

URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

Harassment of Bayan officers in Central Luzon

Thursday 11 October 2007, by [FIDH](#), [OMCT](#) (Date first published: 2 October 2007).

PHL 004 / 1007 / OBS 120

Harassment

Philippines

October 2, 2007

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), requests your urgent intervention in the Philippines.

Description of the situation:

The Observatory has been informed by the Alliance for the Advancement of Peoples' Rights (KARAPATAN) of threats and acts of harassment against Mr. Roman Polintan, Chairperson of BAYAN in Central Luzon and regional coordinator of Bayan Muna [1] ; Mr. Joseph Canlas, chairperson of the Peasant Alliance in Central Luzon (/Alyansa ng Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon -/AMGL), a regional chapter of the Philippines Peasants' Movement (/Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas/ - KMP) and regional coordinator of ANAKPAWIS [2]; Ms. Angelina Ladera, chairperson of WAR3 [3] and Jovelyn Suson, a staff member of BAYAN.

According to the information received, on September 20, 2007, Messrs. Roman Polintan, Joseph Canlas, Ms. Angelina Ladera and Ms. Suson, noticed two men, who hurriedly passed by them, as they were leaving Armando's Pizza in Angeles City, where they had held a press conference on the protest rally to be held the following day in commemoration of the declaration of the Martial Law. As they were about to board their vehicle, they noticed the two men ride a blue motorcycle, with plate number OH5948.

As they were driving in the direction of San Fernando , Pampanga, they noticed the blue motorcycle following them; it overtook them and then ran alongside their vehicle. The two men even tried to have a look inside the van by staying close to it. The men continued to tail the group until they reached Plaza Miranda in Brgy. San Nicolas, Angeles City , where the four human rights defenders took refuge at Police

Station I to report the incident. When the men who were following them saw that they had entered a police station, they went back to a one-way street. However, as the group left the police station they were followed by two other men driving another motorcycle.

The day before the incident, Mr. Polintan had talked at Infomax 8, a radio station, about the Martial Law. He had shared some analysis made by Bayan and invited the listeners of the program to join the mobilisation on September 21, 2007, in commemoration of the 35th year of martial law. Mr. Polintan, Mr. Canlas and Ms. Ladera have also denounced the activities of then Major General Jovito Palparan Jr. during his stint as Commanding General of the 7th Infantry Battalion based in Nueva Ecija as well as the continuing human rights violations against their colleagues and members by elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

In a context of extreme violence, which includes extra-judicial killings and enforced disappearances of human rights defenders involved in the defense of peasants' rights in Central Luzon, the Observatory expresses its concern with such intimidation acts and recalls the obligation of the Philippines State to protect human rights defenders, according to article 12.2 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998, which states that "the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, *de facto* or *de jure* adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration".

Action requested:

Please write to the Philippine authorities asking them to:

- i. guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Roman Polintan, Joseph Canlas, Angelina Ladera, and Jovelyn Suson;
- ii. conduct a fair and independent investigation into those acts of harassment in order to identify those responsible, take them to trial and give them before a competent and impartial tribunal and apply to them the penal, civil and/or administrative sanctions provided by the law;
- iii. End all forms of harassment and ill-treatment of human rights defenders in the Philippines, and guarantee in all circumstances that they be able to carry out their work without any hindrance;
- iv. Conform with all the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, especially its Article 1, which states that "everyone has the right, individually and in association

with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels” and above-mentioned Article 12.2;

v. More generally, ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by the Philippines.

Addresses:

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- Mr. José de Venecia Jr., Speaker of the House of
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- Hon. Purificacion Valera Quisumbing, Commissioner, Commission
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- Mr. Raul Gonzales, Minister of Justice, Department of Justice,
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- Ambassador Enrique A. Manalo, Permanent Mission of the
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345 64 25.

Please also write to the diplomatic missions or embassies of the
Philippines in your respective country.

Notes

[1] "mhtml:mid://00000649/#_ftnref1" BAYAN is an alliance composed of organisations of peasants and workers, and Bayan Muna is a political party that promotes the rights and welfare of the marginalized sectors of the country.

[2] "mhtml:mid://00000649/#_ftnref2" ANAKPAWIS is a national political party that promotes, advocates, and advances the patriotic and democratic aspirations of marginalized sectors of workers.

[3] "mhtml:mid://00000649/#_ftnref3" WRA3 is a trade union alliance promoting and defending the rights and welfare of workers and union members in Central Luzon region.

Geneva - Paris , October 2, 2007

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory, a FIDH and OMCT venture, is dedicated to the protection of Human Rights Defenders and aims to offer them concrete support in their time of need. The Observatory was the winner of the 1998 Human Rights Prize of the French Republic.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

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