

PRESS RELEASE

155 farmers demanding full accounting of Marcos Wealth spending charged

Wednesday 5 October 2005, by [CALMADA Dong B.](#), [PEACE \(Philippines\)](#), [Unorka \(Philippines\)](#) (Date first published: 9 June 2005).

A total of 155 farmers who trooped to the Department of Land Reform to demand for a full accounting of the Marcos Wealth were later dispersed by the Special Weapons Action Team (SWAT) and police forces and later charged with malicious mischief and public disturbance.

At first, the farmers went to the office of the DLR Secretary Rene Villa for a dialogue. One of the legitimate demands for the dialogue is an accounting of the Marcos Wealth spending, which by law should be used directly for agrarian reform.

Upon learning that Villa would not be able to come to the dialogue, the farmers responded by staging a silent protest by lying down on the floor. The protest lasted from 10:00 am till 5:00 pm. In mid-afternoon, the farmers were informed that Villa would show up to meet the farmers. But at 5:30 pm, there was no sight of the Secretary. This disappointed the farmers, who later staged a peaceful occupation of the Secretary's office. "Pakiramdam namin, dalawang beses kaming pinatay sa araw na ito. Dalawang beses kaming umasa na may Kalihim kaming makakausap. Pero wala rin pala. Walang pinag-iba ang kasalukuyang administrasyon sa pamunuan ng mga nakaraan," Ka Julito Diaz, UNORKA President, said. ("We felt that we were killed twice during the day. We twice anticipated that we would meet with the Secretary. We were disappointed. The situation today is no different from that during the previous administrations.")

At 9:30 pm, the SWAT and police forces physically dispersed the farmers. Several SWAT members could not control themselves from attacking the farmers with truncheons. "Sa ginawa nilang ito, di mapigilang mahimatay ang isang kasamahan namin," Ka Vangie Mendoza, UNORKA former President, said of her fellow woman leader. ("Because of that brutality, one fellow woman farmer fainted.")

The farmers could not believe that the DLR and police forces would treat them inhumanely. "Hindi kami hinayaang kumain at uminom ng tubig. Pinatayan pa kami ng ilaw. Tinakot pa kami. Tapos ipinalalabas pa nila na kami ay NPA at may dalang armas," Ka Erik Cabanit, UNORKA Secretary General, complained. "Patunay lamang ito na mababa ang kanilang pagtingin sa magsasaka." ("They did not allow us to eat our own food, even to drink water. They threatened us. They even had the

guts to make it appear that we were members of the NPA and had arms.")

The farmers are now detained at the Camp Karingal, waiting for the processing of their case. In the meantime, they pleaded for support from other groups and individuals so that their health and safety would not be risked. "Kailangan namin ng tulong para sa pagkain, tubig, at suportang panligal. Gusto naming makalaya agad at ituloy ang laban para repormang agraryo. Magsasampa rin kami ng kaso laban sa DLR dahil sa kanilang ginawa sa amin."Diaz said. ("We need support for food, water and legal assistance. We wish to be released soon so that we can pursue the fight for agrarian reform. We will file counter-charges against the DLR for their deplorable act.")

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