to municipal officials would reach the quake victims. [...] The directive was issued after the Department of Social Welfare and Development reported to Roxas that some residents displaced by the disaster have yet to receive relief goods reportedly due to hoarding by local officials. [...] On Tuesday, the Philippine Red Cross said that Mayor Leoncio Evasco Jr. the mayor of Maribojoc town, one of the worst hit by the 7.2-magnitude earthquake, had stopped the organization's relief distribution because he wanted the goods turned over to the local government. [...]

Private volunteers defend Mayor Evasco

Amid the controversy over the relief distribution, a group of private volunteers who flew in from Manila took up the cudgels for the mayor and said agencies like DSWD and Red Cross should understand the realities on the ground. An absolute "no list, no relief goods" requirement was blamed for the encounter

in Maribojoc. Volunteer Marion Raagas, who helped organize the private relief work last October 18-19, said [...] aid groups should consider that when most homes and offices have been flattened by the quake, a bureaucratic requirement like a list of victims may not be that easy to comply with. [...]

In Malacanang, Communications Secretary Herminio Coloma said they have heard the explanations of both the local officials and the aid agencies, and both have a point. The thing to do is find a way to reconcile their points.

UNA's appeal: spare Visayans from politics

In a separate statement, the United Nationalist Alliance (UNA) appealed to the national and local executives to put aside political differences and instead focus on relief operations for the quake victims.

[...]According to Tiangco, [Valenzuela Representative Toby Tiangco, UNA secretary general], it took more than 24 hours for the local government to respond and provide relief efforts in the ravaged towns of Loon and Maribojoc in Bohol simply because they are not political allies. "When President Aquino and Roxas visited Cebu City last week, the President and the DILG secretary did not meet with Cebu City Mayor Mike Rama to discuss the extent of the damage. The President instead met with Tommy Osmena and other LP members," Tiangco said. [...] "The devastation wrought by the earthquake demands a quick and swift response from the national government. Let us put aside personal bickering and collectively help in rebuilding from the tragedy," Tiangco added.

INSTITUTIONS

Sun.Star, 05.10.2013

House bill seeks to criminalize discrimination

A PROPOSED legislation may outlaw discrimination in the country and impose severe sanctions to an individual who treats any other person less favorably on the basis of race, ethnic origin, and religion.

House Bill 401 or the "The Anti-Racial, Ethnic and Religious Discrimination Act of 2013" presented by Tarlac Representative Susan Yap will impose six months imprisonment and a fine of not more than P100,000 to violators.

"The bill will avoid unnecessary prejudice and other forms of intolerance and give equal opportunity to each individual to

achieve his full potential as a person and as a Filipino citizen," Yap said.

Yap said her proposed law seeks to lessen, if not eliminate cases of discrimination in society as it penalizes acts of discrimination, profiling, violence, and all forms of intolerance in employment, education, delivery of goods, facilities and services, accommodation, transportation, media, in search of investigatory activities, and in political, civil, cultural and social life on the basis of ethnicity, race, religion or belief, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, disability and other status.



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Under the measure, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) is mandated to prevent or deter the commission of, and prosecute acts of discrimination and provide legal assistance to victims of discrimination.

The bill provides for the reparations to victims of discrimination,

Rappler.com, 11.10.2013

PH signs UN treaty against mercury

By Pia Ranada

MANILA, Philippines - The Philippines, represented by Environment Secretary Ramon Paje, became a signatory to the historic Minamata Convention on Mercury on Friday, October 11, signifying the country's willingness to reduce and eventually phase out the highly-toxic chemical mercury.

An initiative by the United Nations, the Minamata Convention is a globally-binding instrument that sets guidelines on the regulation of mercury among UN member states. It calls on countries to identify sources and applications of mercury that adversely impact the environment, health, and public well-being.

"Mercury is highly toxic as it damages the brain, kidneys, lungs, heart, and the gastrointestinal tract. The brain may be severely damaged as it may cause tremors, numbness, weakness, motor incoordination, and convulsion," said Paje.

Despite these effects, mercury continues to be used in some thermometers, the manufacturing of electronic devices and industrial chemicals, some fluorescent lamps, and more. (READ: [Toxic toys for sale in Manila](#))

Horrorific health impacts

More than 90 other countries joined the Philippines in signing the convention during a Diplomatic Conference in Kumamoto,

Rappler.com, 15.10.2013

Solon files bill on journalist accreditation

By Angela Casauay

MANILA, Philippines - [...] The proposal to require exams to accredit "professional journalists" has reached the House of Representatives.

Cagayan Rep Rufus Rodriguez and his brother Abante Mindanao Rep Maximo Rodriguez Jr have filed House Bill 2559, which seeks to create a media body to be called the "Philippine Council for Journalists" that will administer exams to journalists before they can be "accredited in the field."

Under the bill, media practitioners who pass the "Professional Journalist Examination" will be considered as "accredited journalists." Those who fail will be considered "non-accredited journalists" but they will not be prohibited from working for media outfits.

The "self-regulatory" Philippine Council for Journalists will be composed of the following:

- National Press Club of the Philippines
- Philippine Press Institute
- Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas
- Press Photographers of the Philippines
- Manila Overseas Press Club
- National Union of Journalists of the Philippines
- Publishers Association of the Philippines Inc
- Federation of Provincial Press Club

[...] The measure provides an exemption for practicing journalists - but only for those who have been in practice for at least 10 years. Such journalists would, however, still be "subject to interview" by the PCJ before they can be accredited.

PCJ will also be in charge of conducting training for journalists.

'Illogical'

Twice, the [National Union of Journalists of the Philippines](#)

which includes restitution, compensation and rehabilitation.

It also creates an Equal Opportunity Committee in all agencies, corporations, companies and educational institutions both private and public, which shall have administrative jurisdiction over cases involving discrimination.

Japan. [...]

The disease first surfaced in 1956 after industrial wastewater containing methylmercury spilled into Minamata Bay. The toxic substance accumulated in fish and shellfish, which Minamata locals ate, resulting in mercury poisoning. For 36 years, animal and human deaths continued. As of 2001, 2,265 victims of the horrific incident have been identified.

The Minamata Convention will enter into force 90 after it is ratified by 50 countries. [...]

Government action

The Geneva-based UNEP commended the Philippine government for its efforts to phase out mercury in the country.

Two anti-mercury programs were presented during the conference in Japan.

The first is the DENR's ban on mercury use in mineral processing in the small-scale mining industry, an implementation of Executive Order No 79 which President Benigno Aquino III signed in July 2012.

The second is the Department of Health's initiative to make all healthcare facilities in the country mercury-free by 2016.

The Philippine Action Plan against mercury can be read [here](#).

[\(NUJP\) has thumbed down such a proposal](#). NUJP is one of the organizations proposed to be included in the PCJ.

In a statement, NUJP chairperson Rowena Paraan said what the bill wants to do is "akin to determining who can and cannot speak out freely."

"As we have said before and will continue to say unequivocally, we oppose any and all attempt to subject journalism to any form of accreditation or licensing for the simple reason that, while it is true that journalism is a profession within the media industry, it is first and foremost part of the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of speech and of expression," Paraan said.

"In short, aside from the professional and ethical standards those who work for various media outfits need to adhere to by reason of their employment, anyone and everyone can and should be able to practice journalism without being discriminated against by virtue of some misguided criteria."

Paraan also called the bill "illogical" since it will still allow "non-accredited journalists" to practice their profession. This makes the accreditation process "superfluous."

Magna Carta for Journalists

NUJP instead endorsed another proposal for a "Magna Carta for Journalists" filed by former ABS-CBN reporter and now Laguna 3rd district Representative Sol Aragonese.

House Bill 2568 seeks to institutionalize a code of ethics and bill of rights for journalists. It also incorporates a Freedom of Information component, which requires government agencies to quickly approve media requests for information.

Aragones' measure also seeks to create a Journalist Welfare Fund worth P50 million that will serve as an insurance for journalists in case of death or accidents.

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ABS-CBN News, 23.10.2013

House panel finally meets for FOI bill

By RG Cruz

MANILA - Four months after the opening of the 16th Congress, the House Committee on Public Information finally organized itself and met on Wednesday to discuss the passage of a Freedom of Information (FOI) law. All 19 FOI bills pending in the house were referred to the panel for initial deliberation. [...]

Advocates and authors of FOI bills were among those present during the meeting.

However, House committee chairman Jorge Almonte said he won't succumb to any pressure to speed up the bill despite its popularity. [...]

For Almonte, FOI is just one of around 40 measures referred to the committee.

In the 15th Congress, the FOI bill made it to plenary but was never debated or voted upon.

This is why one advocate, Quezon City Rep. Winston Castelo, tried to invoke a congressional rule that allows bills in advanced stages of legislation in previous congresses to be fast-tracked to the plenary.

First-term lawmakers like Rep. Gwendolyn Garcia and Rep. Celso Lobregat, however, want to study the bill since they have not read the 15th Congress version of the proposed legislation.

The committee agreed to create a technical working group to consolidate all the 19 FOI bills, along with another version filed Wednesday by Rep. Leni Robredo, as well as the people's initiative that will be referred to the committee by November 18.

However, no agreement was reached when another FOI bill author Rep. Emmeline Aglipay tried to set a timetable for the technical working group.

The only steps reached were for Almonte to head the TWG, and that he have the leeway in picking his members and work timeframe. [...]

CURRENT CASES OF HR VIOLATIONS

InterAksyon.com, 04.10.2013

Military claims 'captured' UP physicist is communist rebel

By Jaime Sinapit

MANILA, Philippines - The military claims a physicist and former university professor they "captured" following a clash with communist rebels in Davao Oriental October 1 has admitted to joining the New People's Army last year.

Captain Alberto Caber, public affairs office chief of the Eastern Mindanao Command, said Kim Gargar "admitted he was a member of the NPA-Guerilla Front 25 of the Southern Mindanao Regional Committee."

However, the Kalikasan-People's Network for the Environment said Gargar was "undertaking a research for the implementation of a disaster management project in Cateel town, which was severely devastated by typhoon 'Pablo,'" when he was taken by the military.

Media group hit AFP for red-baiting

By Cong. Corrales

NATIONAL MEDIA GROUPS have criticized the Armed Forces of the Philippines for red-tagging an online media outfit following the arrest of a University of the Philippines professor on charges of being part of the communist New People's Army.

Physicist and UP professor Kim Gargar was arrested by government troops on October 1 following an encounter with communist rebels in Davao Oriental. [...]

But in trying to link Gargar to the communist rebels, the military took it a step further by also saying that Gargar was married to a journalist working for a "leftist" news organization.

TV5's news web portal, Interaksyon.com, quoted the Army's Eastern Mindanao Command public affairs office chief Capt. Alberto Caber as saying that Gargar admitted to joining the New People's Army in 2012.

The same report quoted Caber as saying that the scientist's wife is "a writer of the leftist Bulatlat.com online news website."

National Union of Journalists of the Philippines chairperson Rowena Paraan demanded an apology from Caber for "slandering" the news organization and putting its staff in danger.

"Even if the military's claims about Gargar are true, we do not see how his wife's work with Bulatlat.com, which has been operating for several years, is relevant at all to any statement Caber has to make," Paraan said in a statement released by the NUJP on Monday.

"Caber's pronouncements are disconcerting because they suggest that "Bulatlat.com's perceived leanings somehow make Gargar's wife—and the whole outfit—complicit in the insurgency," Paraan pointed out.

[...] Paraan said the red-tagging of [Bulatlat](http://Bulatlat.com) by the military is reminiscent of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (ISAFP) 2005 PowerPoint presentation entitled: "Knowing the Enemy," where the NUJP—and even the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines—were branded as "enemies of the state."

Until now, Paraan says they continue to receive reports that "Knowing the Enemy" is "still shown in schools and other venues throughout the land."

[...] Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR) deputy director Luis V. Teodoro says Caber's statement puts mediamen in danger, and adds to the worsening media situation "in which journalists are being harassed, threatened and even killed on a regular basis." [...]

That Gargar's wife writes for Bulatlat.com doesn't prove that Gargar is with the NPA, and neither does his being accused of such an involvement prove that his wife, the journalist Ina Alleco-Silverio, is herself also involved in anything illegal. While the term "leftist" is in this country used to condemn diverse groups and individuals, it is not a crime under Philippine law either," Teodoro points out.

"Why, may we ask, did Captain Caber feel the need to mention Gargar's wife's work with Bulatlat.com? In what context and for what purpose did Captain Caber accuse Bulatlat.com of being leftist?" [Bulatlat](http://Bulatlat.com)'s managing editor Benjie Oliveros asked.

"(Is) the Armed Forces of the Philippines accusing Bulatlat.com of being leftist because of our reportage of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, which earned us numerous awards and citations from agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross," Oliveros asked. [...]

Dhiliwina Center for Investigative Journalism 20 00 2013

He said that since the 8th Congress, attempts were made by lawmakers to pass an FOI bill into law.

In the 14th Congress, one almost passed except that the House failed to ratify the bicameral committee report.

With 27 members elected in plenary, the panel's 1st regular meeting is set on November 26, when the TWG hopes to present a consolidated bill.

An honors graduate of the University of the Philippines National Institute of Physics, Gargar is a member of Agham (Advocates of Science and Technology for the Peoples) and also works with the Center for Environmental Concerns.

He teaches at UP and has taught at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Mapua Institute of Technology and the Mindanao Polytechnic State College, and has also worked for the Asian Development Bank.

He is also a PhD student at Rijksuniversiteit Groningen in The Netherlands.

Caber claimed that Gargar "disclosed that he helped CPP (Communist Party of the Philippines) founder (Jose Ma.) Sison in the production of several books aimed (at) exploiting the



Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

countryside" and "joined the NPA in Compostela Valley Province in 2012."

The military officer also noted that Gargar's wife is "a writer of the leftist Bulatlat.com online news website."

Caber said the soldiers involved in the clash in Barangay Aliwagwag found Gargar during clearing operations, several meters from the body of a slain rebel, Gerald Tagle, alias "Ryan," supposedly vice commander of the NPA's Guerrilla Front 25.

"He (Gargar) was left by his comrades. According to our soldiers who found him, he was laying on the ground semi-unconscious (sic) clutching his M16 rifle and a jungle pack on his back. Our soldiers cautiously approach(ed) him because of the rifle but he did not make any move," Caber said.

Sun.Star Davao, 05.10.2013

Military presence triggers evacuation in Compostela

By [Ruji Peter S. Abat](#)

SOME 200 Matigsalog tribesmen were forced to leave their homes in Barangay Mangayon in the town of Compostela, Compostela Valley on Friday due to the deployment of more government forces in the area.

Bagong Alyansang Makabayan-Southern Mindanao secretary general Sheena Duazo, in text messages to Sun.Star Davao on Friday, said lumads in the area fled their homes after soldiers from the Army's 25th Infantry Battalion occupied their community at sitio Bermuda in the said barangay.

Duazo suspected that the soldiers were deployed in the area to pave the way for a mining company to operate in the area.

"[...] The Agusan Petroleum and Minerals, a sister company of San Miguel Corp., will penetrate the area once again," Duazo

Lieutenant Colonel Krishnamurti Mortela, commanding officer of the 67th Infantry Battalion, claimed Gargar had a jungle pack that yielded components for making landmines.

Mortela also claimed Gargar "was very cooperative in our interviews with him until he was visited by the group Karapatan," a human rights organization.

The battalion commander also attempted to link Gargar's science background to military claims that the rebels have been using improvised explosive devices "with contaminated shrapnel."

Gargar has been charged with illegal possession of firearms and explosives, attempted murder and violating the election gun ban.

said.

She then called for the pullout of the troops as the mining company may operate and destroy the lumads' ancestral domain.

She also pointed out that the presence of the mining company in the area may also deter the development of farmers and small-scale farmers.

The Matigsalog tribesmen are currently taking refuge at town hall gym in Compostela.

The Matigsalog community, along with other lumad communities and farmers in the area, held on September 30 a picket at the town hall and declared a tribal war against the Agusan Petroleum and Minerals due to their ongoing operations.

Asian Human Rights Commission - Urgent Appeal Programme, 08.10.2013

Another activist faces threats in Davao del Sur

Dear friends,

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) writes to inform you that an activist in Davao del Sur is facing threats. Military elements and the village council want to control and limit the activities of the victim's organization. The victim and his family have had to leave their home due to fear of the soldiers.

CASE DETAILS: [Based on the documentation by Citizens Alliance Unified for Sectoral Empowerment - Davao del Sur (CAUSE)]

On 1 September 2013, at 5pm, Rodel Bonghanoy, a volunteer of the United Farmers of Davao del Sur (Nagkahiusang Mag-uuma sa Davao del Sur) was in his residence when two armed men arrived and introduced themselves as soldiers. The two men were in civilian clothes, riding a XRM-Honda, red motorcycle with no plate number.

[...] The two men were later identified as Cpl. Najar and Cpl. Saggaan, elements of the 39th Infantry Battalion, Philippine Army.

The soldier saw a motorcycle in front of Rodel's residence and asked for the identity of its owner and driver. Rodel replied that the motorcycle was owned by the United Sugarcane Planters of Davao Cooperative (USPD) and that he was the driver. The soldier then told Rodel to log in his name at the village hall as he was visiting. He was accompanied by the soldier to the house of the village chief where he was told that they should coordinate their activities.

The soldier continued asking Rodel about his organization, members and even his personal information, all of which Rodel provided.

However, the soldier became angry because he believed that Rodel was being arrogant.

Village chief Rodeto P. Muda asked Rodel why his group entered the village without his permission to organize. Rodel explained that one of their members is a barangay militia so it is not possible that their presence in the village is not coordinated. He also said that organizing is their right according to the Constitution so they don't have to seek anyone's permission.

According to Rodel the soldier became even angrier because he asked them to confirm that if the village chief refused to allow them permission, they would not be allowed to work. The soldiers told him that they would take him to his house in a patrol car. At that time Rodel's wife arrived and she begged and pleaded with the soldier not to take her husband. The soldier told her that Rodel had been arrogant in answering their questions.

To this, Rodel answered: "I am not arrogant. I answer what is being asked, the village chief does not like our organization". Gurabel, a village militia who was there, asked Rodel "why you did not ask permission while I was in the house during your meeting? I know Unified farmers and it is not good."

Another soldier placed his hand on Rodel's left shoulder and said: "From now on you should be cautious, God will be watchful". Rodel was afraid because it sounded like a blatant threat. Agents of Civilian Volunteer Organization (CVO) and Civilian Security Unit (CSU) accompanied them going home. Rodel's wife was suspicious that her husband would not be brought to his house.

Rodel was interrogated for almost three hours. At 9 pm another group of soldiers from the 39th Infantry Battalion arrived in an army truck nearby and asked their neighbor for their house. Rodel Bonghanoy and his family were forced to leave the house due to fear of the soldiers.

According to some witness an unknown person took pictures of the Bonghanoy's house.



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Asian Human Rights Commission - Urgent Appeal Programme, 09.10.2013

Labour leader disappeared after he was followed by persons believed to be military personnel in Cavite

Dear Friends,

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) writes to inform you about the disappearance of a labour leader in Laguna. The victim disappeared on 27 August 2013 and his whereabouts remain unknown. He disappeared after sending an SMS to his colleague in which he said that he was being followed by persons whom he believed to be military personnel.

CASE DETAILS: [Based on the documentation by the Pagkakaaisa ng Manggagawa sa Timog Katagalugan-Kilusang Mayo Uno (PAMANTIK-KMU)] On 27 August 2013 Benjamin Villeno, a full-time staff member of the Organized Labor Association in Line Industries and Agriculture - May First Movement (Kilusang Mayo Uno) (OLALIA-KMU) went to Cavite to perform his task as a labour organiser. On the same day, Villeno sent an SMS to his colleague saying that he would visit his relative. The

last SMS message that he sent was to inform his colleague that he was being followed by persons he believed to be military men somewhere in Cavite.

According to Wenecito Urgel, Secretary General of Pagkakaaisa ng Manggagawa sa Timog Katagalugan - Kilusang Mayo Uno (PAMANTIK-KMU), "there is no other place to search" and they believed the victim is being held by the security forces. Like many other human rights and political activists, Villeno has been subjected to surveillance, allegedly by the military, the police and intelligence units.

Villeno is known for his commitment in organising unions and promoting good governance through campaigning for Bayan Muna, a political party. Villeno's colleagues believe that he has been targeted by the security forces.

Rappler.com, 17.10.2013

140,000 modern slaves in PH - report

By KD Suarez

MANILA, Philippines - The Philippines ranked 98 in the inaugural [Global Slavery Index](#), which listed countries based on the prevalence of modern-day slavery.

The rankings, released by the Walk Free Foundation (WFF) on Thursday, October 17, is based on a "combined measure of three factors": prevalence of modern slavery by population; measure of child marriage; and measure of human trafficking in and out of the country.

In this tally, the higher the ranking, the more prevalent modern-day slavery is in a country.

In [the case of the Philippines](#), it is found in the lower half of the rankings among 162 countries covered by the study.

But when compared to its Asian neighbors, the Philippines ranked 12.

The report estimated that there are 140,000 to 160,000 people enslaved in the Philippines, out of a total population of 96 million people.

"Modern slavery is a significant concern for the Philippines, particularly due to the large numbers of Philippine nationals migrating overseas, predominately for work," the Index noted.

"Reports suggest that Filipino migrants are vulnerable to modern slavery and have been subjected to forced labour and involuntary servitude in many industries, including domestic work and the sex industry, seafaring and maritime work, fisheries, agriculture, health care, engineering, construction and manufacturing," it said.

The report also noted that enslavement within the country is a "significant problem." Particularly vulnerable are people migrating from rural areas to the large urban areas.

WFF noted that "despite stretched resources" the government is "making notable efforts" to combat modern-day slavery of Filipinos at home and abroad.

These include anti-trafficking laws; support for overseas workers; being party to the international anti-slavery treaties; and

programs to protect victims.

The report noted, however, that corruption, which is usually connected to trafficking, is still rampant, and that the country has to do more in its efforts to end modern-day slavery.

30 million enslaved worldwide

As globally ranked, the countries with the highest prevalence of modern slavery are Mauritania, Haiti, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Moldova, Benin, Ivory Coast, Gambia and Gabon. [...]

In terms of absolute numbers, however, the countries with the highest number of enslaved people are India, China, Pakistan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Russia, Thailand, Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar and Bangladesh, according to the report.

"Taken together, these countries account for 76% of the total estimate of 29.8 million in modern slavery," the report said.

All in all, an [estimated 30 million people around the globe are living in modern-day slavery](#), and 72% of them live in Asia.

"The country with the largest estimated number of people in modern slavery is India, which is estimated to have between 13,300,000 and 14,700,000 people enslaved. The India country study suggests that while this involves the exploitation of some foreign nationals, by far the largest proportion of this problem is the exploitation of Indians citizens within India itself, particularly through debt bondage and bonded labor."

[...] Established in May last year, the WFF is a 20-strong team based in Perth on the Australian west coast, founded by philanthropists Andrew Forrest - the chairman of Fortescue Metals Group - and his wife Nicola.

The foundation's definition of modern slavery includes slavery itself, plus slavery-like practices - such as debt bondage, forced marriage and the sale or exploitation of children, human trafficking and forced labor. [...]

The WFF hopes the annual index will help governments monitor and tackle what it calls a "hidden crime."

DavaoToday.com, 18.10.2013

Second farmer leader killed in Agusan del Sur

By Earl O. Condeza

DAVAO CITY - Unidentified gunmen killed last week a leader of farmers protesting against increased military presence in an interior municipality of Agusan del Sur, the second to be killed from the same organization after they evacuated to Davao City to seek public attention to their plight.

The police report was yet to be obtained but the farmers' organization, Kahugpungan Alang sa Kalambuan sa Kauswagan (Kasaka) in Loreto, Agusan del Sur, identified the slain farmer as Gabriel Alindao, 57, a purok leader and an officer of that organization.



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The Kasaka said that on the day he was killed on October 10, Alindao was among the men of Barangay Kauswagan who constructed a military detachment in the place.

Kasaka spokesperson, Marilyn Edgames told Davao Today that Alindao was last seen talking to a "Lieutenant Biernes" of the 26th Infantry Battalion in the construction site of a military detachment.

Alindao and five other persons were building the detachment as part of the military's counterinsurgency "Bayanihan" project, Edgames said.

Kasaka said Alindao was shot near the public school in the barangay center, after he left the construction site to take his lunch.

The group said witnesses found his body about 20 meters from the school gate at around 12 noon, and lying in a pool of blood with bullet shells beside him.

Kasaka said Alindao was its second leader to be killed in a month, after another officer, Benjie Planos, was also hacked and shot dead last September 13 in his farm in Kauswagan.

www.rmp-nmr.org, 22.10.2013

Missionary nun condemns latest surveillance perpetrated against her organization

Iligan City—Sr. Ma. Famita N. Somogod, Sub-Regional Coordinator of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines in Northern Mindanao (RMP-NMR), condemned the non-stop surveillance and harassment being perpetrated against her organization.

"The latest of which was on 30th September 2013, when a certain 'Francis' barged into our office and introduced himself as a personnel from the Australian Aid or AusAID," said Sister Famita.

"On that day, the man discussed about the 'work' of AusAID, and asked me and two of my staff about our works and the current areas where we are doing interventions," the nun furthered.

In suspicion, Sister Famita said they did not entertain 'Francis.' "How come a donor agency, without following any protocol, suddenly came into our office without informing us even a day before?" she emphasized.

RMP-NMR immediately wrote AusAID and verified about 'Francis.'

On 07 October 2013, Rebecca Ongtaco, Head of Finance and Risk Manager of AusAID Philippines replied: "Please be informed that AusAID does not have any employee named 'Francis' or anyone who was authorised to contact RMP-NMR office."

"Rest assured that we shall investigate this matter by contacting our Mindanao-based implementing partners who may be able to shed light on this concern," added by Ongtanco via e-mail.

In another email sent today to RMP-NMR, Ongtanco further said: "Our verification with our Mindanao based implementing partners on whether or not any of their staff contacted your office on 30 Sept. 2013 resulted into negative responses."

The latest incident strengthened RMP-NMR's analysis that they

Edgames said Alindao was active in the community's cacao nursery project and described him as a "responsible Kasaka member".

Edgames said they are pressing their demand to pull out the military from their community, which her group believed was in their area to prepare for the entry of a foreign palm oil investment that covers Loreto.

A blog entry from a Loreto information staff said the British New Britain Palm Oil Limited (NBOL) is said to be planning to invest in Loreto as part of its 36,000 hectare-expansion in Asia.

"[...] Foreign capitalists together with local government is doing everything just to get our lands, we know that this land is rich in resources," she added. [...]

In an ecumenical service led by Karapatan, the group's spokesperson Pastor Jurie Jayme said that "there is an unsigned Memorandum of Agreement between the armed forces of the Philippines and Kasaka. The military now must face this incident including the case of Benjie Planos. They must bring back the trust of the people to them."

are being targeted because of their human rights work for the rural poor.

In February 2013, Kenneth Floyd Navarro, Projects Officer of RMP-NMR was tailed for several times. He feared for his life, and hid. He was dislocated from his work, and has never surfaced since.

Long-time RMP-NMR lay co-worker Joel Q. Yagao, was filed with murder charges, and was arrested on 09 September 2013. Yagao has been responsible for sound agrarian campaigns in Misamis Oriental. He is now being detained at the Gingoog City jail.

"We believe that the state security forces are doing all these surveillance and harassment to hinder us from going to rural areas and report about the degenerating human rights situation of the village folks brought by militarization," Sister Famita concluded.

The nun has just arrived from the Human Rights Defenders' Platform in Dublin, Ireland conducted on 9-11 October 2013. In the Platform, she shared to an international audience composed of human rights defenders the attacks experienced by RMP-NMR and other church workers in Mindanao for defending land rights, and the civil and political rights of the rural poor.

Organized by Frontline International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (Frontline Defenders), the Platform was attended by United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association Mr. Maina Kiai, and by various Irish officials.

Frontline Defenders recently assisted RMP-NMR in improving physical security of their office in Iligan City.

Sun.Star, 22.10.2013

2 peace advocates shot

By Bong Garcia

TWO peace advocates, one of whom is also a school official, were wounded in a gun attack in Zamboanga City, the police reported Tuesday.

Criminal Investigation and Detection Management (CIDM) Chief Inspector Felixberto Martinez said the incident occurred around 9:15 a.m. Tuesday in the village of Baliwasan.

Martinez identified the victims as lawyer Paulino Ersando, the president of Zion Evangelical School, and Evangelical minister Pastor Pablo Palis.

The victims are both members of the Peace Advocates Zamboanga (PAZ), a Catholic organization that aims to promote peace

by strengthening good relations among Christians and Muslims. Initial investigation showed that the victims were onboard a Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV) driven by Ersando when a lone gunman shot them upon arriving Baliwasan village where they were supposed to attend a burial.

Martinez said the gunman, who was wearing a baseball cap, sunglasses, mask and gray long sleeves, fled after the incident.

"We are gathering more information that could lead to the resolution of the incident," he said adding that investigation continues.



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InterAksyon.com, 22.10.2013

NPA accused of publicly executing palm oil plantation security chief

By Dennis Arcon

COTABATO CITY, Philippines -- Communist rebels have been accused of publicly executing the chief security officer of a palm oil plantation in Arakan town, North Cotabato Monday, the same day nine government troops were killed in twin ambushes in the same province.

Authorities said the New People's Army guerrillas entered the plantation then shot former Army sergeant Glen Ariola in the

head before residents.

The rebels reportedly accused Ariola of abuses against poor farmers within the almost 300-hectare plantation owned by a former politician from Matalam town, also in North Cotabato.

The execution of Ariola was carried out soon after rebels set off improvised devices in Tulunan and Makilala towns, killing six Army soldiers and three government militiamen.

Manilatimes.net, 23.10.2013

PNP: cases of violence against women and children high during the first semester of the year

By Anthony Vargas

VIOLATIONS of RA 9262 ranked first among the offenses that were committed against women during the first semester of the year, figures from the Philippine National Police (PNP) revealed on Wednesday.

RA 9262 otherwise known as Anti-Violence against Women and Children Act of 2004 comprises 71 percent of the total recorded crime against women from January to end of June this year, police figures showed.

Figures obtain from the PNP showed that from January to end of June 2013, police have recorded a total of 10,190 offenses against

women, 7,274 of those are classified as violations of RA 9262.

Physical injuries or mugging cases ranks second with 1,376 cases that were recorded for the same period, PNP figures showed.

The PNP figures added that rape cases came in third with 563 cases recorded for the same period followed by acts of lasciviousness with 452 recorded also for the same period. [...]

In terms of demography, the Western Visayas region ranked first in the list with most cases of violence against women and children with 2,289 recorded cases. Davao region ranked second with 2,016 cases. [...]

GMA News, 23.10. 2013

PNoy vows probe on videos showing soldiers firing at Zambo hostages

By Kimberly Jane Tan

The alleged videos showing military personnel firing at civilian hostages during the three-week-long Zamboanga City crisis will be "properly investigated," President Benigno Aquino III told foreign and local journalists Wednesday.

"They will be properly investigated and if there are cases that have to be filed, they will be filed," Aquino said during the forum of the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (FOCAP) at the Manila Hotel.

Aquino was referring to videos supposedly showing hostages of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) waving white flags at the military but were still being shot at during the height of the Zamboanga crisis.

The President, however, admitted that he has yet to see the videos while Justice Sec. Leila De Lima has yet to verify them.

"I have not seen these videos and I am being asked to comment on that which I have not seen. So it will be speculation on top of speculation, which I think is not responsible," Aquino said.

But he said Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin has reminded him that during the time, many MNLF personnel fired at the military while using the hostages as human shields.

"So, these are claims. But, at the same time, perhaps I should caution you, that it smacks of a bit of propaganda," he said.

Sabah

In the same manner, Aquino said he will also ask for a review of the steps that have been undertaken to address reports of the alleged human rights violations of Filipinos in Sabah.

"If I remember correctly, we have had already access to all of our citizens there and, in fact, even the detained individuals," he said, referring to Filipinos languishing in jails in Malaysia, some of them part of the armed group that went there earlier this year supposedly to reclaim the area as part of the Sulu Sultanate's territory.

Aquino added that they have already resolved issues about the supposed prohibition against visitors of the detainees.

"I get regular updates on the status of cases that have been filed or will be filed against those who went to Sabah and allegedly perpetrated all of the violence there," he said.

Meanwhile, the President remained mum on the details of the country's planned negotiations regarding its claim on Sabah.

"The knowledge that I have, I think is also the knowledge you have and you can judge for yourself whether or not we have a strong case," he said.

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UPDATES ON CASES OF HR VIOLATIONS

The Philippine Star, 03.10.2013

Reyes brothers still wanted – DOJ

By Edu Punay

MANILA, Philippines - Former Palawan governor Joel Reyes and his brother former Coron mayor Mario Reyes remain fugitives even after being absolved by the Court of Appeals (CA) in the killing of environment advocate Gerry Ortega in January 2011.

Justice Secretary Leila de Lima yesterday said the Reyes brothers would remain fugitives as there are standing warrants for their arrest issued by the Puerto Princesa Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 52.

"As far as I know, the CA ruling does not quash the warrant of arrest issued by the RTC. That was one of our arguments. The fact that the Palawan RTC accepted the case and issued the warrant, meaning it agreed on findings of probable cause," she told reporters in an ambush interview.

She also cited the order of the RTC last Aug. 29 denying the motion of the Reyes brothers to implement the CA ruling and to recall the arrest warrants against them.

With this, she said the manhunt for the brothers, who were tagged by the other accused as masterminds of the murder, should proceed.

"I think teams from PNP (Philippine National Police) and NBI (National Bureau of Investigation) are undertaking the manhunt operations," she added.

Headlines (Article MRec), pagematch: 1, sectionmatch: 1
De Lima also reiterated that she would question the CA ruling before the Supreme Court.

"I cannot just let it pass because I believe there is significant emasculation of my prerogatives or authority over internal processes or proceedings of the DOJ (Department of Justice). It seems that the justices do not understand that there are certain times when the secretary of justice needs to act on matters without strict conformity with written rules. It is within my prerogatives and plenary authority as head of agency," she stressed. She was reacting to the ruling of the special 10th division of the CA denying the motion filed by the DOJ seeking reconsideration

DavaoToday.com, 17.10.2013

No prosecution two years after Fr. Pops' murder

Earl Condeza

Davao City – On the second year death anniversary of Italian missionary Fausto 'Pops' Tentorio, colleagues reiterate their call for justice as they bewail the fact that authorities have stopped the probe on the priest's killing.

In an interview following a forum at Ateneo de Davao University on Tuesday, private prosecutor Attorney Gregorio Andolana said the investigation should continue on the four suspects apprehended by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) since the case against them was not clearly established.

Andolana said they are awaiting developments from an inter-agency committee composed of the Commission on Human Rights Region XII and the Department of Justice which is handling unsolved extra-judicial killings.[...]

Andolana said the CHR has been following up both the DOJ and NBI on the development of the probe.

Karapatan scores CA for clearing ex-Gov. Reyes on Ortega slay, likens to Gen. Año and Gen. Palparan

Karapatan Press Release

"It's a shame for BS Aquino to drag the name of environmentalist and broadcaster Dr. Gerry Ortega in his attempt to defend his discretionary power to use billions of people's money and to clear his name from any involvement in the corruption cases hounding his administration," said Karapatan secretary general Cristina Palabay.

In his speech before the Brotherhood of Christian Businessmen and Professionals, BS Aquino mentioned Dr. Ortega's killing while he was investigating the misuse of the Malampaya funds, particularly in Palawan.

"He had the gall to do this a day after the Court of Appeals' decision to clear Palawan Governor Joel Reyes on the killing Dr. Gerry Ortega. We remind BS Aquino that Dr. Ortega was killed six months after he assumed presidency. We remind BS Aquino that it was under his presidency that the Reyes brothers were able to sneak out of the country "unnoticed," said Palabay.

The Court of Appeals recently absolved the Reyes brothers on the Ortega killing on sheer technicality.

"Now that evidences of BS Aquino's involvement of misuse of Malampaya funds are coming out, it appears that Aquino may benefit from Reyes' non-prosecution," Palabay said. Palabay said, "perpetrators freed from their accountabilities has become a trend under the BS Aquino regime. The killers are protected, while victims are twice victimized as they are denied justice. This is how Gen. Eduardo Año was cleared from Jonas Burgos disappearance, how Ret. Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan continues to elude arrest, how former Pres. Gloria Arroyo is still not prosecuted for her crimes against the Filipino people. This speaks of BS Aquino's policy – to serve and protect rich killers, regardless if people's rights are violated."

Two years before the expose on Janet Lim Napoles' 10-billion-peso scam and flagrant misuse of Malampaya funds, Dr. Gerry Ortega was already criticizing Gov. Reyes on his involvement on the misuse of billions of pesos of the province's share from the Malampaya gas project.

"Ortega's expose seemed to have opened a can full of worms that eventually led to his death on January 2011. The practice of corruption in the government bureaucracy, much like the existing culture of impunity, is deeply rooted. Those who hold the rein will do anything, even to kill, anyone who tries to expose the rottenness in the bureaucracy, and use all means possible to cover up the crime to be able to perpetuate their rule," Palabay said. [...]

Karapatan while it called for "Justice for Gerry Ortega and other victims of extrajudicial killings," expressed its support for the Ortega family as they elevate their fight to the Supreme Court.

September 19, 2013

of its decision last March 19 that nullified the DOJ resolution indicting the fugitive former governor for murder.

Voting 3-2, justices of the CA division stood firm on its finding that the DOJ committed grave abuse of discretion when it violated procedural protocols governing investigations of cases in creating a second panel of investigating prosecutors instead of resolving a petition for review pending with the office of De Lima.

The CA reiterated that De Lima's action showed "wanton disregard of the rules of procedure and applicable jurisprudence."

The NBI stopped its probe last February of 2012 after charges were filed against four suspects.

Witnesses produced by NBI retracted their earlier statements, and issued sworn statements saying they were instructed to give false testimonies by a mysterious person identified as "Loloy" who was present during the investigation.

But the support group Justice for Father Pops Movement (JPM) said witnesses verified two suspects, Jimmy and Robert Ato, to have been involved in the priest's murder.

The group said witnesses could not point two other suspects, Jose and Dimas Sampulna, as involved on the case.

They also said witnesses point to the involvement of the paramilitary group "Bagani", organized by the Philippine Army's 57th Infantry Battalion, who previously threatened Fr. Tentorio

Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

for his involvement with indigenous peoples in his parish in Arakan, North Cotabato.

"We know that (Fr. Tentorio's) active participation in defending the lumads and their community in Arakan was the reason why he was killed," said Andolana.

Tentorio, of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME) served in Arakan Valley since the late 1980s. He built schools for indigenous children and helped set up sustainable agricultural programs and organizations for the indigenous communities.

He was shot dead in his parish compound on October 17, 2011.

Tentorio's colleague, Fr. Peter Geremia, called the suspects cowards, "who wouldn't admit to the claims and are still hiding under the shadows of impunity."

"Two years since the killing of Fr. Fausto, so many investigators were unable to investigate elements of the state forces that are still hiding under the practice of impunity which is an extension of Martial Law. So much waste of public funds, so many other cases denied the chance of justice in the court of law," he added.

Fr. Geremia said the Aquino administration must solve cases such as Tentorio's murder to prove it has the will to stop impunity. [...]

InterAksyon.com, 19.10.2013

DAR completes Hacienda Luisita distribution

MANILA - Signifying a major breakthrough in land reform in the country, the Department of Agrarian Reform has finished distributing certificates of ownership to Hacienda Luisita farmworker-beneficiaries in the last of the 10 barangays in the sugarcane estate.

"The land in Luisita is now theirs," DAR Secretary Virgilio de los Reyes said in a statement issued Saturday, after the department successfully completed the distribution of Certificates of Land Ownership Award (CLOAs) to farmer-worker beneficiaries in Barangay Mapalacsiao in Hacienda Luisita.

Hacienda Luisita, owned by the family of President Benigno Aquino III, has long represented powerful landowners' strong resistance to agrarian reform. A cornerstone of any political and economic reform agenda, particularly in wealth redistribution, agrarian reform in the country counts the few members of the land-owning class among its enemies.

The distribution of the CLOAs met the Supreme Court deadline despite the damage caused by typhoon Santi to the area, including many of the barangay covered courts where the CLOA distribution activities were previously held, DAR said in the statement.

A total of 663 of 745 farmer-worker beneficiaries (FWBs) received certified true copies of their CLOAs in simple proceedings held at grounds of the barangay hall of Barangay Mapalacsiao.

While DAR has finished distributing to all concerned barangays in Tarlac, it has not distributed all the CLOAs.

Data from DAR show that a total of 5,718 CLOAs were distributed to FWBs out of a total of 6,189 ready for distribution, or 92.39% of the CLOAs registered to date. CLOAs of other FWBs are still being registered with the Registry of Deeds or are still

Farmers: DAR keeping prime Hacienda Luisita lots

By Pia Ranada

MANILA, Philippines - The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) is keeping 200 hectares of prime agricultural land in Hacienda Luisita from being distributed to farmers, said farmers' coalition Alyansa ng mga Manggagawang Bukid sa Asyenda Luisita (AMBALA).

The group [...] said that the 200-300 hectares of land under the Tarlac Development Corporation (TADECO), which is owned by Aquino's family, should be covered by land reform and thus distributed to farmworker-beneficiaries. [...]

Instead, TADECO has been issuing eviction notices to farmers and has set up security posts to keep the farmers away from these "prime agricultural lots," the group said.

They also identified the corporation as being responsible for the [arrest and detention of 11 land reform advocates](#), including Anakpawis Representative Fernando Hicap, last September while the group visited the hacienda to investigate reports of farmers being harassed.

"[...] DAR's excuse is that these lands aren't part of the distributable lands based on the decision of the Supreme Court," said AMBALA spokesperson Christopher Garcia.

Research being conducted

The [...] land being contested is owned by TADECO according to the 1989 Supreme Court decision, said DAR Secretary Virgilio de los Reyes. The decision excluded the land from its valuation of land to be distributed to farmworker-beneficiaries. [...]

The land is classified as "residential," according to tax declarations.

But De los Reyes gave assurances that the TADECO titles to the land are not cast in stone. "We're now doing research on all the land being contested for land reform," he told Rappler.

"If the TADECO land is found to be agricultural, we will send out a notice of coverage to include it in the land distribution. [...] We have to follow the process," he said.

The DAR is set to finish its research on contested land by the end of December. [...]

Asked why the DAR investigation into contested land was not finished before the land distribution, he said he "did not want to delay" the sought-after distribution of titles which serve as proof of land ownership.

De los Reyes said that members of AMBALA have been occupying parts of the TADECO-owned land.

Two or three weeks ago, they destroyed a wire fence being monitored by guard posts, he said. He cautioned against this, saying that if a potential farmworker-beneficiary were to occupy the land before a final decision is made, they may be "disqualified" from owning the land.

A total of 4,000 hectares of the 6,445-hectare Hacienda Luisita is being distributed to farmers to carry out the landmark April 24 Supreme Court ruling.

Since the presidency of Corazon Aquino, the powerful Cojuangco family has dodged government efforts to distribute the estate to farmers.

Rappler.com 15.10.2013

not generated pending the signing by some FWBs of their Application to Purchase and Farmers Undertaking.

De los Reyes said that these figures are going up as FWBs who were not able to receive their CLOAs during the scheduled distribution activities in the barangays have actually been going to the DAR provincial office to get their certified true copies.

Installing the 'mohons'

He said that following the distribution of certified true copies of the CLOAs, the DAR is preparing to install the FWBs in their lots. "We will be installing them in their lots as we progress with the 'monumenting,'" de los Reyes said.

He explained that it is quite impossible to do this at this time when many of the lots are still planted with sugarcane, but assured the FWBs that this will be done when harvesting starts this month so that they will be able clear the area where the "mohons" (concrete boundary markers) will be placed.

De los Reyes also assured the farmer-worker beneficiaries of the DAR's continuing support, saying that even now the department is engaged in testing and determining soil samples to be used as the definitive reference in the customized interventions and menu of support services to be offered to the FWBs, in recognition of the kinds of crops the FWBs may want to plant.

[...] In July, farmers belonging to the Unyon ng Manggagawa sa Agrikultura filed before the Supreme Court an omnibus motion to stop and nullify the raffle and distribution of CLOAs, among others. The high tribunal has not issued a restraining order, allowing DAR to continue with an earlier Supreme Court order to distribute the 6,435-hectare sugar plantation in Tarlac.

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Bulatlat.com, 19.10.1013

Prosecutor's dismissal of case against accused soldiers in Capion massacre slammed

By Marya Salamat

[...]

MANILA — A year ago today, Oct. 18, Juvy Capion, wife of Blaán leader and anti-mining activist Daguil Capion, was [killed in "a military operation"](#) along with her two sons, Jordan 'Pop,' 13, and 'Jan-Jan,' 8 in Tampakan, Kimlawis, Davao del Sur. Witnesses said the mother and the two minors were not armed combatants.

The rules of engagement had been violated in the Capion case, Lt. Col. Lyndon Paniza, spokesperson of Armed Forces of the Philippines, admitted in Oct. last year. Evidences showed Capion's hut in Tampakan had been strafed.

A survivor of what is now dubbed as the Capion massacre, plus the other witnesses such as neighbors who rushed to the victims' house after hearing the volley of gunfire, said they saw only members of the 27th IB there, "cleaning up the crime scene."

The 27th IB was later pulled-out from the area while thirteen members of the army were reportedly placed under court martial.

Yet, recently, just few days before the first anniversary of this massacre, a resolution from the Office of the Provincial Prosecutor in Digos City, Davao del Sur, ordered the dismissal of the murder raps filed by Sukim K. Malid against Lt. Col. Noel Alexis Bravo, Lt. Dante Jimenez and fourteen others.

In the resolution submitted by Prosecutor I Jayson Banjal and approved by Provincial Prosecutor Artemio A. Tajon, the evidences filed by the complainants are described as "circumstantial, and insufficient to establish probable cause for murder." [...]

"Urgent appeal" to Justice Secretary

Indigenous peoples' group Kalipunan ng mga Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas (KAMP) and other human rights organizations and environmentalists held a protest action at the gates of the Department of Justice. Demanding justice for the killing of the Capion family, they also personally submitted an urgent appeal addressed to Justice Secretary Leila de Lima. [...]

Scoring Aquino's denials, accountability to killings

Bayan Muna Rep. Zarate also challenged the Commission on Human Rights and the DOJ to seriously look into the decision on the Capion murder. He appealed for a reversal "for the sake of the Capion family and other victims of human rights violations in mining areas in Mindanao."

The Capion massacre has been linked to the biggest mining project in the country: the \$5.9-billion open-pit gold and copper mining project of mining giant Xstrata-SMI (now Glencore-Xstrata-SMI). Juvy's husband, Daguil, a Blaán tribal leader, had declared a *pangayaw* (war for defence of their ancestral domain) after it reportedly became clear to him that the indigenous peoples' communities would forcibly be removed from their present territories to give way to the huge mining project.

Aside from the Blaán's defensive stance, communities in other affected areas of the mining project have been opposing it through protest actions, some of which led to local governments passing a resolution to ban open-pit mining.

But President Aquino himself has been supportive of Xstrata-SMI's mining project, to the point that it reportedly leaned heavily on the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources so it would reverse its initial decision to withhold the mining giant's ECC (environmental compliance certificate). Aquino has also [deployed more soldiers](#), as well as reactivated paramilitary groups, calling all these troops as "investment defence forces."

The result: [killings in the gold-copper rich area](#) have continued after the Capion massacre, according to KAMP. The recent victim was [Datu Anting Freay, 60, and his son](#), a 16-year old. They were allegedly slain by members of paramilitary group Task Force Kitaco and the 39th IBPA, which replaced the 27th IB. [...]

"The Aquino government's adherence to the policy of plunder of IP ancestral lands and resources accompanied by a program of repression against our just and legitimate defense of our land and life, is the root of the enduring injustice to indigenous peoples," said Kakay Tolentino, secretary-general of IP group Katribu. Tolentino said during the protest in front of the DOJ that the Aquino government "has turned it back on the interest of the IPs and favors the investments of large foreign corporations that plunder our land and natural resources."

The indigenous peoples groups bitterly condemned the Aquino government for using public funds against the people and in defence of huge corporations' businesses. "The peoples' money are being used to buy and maintain the guns, cannons and bullets which state troops use to kill and repress the people," KAMP said in a statement.

Bulatlat.com, 29.10.2013

Burgos family slams military for paying bail of alleged rights violator

By Ronalyn V. Olea

"[Major Harry] Baliaga is even fortunate. He was given the right to bail, the right to defend himself. These are the same rights they denied to Jonas." - Mrs. Edita Burgos

MANILA — The mother of missing activist Jonas Burgos slammed the Philippine Army for shouldering the bail of suspect [Harry Baliaga Jr.](#)

A Quezon City local court [ordered the arrest of Baliaga](#) for charges of arbitrary detention in relation to the disappearance of Jonas since April 28, 2007.

In a [report](#), the Philippine Army admitted it provided financial aid to Baliaga for the bail bond, which amounted to P40,000 (\$930).

"I cannot explain why would the military do that...unless abduction is part of his [Baliaga] functions," Mrs. Edita Burgos told *Bulatlat.com* in a phone interview. "He did what he did in the line of duty. He was really ordered to do it."

Baliaga has denied abducting Jonas. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has also been consistent in denying that it was behind the enforced disappearance of the peasant-activist. [...]

In the same report, Army chief Lt. Gen. Noel Coballes said the Army will also provide legal counsel for Baliaga if he asks for it. Baliaga continues to work as staff of the office of the Army's Adjutant General, Coballes said. [...]

In reaction, Mrs. Burgos told the military, "Are you using people's money for this? To defend someone who is accused of violating the rights of the people you are supposed to protect?"

Mrs. Burgos added, "Baliaga is even fortunate. He was given the right to bail, the right to defend himself. These are the same rights they denied to Jonas. Jonas should have been given a day in court." [...]

In a resolution dated September 3, the Department of Justice held that there is probable cause that Baliaga and three John Does and one Jane Doe committed the crime of arbitrary deten-



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tion against Jonas. The resolution [exonerated two other respondents](#), Lt. Co. Melquiades Feliciano, former commander of the 56th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army (IBPA) and Col. Eduardo Año of the Intelligence Service Group of the Philippine Army. [...]

Baliaga was identified by two of the witnesses during an investigation by the Commission on Human Rights (CHR). The CHR then was ordered by the Supreme Court to conduct an inde-

pendent probe on the case. The SC also ordered the CA to conduct hearings based on the evidence gathered by the CHR.

In its decision in March, the CA held that that the abduction of Jonas is a case of enforced disappearance and declared that the [Armed Forces of the Philippines \(AFP\) is accountable for the crime](#).

[...]

Allvoices.com, 29.10.2013

After 365 Days of unjust Imprisonment Zara Alvarez seeks justice

By chnarendra

It has been one year since human rights defender Zara Alvarez was illegally arrested on Oct 30, 2012. Yet, she continues to face two fabricated charges of murder and robbery in band, suffers the separation from her four-year-old daughter and the daily hardship of a life in prison. The separation of mother and child became even more painful when Zara was transferred from the Cadiz City Jail to the Negros Occidental District Jail on August 16 and again to the Bacolod City District Jail on October 2, both jails are about 70km away from Cadiz. Visits became more difficult and more seldom as every visit involves a lot of time and financial resources. Yet, Zara's prison conditions also worsened.

Zara Reboton Alvarez, 32 years old, a native of Cadiz City, Negros Occidental, a political activist, a human rights defender and a single mother to a 4-year-old daughter. As a "newcomer" in the Bacolod City District Jail, she is being padlocked for two months, only allowed to leave the cell to receive visitors. Currently she shares this cell with 15 other women. They sleep on the floor, no running water, no separate wash room and toilet. As a consequence, she now suffers from a strong cough, allergies and diarrhea. [...]

The Free Zara Alvarez Movement (FZAM) also is confident that truth will reveal and justice prevails. As the venue of the murder case has transferred too, they are hopeful that this will add to the independence and impartiality of the court proceedings, exposing the political repression behind the systematic filing of fabricated charges against her and against many more, resulting in more than 450 political prisoners nationwide.

One year ago, on October 30, 2012 more than 30 fully armed men, a composite of the 62 TB and Special Action Force (SAF) arrested her. The army was later joined by police officers. The warrant of arrest, under which she is currently detained, falsely charges her with the murder of Lieutenant Archie Polenzo of the Philippine Army on March 07, 2010. Along with several other John/Jane Does, she said her name was amended to this case on July 31,

2012. While already detained in the Cadiz City Jail another warrant of arrest was served last March, 2013. It implicates her, along with several other activists in a robbery-in-band case that allegedly took place in July 2011.

In both cases, she said that she was not served a subpoena and both warrants of arrest bear a defective name and address. Moreover, on October 30, 2012, the arresting soldiers and police officers did not introduce themselves to her or inform her of her rights, but even mislead her with false identities. "Even though the cases filed against me are already within the jurisdiction of the Regional Trial Courts of Bacolod City and Sagay City, respectively, I appeal to your empathy and attention as Philippine President and to your wisdom in leading the country to a path of Justice", she said in her letter to the President. [...]

She also stated that she is one of many activists and human rights defenders facing the pain of being tagged and imprisoned as a criminal. She said she would like to bring to President's attention on the alarming number of indiscriminate charges filed against perceived political dissenters. She appealed to him as Commander-in-Chief, to restrain the rank-and-file and officer corps of the Armed Forces from using questionable sources and means to include political activists and human rights defenders in their legal offensives and military Oplan Bayanihan.

Furthermore, she also appealed to order a study of all charges filed by the Armed Forces against suspected insurgents since the time of President Arroyo so that you can see for yourself the indiscriminate pattern of the AFP in demonizing those who seek social change and in criminalizing legitimate dissent.

With deep concern for all children, including her daughter, she still hopes that the abuses by the military during the Marcos and Arroyo governments will be ended under the present administration, so that children will no longer be traumatized in separation from their parents whether they are imprisoned like her, disappeared like Jonas Burgos or killed like Eden Marcellana.

MAGUINDANAO MASSACRE

philstar.com, 02.10.2013

Ampatuan grandsons plead 'not guilty'

By Janvic Mateo

Anwar "Ipi" Ampatuan Jr. and Anwar Sajid "Ulo" Ampatuan entered their plea before Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 221 Judge Jocelyn Solis-Reyes during the continuation of court proceedings inside Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan, Taguig City.

The two Ampatuans were the 102nd and 103rd suspects who entered their plea for the initial 57 counts of murder filed for the massacre.

With their arraignment, only two arrested suspects have yet to be arraigned for the 57 counts of murder - Talemba Masukat and Sahid Guiamadil, who both claim that their apprehension were cases of mistaken identities.

Court records show that a total of 107 suspects out of the 197 people implicated in the massacre have already been arrested by the authorities.



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Charges against the two have already been dismissed by the court.

Meanwhile, more than a dozen arrested suspects have yet to be arraigned for the 58th murder charge that was filed only in September 2012. The case was for the alleged death of photo-journalist Reynaldo "Bebot" Momay, whose remains have yet to be found.

The arraignment of the remaining suspects has yet to push through pending resolutions of the respective motions that they filed before the Department of Justice and the court.

The arraignment of Ipi and Ulo pushed through after Solis-Reyes issued an order denying their motion seeking the reversal of an earlier ruling that denied their bid to dismiss the cases against them.

In her order, Solis-Reyes said she found the motion filed by the Ampatuans as a mere rehash of their earlier arguments that were already dismissed by the court.

She said there is nothing under the rules "which would require that the judicial finding of probable cause be made in a specific form."

SunStar.com, 23.10.2013

CA won't drop witness' testimony against Ampatuans

By Virgil B. Lopez

FORMER Maguindanao Governor Andal Ampatuan Sr. and his son Andal Jr. lost their bid to stop a Quezon City court from including the testimony of an ex-municipal vice mayor in the ongoing trial of the multiple murder cases.

In a ruling dated October 8, the Court of Appeals 14th Division junked the Ampatuans' petition seeking to reverse the decision of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court branch 221 that set aside their motions to expunge Rasol Sangki's testimony.

Sangki told the court on January 13, 2010 that Andal Sr. was behind the killing of 58 civilians including 32 journalists who accompanied the wife of then Buluan vice mayor Esmal Mangudadatu in filing his candidacy papers for governor on November 23, 2009.

Mangudadatu, now on his second term as governor, was Andal Jr.'s rival for the post in the May 2010 elections.

"Neither it is required that the pieces of evidence which were made the bases for the indictment of an accused be specifically mentioned by the court in its order," she added.

In their motion for reconsideration, the suspects – through their lawyer Emmanuel Brotarlo – urged the court to reverse its earlier ruling and dismiss the case against them as there were no evidence of their involvement in the massacre.

"What were the evidences presented by the Panel of Investigating Prosecutors which were personally examined by the Honorable Court before it concluded that there exists a probable cause against (the suspects) for the crimes charged?" asked Brotarlo in the motion.

"The only evidence, if at all, against both Accused, during the alleged conduct of preliminary investigation of the subject cases, is their surname which is 'Ampatuan,'" he added.

Ipi and Ulo claimed that they were in Las Vegas to watch the Manny Pacquiao and Miguel Cotto fight days before the Nov. 23, 2009 massacre. They said that they were attending a session of the Sangguniang Bayan in Shariff Aguak at the time of the incident. [...]

Sangki said he saw the killings.

"The soundness of the RTC's orders in refusing to expunge the testimony of Sangki involves judgment, and not jurisdiction for, undoubtedly, the RTC has jurisdiction over the case," the CA said through Associate Justice Victoria Isabel Paredes.

The Ampatuans claimed that Sangki should be disqualified as prosecution witness because he allegedly appeared to be among those most guilty of the crime.

Ninety-four suspects remain at large while only five Ampatuans have been arraigned nearly four years since the massacre happened.

The Aquino administration earlier promised that it will seek convictions, at least for the principal suspects, before the change of leadership in 2016.

PEACE PROCESS

Philippine Daily Inquirer, 06.10.2013

De Lima wants captured MNLF rebels tried in Manila for security reasons

By Nancy C. Carvajal

Two hundred and twenty-nine members of the More National Liberation Front (MNLF) arrested during the recent siege on Zamboanga City will be brought to Metro Manila for security reasons, Justice Secretary Leila de Lima said Saturday.

"As soon as a commitment order is issued by a judge after their cases are filed, they will be transported to and detained in Bicutan," De Lima told the Inquirer, referring to the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) or Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan, Taguig City.

De Lima had earlier said that the Department of Justice would file a motion in the Supreme Court for a change of venue for the trial of the captured MNLF rebels "for security reasons."

De Lima yesterday visited the San Ramon Penal Colony where the MNLF members are detained. The detention building was covered by a wide blue tarpaulin on all sides.

"The cover is a deterrent to possible rescue operations and escape plans because they cannot see the activities outside," a jail guard told the Inquirer.

The guard revealed there had been an attempt to rescue the MNLF detainees but this was foiled by a military blocking force.

The MNLF rebels have relatives and supporters that could cause trouble during the trial, the guards told De Lima.

The MNLF rebels attacked Zamboanga on Sept. 9. In the ensuing three-week battle between the rebels and government troops, 244 persons were killed, thousands were wounded and over 100,000 were displaced.

The justice secretary disclosed that five of the MNLF members were minors, aged 14 to 17 and were housed in a halfway facility for youth in conflict with the law.

De Lima described her meeting with the youngsters as "heart-breaking." The minors, who were Tausugs, touched De Lima's hand to their foreheads before and after the brief talk.



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"In the case of the minors, I have ordered prosecutors to assess the degree of their participation," De Lima said.

One of the young combatants, who claimed he was from Jolo, told De Lima he accompanied his grandfather to Zamboanga to attend a peace rally. He said his grandfather was a member of the MNLF and was one of those killed in the gun battles.

De Lima also observed that the other MNLF members were mostly young, "probably in their 20's."

Aside from rebellion charges, MNLF leaders Nur Misuari and Javier Malik, who are still at large, will be charged with violating

international laws applicable to noninternational armed conflicts.

Meanwhile, heavy rains flooded evacuation centers in Zamboanga City, adding more misery for thousands of people displaced by the bloody rebel siege.

Almost a month after followers of Misuari besieged Zamboanga, over 116,000 people— around one tenth of the port city's population—are still sheltering in evacuation centers, where there is a shortage of toilets and medicine.

Rappler.com, 13.10.2013

No GPH-MILF deal yet on power-sharing

by Angela Casauay

MANILA, Philippines (UPDATED) – Despite holding a session for more than 18 hours, the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) failed to agree on how power will be shared between the proposed Bangsamoro political entity and the national government in the 41st round of talks.

The last day of the negotiations in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia started at about 10 am Saturday, October 12, and extended until about 5 am Sunday, October 13, in a bid to complete the power-sharing annex. This is one of the two annexes required before the final peace pact can be signed.

At past 1 am Sunday, an MILF source said the panels reached a "technical impasse," with both sides failing to reach a consensus on details regarding the Bangsamoro's ministerial form of government. A technical impasse has to do with how the language of the agreements is formulated.

The panels could not extend another time due to the celebration of the Eid al-Adha, government peace panel chair Miriam Corone-Ferrer said in a text message. [...]

"But very good progress has been achieved in the power-sharing annex including on the possible structure of the new Bangsamoro political entity and the intergovernmental mechanism that can be instituted to ensure coordination and cooperation between the Central and Bangsamoro governments in the exercise of various powers," Ferrer said.

Contentious issues

Power-sharing represents the "heart" of the negotiations, MILF chief negotiator Mohagher Iqbal earlier said.

The annex contains the list of powers reserved for the central government, powers exclusive to the envisioned Bangsamoro government, and concurrent or shared powers between the two. Under the [Framework Agreement](#) signed on Oct 15, 2012, the Bangsamoro government would take a ministerial form, where members of the legislature elected by the people would elect a chief minister among themselves.

In a statement released Sunday, Ferrer said the MILF wants to include certain features of the ministerial government in the annex.

But both sides agree that how the Bangsamoro government would operate won't be defined in full in the power-sharing annex. It would be fleshed out in the Bangsamoro Basic Law instead.

"There is understanding now on the level of detail that would go into the Annex on Power Sharing but some disagreements still on specific features," Ferrer said.

Among the unresolved issues are the extent of territorial jurisdiction of the Bangsamoro political entity over waters and on the

protection of fishing rights of subsistence fisherfolk in the Sulu Sea and Moro Gulf.

Despite the long hours, Ferrer said the panels remained upbeat.

The negotiations are down to the final details of the peace pact. Also yet to be completed is the annex on normalization, which contains the sensitive issues of decommissioning of arms and disposition of armed forces.

Constricted timeline

Failure to sign an annex in this round constricts the timeline of the Bangsamoro peace process even further – a situation recognized by the panels themselves.

In their joint statement, both sides said they hope to complete the annexes after the Eid al-Adha break.

MILF chief negotiator Mohagher Iqbal earlier said the delay is impeding the working timeline of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, the body tasked to draft the Basic Law. Iqbal also heads the commission.

For the government, there's no turning back for the peace negotiations.

Citing a June 2013 Social Weather Stations survey showing that 70% of Filipinos still believe a peace agreement is possible, Ferrer said in her opening statement: "It is evident from these survey results that the key question to many people following up this negotiation is not so much IF we will have a peace agreement, but WHEN."

The government wants the transition from the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao towards the Bangsamoro political entity before President Benigno Aquino III steps down from office in 2016.

Both the government and the MILF recognize the urgency of beating this deadline, given the uncertainty of a change in political climate when a new set of officials take over.

Lawmakers earlier said it would be ideal for the Transition Commission to finish drafting the law by the [first quarter of 2014](#) to give Congress enough time to pass the measure.

Once the Basic Law is ratified, the ARMM will be deemed abolished, paving the way for the MILF-led Bangsamoro Transition Authority to take over until the election of Bangsamoro officials in 2016.

This round of talks comes weeks after forces associated with a faction of the MILF's rival group, the Moro National Liberation Front, attacked Zamboanga City, resulting in a 3-week standoff. The impasse ended with 139 civilian casualties and damaged homes and properties. [...]

Despite the setbacks, both sides still hope the final peace pact will end the 40-year armed struggle in Mindanao.



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FURTHER READINGS

Hronlineph.com, 04.10.2013

Corporate Human Rights Abuses in ASEAN: Civil Society Calls for Corporate Accountability and Compliance with International Human Rights Law

(Bangkok/[Jakarta](#)) – Civil society groups called for greater corporate accountability in the region [...]. The report, published by regional human rights NGO [Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development](#) (FORUM-ASIA), was officially presented [...] during the 6th Regional Consultation on ASEAN and Human Rights held in Jakarta on 1-3 October 2013.

The ASEAN civil society's call [...] comes against the backdrop of ASEAN governments' continued push for the creation of an [ASEAN Economic Community](#) (AEC) by 2015 that would facilitate accelerated cross-border trade and investment in the region, which civil society claims is not accompanied by adequate safeguards set in place for those marginalized by the process.

[...] The report makes a detailed list of recommendations to ASEAN governments and institutions [...] in addressing the legal and institutional deficits in the protection of human rights in the region, the State-business nexus that has resulted in unaccountable decision-making, barriers to information and public participation, and access to justice and remedy in cases of corporate human rights abuses. [...] Corporate Accountability in ASEAN: A Human Rights-Based Approach can be downloaded [here](#).

OXFAM, 10.10.2013

Free Prior and Informed Consent in the Philippines Regulations and Realities

Oxfam has just completed a policy briefing [paper](#) called "Free [Prior Informed Consent](#) in the Philippines: Regulations and Realities" which describes the key legal protections for FPIC in the Philippines as well as past obstacles to effective implementation. In addition, the policy note highlights features of implementing rules adopted by the government in 2012 to promote more effective future implementation of FPIC. The paper is available at: <http://www.oxfamamerica.org/publications/free-prior-and-informed-consent-in-the-philippines>