



4 October 2018

### **Urgent Appeal to Support Indigenous Human Rights Defender Rachel Mariano**

Rachel S. Mariano is an indigenous human rights defender (IPHRD) from the Cordillera, Philippines belonging to the *Ibaloi-Kankanaey* people. Rachel is the Health Program Desk Coordinator of the Community Health, Education, Services and Training in the Cordillera (CHESTCORE) based in Baguio City, Benguet province since 2004. CHESTCORE is the health program of the Center for Development Programs in the Cordillera (CDPC), a network of NGO development programs servicing different people's organizations in the Cordillera region. From July to September 2017, Rachel faced different trumped-up charges filed against her on a monthly basis by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), specifically the 81<sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion (IB).



*Rachel Mariano (right) with daughter and fellow indigenous activist Aisah.*

Along with four other women human rights defenders in the Cordillera region facing trumped-up charges, Rachel submitted herself to the Municipal Trial Courts of Galimuyod and Salcedo in Ilocos Sur province in February 2018 and availed of the right to bail to prove their innocence on 14 counts of frustrated and attempted homicide lodged against them .

On September 18, she submitted herself to court but this time she has to be detained as she faces a non-bailable trumped-up charge of murder and 8 cases of attempted/frustrated murder filed against her by the same 81<sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion, alleging that Rachel is a member of the New People's Army (NPA) that had an armed encounter with the 81<sup>st</sup> IB in Quirino, Ilocos Sur last year.

Rachel is detained in the Ilocos Sur Provincial Jail in Bantay, Ilocos Sur which is five to six hours away from Baguio City where her family is. Upon Rachel's submission to court, her lawyer also submitted a petition for bail. The rules of court state that if she is permitted bail, she will be needing a maximum total amount of PHP 1.4 million. These series of events have taken its toll on Rachel's health. She presently suffers from hyperthyroidism aggravating her

mental health condition where she suffers trauma and depression. With her family, she is in need of regular psychological counseling.

The submission to court and detention is an act of courage. It was a painful and difficult decision for Rachel Mariano, her husband and three children. Her husband Bill Mariano a pastor of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) and project staff of the Regional Ecumenical Council in the Cordillera (RECCORD), travels regularly to check on Rachel and visit her. Their eldest daughter, Aisah, is the Deputy Secretary General of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA).

We are appealing for support for Rachel and her family's behalf for her bail, other legal expenses, medical and counseling needs in addition to your prayers and moral support. As we know that the process of the justice system in the Philippines takes long, we are hoping that you stand with us as we seek her temporary liberty through bail and until her case is justly dismissed from court with finality. In addition to the legal case, welfare and security of Rachel and her family, a campaign has been launched in support of Rachel and all Cordillera activists facing trumped-up charges.

Your support and solidarity goes a long way in giving strength to Rachel and her family, her organization and the communities she has been working with in the Cordillera region. Her case is one of the hundreds in the entire Philippines, where human rights defenders are being criminalized by government for the activism. They are vilified as terrorists, all the more open targets of different human rights violations.

Thank you in advance for your support and solidarity for Rachel, her family and the Cordillera people's movement! \*\*\*

References:

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*\*Your financial contributions and/or donations may be coursed through the following:*

PESO ACCOUNT

Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation (RCBC), Session Road, Baguio City.  
Account Name: Cordillera Peoples Alliance, Inc.  
Account Number: 1-326-72354-8  
Swift Code: RCBCPHMM  
Routing Code: 120280014

USD ACCOUNT

Banco De Oro – Luneta Hill Cor. Gov. Pack Road, Session Road, Baguio City  
Account Name: Center for Development Programs in the Cordillera (CDPC)  
Account Number 100790248425  
Swift Code: BNORPHMM  
Routing Code: 010530667