



May 24, 2013

Update on the Surface James Campaign

Since the 52nd birthday of desaparecido James Balao last April 19, 2013, various local and international groups and individuals contributed 1, 437 paper cranes to call for the surfacing of James and an end to enforced disappearances.

The campaign launched on that day targeted the creation of a thousand paper cranes from different human rights and peace advocates. A thousand paper cranes or senbazuru (千羽鶴) is an old Japanese tradition adopted to call for the surfacing of James Balao who is also of Japanese descent. According to the original tradition, anyone who folds a thousand origami cranes will be granted what one yearns for.

We are very grateful to those who took time and effort to fold the paper cranes to call for the surfacing of James. The solidarity that continuously pours in is a source of strength in our continuing work for human rights, justice and peace.

Among individuals and groups that joined the campaign are individuals from the University of the Philippines Baguio, Diliman and Cebu, Saint Louis School Center young writers, Cordillera Peoples Alliance, Dinteg Cordillera Indigenous Peoples Legal Center, Timpuyog dagiti Umili ti Lacub, Bantayan Ekolohiya ken Kinabaknang (Lacub Peoples Federation for Ecological and Resource Protection), Abra Human Rights Movement (AHRM), Alinaga Art Space in Vigan, Ilocos Human Rights Alliance, Desaparecidos, Karapatan Alliance for the Advancement of Human Rights, the National Union of People's Lawyers (NUPL), Partylists Bayan Muna, Gabriela and Katribu, Task Force on Indigenous Peoples Rights in the Philippines, the Monday Demonstration Group in Stuttgart, Germany, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), Indigenous Human Rights Defenders, different chapters of Amnesty International based in the United States of America, different individuals and groups in San Francisco, USA lead by the Committee on Human Rights in the Philippines - San Francisco, different individuals and groups in Minnesota lead by Group 37 of the Amnesty International and Humphrey Fellows of the University of Minnesota, Samahan ng mga Manggagawa at Migrante sa Qatar and friends from The Netherlands, Germany and Japan.

More paper cranes are being contributed by the day especially by local groups. The paper cranes for James campaign will culminate on September 17, 2013.

On the same month, Judge Jennifer Humiding of the Benguet Regional Trial Court Branch 63 issued a report to the Supreme Court regarding the investigation of the case of James Balao. The report is part of the continuing case regarding the Petition for the Writ of Amparo for James filed in 2008. Judge Humiding recommended for the following:

1. "The incumbent chief of staff of the AFP and the director general of the Philippine National Police to directly and personally monitor the efforts of the SITFG-Balao until its conclusion."
2. The conduct of parallel investigation by the National Bureau of Investigation and the Commission on Human Rights. These parallel investigations are expected to provide a system of check and balance to the investigation being conducted by the AFP and PNP.
3. "All the concerned officers and authorities shall make available all documents they have on JAMES BALAO and make accessible all the officers who had anything to do with the abduction, or who had knowledge of the abduction; as well as to be granted access to camps and safehouses that could give leads to the whereabouts of JAMES BALAO."
4. Regular reports regarding the investigation should be submitted to the Supreme Court.

The denial of State security forces of information regarding the whereabouts of James and the insufficient investigation on his case continues to portray the impunity under the present administration. Despite difficulties, the family, friends and colleagues of James will continue the search. Peace and human rights advocates will not cease in calling for the immediate surfacing of James. We will search for him with the ever-heightening rage against injustices and human rights violations.

We reiterate this today as we remember the birthday of Arthur Balao – James' father who passed away in 2010 but left behind the hope that one day James will be found. #

For reference:

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