



## Action Network Human Rights- Philippines

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***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).*

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HEADLINES & POLITICS

Inquirer.net, 11.02.2015

### Lawyers buck transfer of Tiamzons' trial

Jerome Aning and Jaymee T. Gamil

MANILA, Philippines—Two lawyers groups on Tuesday protested the transfer of the trial of alleged Communist Party of the Philippines leaders Benito Tiamzon and Wilma Austria-Tiamzon from the Quezon City Regional Trial Court (RTC) to Camp Crame.

The National Union for People's Lawyers (NUPL) and the Public Interest Law Center described the transfer—ordered by the Supreme Court on the request of the judge—as “unilateral” and an overreaction to a protest action held during the last hearing at the Quezon City Hall of Justice. [...]

[NUPL secretary general Edre] Olalia and [NUPL managing counsel Rachel] Pastores also expressed apprehension over the holding of the trial in what they described as a “police fortress under very hostile conditions and atmosphere and beyond open scrutiny.”

“[It] is inconsistent with the minimum requirements of due process mandating a fair and impartial trial that require a public hearing. The state has all the power and resources to continue the previous security arrangements that had worked just fine prior to such an unreasonable transfer,” they said.

The transfer was also “not conducive to the search for truth as witnesses for the defense will be intimidated by the overbearing presence of scores of police and intelligence personnel enjoying a home court advantage to the exclusion of the general public,” they said.

The pretrial for the case of kidnapping was held at the Philippine National Police Training Center yesterday morning.

The change in venue was apparently prompted by a rally held by the Tiamzons' supporters which caused the shutdown of the

QC Hall of Justice on Oct. 21.

The venue change was ordered by the Supreme Court in a notice issued on Nov. 25, acting on a request from QC RTC Executive Judge Fernando Sagun Jr.

Olalia said the change in venue was done to prevent a repeat of the trouble that attended the last hearing at the QC Hall of Justice on Oct. 21.

Activists calling for the release of the Tiamzons mobbed the hall, prompting police to shut the building down, and for Sagun to call for the suspension of the building's operations for the day.

The reason for the venue change was confirmed by QC RTC Branch 81 Judge Madonna Echiverri at yesterday's hearing, where she recalled that people were banging on her courtroom's windows during the Oct. 21 hearing, Olalia said.

Olalia protested that the defense camp was only informed of the venue change when they received Echiverri's notice about it on Jan. 30.

He said the banging on the courtroom's windows was not done by protesters, who were shut out of the hall of justice, but by the Tiamzons' police guards who were asking to be let into the courtroom.

“We were never given a chance to explain our side and refute the reason for the venue change,” he said.

Tuesday's pretrial hearing was deferred to April 15. Olalia said the defense will file a motion for reconsideration in the Supreme Court over the venue change.

The Tiamzons are being tried for the abduction of five soldiers and one Philippine Narcotics Command member in 1988.

Rappler.com, 17.02.2015

### Mining sector opposes 8 'mining-free' zones

By Pia Ranada

MANILA, Philippines – Representatives from the mining sector expressed their reservations about the plan to declare 8 provinces as mining-free zones during a Senate hearing on Tuesday, February 17.

The hearing looked into 8 bills filed separately by 8 congressmen to declare their provinces [Cagayan de Oro City, Catanduanes, Nueva Vizcaya, Eastern Samar, Nueva Ecija, Biliran, Davao City, 2nd District of Sorsogon] and one district as off-limits to mining.

[...] Banning mining from these areas will “set a bad precedent” for the Philippine government, said Chamber of Mines of the Philippines vice president for policy Ronald Recidoro during the hearing.

“Mineral resources are limited, finite and do not occur everywhere. They are concentrated in only a few blessed provinces. This deprives the national government of the chance to develop a national industrialization plan,” he added.

Around 65% of the Philippines [cannot be mined](#) under current laws and executive orders despite the vast potential of the country as a source of minerals.

The Fraser Institute of Canada, a public policy research organization for Canada, puts the Philippines among the top 10 countries most attractive for mineral development based on mineral potential alone.

But the country is also among the least attractive locations “because of policy and bureaucratic obstructions and the lack of government support for mineral development,” reads a statement from the Joint Foreign Chambers of the Philippines.

Currently, [Executive Order No 79](#) puts a moratorium on all new mining contracts until a [new revenue-sharing agreement](#) between mining companies, national government and local gov-

ernment is finalized. In 2013, mining contributed only 0.7% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), according to the National Economic and Development Authority.

#### 'Not a penny'

But the congressmen who filed the bills defended their proposed laws saying mining has led to nothing but catastrophe for the provinces they represent.

“Mining is destructive to the environment of our province. We prioritize agriculture over mining,” said Representative Carlos Padilla of the lone district of Nueva Vizcaya.

There are two companies mining for gold and copper in Nueva Vizcaya: Canadian-owned Oceana Gold and British-owned FCF Minerals Corporation.

They are both covered by the Financial Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) which allows companies 100% owned by foreigners to extract minerals in the Philippines.

The province, said Padilla, “does not get a penny” from Oceana Gold. The mining company did not get the consent of the provincial council and do not pay realty tax, he added.

They used to pay excise tax and business license tax but no longer do so.

Meanwhile, it's the local government that bears the responsibility of tending to supposed human rights abuses, people displaced by the bulldozing of houses and the environmental degradation due to the mining activities, said Padilla.

Oceana Gold chairman Jose Leviste Jr denied any human rights abuses and said they provide housing for those displaced by the company's activities.

He said they no longer pay excise tax because the Board of Investments has exempted them from doing so.

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As for the payment of business license tax, he said the company received a letter from near-by Quirino province claiming it is their province who should be given the tax, not Nueva Vizcaya because the mining area falls under their jurisdiction.

"Quirino complicated things. There's a lawsuit now and we're trying to work things out," he told the body.

But Padilla said there are other reasons to declare his province mining-free. Nueva Vizcaya houses an important watershed that supplies water for major dams like the Magat and Ambuklao dams. These dams irrigate thousands of hectares of farmland in Luzon.

Some 15 tribes are threatened with displacement by mining because their ancestral domains sit on top of the mineral deposits. On top of that, the province's steep slopes and increasing rainfall make it susceptible to landslides.

### Benefits of mining

In Catanduanes, a company has been given permits from the Department of Energy to mine for coal, said Representative Cesar Sarmiento who authored a bill to declare the province off-limits to mining.

Australian company Altura Mining was given a coal operating contract covering 7,000 hectares. Sarmiento's bill aims to protect Catanduanes' forests, the largest remaining forest cover in Bicol, from the effects of mining.

In the past, Catanduanes citizens backed by the church were able to boot out Australian mining firm Monte Oro Resources and Energy Inc from mining its coal deposits. There is also a provincial ordinance declaring the province a mining-free zone.

But Julian Payne, president of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, said mining could pose benefits to local communities.

He said mining generated 252,000 direct jobs and around 1 million indirect jobs in 2012.

Senator Loren Legarda, chairperson of the Senate Environment Committee, decided to suspend the hearing until more data on the benefits of mining could be presented.

Bulatlat.com, 21.02.2015

## 'Dead end for Aquino's righteous path'

By Dee Ayroso

The Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights or Karapatan said President Aquino's "daang matuwid" or "righteous path" is now pushing to a dead-end, in the wake of the Mamasapano fiasco, human rights violations and corruption cases.

"The BS Aquino regime has a highway of crimes that could no longer be ignored," said Cristina Palabay, Karapatan secretary general, in a statement.

"Added to these are the issues of corruption through the unconstitutional Disbursement Acceleration Program and the sellout of Philippine sovereignty with the signing of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement with the US government," she said.

Under Aquino's term, from June 2010 to end 2014, Karapatan has documented 229 extrajudicial killings, 225 frustrated killing, 106 cases of torture, 46,861 victims of forced evacuation and 700 illegal arrests.

## Gov't vows 'full force' vs 'power grab' plotters

By Paterno Esmaguél II

MANILA, Philippines - The government vows to apply the "full force of the law" against the President's critics who push for an "unconstitutional and illegal power grab," Justice Secretary Leila de Lima said Sunday, February 22.

De Lima singled out the National Transformation Council (NTC), a group composed of allies of former president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

The group includes Norberto Gonzales, a former defense secretary and national security adviser under the Arroyo administration.

In a statement, De Lima slammed the NTC for urging "the installation of a civilian-military junta." She pointed out that the group wants to become "the de facto government" of the Philippines.

She also criticized the NTC for proposing or conspiring "to commit the crime of coup d'etat," as when it requested the military's support.

"The NTC's pronouncements and publicly declared strategy for the capture of state power through active military support to the NTC are therefore acts which already constitute conspiracy or proposal to commit rebellion and coup d'etat (Art. 136 in relation to Arts. 134 and 134-A, Revised Penal Code), conspiracy to commit sedition (Art. 141 in relation to Art. 139, RPC) or, at the very least, inciting to sedition (Art. 142, RPC), as well as illegal assemblies (Art. 146, RPC)," the justice secretary said.

She explained: "A junta by any other sanitized name is still illegal and unconstitutional. By calling for people power and military support to force the President's 'resignation' in order to pave the way for a junta, the NTC and its mushrooming allied alphabet soup organizations of discredited government officials consisting of charged plunderers, grafters, and tax evaders, or of those under investigation for such crimes, may have just crossed the line of legitimate dissent."

"The government will not relent in applying the full force of the law against them in order to protect the people and the State from an unconstitutional and illegal power grab," De Lima said.

Reports of a coup plot [surfaced](#) as President Benigno Aquino III faces the worst crisis of his presidency: a bloodbath in Mamasapano, Maguindanao, that killed 44 members of the Philippine National Police Special Action Force (PNP-SAF), 18 Muslim rebels, and at least 3 civilians.

### 'Perverting nation's grief'

[...] In her statement on Sunday, De Lima accused the NTC of spreading the word about a supposed coup threat. She said the reported threats "are not coup threats in the strict sense of the word" because they "do not come from any section of the government's security forces."

[...]

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, for its part, [...] [rejected extra-constitutional measures](#) as bishops linked with the NTC call on Aquino to quit.

The NTC's moves came as various groups and individuals, including the President's uncle, Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, also called on Aquino to quit. [...]

Rappler.com, 22.02.2015

"I want to see poverty incidence before and after mining. I want to see environmental impact assessments. I am not anti-development but I believe that mining companies should be responsible."

Palabay said Aquino has been "indifferent to the plight of Moro peoples and indigenous communities of Mindanao" in spite of government's claims and the ongoing peace process with Moro rebels.

"The Zamboanga siege in September 2013 victimized hundreds of Moro peoples sending them to evacuation centers in subhuman conditions which led to diseases and deaths of children. This also led to a number of deaths, imprisonment, torture of many suspected to be members of the Moro National Liberation Front," Palabay said.

Palabay added that many Moro detainees are still languishing in jail, at Special Intensive Care Area-2, in Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig city. "The SICA-2 building is covered with metal louvers, which prevents air and sun to come in," she said.

"BS Aquino's neglect on the plight of many Filipinos in Sabah, mostly Tausug, and his tolerance of the Malaysian government's crackdown against undocumented Filipino is also another



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crime," Palabay said.

The Karapatan leader also said Aquino "simply shunned" the 400 Lumads, Moro peasant and urban poor from Mindanao who travelled to Manila late last year with the "Manilakbayan for Food and Peace in Mindanao."

### 'Reject joint council'

[...] "We flatly reject a "joint council" with Aquino as one of the alleged exit plans being devised by Malacanang in the face of the growing people's movement for his resignation," he [Elmar Labog, chair of International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS)] said. "It is time to transit, to trans-

## CALAMITIES & CLIMATE CHANGE

Theguardian.com, 26.02.2015

### François Hollande in Philippines for climate change push

President François Hollande arrived in the [Philippines](#) on Thursday, accompanied by two of France's leading actresses, to promote the fight against climate change ahead of a crucial summit of world leaders. The two-day trip, the first by a French president to the Philippines, is part of Hollande's campaign to build diplomatic momentum ahead of the United Nations event that [France](#) will host in December.

Hollande says he is determined to "leave a mark" on history by brokering an historic agreement to contain climate change, that would make up for the failure to reach such an accord in [Copenhagen in 2009](#).

The [Philippines is seen as a frontline state in the battle against climate change](#), having been battered by relentless storms in recent years that have emerged from the Pacific Ocean and claimed many thousands of lives.

These included super typhoon Haiyan, the strongest storm ever recorded on land, which left more than 7,350 people dead or missing in November 2013 [and which scientists have linked to climate change](#). [...]

The goal of the planned Paris pact, which must enter into force by 2020, is to limit warming to 2C over pre-industrial revolution levels.

Scientists warn that on current trends, Earth is on track for double that, or more – a recipe for catastrophic droughts, fiercer storms like Haiyan, and other extreme weather events.

However most followers of the UN climate change diplomatic process are sceptical a pact can be secured that will be ambitious enough to achieve the 2C goal, with rich and poor nations continuing to fight over who should shoulder more of the burden.

## INSTITUTIONS

Inquirer.net, 11.02.2015

### SC junks plunder suit vs Aquino, Soliman, Abad

By Tarra Quismundo

MANILA, Philippines—The Supreme Court on Tuesday junked outright a petition that sought court action to hold President Aquino, Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman and Budget Secretary Florencio Abad liable for alleged anomalies in government.

In an en banc ruling, the high court "dismissed for lack of form and substance" a one-page petition filed by taxpayer Romeo

form and move forward with a leadership without Aquino and his ilk. We are for regime change, and for genuine systems change for the Filipino people." [...]

### PH civil society groups not impressed with French President's "climate trip" to the Philippines

[...] President Hollande's visit is an important opportunity for us to remind France and other developed countries governments of their historical responsibility for climate change and their obligations towards peoples of developing countries who suffer the brunt of the impacts." says Lidy Nacpil, Regional Coordinator of the Jubilee South Asia Pacific Movement on Debt and Development (JS-APMDD) and Convenor of the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ), a coalition of 109 organizations from different sectors advocating a systematic change in order to cope with the adverse effects of a changing climate. [...]

"Their expression of support for us, the vulnerable countries, is contradicted by their energy policy and their investments in dirty energy," added Nacpil. "What we need from France is not posturing, but the fulfilment of their obligations to radically reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and deliver sufficient climate finance as their historical responsibility for climate change requires.

France, which at present still heavily relies on petroleum imports for energy and is the second-largest producer of nuclear energy next to the United States, is also one of the biggest funders of coal projects globally through public funds (export credit agencies) with US\$1.8 billion from 2003 to 2013.

In their talks with the United States, France expressed support for free market solutions to the problem of climate change, including ECAs, emissions trading and development project which enable developed countries to decrease their reduction requirements, which Nacpil denounced as "false solutions" to the problem of climate change.

"Market mechanisms only allow for businesses in developed countries to go about their business without regard for the environment and the plight of vulnerable countries concerning climate change," said Nacpil. "France should show that it is on the Philippines' side, the side of the vulnerable to the disasters we are funding by postponing climate justice."

"As the host of this year's COP21, France must show its sincerity to fight climate change by supporting the interests of the people most vulnerable to its effects, not those countries who have profited and continue to profit from it," says Gerry Arances, National Coordinator of PMCJ. "For example, it should lead the EU to aim for higher, more ambitious emissions reduction targets. If we are to maintain emissions at the ideal level by 2030, which is below 2 degrees, the EU is expected to cut back 55% of their emissions."

Arances also emphasized the importance of climate financing to respond to the demands of climate financing, saying: "At present, the Green Climate Fund remains to be a very low priority among parties to the UNFCCC with very minimal funding. We must not be deceived by the reported pledges made by developed countries, like the \$1 Billion pledge from France. What we need is a centralized approach which shall honor historical responsibilities, especially from the part of developed countries."

HRonlineph.com, 24.02.2015

[...] In what is shaping up to be the most symbolic and emotional leg of Hollande's trip, he will on Friday visit the small town of Guiuan in eastern Philippines that was devastated when Haiyan hit with winds of up to 315 km (195 miles) an hour.

The Aquino government is also warmly embracing Hollande's trip, the first by a French head of state since the two nations established diplomatic relations in 1947, as an endorsement of the Philippines' maturing democracy. [...]

A number of trade agreements on "green" sectors, including in transport, renewable energy and water treatment, are also expected to be signed during Hollande's visit.

The leaders are also expected to discuss the tense territorial dispute between the Philippines and China over their rival claims to parts of the South China Sea.



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But Te said the petition was dismissed because "the court has no jurisdiction to determine the liability of the respondents without a prior appropriate proceeding."

Under the law, the Sandiganbayan has jurisdiction over graft

CURRENT CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Sun.Star Cagayan de Oro, 02.02.2015

### Gov't intervention on lumad displacement sought

By Jigger J. Jerusalem

THE local and national governments must intervene in the evacuation of the close to a thousand indigenous people (IP) living in four hinterland villages in San Luis, Agusan del Sur, after one of a lumad member died as a result of the displacement, a tribal leader told Sun.Star Cagayan de Oro Monday.

Datu Jomorito Goaynon, deputy secretary-general of Kalumaran, a federation of tribal organizations in Mindanao, said a still unnamed female Banwaon died on February 2, at 5 p.m. after being admitted for a week due to stress and fatigue. Goaynon said the dead tribal member was confined at a public hospital in Patin-ay, Agusan del Sur, and was taken care of by Kalumaran.

He said they could not yet identify the fatality as she still in a morgue in Patin-ay, which is far from the evacuation center in Barangay Balit where the lumads are currently staying.

Aside from her, many of the Banwaon evacuees are also suffering from various ailments due to their traumatic experience such as long walk night and day as they fled from their communities, he said.

In a statement emailed to Sun.Star Cagayan de Oro by Kalumaran, it reported that around 207 Banwaon households, or about 969 individuals, have become "victims of human rights violations as recorded by Karapatan Caraga due to the ceaseless military operations in four villages in San Luis... to pave way for the entry of mining companies in the area."

The group said the families fled their homes due to threats by

and corruption cases involving public officials and employees.

Bayogos sought litigation against the President and his Cabinet officials, saying there was "no evidence of cash transfer receipts or concrete proof of expenditures of funds" in the CCT program.

paramilitary groups and state security forces.

"Datu 'Bagal' Mauro Mansilyohan, a chief community adviser of the Banwaons in Sitio Tabon-Tabon, Barangay Mahagsay, San Luis... said the paramilitary groups in the area wants us to give up our ancestral domain to them through a unified Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT)," the statement said.

"Mario Napungahan, a tribal chieftain who used to be with the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (Cafgu), wants us to transfer to their community so that the ancestral domain of the Banwaons will be consolidated under his supervision and leadership," the group quoted Mansilyohan as saying.

Kalumaran alleged Napungahan wants to consolidate the CADT because he wants mining corporations to operate in the ancestral domains of the Banwaons in San Luis, Agusan del Sur.

Goaynon added the forcible evacuation is the effect of the army and paramilitary group's coercion to allow the entry of mining corporations in the ancestral domain of the Banwaons.

"In our previous experience, after the approval of the consolidated CADT, the datus in Barangay Binicalan are now under threats and harassment for refusing to sign the Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) that grants the entry of mining corporations in the area, following the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (Ipra)," he added.

Goaynon said they are calling on the government to pull out its troops and subdue the paramilitary forces operating in the area so the Banwaons can go back to their lands.

Sun.Star Pampanga, 07.02.2015

### Group slams police on 'no rally' policy

By Reynaldo G. Navales

ANGELES CITY -- The militant Anakpawis Partylist slammed the "no rally" policy set by the Central Luzon police during the Asia Pacific Economic Conference (Apec) meeting in Clark Freeport, which officially concluded Saturday.

The group stated that Central Luzon police director Chief Superintendent Ronald Santos, claimed that mayors around the Clark Freeport did not grant rally permits in order to secure the area and protect the VIPs attending the Apec Senior Officials Meeting (SOMI).

"[...] In the case that there are foreign visitors, the democratic rights of the Filipinos are suspended? It is a serious matter if it is really a policy among mayors," Anakpawis Partylist Representative Fernando "Ka Pando" Hicap said in a statement.

The Anakpawis officials asserted that various sectors must be allowed to air their opposition to the Apec. Apec has led to unimaginable poverty and misery to the basic sectors of farmers and workers with its mission to push a so-called "free trade" economic system between Asia-Pacific countries, the group said. Apec boasts that it pulled down the average tariff of Apec countries from 17 percent in 1989 to 5.2 percent in 2012, the group

added.

The group said that like the World Trade Organization (WTO), Apec implements neo-liberal policies imposed by imperialist countries including the tearing down of protectionist measures safeguarding a member country's respective local economy.

"[...] We suffered negative effects of the WTO, and now that APEC meetings are ongoing, protests would be banned? The local police must even join protests because APEC is detrimental to the national interest, APEC is anti-Filipino and pro-imperialist," Hicap said.

Anakpawis called for the country's withdrawal from Apec and also the WTO.

#### Lightning rally

A little past lunch though, militant groups bearing placards gathered for a lightning rally at the main gate of Clark Freeport to express their sentiments.

A police official said that the protest was peaceful and no untoward incident happened, as anti-riot officers exercised maximum tolerance.

Philstar.com, 12.02.2015

### Political prisoners sue jail warden for rights violations

By Dennis Carcamo

MANILA, Philippines - Political prisoners at the jail facility in Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig City on Thursday sued the warden of the Special Intensive Care Area 1 (SICA 1) before the Office of

the Ombudsman for allegedly violating their rights.

Through their lawyers, the political prisoners filed criminal and administrative charges against Senior Inspector Michelle Ng

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Bonto, officer in charge of the SICA 1.

In their affidavit, the complainants claimed that Bonto refused to allow family members and doctors to visit the political prisoners who were on hunger strike during the Papal visit last January.

The political prisoners, in the course of the hunger strike or fasting, faced reprisals and curtailment of their rights, their affidavit read.

In an earlier statement, political prisoners said Bonto's suspension of visitors at SICA-1 on January 14 agitated some of the detainees, "especially the members of certain hail gangs such as the Sputnik gang, blamed the political prisoners for the prohibition of the visits to them."

"Reportedly, the SICA-1 jail warden herself is instigating the Sputnik gang in threatening the lives and security of the political prisoners and inciting division among all the detainees by unjustly blaming the political prisoners' fasting/hunger strike as the root of the sudden unfair restrictions on their rights," the group said in a statement.

Marie Hilao-Enriquez of the rights group Karapatan said that Ng-Bonto did not only violate the rights of political prisoners at SICA-1-Camp Bagong Diwa but has also put their lives at risk.

"Warden Bonto and the Bureau of Jail Management and Penolo-

Rappler.com, 15.02.2015

### Bohol radioman shot dead on Valentine's Day

MANILA, Philippines - A motorcycle-riding gunman shot dead a radio broadcaster Maurito Lim in Bohol on Saturday, February 14, Bohol, according to the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP).

The host of the the daily program "Chairman Mao on Board" is the second journalist murdered in Bohol. NUJP record shows he is the 31st journalist to die under the administration of President Benigno Aquino III.

"We have run out of words of condemnation in the face of the murder of yet another colleague," said NUJP president Rowena Paraan in a statement released Sunday, February 15.

Manilatimes.net, 18.02.2015

### Military tagged in shooting of foreign tourists in Bukidnon

By Zea Io Ming C. Capistrano

DAVAO CITY - Seven foreign tourists were allegedly shot at by armed forces elements in Malaybalay, Bukidnon last February 13.

The New People's Army - North Central Mindanao Regional Command (NPA-NCMR) said in a statement Wednesday that "the indiscriminate firing of operating AFP troops under the 4th Infantry Division against seven foreign tourists and their guide" took place in a mountainous part of Brgy. Dalwangan, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon on February 13, around 8:00 AM.

According to reports the foreigners include an Australian, three British, and three Danish.

Carlito Gayamara, who reportedly served as tourist's guide, was wounded in the incident.

Gayamara acquired a gunshot wound on his upper arm, said Allan Juanito, spokesperson for the NPA-NCMR.

"He was then serving as a tourist guide to seven foreign bird-watchers trekking Mt. Kitanglad. What was supposed to be the group's immersion in a natural wonder turned into a traumatic

### Dispatches: Jailing the Philippines' Elusive Journalist Killers

By Carlos Conde, Human Rights Watch

Media freedom advocates in the Philippines scored a rare victory when a court convicted an alleged gunman in the killing of broadcaster Miguel Belen. The court, in the province of Camarines Sur, last week sentenced Eric Vargas to a 40-year prison term for the July 2010 murder of Belen in Sorsogon City. Killers of journalists in the Philippines almost always elude justice.

According to data from the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, only 14 of the 172 such cases filed in court after the Philippines' People Power revolution in 1986 have ended in a conviction. President Benigno Aquino III has said that his administration is pursuing the prosecution of those behind the killings "with the end in view of arresting every culprit regardless of whether [the victim] was a media individual, an activist, or any other individual." Despite that rhetoric, convictions have been rare while the body count has steadily risen: 30 journalists have been murdered since Aquino took office in 2010. Even worse, not a single mastermind of these killings has been prosecuted and convicted.

A case in point is that of Gerry Ortega, a broadcaster and environmentalist murdered in January 2011. Although one of the suspects, Marlon Recamata, confessed to killing Ortega and implicated former Palawan governor Joel T. Reyes and his brother Mario as the masterminds behind the murder, both men remain at large.

Government inaction not only denies families of victims justice, but it puts others at risk. In a May 2014 report, Human Rights Watch linked the killing of broadcaster Rogelio Butalid to a "death squad" in the southern city of Tagum, financed and directed by then-Tagum City Mayor Rey Chiong Uy. A witness told Human Rights Watch that one of Uy's gunmen killed Butalid. Former death squad members as well as a top police official also implicated Uy in Butalid's murder. But to date, Philippines authorities have taken no action against Uy and his accomplices. Meanwhile, Uy is contemplating another run for Tagum City mayor in 2016 elections.

HRonlineph.com, 09.02.2015

gy cannot simply disregard the law at their pleasure," she added.

The political prisoners also filed a complaint against Bonto before Taguig Regional Trial Court branche 266 and 271.

The radio man was about to enter the building of the dyRD radio station in Tagbilaran City at 10:30 on Saturday, when a lone gunman onboard a motorcycle shot him. The bullet reportedly hit his left jaw and exited on the other side of his face.

Lim was rushed to the hospital across the street from the radio station but he didn't survive. He was declared dead at 1:15 pm.

NUJP condemned the government for continuing impunity. "While we seriously doubt demanding justice will get us, or Maurito Lim's family and colleagues, anywhere, we challenge the government to prove us wrong by acting swiftly to solve the case, arrest the killers and, most important, the mastermind who ordered his death," Paraan was quoted as saying.

experience when they, despite their shouts that they are civilians, were strafed for more than ten minutes by the reactionary troops," Juanito said.

Juanito said the military "did not even help their victim to the hospital and left Gayamara to shoulder all expenses for his medication by himself."

Juanito also denied the military's previous statement that Gayamara was caught in a crossfire between the armed forces and the NPAs.

"There was no encounter between NPA and AFP troops in the area that day. Only the AFP troops and the tourists happened to meet at the time," Juanito said.

Juanito claimed that "AFP troops vent their anger on innocent civilians after their latest defeat in a battle with NPA fighters in the area."

NPAs said they figured in a skirmish with the army's Special Forces Battalion on February 11.

Two of their troops were killed while five others were wounded,

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contrary to the 4th ID's claim that only one of their soldiers was

killed, Juanito said.

InterAksyon.com, 19.02.2015

### IPs urge govt to scrap anti insurgency program

DAVAO CITY - More than 300 tribal members of different tribal communities in Mindanao gathered here on Tuesday to call the attention of government to scrap the military's Oplan Bayanihan which they claim as "causing havoc in the hinterlands."

The groups said more than 1,000 families, or approximately 5,000 individuals, have already evacuated as the Army mounted recently successive military operations to combat the New Peoples Army and other rebels.

Groups coming from Kapalong, Talaingod, Caraga, Bukidnon, Surigao Del Sur and Agusan Del Sur fled to Davao City in their plight to inform the public of their grievances.

Datu Doloman Dausay of Salugpongan Ta 'Tanu Igkanogon (STTI) from Talaingod made it clear however, that their act to evade military operations in their area was "not a sign of cowardice but an open demonstration to fight for their constitutional rights."

"The incessant military ops (military operations) in our homeland is a big violation of our constitutional rights," Doloman said.

"In our evacuation, we did not fear the roaring guns and the continued oppression of government forces. We are here to demonstrate our resolve to express our grievances especially to the military officials in Camp Panacan who command the entire army in Southern Mindanao," he added.

Since the firefight began, there were consecutive evacuations that happened in the entire Mindanao Region.

In April 2014, about 1,300 Manuvu from Talaingod, Davao Del Norte arrived in Davao City to seek refuge from "militarization" of their communities.

The fighting also affected 22 sitios, 27 families, and 234 individuals including women and children in Bukidnon.

From March 21 to December 2014, 962 families and 4,176 individuals from Caraga Region were forced to evacuate their homes for fear of being caught in the crossfire between the government and NPA guerrillas.

The incessant fighting resulted in a mass exodus called "Bakwit Mindanao" where they fled to Davao City and lived in clusters at makeshift houses and tents at UCCP Haran Compound.

The tribes also expressed concern over the abuses done by fellow tribesmen who were forcibly recruited into the paramilitary in order to fight the NPA guerrillas. They said these tribal paramilitary "created more harm than safety."

UPDATES ON CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

HRonlineph.com, 12.02.2015

### Immediately release Marites and Rosario, hold their torturers accountable so that it may not happen again to anyone

Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP) calls on the immediate implementation of the Review Resolution issued by the Department of Justice Secretary Leila De Lima and the immediate release of the two Agta women illegally arrested, detained and psychologically tortured by authorities.

All those involved must be held accountable and this practice that violates human rights must be stopped. [...]

Marites and Rosario were arrested by combined elements of the 59th and 16th Infantry Battalions and local police of Tanay, headed by 2LT Ronnel Avanzado and Chief Insp. Reynaldo Francisco because they were suspected to be members of the New People's Army (NPA), accused of kidnapping, robbery and murder.

According to the DOJ statement posted on their website, "Pursuant to her power to act directly on any matter involving a

Bai Eufemia Cullamat of Mapaso, Surigao Del Sur has condemned the paramilitary groups "for terrorizing citizens and stealing goods" from their community.

According to Cullamat, the male members of a tribe were under pressure to join "because refusal to do so would mean that they are members of the NPA."

"These Bagani, Alamara and other paramilitary troops who constantly ravage our community are once our tribesmen who were recruited by the AFP out of fear of being killed or accused of being NPAs and some had also willingly strayed to fight for the military," Cullamat said.

"Military troops are constantly denying that they have association with any paramilitary groups but we do not believe them because the special force and rangers would often accompany them," she added.

Several datos and leaders from their community who stood firm in defying the plans of the military troops and mining companies were also killed, the group said.

From 2014 to 2015, nine cases of extrajudicial killings were recorded. Among those who were killed were Datu Rolando Ambongan, Ricardo Tuazon, Sr., Rusin Sarrento-Legaspi, Armando Campos, Datu Roger Alaki, Henry Alameda, Aldren Dumagit, Philjohn Poloyapoy, Barangay Captain Necasio Precioso, and Jose Alimboyong.

Bai Josephine Pagalan of Kasalo Caraga said the killing was "a form of injustice" and accused the military of backing the mining activities in the region.

"Caraga Region is under attack because it is the mining capital in the country and we are not going to let other mining companies steal our lands and its wealth," Pagalan said.

"I hope that the national government would intervene especially the government to stop these illegal activities," she added.

The tribal members would stay in Davao City until their plight would be heard by the government.

The tribal evacuees were here since last week in celebration of the first Sabokahan To Mo Lumad Kamalitanan Confederation of Lumad Women.

In Butuan City, 350 indigenous peoples and farmers from Agusan del Sur are also staging a camp-out protest in Butuan City Sports Complex in Libertad Thursday to call for the pull out of the military in their communities.

probable miscarriage of justice within the jurisdiction of prosecutors, and to review the final judgments and orders of prosecutors, a Review Resolution was issued by the Secretary of Justice in connection with the case of two Dumagats who are allegedly detained at Tanay Philippine National Police, Rizal."

A "Motion to Withdraw Information" was filed in January 26, 2015 by Senior Assistant Provincial Prosecutor Leonardo T. Gonzales, in compliance with Secretary De Lima's order.

In view of the findings of DOJ, based on the careful review of the evidence on record, it reveals that a procedural flaw violated the sacred rights of Marites and Rosario. The Justice Secretary emphasized in the Review Resolution that "in an inquest proceeding, it is the duty of the prosecutor to, first and foremost, determine the legality of the arrest made."

DOJ also stated that the arrests of Marites and Rosario were



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based merely on hearsay information provided by a certain Mr. Delos Angeles. In reviewing the Resolution, the Justice Secretary cited the ruling of the Supreme Court in the case of People vs Doria that "if there is no showing that the person who effected the warrantless arrest had, in his own right, knowledge of facts implicating the person arrested to the perpetration of a criminal offense, the arrest is legally objectionable."

Thus, the need for this injustice and human rights violation against Marites and Rosario be stopped. Immediately release the two IP women and made those involved in the irresponsible and illegal arrest and torture of the two be held accountable.

Base on TFDP documentation besides being illegally arrested and detained, Marites and Rosario also suffered emotional trauma caused by this unfortunate incident. They were deprived of sleep and rest during their interrogation and have feared for their lives.

Their families, including their children and livelihood have been affected severely since they have been illegally detained for

more than five months now.

Psychological torture is a crime under RA 9745 or the Anti-torture Act which states that "Mental/Psychological Torture refers to acts committed by a person in authority or agent of a person in authority which are calculated to affect or confuse the mind and/or undermine a person's dignity and morale.."

There have been many cases of illegal arrests and torture perpetrated against alleged and accused members of rebel groups violating the right to due process and equal protection under the law, victimizing innocent civilians belonging to the marginalized sectors.

There were cases of mistaken identities and many more human rights violations and there were no perpetrators punished.

Let Marites and Rosario be the last victims of this habitual and irresponsible handling of authorities especially the security sectors to cases involving suspected insurgents. Release them and hold all those involved accountable.

The Philippine Star, 21.02.2015

## DOJ affirms murder indictment of Pemberton

By Edu Punay

MANILA, Philippines - The Department of Justice (DOJ) has affirmed with finality the murder indictment of US Marine Lance Cpl. Joseph Scott Pemberton over the killing of transgender Jeffrey "Jennifer" Laude in Olongapo City in October last year.

In a nine-page resolution issued yesterday, the DOJ denied Pemberton's motion for reconsideration seeking reversal of the review resolution upholding the finding of probable cause by the Olongapo City Prosecutor's Office on the murder charge against the detained American serviceman.

"We reviewed the facts and the procedural backdrop of this case vis-à-vis the arguments in the motion for reconsideration and found no sufficient justification to reverse, alter or modify the resolution dated Jan. 27, 2015," read the ruling signed by Justice Secretary Leila de Lima.

Pemberton had appealed the resolution of the DOJ last month affirming his indictment.

In a 24-page motion for reconsideration, the detained American serviceman insisted the DOJ should have dismissed the charge that does not satisfy all necessary elements of a murder case. [...] His lawyers led by Rowena Garcia-Flores questioned why the prosecutor accepted additional evidence after Pemberton's waiver - including the Naval Criminal Investigation Service (NCIS) report - allegedly in violation of the Section 3, Rule 112 of the Rules of Court.

They said Pemberton's right to due process was violated during the preliminary investigation conducted by the Olongapo City prosecutor's office.

De Lima rejected the argument, saying there was even no need for the supposed additional evidence allowed by the investigating prosecutors to establish probable cause.

She said pieces of circumstantial evidence - particularly the statement of witnesses Mark Clarence Gelviro alias "Barbie" and Ellias Gallamos and the CCTV footage from the club where Pemberton and Laude went - would suffice to file the case in court.

"The circumstance that respondent (Pemberton) was the person last seen with Laude before and right after the commission of the crime falls within the second type of positive identification and points to respondent as perpetrator of the crime. To us, this is sufficient to establish probable cause against respondent," De Lima explained. [...]

The Olongapo City Regional Trial Court Branch 74 has set the arraignment of Pemberton on Monday, Feb. 23, following the DOJ's dismissal of his petition for review seeking reversal of findings of the Olongapo City prosecutor's office last December that led to the filing of the murder case against him in court.

Justice Secretary Leila de Lima said her office would try to resolve the MR before Monday so as not to further delay the arraignment proceedings. [...]

The Olongapo city prosecutor's office filed the murder case against Pemberton last month with the Olongapo City regional trial court Branch 74, which later on issued an arrest warrant against the US serviceman, who remains under US custody at a joint facility in Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City.

Sun.Star, 22.02.2015

## Peace and order meeting to address Samar killings

TACLOBAN CITY -- The Provincial Government of Samar is positive that the Regional Peace and Order Council (RPOC) meeting slated in March will resolve the series of killings in Calbayog City.

Samar Governor Sharee Ann Tan-de los Santos, who asked for the RPOC members to convene, said she is alarmed with the shooting incidents in Calbayog that setback efforts to draw investments in the province.

In December 2014, a series of killing perpetuated by riding-in-tandem suspects has been reported. Most victims are village officials in Calbayog.

Philippine National Police (PNP) Regional Director Asher Dolina also said that based on their initial findings, the killings were politically motivated and some are rooted on personal grudge.

"My main concern is to address these killings with help from the police, the military and the local chief executives who are RPOC members," Tan-de los Santos said.

The RPOC is chaired by Calbayog City Mayor Ronald Aquino.

The lady governor also said that past killing incidents in Gandara town were already resolved through the help of the police. The crimes are all linked to politics and were perpetuated by private-armed groups.

Karapatan - Press Release, 23.02.2015

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### Police officers in Panesa abduction and torture case arraigned today - Karapatan

The police officers in the abduction, torture and illegal detention of security guard Rolly Panesa will be arraigned today at the Municipal Trial Court-Calamba City for charges of less serious physical injuries based on the resolution issued by the Department of Justice (DOJ) on June 11, 2014.

On September 4, 2013, upon his release, Panesa filed charges before the DOJ against all those involved in his abduction and torture under the Anti-Torture Act, Violation of rights of arrested persons, unlawful arrest, incriminatory machination and perjury.

"It must be stressed that all those who acquiesced, consented and participated in the abduction and torture of Panesa, including high ranking officials, must be indicted and be held accountable," said Cristina Palabay, Karapatan Secretary General.

However, the DOJ, in its June 2014 resolution, downgraded the case to "less serious physical injuries" and charged only four of the named respondents: Insp. Bonifacio Guevarra, SPO1 Christopher Flores, P02 Ariel Dela Cruz and P02 Joseph M. Fernandez. In its resolution, the DOJ said there is violation of the anti-torture law by these state security forces but at the same time clarified there is no physical torture, as defined under the law. The injuries sustained by Panesa, the resolution said, were merely "superficial much less not severe." [...]

On June 26, 2014, security guard Rolly Panesa filed a petition for partial review on the ground of grave abuse of discretion of the investigating prosecutor. Almost a year later, the petition is still pending before the DOJ even as it is already submitted for resolution.

"The dismissal of the complaint against high ranking police and military officials leads to miscarriage of justice. The police officers in the complaint are clearly acting based on the chain of

#### Raymond Manalo faces his abductor-torturer

Raymond Manalo, a victim of enforced disappearance, testified before the Bulacan Regional Trial Court that he saw the two missing students of the University of the Philippines held captive and tortured by Gen. Palparan's men. During his captivity, Manalo personally met Gen. Palparan, or "Lolo", as his soldiers called him.

Today, Manalo faced Gen. Palparan in court as he described in detail how Sherlyn Cadapan and Karen Empeno were tortured and abused by their captors. [...]

At today's hearing, Palparan was heavily secured with armed men in uniform and others in civilian clothes. They filled the whole courtroom while human rights workers and supporters of petitioners Mrs. Connie Empeno and Mrs. Linda Cadapan were not allowed entry. Manalo was even frisked by the sheriff for firearms upon entry in the courtroom and before taking the witness stand.

Manalo, a poor farmer from San Ildefonso, Bulacan was abducted with his older brother Reynaldo by the 24th Infantry Battalion under the command of then Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan on Valentine's day in 2006. The soldiers were looking for Manalo's other brother Bestre, allegedly a member of the New People Army. The Manalo brothers were held captives by the military for one and a half years. They were brought to several camps in Central Luzon and where they were tortured.

Sometime in 2006, at Camp Tecson, San Miguel, Bulacan, he met Sherlyn Cadapan, Karen Empeno and Manuel Merino. He was ordered by the soldiers to bring food to the prisoners in some cells. He did not know he was delivering food for Sherlyn, who was then chained to a bed.

He, along with Reynaldo, Merino, Cadapan and Empeno were brought to Limay, Bataan where an unofficial military camp was set up. Manalo told the court in gory details how the two women were heavily tortured and molested after being caught trying to give a letter to Sherlyn's mother-in-law. Manalo also recalled the killing and burning of Merino.

"With the testimony as strong as Raymond Manalo's, Gen. Palparan should be quickly convicted for his crime of torture and disappearance of two students Karen Empeno and Sherlyn Cadapan," added Hilao-Enriquez.

Hilao-Enriquez was with a team from Karapatan, the Commission on Human Rights then led by Leila de Lima, and Dr. Francisco Datar of the UP Anthropology Department which conducted an investigative mission at Limay, Bataan in 2008. "Raymond Manalo tried very hard to recall the dark memories of where things happened," [Karapatan chairperson Marie] Hilao-Enriquez said. "After some time, despite the terrible headache brought by painful and violent memories, Raymond pointed to the spot where he saw Merino shot, burned and buried," Hilao-Enriquez continued.

"In the site pinpointed by Raymond, charred human bones and yellow slippers were found. Raymond recalled Manuel Merino had been wearing yellow slippers. This proved that Raymond Manalo's statement is undisputable," Hilao-Enriquez said.

"The facts are glaring. Yet, the trial against Palparan has dragged on. For almost five years now, BS Aquino has proven he is incapable of rendering justice to Karen Empeno, Sherlyn Cadapan, Manuel Merino and Raymond Manalo, and to the many other victims of human rights violations committed by his regime. [...]" Hilao-Enriquez concluded.

*Karapatan - Press Release, 16.02.2015*

command. Justice will only be truly served if the DOJ will resolve the petition for partial review and criminally charge in court those they dropped in the complaint," said Palabay.

InterAksyon.com, 24.02.2015

### Palparan's camp tries to destroy witness credibility as trial resumes

By Emil G. Gamos

MALOLOS CITY, Bulacan - The trial of retired Army Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan pushed through on Monday morning with the cross examination of a primary witness that earlier identified the controversial military officer as the one behind the abduction of missing UP students Karen Empeño and Shierlyn Cadapan.

Prosecution witness Raymond Manalo reiterated his earlier testimony that he saw Palparan three times when he was also brought to a military camp.

Manalo again told the court that he saw the two missing students being tortured and at one time saw them hogtied naked.

The lawyers of Palparan, however, dismissed Manalo's testimonies as "inconsistent" saying that it was not the latter's own but a "scripted" piece.

Lawyer Narzal Mallares said that because his client (Palparan) is famous anybody can impersonate him and the witness might have pointed to a wrong guy.

Aside from this, Mallares said the cross examination on Manalo only strengthened the defense's claim that the criminal charges filed by the Department of Justice (DOJ) against his client is

wrong.

Mallares explained that Palparan was still in active duty when the abduction of the two students happened and that the general was only doing his job as a military officer.

On the other hand, prosecution Lawyer Edre Olalia said Manalo's testimonies are credible because he saw what took place and was there when it happened.

He said Manalo's recollection on what happened was clear and sharp.

Manalo is also the same witness against Palparan's co-accused Col. Felipe Anotado and M/Sgt. Edgardo Osorio.

At the same time, Olalia said the security at the court now seems to be like a circus with anti-riot police deployed under the heat of the sun even after the hearing was over and Palparan was already whisked away by a phalanx of heavily armed escorts to his detention in Fort Bonifacio.

"The policemen should be helping in tracking down criminals," Olalia said.

No hearing will be conducted in the whole month of March.



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Court hearings will resume on April 6 after the observance of Holy Week.

Sun.Star Davao, 24.02.2015

### Militants: Filing of charges an attempt to silence us

By Ruji Peter S. Abat

LEADERS of progressive groups, who conducted a highway protest in Compostela Valley in 2013 to dramatize their sentiments against the government's system in the distribution of relief assistance to victims of Typhoon Pablo, cried foul over what they described as "trumped up charges" filed against them by Montevista police.

They claimed the filing of the charges was an attempt to silence them from airing their grievances against the government.

Bayan-Southern Mindanao spokesperson Sheena Duazo, who is among the eight accused charged with disobedience to a person of authority and public disorder under the Batas Pambansa 880 before the Municipal Circuit Trial Court (MCTC) Monkayo-Montevista, told Sun.Star Davao in an interview Monday the charges were baseless.

"[...] They have sued the people who are demanding for relief and rehabilitation and even we who are their support group were charged as well. This just shows the government's insincerity to respond to the legitimate call of the people," she said.

Duazo added that during the protest along the national highway in Montevista, Compostela Valley where thousands of Typhoon Pablo survivors mounted a picket, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Secretary Corazon Soliman signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the leader of progressive groups, wherein both parties agreed that no charges will be

Palparan is on trial for the kidnapping and illegal detention of the two co-eds.

filed against leaders of the protest action while the DSWD will be distributing relief goods to the typhoon victims.

The agreement was apparently breached after the leaders of the progressive groups were charged.

[...] She said the respondents were given the notice of hearing the day before the scheduled arraignment on October 21, 2014.

"The case was resolved and forwarded to the MCTC even when the respondents were not given the chance to file their counter-affidavit. That is why we filed a motion for reinvestigation and we are hoping that the motion will be resolved soon," Evangelio said.

In lieu of the pending case, Balsa Mindanao launched a campaign on Monday to promote the passage of the Anti-Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (Slapp) bill, which is still under review before the Congress.

Hanimay Suazo of Balsa Mindanao described Slapp as charges filed by corporations, public officials, or employers against mass leaders, activists in an attempt to restrict them from organizing mass actions. [...]

Slapps, Suazo said, are also violations of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), citing Part 3, Article 7 of the agreement stating that such laws that restrict and control the right to peaceably assemble should be repealed including BP880.

PEACE PROCESS

Sun.Star Bacolod, 03.02.2015

### OPAPP sees signing of final peace pact with RPA

By Teresa Ellera

THE closure agreement between the National Government and the Partido ng Manggagawa-Pilipinas/Revolutionary Proletarian Army/Alex Boncayao Brigade- Tabara Paduano Group (RPM-P/RPA/ABB-TPG) will be signed "hopefully within the first quarter of 2015."

This was stated by Undersecretary Maria Cleofe Sandoval, of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), who met with representatives of the Negros Occidental Provincial Government and different national agencies at the Capitol in Bacolod City Monday.

"We are aiming for the soonest possible time, but I cannot give an exact date," she said.

RPM-P/RPA/ABB-TPG is now known as Kapatiran para sa Progresong Panlipunan (KPP) as part of their compliance with the provisions of the peace agreement they signed with the government in year 2000.

Former RPA-ABB national commander Carapali Luahalti whose real name is Stephen Paduano is currently representative of party-list Abang Lingkod.

Sandoval said they are conducting "due diligence to ensure that

all components of the agreements are all settled before the (closure) agreement is signed."

The signing of the closure agreement has been delayed because "we are reviewing it." [...]

The OPAPP official said the government has allocated a budget for the agreement but she did not mention the specific amount.

"Since 2012, the government has set aside a budget for them," she said.

Sandoval said the budget includes funds for the development of the community sites where they will be relocated, livelihood for the members and the communities, social protection package for their families and children as well as for health, education, and security.

More than 50 percent of the 400 members of the RPM-P/RPA/ABB-TPG are from Negros Occidental thus the bigger budget will be here, she added. [...]

Sandoval also said they are attending to the cases of RPA-ABB members arrested by the police because of carrying firearms and other previous cases.

"If they have cases they have to face it," she said. [...]

Rappler.com, 09.02.2015

### Mamasapano clash delays passage of Bangsamoro law

By Angela Casauay

MANILA, Philippines - The House of Representatives will no longer meet the March 2015 deadline to pass the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).

The ad hoc committee tackling the measure agreed on Monday, February 9, to suspend deliberations "indefinitely" to give way to the House probe into the deadly clash in Mamasapano,

Maguindanao on Wednesday, said Cagayan de Oro Representative Rufus Rodriguez.

Rodriguez, chair of the ad hoc committee tackling the bill, said the pending probe would make it difficult for the House to pass the law by March before Congress pauses for a break until May.

"We do not set deadlines anymore. The Mamasapano incident is so grave that it (resumption of deliberations) depends on the

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findings of the committees. The findings that we have will affect our deliberations," Rodriguez said.

The ad hoc committee will wait for the committee on public order and safety to wrap up its probe before resuming discussions. The Senate conducted its own hearing Monday.

Deliberations would also be on hold until the Philippine National Police submits its findings to the House.

The committee earlier asked the PNP, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, and the Armed Forces of the Philippines to [submit their reports on the clash](#).

Before the Mamasapano clash, the committee had wanted the bill to be passed at committee level by February 9 and discussed in the plenary by February 16.

Lawmakers had covered 70% of the bill when the executive meeting concluded Monday afternoon.

What was left hanging were key provisions on transition, as well as 4 provisions related to security: public order, the army, the police, and how troops will return to post-war life. The committee earlier agreed to postpone discussion on these until the resolution of the Maguindanao clash.

On January 25, close to 400 members of the Philippine National Police Special Action Force entered the town of Mamasapano, a known bailiwick of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), to serve the warrants of arrest for wanted terrorists [Abdul Basit Usman](#) and [Zulkifli bin Hir](#).

However, alleged combined forces of the MILF and breakaway group Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters surrounded them on their way out, triggering a firefight that killed 44 elite cops, at least 17 Moro rebels, and 7 civilians. The MILF blamed the lack of coordination for the incident.

The MILF signed a [peace accord](#) with the government in March 2014 in a deal that set the stage for the creation of a new autonomous region in Mindanao with greater political and fiscal powers than the current one in place.

However, public clamor for accountability over the clash and the beating of war drums are threatening to derail the passage of the bill.

The MILF is also under pressure to prove its commitment to the peace process with no less than President Benigno Aquino III asking them to [return PNP-SAF weapons](#) and [turn over Usman](#). 'Let emotions subside'

Does the Bangsamoro bill still have a chance to pass in the House?

North Cotabato 1st district Representative [Jesus Sacdalan](#), one of the supporters of the bill in the House, said it would be better to let emotions subside before gauging the chances of the bill in Congress again. [...]

Speaker Feliciano Belmonte Jr earlier admitted support for the BBL was "somewhat eroded" following the clash but maintained that that incident should not derail the proposed law's passage. Implications of delay

The suspension of hearings threatens to push back the passage of the proposed law to as late as June 2015, members of the

committee said. Lawmakers will report back for work in May when they pause for a break in March.

With [constitutional issues facing the bill](#) also a top concern, proponents expect the law to be questioned before the Supreme Court once it hurdles Congress, raising the possibility of further delaying the subsequent plebiscite to pass the law.

### In the Aftermath of the Mamasapano Tragedy Coalition for All-out Peace and Social Justice Launched

A COALITION composed of religious, human rights advocates, lawyers, progressive organizations and Moslem professionals have bonded together to form PEACE Camp or Campaign for Peace with Social Justice amidst the on-going probes on the Mamasapano tragedy in Congress.

At their press conference which also served as their public launching, PEACE Camp lead convenors announced their "unwavering commitment to push for All-out peace with social justice in Mindanao, to stop the US-led "war on terror" in the Philippines, and campaign for the Right to Self-Determination of the Bangsamoro Nation".

They called the US involvement in the operations to get Marwan a "white elephant" in both the Senate and House hearings. They also claimed that, "consciously being omitted in the raging fervour for justice is the culpability of the US Government who engineered Oplan Exodus and not a few failed operations before it".

PEACE Camp claimed that the Mamasapano tragedy is "a testament to the reality that far from acting as a sovereign State, the Philippines under the auspices of President Benigno Aquino III continues to willfully and willingly enforce the wishes of the United States Government".

The group blamed Aquino for allowing "our sovereignty to play second fiddle to that of the US, when it acquiesced to Oplan Exodus at the expense of scuttling the unfolding peace process and risking the lives not only of the Fallen 44 but scores of civilians".

"We demand for the immediate rejection of the continued US military presence in Mindanao and elsewhere in the country in utter disregard of our sovereignty as a nation, their statement said.

"We underscore the need for a lasting peace in Mindanao based on justice. We call for justice for the centuries-old oppression and exclusion of the Bangsamoro from meaningful participation and self-determination of their destiny. Peace cannot reign in situations of injustice. Justice restores the dignity of the Bangsamoro as a free, equal and peace-loving people of Philippine society".

"We demand for the immediate rejection of the continued US military presence in Mindanao and elsewhere in the country in utter disregard of our sovereignty as a nation. We demand that the Philippine government side with the Filipino people by rejecting the US-led War on Terror".

PEACE Camp Convenors include: Fr. Robert P. Reyes of Gomburza, Atty. Aaron Pedrosa of Sanlakas, Atty. Arpee Santiago of the Ateneo Human Rights Center, Misty Amistad of the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP), Atty. Banjo Lucman of the Muslim Lawyers Foundation (MUSLAF), Mike Gary of Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino, the Friends of the Bangsamoro Network, Atty. Tecson Lim, Atty. Abdel Jamal Disangcopan and Miss Manila 2014 Ms. KC Halili.

*HRonlineph.com, 13.02.2015*

Even if Congress votes to pass the bill, the transition period toward the new autonomous government would be limited to only a few months if lawmakers decide to stick with the original timeline of installing the Bangsamoro government by May 2016, a month before President Aquino's term ends.

The MILF had hoped to lead the transitional body toward the Bangsamoro for at least a year before the elections of new officers in May 2016. [...]

One of the last items discussed was the issue on the length of the transition period from the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao to the proposed Bangsamoro, a member of the ad hoc committee said.

The committee member said the possibility of extending the transition period to up to 2019 was brought up in the committee. But there was no consensus made as the committee was only in the initial stages of discussions regarding the Bangsamoro Transition Authority that will be led by the MILF.

Without the passage of the law and the creation of the Bangsamoro government, the MILF would not undergo full decommissioning.



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### Close to 15,000 displaced by MILF-BIFF clashes

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By Dennis Arcon

COTABATO CITY, Philippines -- Continued fighting between units of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and its breakaway faction, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, has forced almost 15,000 persons to flee their homes in Pikit, North Cotabato and Pagalungan, Maguindanao.

This developed as the BIFF leadership said they had written their counterparts in the MILF asking for a ceasefire.

The [hostilities](#) between MILF fighters led by Commander Jack Abas and the BIFF led by Shiek Muhiddin Animbang, alias "Commander Karialan," began Saturday in Sitio Tatak, Barangay Kalbugan in Pagalungan, "deep inside the Maguindanao marshland," according to the military.

The affected areas are within the so-called Buliok Complex -- where the boundaries of Maguindanao, North Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat provinces meet.

Among the confirmed casualties is [MILF commander Datukong Ampuan](#), alias "Falcon," of the 108th Base Command.

Although the MILF claims to have killed at least four BIFF gunmen, the splinter group's spokesman Abu Misrie Mama, acknowledged only one fatality and five wounded on their side while claiming to have killed five MILF fighters.

Pikit Disaster Risk Reduction and Management officer Tahira Kalantungan reported 9,036 residents had evacuated [...].

Kalantungan said the fighting has also forced the suspension of classes in the affected villages.

Another 5,000 persons have evacuated in Pagalungan and have been staying at the municipal gym, the market and schools, according to lawyer Laisa Alamia, executive secretary of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.