



Republic of the Philippines  
MOUNTAIN PROVINCE  
BONTOC

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

**STATEMENT AGAINST FORCED DISAPPEARANCES**

I feel saddened everytime a person is unjustifiably killed or forcefully kidnapped/abducted. But the continued commission of these incidents at a seemingly unchecked pace is outrageous and condemnable. These twin offenses are the worst forms of crime against humanity.

Basically, I could decipher of two possible reasons why forced disappearances and killings still persist in the country today.

One is the disintegration of morals among the people. Regardless of religious, tribal, or cultural class we belong, Filipinos are by nature law abiding who have high respect for the rights of other people. In some areas of the Cordillera including Mountain Province, how a community value one's life is manifested when a tribe goes to war every time they feel that the right of one of their members had been violated. It is sad however to note that this caring mindset appears to be weakening among people. The time has come that we revisit our old values and do away with norms that further degrade the dignity of man.

The other is greed. The selfish motive of people and/or group of people to perpetuate themselves in power either in the field of politics or business has sacrificed the lives of innocent individuals. More often, the victims are crusading media people and members of legitimate organizations who, in their pursuit for truth and justice, may have affronted vested selfish interests. This practice should be stopped. It has no place in a democratic country like ours where the freedom of citizens to speech and expression are expressly granted by law.

As a father of the province and as Regional Chairman of the League of Provinces, I denounce the unexplained disappearance of James Balao who is one of us. The act does not only deprive him of his rights but also subjects his family to untold mental and psychological torture.

I sympathize with his family and the many hearts crying for justice. Those responsible, regardless of their position or standing in society, should be held accountable and made to pay for their acts. Denying or delaying justice would prompt aggrieved parties to take the law into their hands. Worse, the impunity by which the crimes have been committed may institutionalize or promote the commission of the same.

In the spirit of the Christmas season, I appeal the goodness of those responsible to set free James and other captives. There is no better gift to the peace loving Filipino people than for us to see each family together as we celebrate the birth of our Saviour.