

Philippines: Sentro Condemns the NPA Attack on Civilians

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Military conflict not only disrupts communities and denies them the right to live in peace, it also makes it difficult for working people to independently assert themselves. War doesn't only lead to deaths, physical and physiological harm, institutions such as unions, cooperatives, and other People's organizations are among the first to be caught in the crossfire.

The Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa (SENTRO) demands justice for the death of our union leader Nolgen Absalon and his cousin the FEU football player Keith Absalon. We grieve with their families, the members of the Masbate Electric Cooperative Employees Union, and the FEU football team. We extend our condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. With them, SENTRO seeks accountability from the perpetrators of the murders.

We condemn the NPA's attack on our union leader and his relatives. Weapons of war have no place in roads used extensively by civilians. While the government would no doubt use this incident as propaganda material against the communist insurgency, SENTRO expresses its strong opposition to the militarization of the countryside, whether the units are of the AFP/NP or the NPA.

An attack on civilians, especially trade unionists, regardless whether it is perpetrated by state or non-state actors, is completely unacceptable. SENTRO asserts that we cannot tolerate the persistence of armed conflict in our communities in the provinces. To maintain warzones in civilian areas is to deny, limit, and undermine the ability of the people in these places to participate in governance, form their own associations, as well as be involved in local decision-making processes.

The death of Nolgen and Keith Absalon benefits no one. The loss of their lives is a huge blow to both our union and the country's football scene. Such is the cost of war, we continue to lose committed, passionate, and talented people, their lives added to the grim statistics of a decades-long armed conflict.

SENTRO calls for justice for those killed, as well as an end to the fighting. Both the government and the CPP should restart peace negotiations in good faith. Only when the guns fall silent in all corners of our country can our people start the process of exercising their right to live in peace. ###

Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa - Sentro

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