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An urgent call to the National Democratic Front and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines regarding the recent killings of farmers!

Thursday 13 November 2008, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 8 November 2008).

We, the undersigned, condemn in the strongest possible terms the recent spate of killings of farmers and farmer-leaders in Masbate and Bondoc Peninsula.

Several months ago on 26 December 2007, Botsoy Vale, farmer leader and elected Barangay Captain, was tortured and killed by the NPA. His death was claimed by the Jose Rapsing Command of the NPA in an official statement. We quote:

“Ang ikalawang pagsisikap na maparusahan si Botsoy ay nagmateryalisa noong Disyembre. Nakumpiska sa kanya ang isang kalibre 45 baril. Kusang dinala at inilayo siya sa mga walang kinalaman upang di sila madamay at maiwasan din ang di kinakailangang pagkatakot at pagkabigla sa mga ibang sibilyan.”

Soon after Botsoy Vale’s death, a death list was issued by unknown texter/s, enumerating the names of the individuals whom they claim to be counter-revolutionaries. Included in this list was Rene Llabres.

On July 6, 2008, just after six months since the killing of Botsoy Vale, Rene Llabres and another farmer Junrie Pagaspas, were also slain by armed men suspected to be members of the NPA. Two weeks later another farmer was killed - Alberto “Bito” Yusi, President of Samahan ng mga Anak ng Magsasaka ng Famosa, Incorporated (SAMFAI), an organization of landless peasants that has filed a petition for the distribution of the 490-hectare Ticao Agro-Industrial Development Incorporated (TAIDI) landholding situated at Barangay Famosa, Monreal, Masbate. Relatives revealed that he had been warned by the New People’s Army to stop their petition for the government’s land reform.

The killings in Masbate come at the heels of the latest killing in Bondoc Peninsula, that of Deolito Empas in February 2008, whose perpetrators are believed by community members to be members of the NPA.

It is revolting that such acts of violence and killings perpetrated against impoverished farmers fighting against injustice —or at the very least, the creation of a climate of fear and repression - are being perceived as the handiwork of those who purport to fight for the masses and stand beside the oppressed.

If this is true, then it is most uncanny that the organization that claims to serve the people stands accused by humble tillers of sowing the seeds of harassment and impunity, the consequence of which would benefit the landowners bent on reconsolidating their lands.

If this is true, then we remind the National Democratic Front that it is a signatory to the 1998 Comprehensive Agreement for Respect of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law that upholds the protection of non-combatants as prescribed by international conventions. It cannot be gainsaid that farmers are not only non-combatants, but belong to the marginalized classes of society whose rights we are all duty bound to defend.

If this is true, we therefore call on the National Democratic Front and the NPA General Command to act swiftly to prevent another peasant killing in Masbate or Bondoc Peninsula or anywhere else for that matter. As we have repeatedly condemned the killings of national democratic activists where the government is the suspect, so too must we condemn killings and human rights violations by the Armed Left or by armed groups or goons of landowners. Let not another woman find herself a widow, let not another child find himself an orphan.

We likewise call on the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) to effectively perform its sworn responsibility of protecting, fulfilling and respecting the human rights of its citizens. Landless-peasants who continue to be subjected to various forms of harassments and killings from powerful landowners and non-state armed groups deserve no less.

Let the killings stop!

Signed:

Kilusang para sa Repormang Pansakahan at Katarungang Panlipunan (KATARUNGAN)

Cagayan Center for Rural Empowerment and Development (CREDO), Inc.

Timpuyog Dagiti Mannalon Iti Isabela (TIDAMI)

Samahan ng mga Magsasaka sa Cagayan (SAMACA)

Emancipatory Movement for People Empowerment (EMPOWERMENT), Inc.

Malayang Kaisahan ng mga Magbubukid sa Nueva Ecija (MAKIBAKA)

Quezon Association for Rural Development and Democratization Services (QUARDDS), Inc.

Kilusan ng Magbubukid ng Bondoc Peninsula (KMBP)

Ugnayan ng mga Magsasaka sa Gitnang Quezon (UGNAYAN)

Builders for Rural Empowerment and Human Rights Advocates Network (BRETHREN), Inc.

Bicol Hegemony for Rural Empowerment and Development (B-HEARD), Inc.

Alyansa at Samahan ng mga Paraoma (ALSA-PARAOMA)-Camarines Sur

Alyansa at Samahan ng mga Paraoma (ALSA-PARAOMA)-Albay

Masbate Center for Rural Development and Empowerment (MACARADE), Inc.

Alyansa at Samahan ng mga Paraoma (ALSA-PARAOMA) Masbate

Panay Rural Organizing for Reform and Social Order (PROGRESO), Inc.

Pagtingog Sang Maguuma kag Mamumungon sa Kaumban (PASAMAKA)
Negros Oriental Center for People Empowerment and Development (NOCPED)
Mag-uumang Naga-hiusa Alang sa Kalambuan (MANAAKA)
Center for Rural Empowerment Services in Central Mindanao (CRESCENT), Inc.
North Cotabato Autonomous Peasants Organizations (NCAPO)
Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka (PAKISAMA)
Center for Agrarian Reform Empowerment and Transformation (CARET)
Peace Advocates for Truth Healing and Justice (PATH)
People's Campaign for Agrarian Reform Network (AR Now!)
Initiatives for Dialogue and Empowerment through Alternative Legal Services (IDEALS)
Task Force Mapalad (TFM)
Bukluran sa Ikauunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa (BISIG)
Center for Popular Empowerment (CPE)
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Dr. Joel Rocamora
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Food-First Information and Actions Network (FIAN) - International

Evert de Boer, Philippine Solidarity Group Netherlands (FGN)

Utrecht, The Netherlands

KASAPI-HELLAS, Athens, Greece

Jack Catarata

Working Group for Filipino Migrants in Germany

Inter-Church Organisation for Development Cooperation (ICCO)