



May 23, 2013

## URGENT ACTION ALERT

Dear friends,

Human rights workers and development workers in the Cordillera region are under serious threat with recent incidents of harassment, surveillance and political vilification. The incidents were perpetrated by elements and troops under the 86<sup>th</sup> IBPA and the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division as part of the implementation of the Aquino government's National Internal Security Plan Operation Plan Bayanihan (Operation Plan Cooperation).

We are appealing for your support to raise concern and denounce these incidents:

- Since January of this year, Jude Baggo, the Secretary General of the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance – KARAPATAN (CHRA-Karapatan) was subjected to threats warning him to cease from his political activities otherwise he will be arrested. This April, he was threatened with imprisonment “just after the elections”. Reliable sources validated that the messages were from State security forces. He and colleagues had also noted surveillance and monitoring on his whereabouts by suspicious individuals. One of the messages he received associated his presence and activities in Ifugao to the activities of the New People's Army (NPA).
- William Bugatti, a paralegal of the CHRA-Karapatan in Ifugao has constantly been accused of being a member of the NPA. This has resulted to notable incidents of surveillance and harassment against him that derailed him from doing his work. He was even barred several times from visiting political detainees at the Ifugao Provincial Jail. The Jail warden claims that there is a “Regional Memorandum” stating that Bugatti is not allowed to enter the jail and visit the political detainees.

Bugatti and Baggo were listed as #21 and #22 respectively and tagged as “UTAK NG NPA” (Brains of the NPA) in a document entitled “MUNICIPALITY OF TINOC (Target Persons)” bearing the logos of Charlie Company of the 86<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Highlander) of the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (North Star), Philippine Army. The two-page document received by the CHRA-Karapatan last October 2012 listed names of individuals, their alleged association with the New Peoples Army (NPA), mobile phone numbers, organizations, and the remarks/assessment by the 86<sup>th</sup> IBPA and the 5<sup>th</sup> ID. The list was composed of names of members and leaders of legal people's organizations, human rights defenders and development workers from the Center for Development Programs in the Cordillera (CDPC), Montanosa Research and Development Center (MRDC) and the Ifugao Resources and Development Center (IRDC).

There is strong reason to believe that the 86<sup>th</sup> IBPA and elements of the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division are behind these cases especially with the “Target Persons” list. The AFP's denial of the existence of this document runs in contrary with the cases of harassment, surveillance and other human rights violations experienced by the people included in the list.

The 86<sup>th</sup> IBPA has been notorious in Northern Luzon for its human rights violations since President Aquino came into office. It is composed of integrees from the paramilitary group Cordillera Peoples Liberation Army. In 2012, the 86<sup>th</sup> IBPA were the perpetrators of various human rights violations such as illegal detention and torture, destruction and divestment of properties, several counts of threats/harassment/intimidation. An officer of this unit, Capt. Danilo Lalin is the primary suspect in a rape case involving a minor in Mankayan, Benguet last March 2012. The 86<sup>th</sup> IBPA was responsible for the trumped up charges against youth leader Mildred Salang-ey in 2011 which were dismissed due



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to lack of evidence. This unit also filed trumped up charges against Grayson Naogsan, Rene Boy Abiva, Virgilio Corpuz, Randy Vegas and Raul Camposano. Naogsan, Abiva and Corpuz are currently detained at the Ifugao Provincial Jail. Vegas and Camposano are both long-time union organizers of the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government (COURAGE) at the National Capital Region.

Aside from human rights workers, development workers in Ifugao and the rest of the region have experienced similar threats on their security. Claudine Panayo and Fernando Alikes of the Ifugao Resources Development Center have also reported incidents of surveillance on them and their office especially this April and May. Willy Kuan, a development worker of the Regional Development Center - Katinnulong Daguiti Umili ti Amianan a Luzon (RDC-KADUAMI) received threat messages through his mobile phone this April 2012.

We are alarmed and convinced that the intensity of threats and political vilification are serious warnings of actual arrest, detention and even graver forms of human rights violations. *Oplan Bayanihan* deliberately associates human rights defenders, development workers and civilians as members or supporters of NPA to condition the public that they are “enemies of the State” or “terrorists” and thus serve as a prelude or justification to illegal arrests based on trumped up charges or even possible extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearance. Serious concern has to be raised against this.

It is unjust that those who bring services to far-flung communities of farmers and indigenous peoples are vilified and threatened. Development workers and their NGO’s and PO’s provide much needed social services and livelihood assistance to communities and sectors suffering from severe poverty and government neglect. It is condemnable that human rights workers are being silenced by the State that is mandated to uphold and defend human rights

**Please send letters, emails or fax messages calling for:**

- 1. An independent investigation of the surveillance, threats and harassment against human rights workers and development workers in the Cordillera region**
- 2. An end to political vilification of people’s organizations, development workers, and human rights defenders maliciously tagged as “enemies of the State” or “terrorists”.**
- 3. The prosecution of those involved in human rights violations, specifically, elements of the 86<sup>th</sup> IBPA and the 5<sup>th</sup> ID.**
- 4. The Aquino administration to withdraw its counter-insurgency program *Oplan Bayanihan* that targets innocent and unarmed civilians and activists**
- 5. The resumption of peace negotiations between the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front as a means to achieve just and lasting peace**
- 6. The Aquino administration to be reminded that the Philippines is a party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, various human rights treaties and instruments, and the International Humanitarian Law, thus it is bound to observe all of these.**

**You may send your communications to:**

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**KARAPATAN**

**Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights.**

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**Please send us a copy of your email/mail/fax to the above-named government officials, to our address below.**

**APPEAL FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION Prepared by:  
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