

## **STATEMENT OF THE ASIAN NETWORK OF INDIGENOUS LAWYERS ON JAMES BALAO'S ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE**

It is brought to the notice of the **Asian Network of Indigenous Lawyers (ANIL)** that Mr. James M. Balao, founding member of the **Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA)** has been abducted by a group of armed men in civilian clothes claiming to be policemen on 17 September 2008 in La Trinidad, Benguet and that his whereabouts are still unknown to date.

A petition for a writ of amparo filed by Mr. Balao's family with the assistance of the **Cordillera Human Rights Alliance (CHRA)** is pending before the Regional Trial Court in La Trinidad, Benguet. ANIL is concerned that on the behest of CHRA and CPA, the Commission on Human Rights issued an order for the inspection of state detention facilities. But the military denied entry to Camp Aguinaldo.

There is reasonable ground to believe that the enforced disappearance of Mr. Balao is linked to his non-violent resistance to the Arroyo administration's program of aggressive harnessing of natural resources in the indigenous cultural communities/indigenous peoples' ancestral domains under the Mining Revitalization Program, among others.

In this connection ANIL:

- Expresses its solidarity with the Balao family, the Cordillera Peoples Alliance, the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance and other organizations and individuals involved in the campaign to bring out James Balao.
- Reminds the Philippines Government of its international human rights obligations to ascertain the whereabouts of Mr. Balao and to ensure his safety and security.
- Strongly urges the Philippine Government to make public his present legal status, if he is in the custody of the state security forces, as indicated by some reliable sources
- Calls on the Philippine Government to become a state party to the UN Convention for the Protection of all persons from Enforced Disappearance.

For the **Asian Network of Indigenous Lawyers (ANIL)**:

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