

**On James Balao's 1097th Day of Enforced Disappearance and Martial Law Commemoration:
Resist Continuing State Terrorism! Persevere in The Defense and Assertion of Human Rights!**

Heavy rains did not hamper the Balao family, people's organizations and the various individuals who participated in the commemoration of the 1097th day of James Balao's enforced disappearance and the 39th year anniversary of Martial Law last September 17, 2011 at Peoples' Park, Baguio City, as part of the continuing campaign to surface James and an end to political repression and State terrorism.

In the gathering, over a hundred individuals clamored for the administration of Pres. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III to pursue and prosecute the past regime of Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for countless and gross violations of human rights and to cease from implementing Operation Plan Bayanihan.

"It has been three long years...We are deeply disappointed that despite all our efforts to have President Aquino act on James' enforced disappearance, the government has not lifted a finger... We are angered that since last year, eight more cases of enforced disappearances were perpetrated under his administration," as stated by the Balao family in their open letter to the public.

Since June 12 of this year, the Balao family, along with local and international organizations, appealed to the Aquino administration to take action and surface James Balao reiterating that State security forces were the ones who took him. Thousands of postcards to Malacañang were sent since June this year. However, "there has been no reply from Malacanang... enforced disappearances have continued with the implementation of Aquino's Oplan Bayanihan (Operation Plan Solidarity) which continues to vilify members and leaders of people's organizations," said Cordillera Human Rights Alliance (CHRA) Secretary General Jude Baggo, adding that "the imposition of the Oplan Bayanihan as a peace and development policy only fueled the rampant violations of human rights similar to the darkest years of martial rule."

Karapatan (Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights) adds that under Aquino's supposed "righteous path" 48 individuals have been victims of extrajudicial killings, while there are 8 enforced disappearances, 29 torture cases, 151 cases of illegal arrests and 3,010 victims of forced evacuation from rural villages.

In the activity, the video documentary entitled *Rimbaw* (To Overcome), which chronicles the struggles of families in Northern Luzon subjected to human rights violations, through Operation Plans Bantay Laya I and II and Bayanihan was launched during this occasion. The documentary was produced through the efforts of European Union Delegation to the Philippines and Dinteg (Cordillera Indigenous Peoples' Legal Center) along with other peoples' organizations and institutions.

In his speech, Baggo reminded the public that men, women and children, rose up and resisted State terrorism even in the darkest years of martial rule. "We should persevere in the assertion for the defense and assertion of human rights during these times as they did," he said. #