

## HEADLINES NEWS REVIEW APRIL 2015

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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).*

## HEADLINES &amp; POLITICS

Bulatlat.com, 15.04.2015

**QC court junks one of 2 charges in Tiamzons' pre-trial**

By Janess Ann J. Ellao

MANILA - The Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 81 dismissed one of the two charges filed against Benito Tiamzon and Wilma Austria, peace consultants of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) in a pre-trial hearing at the Philippine National Police (PNP) Training Center in Camp Crame today, Apr. 15.

Rachelle Pastores, one of the lawyers of the Tiamzon spouses, told the media that the dismissal was due to the failure of the prosecution to bring before the court Sgt. John Jacob, the complainant of the nearly 30-year-old case.

One of the four complainants in the other information, a certain Col. Abraham Casis, attended the hearing. But Pastores said

they manifested the seeming "selective prosecution" as the said complainant never appeared before the court in previous hearings for other accused, which were consequently dismissed as well.

"They did not explain," she said.

The Tiamzon spouses were arrested in Cebu in March 2014. They are facing kidnapping and illegal detention charges before the QC trial court.

The prosecution is set to present three witnesses while the defense will present 13. [...]

Sun.Star, 22.04.2015

**90 face murder, theft raps over Mamasapano clash**

By Ruth Abbey Gita

MANILA -- State investigators recommended on Wednesday the filing of direct assault complexed with murder and theft charges against 90 persons over the deaths of 35 elite cops during the botched law enforcement operation in Mamasapano, Maguindanao on January 25.

The Department of Justice (DOJ), which released the joint Special Investigation Team's 225-page report, said 90 members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), and private armed groups (PAGs) would face charges for killing 35 members of the 55th Special Action Company (SAC) of the police Special Action Force (SAF) at the cornfields of Barangay Tukanalipao, Mamasapano.

The suspects were identified by a witness codenamed "Marathon."

"It (death of 35 elite cops) was murder all the way and around when the MILF, BIFF, and PAGs crossed the river over to the cornfield to finish off the dying members of the 55th SAC by means of gunshots to the heads and other parts of their bodies," said the report of the joint Special Investigation Team composed of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and National Prosecution Service (NPS).

Although the report noted that it was the 55th SAC that started the firefight with the Moro combatants, it said there was a "pintakasi" among the MILF, BIFF, and PAGs against the elite police. The MILF had said that the Moro combatants just defended themselves as the elite police commandos first fired on them.

The report said the Moro breakaway groups "were impelled by a common intention and banded together against the 55th SAC to kill and wipe out the latter."

At 8 a.m. of January 25, the report stressed that the MILF, BIFF, and PAGs "already knew that they were engage in a firefight with police officers" and yet, the breakaway groups did not stop firing against the elite cops.

"Some 55th SAC commandos tried to surrender but the MILF, BIFF, and PAGs continued firing at them until the commandos would no longer fight back because many of them were already dead and those still alive were severely wounded," the report said.

"After the firefight, MILF elements crossed the river over to the cornfields to finish off the dying 55th SAC members," it added.

As to the deaths of nine 84th SAC commandos, the report said there was no third party eyewitness and the survivor belonging to the group does not identify the particular suspect.

The report said it could not confirm the alleged killing of survivor Police Officer 1 Raymond Lalan of four civilians sleeping at a makeshift mosque as the MILF did not allow the investigation team to interview the witnesses.

The special investigation team said another set of eyewitnesses are necessary to testify. Thus, the DOJ gave the investigation team two months to identify the suspects over the deaths of nine members of the 84th SAC and the four civilians.

Meanwhile, the report did not establish if the clash was a "massacre" as described by the Senate, or a "misencounter," as suggested by MILF. Rather, it said the incident was "somewhat in between these two extremes."

The bloodshed killed 44 SAF commandos, 17 Moro rebels, and five individuals. Malaysian terrorist Zulkifli bin Hir, alias Marwan, one of the main targets of the law enforcement operation, was also killed.

Rappler.com, 29.04.2015

**Mary Jane's testimony to help other trafficking victims - DOLE**

By Katerina Francisco

MANILA, Philippines - The testimony of Filipina Mary Jane Veloso against the alleged illegal recruiters who duped her into smuggling drugs into Indonesia will help other victims of human trafficking, Philippine Labor Secretary Rosalinda Baldoz said on Wednesday, April 29.

In a press conference after Veloso was granted a [last-minute reprieve](#) from execution by Indonesian officials, Baldoz said the Filipina worker's testimony will help give a picture of the depth and complexity of illegal recruitment cases.

"Hopefully this case will unearth how widespread or complicated this case is, involving not just Mary Jane but other nationalities," Baldoz said. [...]

Indonesia stayed Veloso's execution, which was scheduled at around 1 am (Manila time) on Wednesday, to allow her to testify against her alleged illegal recruiter, Maria Kristina Sergio.

Sergio allegedly recruited Veloso to work as a domestic helper in Malaysia. When Veloso was already there, she was told she would work in Indonesia instead. Sergio's contact, a certain "Ike," allegedly gave Veloso a travel bag to use, which she didn't know contained 2.6 kilograms of the prohibited drug heroin.

The 30-year-old single mother of two was convicted for drug smuggling in October 2010.

Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs spokesman Charles Jose said that Sergio's surrender to Nueva Ecija police on Tuesday "played a big part" in Veloso's reprieve.

Philippine President Benigno Aquino III earlier [requested Indonesia](#) to turn Veloso into a state witness. In a last-minute phone call to Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi on Tuesday, April 28, Aquino said this would allow Indonesia to pin down a drug trafficking syndicate.

#### Better info dissemination needed

Speaking to reporters, Baldoz on Wednesday also stressed the need to improve information dissemination to protect overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) from being used as drug couriers or duped into carrying out illegal activities abroad.

Baldoz instructed the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and the Overseas

Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) to intensify their pre-employment orientation program.

She also ordered strengthening the collaboration among the member agencies of the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT). [...]

#### Jokowi on Mary Jane Veloso: I listened to rights groups

By Voltaire Tupaz

MANILA, Philippines – Indonesian President Joko "Jokowi" did not only consider President Benigno Aquino III's last-ditch [appeal for Mary Jane Veloso's life](#) but also human rights' activists'.

For an hour, President Jokowi met with a local migrants rights advocate and representatives from 3 trade unions on Tuesday, April 28, a few hours before the scheduled Indonesian executions. [...]

Human rights lawyer [Edre Olalia](#), Veloso's private counsel, earlier said the Filipina is not just a victim of a drug syndicate but also a "human trafficking victim." [...]

The National Bureau of Investigation had earlier filed [illegal recruitment, human trafficking, and estafa charges](#) against Sergio and two others in connection with Veloso's case. [...]

Rappler.com, 29.04.2015

InterAksyon.com, 30.04.2015

## ROUND-UP | 79 CPP-NPA-NDF leaders arrested from 2011 to March 2015

By Jaime Sinapit

MANILA - Apparent complacency and slackened vigilance on the part of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), its armed wing New People's Army (NPA) and negotiating arm National Democratic Front (NDF), coupled by stepped-up intelligence operations by the government's security establishment, contributed to the neutralization of at least 79 high-ranking rebels, a confidential briefing document indicated. The outcome, covering the period 2011 to March 2015, was spelled out in a joint military and police document marked "confidential" obtained by InterAksyon.com. From January to March 31 alone this year, nine communist leaders from the national, regional and front levels were either arrested or killed in intelligence and combat operations launched by the military and police. The data showed that, from 2011 to 2014, a total of 70 communist leaders were neutralized as the result of armed encounters with government troops.

The list also indicated that some of these communist leaders opted to surrender when cornered. In 2012, 10 rebel leaders were arrested, followed by 19 in 2013 and 34 in 2014.

On Monday this week, NDF chief negotiator Luis Jalandoni announced that peace talks with the government may resume in

May as long as the government releases from jail 16 of its "peace consultants" including Benito Tiamzon and his wife Wilma Austria-Tiamzon, vice chairman/acting chairman of the CPP and CPP secretary general/CPP head national finance commission, respectively.

AFP chief of staff General Gregorio Pio Catapang Jr. said he believed the arrest of the Tiamzons was a big blow to the 46 years old communist armed struggle, the longest in Asia, and led to a "leadership vacuum" in the CPP-NPA-NDF. The Tiamzons are currently detained at the Philippine National Police's (PNP) Custodial Center at Camp Crame in Quezon City. Last week, Catapang welcomed the suggestion of Jalandoni for the resumption of peace talks. [...]

In February 2011, the NDF turned its back on the negotiating table as it accused the government of tolerating the military and police move of arresting its "peace consultants" and thus violating the Joint Agreement on Security and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG).

But the government stood pat on its position that those being arrested had nothing to do with the peace talks, besides being the subject of standing arrest warrants for a string of alleged criminal cases filed in courts against them. [...]

#### INSTITUTIONS

ABS-CBN News, 26.03.2015

## False arrests, multi-million rewards

By Gigi Grande, ABS-CBN News

THE GOVERNMENT has released some P280 million in reward money to so-called tipsters for information that led to the arrests of suspected terrorists and criminals from 2004 to 2014.

Despite prohibition, lawmen took a share of the bounty and based on records and interviews gathered by the ABS-CBN Investigative team, they arrested a number of wrong men, leaving the real terrorists scot-free.

To date, there have been at least 51 cases of wrongful arrests in the kidnapping of some 50 teachers and students in Tumahubong, Basilan in March 2000; the kidnapping of foreign tourists in Sipadan in April 2000; the abduction of American Jeffrey Schilling in August 2000; the Dos Palmas kidnapping in May 2001; and the Kidapawan City twin blasts in Cotabato in October 2007, all allegedly the handiwork of members of the Abu Sayyaf.

All these were celebrated crimes, and those wanted for the crimes had huge bounties on their heads ranging from P150,000 to P3.5 million.

#### ABU MAN, TAGUIG SCHOOL BUS DRIVER?

One of them was Ibno Abbas Abdil, wanted for the Tumahubong kidnapping. He had a P1 million bounty.

In July 2004, police announced the arrest of one Ibno Alih Ordonez at Fort Bonifacio Global City, Taguig. Ordonez, they said, was Abdil posing as a school bus driver in Taguig.

"Abdil" was detained at the PNP Custodial Center in Camp Crame. Three years later, a court ruled that Ordonez and Abdil were two different people.

"They beat me up. I threw up every time," Ordonez recalled in a mix of English, Filipino and Spanish. [...]

But by the time Ordonez was released, the reward money for his capture had long been claimed and allegedly divided among the tipsters and policemen.

In all, government has paid informants cash rewards of nearly P280 million since 2004 for information leading to the arrest of the country's most wanted.

A joint circular of the PNP and AFP clearly bars government employees from receiving cash rewards.

#### KABIGTING ADMITS SCHEME

But in an interview with ABS-CBN, retired police Supt. Jess Kabigting, former chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP) Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) General Investigation Unit, said that a policeman getting part of the bounty was "normal" practice, supposedly part of an "unwritten rule" among the circle of officers and informers.

The Philippine Star, 01.04.2015

### Journalist killing a war crime? CHR wants study

By Janvic Mateo

MANILA, Philippines - Serious study is needed on the proposal to make it a war crime to kill or kidnap journalists who cover conflict areas, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) said yesterday.

CHR spokesman Marc Cebreros said changes in the international human rights law have to be carefully considered before it can be adopted by different countries.

Cebreros was reacting to the statement of Associated Press president Gary Pruitt, who said a new framework is needed to protect journalists who cover conflicts.

"It used to be that when media wore 'Press' emblazoned on their vest, or 'Press' or 'Media' was on their vehicle, it gave them a degree of protection," Pruitt said in a speech Monday at Hong Kong's Foreign Correspondents' Club.

"But guess what: That labeling now is more likely to make them a target," he added.

Sun.Star, 19.04.2015

### Senators divided over probe on alleged corruption in judiciary

By Camille P. Balagtas

SENATE President Franklin Drilon said Sunday the judiciary is not exempted from any investigation on alleged corruption. Drilon clarified that it is within the Supreme Court's power to discipline its members but "it does not mean that Congress may not investigate issues of corruption within the judiciary."

The Senate chief said that although the two Court of Appeals (CA) justices accused of receiving bribes from the camp of Makati Mayor Jejomar Erwin Binay Jr. could be invited to a Senate hearing, "they should not be forced to appear if they do not wish to do so," citing interdepartmental courtesy. [...]

Drilon admitted that allegations of bribery and anomalies in the judiciary are disturbing and merits the attention of Congress, saying that "court officials are not above the law." [...]

Drilon also cited the controversies on the use of the Judicial Development Fund which was raised by the House of Representatives which earlier claimed that the JDF is similar to the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) that is not totally transparent.

Drilon said it is undeniable that the anomalies in the justice system are really happening as he cited the recent ouster of Sandiganbayan Justice Gregory Ong and Chief Justice Renato Corona.

HRonlineph.com, 25.04.2015

Kabigting himself was involved in the arrest of several high-profile cases the past decade, including Ordonez's.

"Even if the reward is supposed to go to the civilian informant, it's split with policemen because it's a team effort," Kabigting said in Filipino.

"Yes I've received a token amount, I have no problem admitting that. We once arrested someone with a P1 million bounty on his head, and I received 80 (thousand pesos)."

Two other sources confirmed the alleged practice to the ABS-CBN News: One is an intelligence officer who spoke on condition of anonymity because he's still in active service; the other, a government informant who requested his name be withheld for security reasons. [...]

Cebreros said the strong message of the AP president highlighted the enormity of the problem with regard to the killing of journalists, particularly in war-torn areas such as Syria and Iraq.

He stressed the need for governments, including the Philippines, to ensure the protection of all journalists, and not just those who cover conflicts.

According to Cebreros, classifying an act as a war crime - in this case the killing of journalists - would entail higher penalties and a different evidentiary requirement during trial.

"The nature of the offense will be different," he said.

If killing or kidnapping journalists would be declared a war crime, Cebreros said media personnel who cover conflicts might be accorded the same protection given to members of the Red Cross.

He said under international human rights law, both sides of the warring parties are obligated to ensure the protection of the Red Cross.

Senator Antonio Trillanes IV in an interview said that Congress actually respects the decision of the SC on various issues and follow its ruling without question.

But Trillanes said it is also expected for the court to bend in favor of Congress supremacy to inquire in aid of legislation, considering that the issue is about the integrity of the justice system.

Trillanes recently filed Senate Resolution 1265 to investigate alleged "justice for sale" as he accused CA Sixth Division Justices Jose Reyes and Francisco Acosta of receiving millions of pesos in exchange for issuing a temporary restraining order and writ of preliminary injunction against the suspension order issued by the Office of Ombudsman against Binay.

Trillanes said the Filipino people expect justices and officials of the court to act with honesty and integrity. Otherwise, "justice rests on shaky grounds," he added.

He said that the Senate, as a legislative body, has the oversight function on all government offices, including the judiciary under the system of checks and balances. [...]

But Acting Minority Leader Vicente Sotto III said the SC would be the best venue to probe Trillanes' accusations.

Sotto said it is not proper to allow court officials to submit themselves to a legislative probe as he urged colleagues to submit any complaint against corrupt justices to the SC. [...]

## CHR's Personnel Arising Against "Midnight" Appointment of Executive Director by Commissioners Rosales, Cardona and Dela Cruz

By Max De Mesa

The arising of more than 100 personnel to register their strong protest against an appointment to the institution's adjudged as done in "indecent haste" augers well for a renewal of good governance in our Commission on Human Rights (CHR). It is indeed a welcome refreshing wind of unprecedented change to demand from the CHR Commissioners its rights-based obligations as duty bearers in governance, i.e., participation, transparency and accountability. It vindicates quiet deep sensitivity for fairness of the many hard-working and faithful personnel in the CHR.

The first-of-its-kind petition forged and signed by CHR Directors, Officers-in-Charge (OICs) and rank-and-file employees from the national and regional offices disputes the eligibility and procedures assented to and conducted by Chairperson Etta Rosales, Commissioners Ma. Victoria Cardona and Norberto dela Cruz to appoint Atty. Marc Titus B. Cebreros as CHR Executive Director (ED). Commissioner Jose Manuel Mamauag dissented and preferred to leave the appointing of the ED, out of delicadeza, to the next Commission. The petition has been submitted to the currently sitting en banc Commission.

The Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) strongly decry this "midnight" appointment last April 13, 2015 while the Commission term ends on May 5, 2015. It deliberately sets aside the rules of promotion stated in the provisions of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and in the CHR's own all-personnel-approved Merit Selection Plan (MSP). After studying judiciously the data and documents related to the said appoint-

ment, PAHRA stands in solidarity with the findings and protest petition of the CHR personnel.

Furthermore, PAHRA demands the immediate removal of Chairperson Etta Rosales, Commissioners Ma. Victoria Cardona and Norberto dela Cruz for grave abuse of discretion.

The three CHR officials have tailor-fitted requirements and procedures for one who seems to be a pre-favored candidate for ED, Atty. Cebreros.

A janitress applicant required to undergo a neuro-psychological examination to clean the Chairperson's office, but examinations needed for eligibility as ED, the top career position in the Commission to oversee the work and operations of the national office and 13 regional offices, are all set aside. The Civil Service Commission (CSC) advised that it should take at least a month to screen applicants/candidates for managerial positions but the vetting process were manipulatedly short-cutted by the 3 CHR officials to fast-track in four (4) working days said process of appointment.

What alarms PAHRA the most, if not acted upon by the appropriate authorities, is that this grave abuse of discretion may become a justifiable precedent action and a new acceptable standard for Commissioners and personnel of CHR. Much less should it be implanted and perpetuated in the institution.

Whether this grave abuse of discretion has been done near the end or at any period of any Commissioner's term, it merits the same disciplinary action. It goes against the common Paris Principles for NHRIs in the areas of transparency, accountability and rule of law. [...]

### CURRENT CASES OF HR VIOLATIONS

Philippine Daily Inquirer, 30.03.2015

#### NPA owns attack on gov's convoy

DAVAO CITY—On its 46th founding anniversary, the New People's Army (NPA) admitted responsibility over the attack on the convoy of Agusan del Norte Gov. Maria Angelica Amante-Matba in Nasipit town on Thursday.

The military earlier reported that the convoy was on its way to the formal turnover of a school in Barangay (village) Camagong when it was fired upon by alleged NPA rebels.

A policeman was wounded in the attack and was immediately brought to a hospital in Butuan City.

Allan Juanito, spokesperson of the NPA's North Central Mindanao Region, in a statement said communist guerrillas under the NPA-Western Norte-Agusan Sur Command opened fire at the armed escorts of the six-vehicle convoy at an area where there was military operation.

"Six vehicles of Gov. Amante entered along with armed escorts in Camagong area despite an ongoing operation by the 29th

Infantry Battalion troops and Philippine National Police-Nasipit personnel in the boundary of Carmen and Nasipit towns," Juanito said.

He expressed apologies for the incident explaining that they did not know that the governor was in the convoy.

"We earnestly express our regret on this event. It should have been circumvented should there have been prior coordination by the governor's party with the responsible revolutionary cadres in the said territory," Juanito said.

Juanito also reminded politicians to avoid bringing in armed escorts in areas identified as territories of the communist movement. [...]

Peace advocates have been calling on both the government and the National Democratic Front (NDF) to resume the negotiations that would address the root causes of the conflict that has caused numerous casualties and damages to properties. [...]

Sun.Star Cagayan de Oro, 01.04.2015

#### Army blamed in Misamis Oriental village shooting

MEMBERS of a tribal association in Misamis Oriental on Wednesday narrated how four of their companions were killed by soldiers last Sunday.

The association, which represents residents of Sitio Bugna, Barangay Casinglot, in Tagoloan town, told their story at a press conference in Cagayan de Oro City.

The group said troops from the Army's 1st Special Forces Battalion based in Bukidnon entered the village and began shooting at the houses.

The military reported earlier that troops clashed with armed men believed to be New People's Army (NPA) guerrillas who

had converged in Bugna apparently to mark the NPA anniversary. [...]

Killed were Rosalie Neri, 37; Bernabe Sarucam, 40; Nemesio Casas Sr., 56; and Fiel Casas, 17.

Wounded were Jessie Miomio, 22; Elegio Dacumos, 40; Potenciano Paelmariano, 70; and Nemesio Casas Jr., 19.

The residents denied there were NPAs in their village.

"I was cooking rice and my father was feeding the chickens when I heard the gunshots. When I saw that my father and brother were hit, I went out and saw that the army strafed our house," said Nemesio Casas Jr., who had a bullet wound below the right armpit.

Julia Sarucam was preparing breakfast when she heard the gunshots. She sought cover, and found out later her brother-in-law Bernabe Sarucam was shot and killed.

Captain Martinez said guns were recovered from the slain villagers. "Even the son (Casas Jr.) admitted they had a firearm for protection," he said.

Fr. Christopher Ablon, secretary general of Karapatan in Northern Mindanao, said "the army failed to verify the reports they received in which the actions it had taken resulted to the death of four civilians."

"It is clear to Karapatan that these people who sought refuge at Barangay Bugo are civilians after presenting to us identification

cards. For the army to fail in verifying the reports reaching them was irresponsible since it resulted to a massacre," Ablon said.

Datu Gabunan, who is also known as Billy Miaque, told reporters the Bugna tribal association is claiming as ancestral land portions of a ranch whose permit had expired in 2009.

Miaque said the villagers had had run-ins with security guards at the ranch. "These security guards of the CD Ranch have been harassing us since we started our claim of our ancestral domain," he said.

Miaque and the other residents said they will file complaints in court next week.

Twenty-one families who evacuated in Barangay Bugo have returned to their homes to bury their dead.

Sun.Star Davao, 04.04.2015

## 40 lumad families evicted

By Ruji Peter S. Abat

AN INDIGENOUS People's (IP) group based in Barangay Manuel Guianga in Tugbok, Davao City cried foul over alleged eviction of 40 lumad families by a religious group from their ancestral land.

Kahugpong sa mga Lumad (KSL) secretary general Danny Diarog and spokesperson Jonas Alingay, in a joint statement sent to Sun.Star Davao, condemned the actions of a certain Jesus Christ Cooperative, headed by a certain Tony Paner and John Repaso.

The officials of KSL accused the group of shooing off around 40 Bagobo-Klata families from their ancestral lands at sitio Diolo. They claimed some of the cooperative were armed. The victims are currently residing at the neighboring sitio Kahusayan.

"[...] On January 23, 2014, members of the Jesus Christ Cooperative led by Tony Paner and John Repaso shooed us off from Sitio Diolo. They also destroyed our crops and burned down the things in our homes." KSL's statement read.

The lumad leaders also said the religious group cordoned off some portions of what they claimed as their ancestral lands since they used some of the parcels of land to plant pine trees. The lumad leaders were allegedly told that the pine tree planting was for eco-tourism purposes.

In 2008, the KSL officials said, their tribal leader Dominador Diarog was killed and it then paved the way for a string of harassments allegedly perpetrated by the Jesus Christ Cooperative claiming that its members threatened Lumads.

Diarog and Kalingay then urged the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP)-Davao and other government agencies to conduct a probe on the alleged harassments. They also called for the compensation of the damages brought to their houses and crops while they asked the Jesus Christ Cooperative to leave their ancestral lands, stop planting pine trees and cease the harassments on Lumads in Sitio Diolo.

Philippine Daily Inquirer, 06.04.2015

## Ex-mayor shot dead

CATARMAN, Northern Samar —A retired prosecutor, who served as a municipal mayor in the 1990s, was shot and killed while he was having coffee at his porch early Monday.

Police officials have yet to determine the motive in the killing of Harold Acompaniado, who was also a law professor at University of Eastern Philippines (UEP). They are looking into his job as a lawyer as one angle, said PO3 Jim Cutorio, homicide investigator.

In December last year, Acompaniado went to the police station in Catarman town to report that he had been receiving death threats, said Supt. Alberto Garcia Jr., municipal police chief. He declined to elaborate, saying he did not want to jeopardize the investigation.

Acompaniado was mayor of Las Navas town in Northern Samar province from 1992 to 1995, and was a municipal board member from 1995 to 1998. In 1998, he became assistant provincial prosecutor and was assigned to the regional trial court in Laoang town, Northern Samar.

He retired in 2013 and returned to private practice.

Acompaniado was sitting at his porch and having coffee in Barangay (village) Zone 2, Catarman, about 5:30 a.m. when he was shot in the head and chest from across the street with a .45-cal. pistol, Garcia said. The assailant walked away casually, he added.

Sun.Star Davao, 06.04.2015

## Militiaman kills couple

HUMAN rights group Karapatan in Southern Mindanao condemned the killing of a couple allegedly perpetrated by a member of the paramilitary group Alamara at sitio Patel in Barangay Gupitan in Kapalong, Davao del Norte, on April 4.

Karapatan-SMR secretary general Hanimay Suazo, in a phone interview with Sun.Star Davao, said a member of the Alamara identified as Panggong Bukad Masaluon was arrested by barangay officials and was later turned over to the Kapalong police after he allegedly killed Reynaldo and Teresita Martir.

Suazo said that based on the initial findings of Karapatan-SMR's quick response team, the incident happened at around noon

when the suspect was lining up with other individuals at corn mill owned by the Martirs.

An altercation allegedly ensued when Masaluon wanted to cut in line as he was in a hurry. But Reynaldo refused to grant Masaluon's request telling the latter that it was a first come-first serve basis.

Masaluon left the line and returned shortly armed with an M14 rifle. He then allegedly shot three times Reynaldo who was killed on the spot. The suspect also shot Teresita dead when she came to the aid of her husband.

"[...] We condemn the killing of the Martir couple perpetrated by the Alamara. That is why human rights advocates are calling

for the disarming and disbandment of the Alamara and other paramilitary groups," Suazo said. She also urged the Philippine Army's 60th and 72nd Infantry Battalions, whom they accused of recruiting Lumads to join

paramilitary groups, to stop the recruitment and leave the communities, claiming that it has become the apparent cause of human rights violations in the area.

Rappler.com, 06.04.2015

### Zamboanga Sibugay mayor abducted from home

MANILA, Philippines – The mayor of Naga town in Zamboanga Sibugay was abducted late Monday evening, April 6, by 5 armed men.

According to a report from the Philippine National Police (PNP), Naga mayor Gemma Adana was abducted at around 9:15 pm from her residence.

The unidentified armed men then boarded the municipal mayor onto a pump boat, and left heading towards Sibugay Bay.

"Our police are exerting all efforts to determine the whereabouts of the mayor and rescue her safely in coordination with other

law enforcement authorities and the military," said Interior Secretary Manuel Roxas II in a statement Tuesday, April 7.

"She was with her friends when the suspects armed with short firearms barged in and forcibly took the mayor," Roxas said. "The group sped off towards the sea onboard two motorized bancas."

Naga police are in pursuit of the mayor's abductors as of posting.

Inquirer Southern Luzon, 13.04.2015

### Former Inquirer correspondent shot dead in Batangas

By Marrah Erika Rabe

BATANGAS CITY, Philippines—Melinda "Mei" Magsino, 41, and a former Inquirer correspondent, was shot dead by a motorcycle riding gunman while walking along Purok 2, Barangay (village) Balagtas here noontime Monday, police said. [...]

Magsino died on the spot with a gunshot wound on the head.

Her assailant, who was on board a black and white Honda motorcycle without a license plate, fled the scene of crime.

Investigation is still ongoing to identify the suspects and motive for her killing.

Asian Human Rights Commission – Urgent Appeals Programme, 19.04.2015

### [...] Activist killed

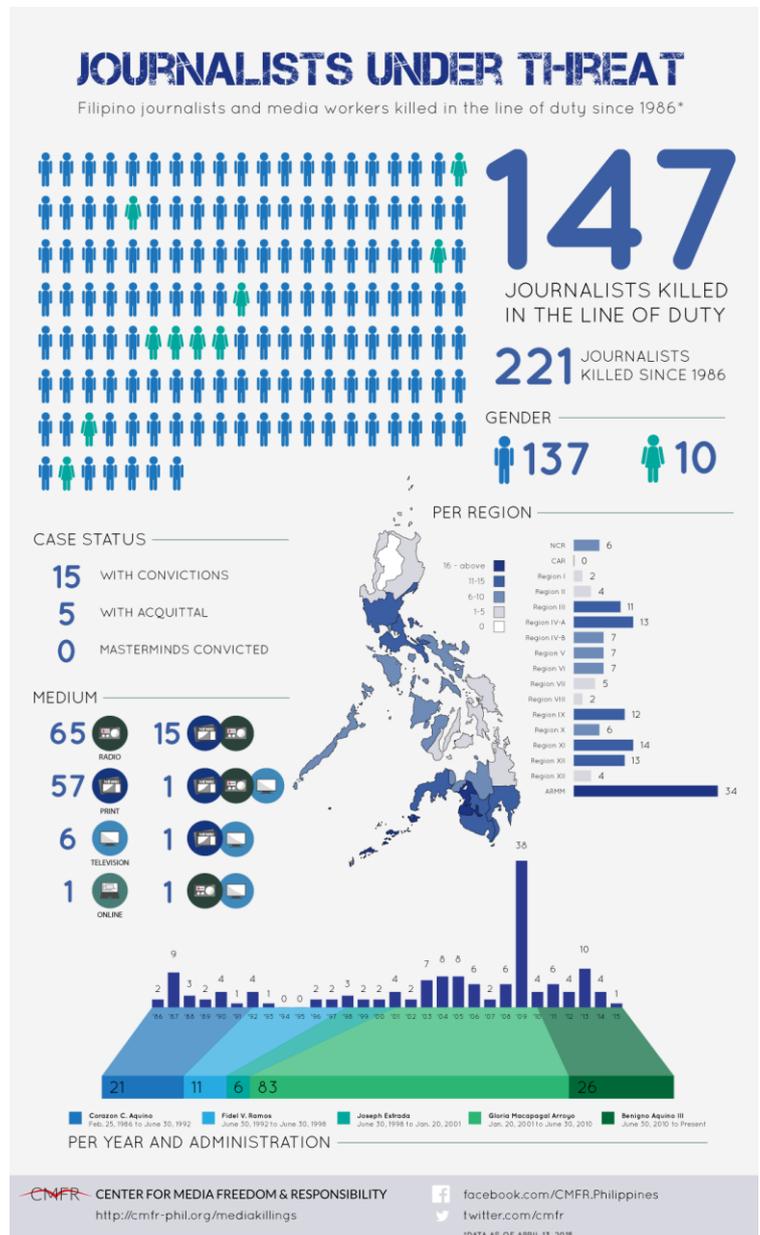
[...] On March 16, 2015, Virgilio Leotorco was found begging for help by a farmer looking for his lost cow in Brgy. Matusalem, Roxas, Isabela. [...] Leotorco was shot thrice. He was near the irrigation canal when the farmer found him. He was out that night to catch frogs. Before the farmer could ask for help to bring Leotorco out from the irrigation canal, Leotorco died. Leotorco is a member of Agbiag Matusalem Roxas Isabela (AMARI), a local group in Matusalem, Isabela fighting for land and housing rights. Leotorco, 56, was among the 66 settlers fighting for their resettlement in the area claimed by the Isabela State University. On February 28, 2014 another member of AMARI, Romulo dela Cruz was a victim of enforced disappearance. His whereabouts remain unknown. [...]

HRonlineph.com, 20.04.2015

### Harassment and Frustrated Killing of Indigenous People Leader -MAG

The Medical Action Group (MAG) is forwarding to you an appeal regarding the harassment and frustrated killing of indigenous people, Manobo leader in Don Carlos, Bukidnon.

[...] Nestorio Sulatan Ampode, 36, a member of Ambugkol Manobo Tribal Association (AMTA), belonging to a Manobo tribe was working in the rice field



when he was strafed with bullets allegedly by a group of security guards of Levelit Balarote- Zambrano. The incident reportedly happened on October 2, 2014 at about 8:00 in the morning in Purok 9, Prakatahan, Barangay Pualas, Don Carlos, Bukidnon.

Ampode is an active member of AMTA and a tribal council member of Sitio Prakatahan, Brgy. Pualas, Don Carlos, Bukidnon.

The above-mentioned area where the reported incident occurred is part of disputed land between indigenous peoples who are AMTA members and a certain Levelit Balarote Zambrano.

Despite previous incidents of harassment and threats against AMTA members by security guards employed by Balarote Zambrano, Ampode and his fellow members of AMTA continue to assert their right and work through the legal process on their ancestral land claim. He serves as an overseer of AMTA while he works on facilitating and processing its Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) claim.

According to Ampode, before the incident, he used to till a parcel of land which he owns. However, the Balarote-Zambrano group prevented him to till his land. He was left with no choice but to work outside his land. While their claim of ancestral land is yet to be settled, Ampode served as a paid farm worker of a certain Danny Tahuyan to raise some income for his family.

On October 2, 2014, Ampode was cultivating the rice field together with Danny Tahuyan when they were approached by Marcial Balarote, a private security guard, and told them to leave the area they were cultivating.

Ampode narrated that he insisted to talk with Balarote but the guard pointed an armalite toward his abdomen. The guard fired his gun. Ampode fell down, but the bullet did not hit him. Balarote and Tahuyan thought that Ampode was already dead. The guard immediately left the area and reportedly went back to their barracks. Ampode said he went home and pretended that nothing happened.

Some AMTA leaders immediately went to the place of incident and recovered empty shells of shot gun in the scene. On the same day at around 10:00 in the morning, the incident was reported by AMTA leaders to the Philippine National Police (PNP) Don Carlos, Bukidnon station for blotter. They submitted

the gathered evidences such as empty shell of bullets and Ampode's shirt which reportedly had gun powder.

In the evening of October 02, 2014, according to Liguria Sagubalan, wife of Ampode, while she and Ampode were in their house, she noticed four unidentified persons roaming around the vicinity of their house reportedly carrying guns. According to Sagubalan, she noticed a gun pointed toward the direction of their door. Ampode remained inside their house.

The Levelit Balarote-Zambrano group wanted Ampode to leave the disputed land as what other members of AMTA did.

Levelit Balarote-Zambrano claimed that they owned the lands being disputed which was already awarded to them by the government through Commission on the Settlement of Land Problems (COSLAP). The Balarote-Zambrano Group had created policies which did not sit well with the indigenous peoples living in the area. Among the policies are restrictions of indigenous peoples to till their own land, and imposed curfew hours until 9:00pm.

The ordinance had created fear among indigenous peoples in the area. Further it has taken its toll on the livelihood and socio-economic activities of indigenous peoples.

Before the incident of strafing on October 2, there was a reported incident of attempted killing on Ampode on September 24, 2014 at about 5:00 in the afternoon while tending to his carabao.

Ampode was shot twice by a certain Richie Lacorte, one of the security guards of Levelita Balarote-Zambrano. Fortunately, Ampode was unharmed. This incident was related to their struggle on their claims for the CADT. The incident was immediately reported by AMTA members to the PNP-Don Carlos, Bukidnon, but full and thorough investigation on the case is yet to be conducted by authorities.

The process of the ancestral domain claim should be sped up to prevent further harassment in the said area. The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) continues to act with impunity. Ampode said the effect of NCIP's inactions not only deprives the members of Manobo communities affected by the unlawful claim of Balarote-Zambrano to their rights to ancestral domain and means of subsistence but that of the entire indigenous peoples within the CADT area.

Bulatlat.com, 21.04.2015

## Lumad leader slapped with 'fabricated' charges

By Ronalyn V. Olea

MANILA - A leader of a regional organization of Lumads in Northern Mindanao is charged with murder.

Jomorito Goaynon, chairperson of Kalumbay, told Bulatlat.com in an interview that he was shocked to receive a text message from a colleague saying he is facing yet another "trumped-up" criminal charge. Goaynon was in Manila to attend the Peace Summit organized by the Citizens Alliance for Just Peace, April 18.

Goaynon and his three siblings were being implicated in the killing of Dorlito Goaynon dela Mance, a leader of a paramilitary group, on March 28 in Malaybalay, Bukidnon. Goaynon denied any involvement, saying he was in a meeting in Cagayan de Oro at the time of the incident. Goaynon added that the New People's Army (NPA) publicly owned up the killing.

This is the second time that Goaynon was slapped with a criminal offense since he figured in the anti-militarization campaign in Mindanao, according to Cristina Palabay, secretary general of human rights alliance Karapatan.

Goaynon said he had heated debates with the [military over the recent evacuation of the more than 1,000 residents](#) from 14 communities to Balit, Agusan del Sur.

"It's clear the military is determined to imprison me," Goaynon said.

Earlier in February, Goaynon and seven other leaders of people's organizations and human rights workers were accused of illegal detention. A petition for a Writ of Habeas Corpus and Writ of Amparo was filed by the 4th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army (IDPA) in the name of Teddy Ostos. [Teddy alleged that Goaynon and the others detained his son, Rene and family](#) who were among those who stayed at the evacuation center in Balit village.

The Court of Appeals, however, in a resolution dated March 5, 2015, pointed out defects in the petition and ordered the petitioner to correct them within five days.

When sought out by some of the respondents, Teddy said he was tortured by soldiers of the 26th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army (IBPA) to force him to execute the complaint affidavit. Later, Teddy executed an affidavit recanting his testimony against the respondents.

Palabay said what happened to Goaynon is "one of the numerous violations committed against civilians in many remote communities."

All over Mindanao, [at least 508 indigenous peoples' leaders and activists have been charged with common crimes](#). Human rights groups decried this as "criminalization of political dissent."

Rappler.com, 23.04.2015

## Iloilo barangay official shot dead

By Glenda Sologastoa

ILOILO, Philippines – A village head in the town of Lambunao in Iloilo was killed by riding-in-tandem gunmen morning of Wednesday, April 22.

Chief Inspector Elmer Armada of the Lambunao municipal police station said that Raul Ganadillo, chairman of of Barangay Pandan, was driving along the highway when two men aboard a motorcycle approached his vehicle and fired at him 3 times.

Ganadillo sustained multiple gunshot wounds, with one fatal shot on the left side of his body. He was rushed to the Ricardo Y. Ladrido Memorial District Hospital in Lambunao, but was declared dead on arrival.

The police were able to trace and arrest the suspects, as witnesses reported seeing the culprits head toward the nearby town of Calinog.

The arrested suspects were Crisanto Caro alias "Badong" and his unnamed cousin-in-law.

"[...] We found them in their house while painting their motor-cycle)," Armada said.

Armada said Caro and his group were previously involved in a series of hold-up incidents in Calinog and nearby towns, and had just released from jail.

Caro vehemently denied he was behind the crime.

Armada declined to provide further details so as not to jeopardize the ongoing investigations. Investigators are looking into the threat that Ganadillo reportedly received and his conflict with the barangay council.

Manilatimes.net, 29.04.2015

## Rights group accuses military of harassment

By Al Jacinto

**ZAMBOANGA CITY:** The human rights group Karapatan has accused the military of harassment after a failed raid on its office in Davao City in southern Philippines.

It said the armed men were stopped by human rights workers from barging into the office late on Monday.

Hanimay Suazo, Karapatan secretary general, said they reported the matter to the police. She said some of those in the office were villagers who were victims of human rights violations in Paquibato District.

"This incident is a form of harassment and a criminal act. The military wants to inflict fear to silence us," she said.

"There is no doubt that this is a clear handiwork of military and their agents for the fulfilment of their intelligence and combat operations of the failing Oplan Bayanihan of the AFP [Armed Forces of the Philippines] and [President] Benigno Aquino. We condemn these blatant attacks against us, human rights defenders," Suazo added.

There was no immediate statement from the military about the allegations, but Karapatan has repeatedly accused troops under the Eastern Mindanao Command of violating human rights of villagers and tribesmen in Davao and other provinces nearby.

UPDATES ON CASES OF HR VIOLATIONS

CNN Philippines, 21.04.2015

## Councilor tagged in killing of Italian priest

By Abner Francisco

**(CNN Philippines)** – A town councilor in North Cotabato is the latest addition to the list of suspects being linked to the killing of an Italian missionary more than three years ago.

The Justice Department-led body investigating the case is set to meet before the end of this month to evaluate the new testimony.

Fr. Fausto "Pops" Tentorio of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Mission (PIME) was gunned down early morning of October 17, 2011 by unidentified assailants outside his parish convent in Arakan, North Cotabato.

He was about to drive for the monthly clergy meeting in Kidapawan City that morning.

According to PIME's Fr. Peter Geremia, assistant parish priest in Arakan, a new witness surfaced and tagged Arakan Councilor Luis Bunsuran as one of those who allegedly planned the assassination plot against his colleague.

Bunsuran is a first-term town councilor and chairperson of the Municipal Council's Committee on Peace and Order.

The witness executed his judicial affidavit complaint before the Special Investigating Team for Unsolved Cases (SITU), an investigating body composed of the Department of Justice (DOJ), National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and Commission on Human Rights (CHR).

In his sworn statement, the witness revealed that Bunsuran allegedly approached him and asked him if he could kill Tentorio.

Bunsuran allegedly told the witness that Tentorio should be killed for being an active supporter of the communist New Peoples Army (NPA).

The witness added that Bunsuran even showed him the gun to be used in killing the priest, but he turned down the offer, saying that his conscience could not allow him to kill a good man who helped his children in their schooling.

A few months later, the witness said he was shocked to know that the priest was shot dead inside the church compound.

The witness revealed that two close relatives of the councilor attempted to kill him, but he fought back and killed his attackers.

Bunsuran and his lawyer refused to give any comment on the issue, but Geremia said the councilor approached him and swore he had nothing to do with the killing of Fr. Tentorio.

Geremia added that if Bunsuran indeed had no involvement in the crime he could do two things: One is to prove his innocence, and second is to reveal what he knows about the killing and turn himself in to become a state witness.

Aside from Bunsuran, other suspects who were earlier identified were Johnny Corbala, also known as Kumander Iring, a known leader of vigilante group Bagani, and his five other companions.

The government of Italy is also looking closely at the outcome of this investigation as this is the second case in North Cotabato that an Italian priest was killed while doing missionary work.

In 1985, Italian priest Fr. Tulio Favali, also of PIME, was brutally murdered in the municipality of Tulunan.

Bulatlat.com, 27.04.2015

## 'Lolo' is Palparan - witness

By Janess Ann J. Ellao

MANILA – Another witness on the disappearance of two students of the University of the Philippines positively identified retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan as among those behind the abduction.

“He is ‘lolo,’ (grandfather),” Oscar Leuterio said, pointing at Palparan in the hearing at the Malolos Regional Trial Court today, Apr. 27.

Leuterio was abducted by paramilitary and suspected military agents on April 17, 2006. He was a security guard working for the Iron Ore Mining Corporation at Camaching village in Doña Remedios Trinidad, Bulacan for nearly a year when he was abducted.

Leuterio related that at least 30 armed men, along with five men in civilian clothes, indiscriminately fired at the mining company, while their manager Bernabe Mendiola was handing out the workers’ salaries.

During the hearing, Leuterio said he was not able to identify the armed men. But he said he was able to identify the civilian guides [...]. He said they are members of CAGFU assigned in their area.

Leuterio said they were made to lie on the ground, along with Mendiola and co-workers spouses Virgilio and Teresa Calilap. He said he was tortured and interrogated about New People’s Army rebels.

In his testimony, he said he was brought to Fort Magsaysay on April 18, 2006, where he was detained in a small cell. This was also the time that he met the Manalo brothers, who were detained in a nearby cell.

On June 27, 2006, at around 2 a.m., he said he saw his friend ‘Em-en’ along with two girls, whom he described as a “tall girl with protruding front teeth” and another who was “chubby.”

Em-em is Manuel Merino, the farmer abducted along with UP students Karen Empeño and Sherlyn Cadapan, on June 26, 2006 in Hagonoy, Bulacan.

Leuterio then said that through a “slit” in the door, he saw how soldiers wanted the two girls, whom they referred to as Tanya and Sierra, to dance. He also heard one said that, “[...] they look so luscious”.

Meanwhile, soldiers were punching and kicking Merino on the floor.

During his cross-examination, Leuterio was asked by defense lawyers if it was possible to see such details if he was only looking through a slit in the door. But in his re-direct examination, he clarified that the “slit” was an opening big enough for him to see the entire living room where Merino and the two girls were.

A few minutes later, the three were ordered to be brought back to the vehicle.

Leuterio, along with fellow detainee Manuel Sioson, also said that on Aug. 29, 2006, he was brought to the office of the commanding general, where, he was told, he would meet a certain “Lolo.”

Soldiers turned off the light and then kicked him, causing his blindfold to be removed. When the light was turned on again, he finally saw “Lolo,” whom he later identified as Palparan.

The military finally released Leuterio on Sept. 14, 2006, with orders from no less than Palparan that he should not speak to anyone during the first few weeks of his release. [...]

Erlinda Cadapan, mother of Sherlyn, said Leuterio’s testimony is a step closer for the truth to come out and to make Palparan accountable, adding that justice would soon be served for the two missing students.

InterAksyon.com, 28.04.2015

## JONAS BURGOS, 8 YEARS | 'End our suffering of not knowing' - Edita to PNoy

By Edita Burgos, mother of Jonas Burgos

MANILA, Philippines -- Today, April 28, 2015, marks the eighth year since activist Jonas Burgos, son of press freedom icon Jose Burgos Jr., was abducted from a Quezon City mall.

Although the Supreme Court has affirmed that the Armed Forces of the Philippines, specifically a Philippine Army unit commanded by now Major Harry Baliaga, no one has yet been made to account and Jonas remains missing, his fate unknown, his family unable to bring closure to what is, sadly, just one of the hundreds of cases of desaparecidos in the country.

InterAksyon.com is posting here in full the letter written by Edita Burgos, Jonas’ mother, appealing to President Benigno Aquino III to exercise his authority as commander in chief of the AFP and order the Army “to follow the SC order and return Jonas to the family, at whatever state he is in.”

She also urges Aquino to sign the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, People from being Disappeared:

Your Excellency:

*I come with open hands offering prayers of peace for the Country, our beloved Philippines*

*As you know, my son, Jonas is still missing. Today he will have been gone for 8 years. The case of Jonas, which the family has pursued very deliberately and carefully using peaceful means through our existing legal and government systems, has been marked by setbacks and victories.*

*By God’s grace we have won our legal battle. You have already been informed that our Supreme Court has affirmed the findings of the Court of Appeals to wit, (March 7, 2013):*

*That the case of Jonas’ abduction is a **CASE OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE;***

*That the Armed Forces of the Philippines-Philippine Army (AFP-PA) is **ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE ABDUCTION;***

*That among many John Does, Major Harry Baliaga Jr., of the Philippine Army is **RESPONSIBLE** for the abduction of Jonas.*

*As a result of these conclusions we have filed a criminal case against Harry Baliaga and the case is being heard at the Quezon City RTC Branch 216.*

*We have won the battle and yet we are losing the war ... Jonas has not been returned to his family and nobody has been held responsible for this noncompliance of the Supreme Court order (February 2, 2014). Even the National Bureau of Investigation whom Your Excellency has ordered to investigate and to file the necessary cases as expeditiously as they can as warranted from the investigation, has not done anything after more than a year after your order was received.*

*The family has not left any stone unturned ... taking legal steps, pursuing all available avenues both private and government. However, we very strongly believe that you, as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, can shorten the long drawn painful process of the search.*

*It is in this view, that we prayerfully plead that Your Excellency, order your subordinates, the AFP-PA to follow the SC order and return Jonas to the family, at whatever state he is in.*

*As a mother, I personally appeal to you to end this suffering of the family of not knowing the truth about what happened to Jonas. Surely, you who have held your own mother dear and revered, would listen to this poor mother who is looking for her son.*

*And, finally, we all would like a world without Disappearances, allow me to take this opportunity to appeal to you to sign the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, People from being Disappeared and thus move towards that goal. This would*

*be a noteworthy legacy you can leave not only with the Philippines but with the world.*

*With prayers for a just, peaceful and disappearance free Philippines, I am,  
Edita Burgos, mother of Jonas*

HRonlineph.com, 29.04.2015

## Free Apung Tony Tolentino, Protect Human Rights Defenders!

Apung Tony Tolentino, a barangay chairperson of Brgy. Hacienda Dolores, in Porac, Pampanga is accused of crimes. And what crime? He led the fight with farmers in their right to land against private land developer, he defended and sacrificed for others who would not let the truth die with them. Apung Tony was arrested due to trumped up charges filed by private land developer and detained since April 16, 2014.

Apung Tony believes that all cases filed against him are mere forms of harassment. He emphasized that the only purpose of

him being arrested is to weaken the farmers' resistance against land corporation.

Brgy. Chair Tolentino is also one of the leaders of Aniban ng Nakakaisang Mamamayan ng Hacienda Dolores (Aniban), a farmers group from Porac, Pampanga, claiming ownership of Hacienda Dolores by virtue of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

MAGUINDANAO MASSACRE

Rappler.com, 22.04.2015

## Andal Ampatuan Sr's bail plea denied

MANILA, Philippines - Former Maguindanao governor and clan patriarch Andal Ampatuan Sr will not get temporary liberty after the Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 221 on Tuesday, April 21, denied his bail plea.

Presiding Judge Jocelyn Solis-Reyes found that the evidence of guilt against Ampatuan Sr is strong in connection with the [Maguindanao massacre](#) case - the Philippines' most gruesome election-related crime in recent years and the world's worst single attack against journalists.

Ampatuan Sr, along with his son, Andal "Unsay" Ampatuan Jr, are the principal accused in the massacre of 58 individuals, including 32 journalists, in Maguindanao.

The Ampatuan clan was believed to have plotted the massacre to thwart the gubernatorial candidacy of rival Esmael Mangudadatu for the 2010 May elections. Mangudadatu won and is still the governor of Maguindanao.

In its decision, the court said it "appears that the accused himself called and presided over three meetings that had the agenda of killing persons to prevent Esmael Mangudadatu from pursuing his political plans."

"The said meetings contained details reminiscent of the scheme allegedly executed on November 23, 2009 - the use of numerous men, the utilization of firearms, the conduct of checkpoints, and the blocking of the convoy," said the decision.

The court said there was also evidence that Ampatuan Sr monitored the execution through "numerous phone and radio calls" and "supposedly also tried to orchestrate the escape of the men in Sitio Amasalay," as well as his own escape.

The development comes more than 5 years after the incident occurred.

In January 2015, the court granted the bail plea of Ampatuan Sr's son, [Sajid Islam](#). He was released from jail in March 2015 after posting an P11.6-million bail.

The court in 2014 also granted the bail petitions of [41 police officers](#) accused of being involved in the crime. At least 197 individuals have been indicted over the massacre, with at least 86 still at large.

A [key witness](#) was placed under the Witness Protection Program in March 2015 days after the Department of Justice announced it is investigating [50 new suspects](#) in the massacre.

The slow pace of the Maguindanao massacre has been one of the sore points of the Aquino administration, according to a January 2015 [Social Weather Stations](#) survey.

[Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno](#), meanwhile, has maintained that the Supreme Court is doing all it can to resolve the case at the soonest time possible.

PEACE PROCESS

Rappler.com, 30.03.2015

## AFP: All-out offensive vs BIFF ends today

By Carmela Fonbuena

MANILA, Philippines (Updated) - The military announced it is ending its all-out offensive against the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and will make way for the return of residents back to their homes.

"Effective today, March 30, the all-out offensive against the BIFF would be ended," Armed Forces chief General Gregorio Cata-pang Jr said early Monday morning, March 30.

Catapang said the military has "defeated" the BIFF, whose members are now supposedly hiding in the Liguasan marshlands and even in the mountainous areas.

He said the troops killed a total of 139 BIFF members or more than 50% of the ranks of the BIFF. They also captured bomb factories and seized their encampments.

Up to 120,000 residents were [displaced by military operations](#).

**Military presence will continue**

Military presence, however, will continue in Maguindanao and neighboring Cotabato to hunt down the remaining BIFF mem-

bers including bombmaker [Bassit Usman](#) and to make sure they will not return to their previous lairs. [...]

The military launched on February 25 an [all-out offensive against the BIFF](#) in the wake of a bloody police operation that killed international terrorist Zulkifli bin hir or "Marwan" but also 67 Filipinos including 44 elite cops.

Aquino vowed in a [televised speech](#) in January that Usman, the other target of police operation but who was able to escape, will be caught.

Catapang said the military is now in control of the so-called SPMS box, referring to the areas of Salibu, Pagatin, Mamasapano and Shariff Aguak that the military could not penetrate before. [...]

**P67-M intervention**

Catapang also announced a P67 million allocation approved by President Benigno Aquino III for "socio-economic" interventions in the war-torn areas.

"We are now entering the new phase of our operation which is peace and development. I want to emphasize that still, we will continuously deploy forces to secure communities and deny the BIFF entry into their former enclaves in Maguindanao. [...]" Catapang said.

Rappler.com, 18.04.2015

## NDF proposes 6-month, time-bound peace talks

B Carmela Fonbuena

MANILA, Philippines (Updated) – An exploratory team led by former Agrarian Secretary Hernani Braganza, working with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), submitted to Malacañang last week a report aimed at resuming on the last year of the Aquino administration the long-stalled peace talks, two Rappler sources said.

The report was submitted Wednesday, April 8. Malacañang's security cluster scheduled a meeting to discuss it but was postponed, one of the sources said.

The first official statement on the proposal came from Armed Forces chief General Gregorio Catapang Jr on Saturday, April 18. "General Gregorio Catapang Jr, the Chief of Staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines welcomes the proposal of the CPP-NPA-NDF (CNN) to resume peace talks with the government," said Armed Forces public affairs officer Lieutenant Colonel Harold Cabunoc. The statement did not provide details.

### Joma: Exploratory talks started 2014

[...] NDFP chief political consultant Jose Maria Sison confirmed to Rappler they've been talking to Braganza's team since last 2014.

"The NDFP has made a proposal for a long-term ceasefire and time-bound negotiations of 6 months for each of the following of the substantive items: 1. social and economic reforms, 2. political and constitutional reforms and 3. end of conflict and disposition of forces," Sison told Rappler in an e-mail on Friday, April 17.

The 6-month duration was proposed in February, Sison said.

Government officials, in off the record conversations, admitted there is not enough time to complete a peace agreement with the Philippine Left. But there is a lot of interest in reducing the violent encounters between government troops and CPP's armed group, New People's Army (NPA), especially in the coming elections.

The arrest of tagged [CPP leaders Benito Tiamzon and wife Wilma](#) in February 2014 was considered a game-changer by some in government. It brought hopes that the CPP would be more willing to discuss issues that led to the collapse of talks in February 2013.

The exploratory team went to work a few months later.

HRonlineph.com, 24.04.2015

## Philippine peace groups call for solidarity and support for Mindanao peace process

KUALA LUMPUR – In a bid to generate broader regional solidarity for peace in Mindanao including support for the ongoing Bangsamoro peace process, peace groups from the Philippines launched a signature campaign at the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People's Forum 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from April 22-24.

Malaysia is the Chair of this year's ASEAN summit and host of the ACSC/APF from April 21 to 24. The ACSC/APF is an annual conference that started in Malaysia 10 years ago that has now attracted thousands of civil society participants working on various issues in the region.

The 'DECLARATION OF SUPPORT FOR AN ALL-OUT-PEACE CAMPAIGN IN THE PHILIPPINES AND SOLIDARITY FOR THE PEACE PROCESS', campaign calls for the 'passage of a just and inclusive Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) that is now pending at the Philippine Congress as an instrument that will start to

The BIFF is a breakaway group of the dominant Muslim rebel group Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which signed a peace agreement with the government last year. The peace process however was derailed after the bloody January 25 police operation in an MILF territory in Maguindanao. [...]

[Braganza's involvement](#) was revealed in December 2014 when the Armed Forces issued a statement on his visit to a rebel camp in Mindanao during the CPP's 46th anniversary. He secured the release of cops who were taken as captives by NPA-Mindanao.

It was a [high point in the peace talks](#) since their collapse. The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) recommended the appointment of retired Armed Forces chief [General Emmanuel Bautista](#) as the chief negotiator.

OPAPP Secretary Teresita Deles said back then that the government is [open to the release of the Tiamzons](#).

Bautista was also supposed to meet his counterparts in February 2015. But it did not happen.

### CPP statements after Mamasapano

The political climate changed between December 2014 and this report of the exploratory team, however. A lot of confidence-building will be required to resume the talks.

The death of 44 Special Action Force (SAF) commandos in Mamasapano, Maguindanao has derailed developments.

The OPAPP was trapped in a series of congressional hearings and put on the defensive as several lawmakers blamed the peace process for the death of the elite cops. It turned into the worst crisis of the Aquino administration.

CPP [statements](#) against the Aquino administration in the aftermath of the Mamasapano tragedy were not appreciated by the OPAPP. They decided to put on hold the appointment of Bautista, Rappler learned.

The issues remain contentious and the NDFP officials have not hidden their opposition to Deles.

"Through Deles of OPAPP and Padilla the chairman of the decomposed GPH negotiating panel, Aquino has declared that The Hague Joint Declaration is 'a document of perpetual division,' the JASIG is an 'inoperative piece of paper' and the CARHRIHL as a 'propaganda document of the NDFP. The quotes are from Deles and Padilla," said Sison.

Padilla, for his part, while recognizing the sincerity of the NDFP, remains [doubtful about the interests of the CPP](#).

The success of the new move could hinge on how much the government wants an indefinite ceasefire, and how much the Left wants the release of its political consultants.

address and rectify the historical injustices committed against the Bangsamoro and other inhabitants of Mindanao.'

'With challenges now confronting the Mindanao peace process and the BBL in the Philippines, we believe that the support and solidarity of all peace-loving leaders and citizens of the region who see that a negotiated political settlement is the key in resolving the century-old problem in Mindanao is necessary. We have to salvage the peace process by showing that people not just in the Philippines but in the region are in solidarity and united for a just peace,' said Gus Miclat, regional initiator of Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict-Southeast Asia (GPPAC-SEA) and executive director of the regional non-government advocacy and solidarity organization, Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID).

IID has spearheaded peace-building efforts in Mindanao and has been in the forefront of engaging the peace process in the Phil-

ippines including in other conflict prevention initiatives in the region. Miclat is also a member of the ACSC/APF 2015 Steering Committee representing regional organizations.

Miclat explained, 'it is impossible for us to find a viable formula for peace in Mindanao if we base our judgments solely on biases and prejudices against the Moros and Muslims. If the House of

Representatives and the Senate will pass the BBL, it should be on the premise of recognizing that the Bangsamoro, the indigenous peoples and other inhabitants of Mindanao have legitimate claims and therefore have the right to determine their own political future.'

Manilatimes.net, 28.04.2015

## MNLF affirms solidarity with MILF

By Bencyrus G. Ellorin

**MARAWI CITY:** Leaders of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) gathered in Marawi City on Tuesday to firm up its call for passage of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) and to express solidarity with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Over a thousand people joined the Bangsamoro Walk for Peace around the city early morning of the same day and held a rally at the Banggolo Plaza in Marawi City to acknowledge peace efforts of both the MILF and the Philippine government.

Datu Abul Khayr Alonto, chairman of the MNLF, said the Bangsamoro people are looking for more peace champions to push the BBL.

While saying he appreciated the unwavering support of President Benigno Aquino 3rd to the BBL and the whole peace process with the MILF, he admitted that the President's efforts fall short, especially with his role in the Mamasapano incident that claimed the lives of 44 Special Action Forces of the Philippine National Police, 18 MILF fighters and five civilians last January 25.

Alonto said their eyes are now focused on the Senate Committee on Local Government headed by Sen. Ferdinand Marcos Jr. after the House Ad Hoc Committee on the BBL wrapped up deliberations on the proposed law. [...]

The BBL, Alonto said, may be last time the Bangsamoro people will agree to negotiating autonomy for their homeland.

"While we need sincerity to pursue lasting peace in Mindanao, all stakeholders, especially the government, should consider the utmost necessity to settle the Bangsamoro issue and a diluted [BBL] has a price that will be too great," he added.

### FURTHER READINGS

Globalwitness.org, 20.04.2015

## How Many More?

New report shows killings of environmental activists are increasing, with indigenous communities hardest hit. [...]

*How Many More?* analyses global trends in violence and intimidation, with testimony from activists who have suffered threats, attacks, and criminalisation for standing in the way of so-called

Joining in Tuesday's events were surviving original MNLF fighters known in the late 1960s and the 1970s as the Black Shirts, emissaries and representatives of the MILF, the government peace panel and the International Monitoring Team headed by its current head of mission Maj. Gen. Dato' Sheikh Mokhsin bin Sheikh Hassan of Malaysia.

Alonto reiterated the MNLF's solidarity with the MILF, saying they share the same cause, which is to "assert the Bangsamoro people's right to self-determination."

He said the MNLF and the MILF have set aside their differences and agreed to work together after he and MILF chairman Al Haj Murad Ebrahim signed a communiqué for cooperation at Camp Darapanan last January 5.

Alonto belittled rifts in the MNLF, saying the group remains solid but it is the government that is sowing division among its ranks.

"The government should stop dividing us. It should realize that addressing the conflict in Mindanao is more difficult if the Bangsamoro is divided," he said.

Meanwhile, IMT Head of Mission Maj. Gen. Dato said he is happy with the progress in the peace process, despite setbacks caused by the Mamasapano incident.

Overall, he added, with ceasefire mechanisms in place, proper coordination between the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Philippine National Police and the MILF have prevented violent confrontations. [...]

'development'. In a disturbing trend some are even being tried as terrorists, portrayed as enemies of the state. [...]

Global Witness is calling on governments and the international community to monitor, investigate and punish these crimes [...]. Access the report [here](#).

Rappler.com, 28.04.2015

## FULL REPORT: Peace Council on the Bangsamoro Basic Law

MANILA, Philippines - Reeling from public backlash and the political fallout that followed the [deadly clash in Mamasapano, Maguindanao](#), President Benigno Aquino III on March 27 convened a group that seeks to forge a consensus on the proposed [Bangsamoro Basic Law](#). [...]

After two weeks of discussions, the council arrived at a conclusion that the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law is "[overwhelmingly acceptable and deserves the support of Filipinos](#)" save for some [recommendations](#). A total of 136 individuals participated in the discussions, including all the convenors.

The Bangsamoro bill aims to create a new autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao with expanded political and fiscal powers. It marks the next stage of the peace process in Southern Philippines - the implementation of the [peace agreement](#) between the government and rebel group Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Read the full report [here](#).