

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 81/94 Death threat

3 March 1994

PHILIPPINES Sonia Soto, aged 33, human rights activist (f)

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of human rights activist, Sonia Soto. In recent weeks she has been threatened by men in plain clothes believed to be linked to the Philippine National Police (PNP) in Angeles City, Pampanga province. Local human rights activists believe that the threat is linked to Sonia Soto's campaigning on behalf of two peasant activists who were recently killed by armed men alleged to be members of the 172nd unit of the PNP.

On 26 February 1994 Sonia Soto was stopped in the street by several plainclothes men driving an unidentified jeep. Before driving away, one of the men told her: *"How are you Ms. Soto. We've just been to your house. We know you. Be careful you will be next"*.

Later that night, a vehicle parked outside Sonia's house and the driver blew the horn continuously, driving away each time Sonia switched on the lights, only to return and begin again after a short time. On the night of 27 February the gate of Sonia's house was banged continuously, again for no apparent reason.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human rights violations in the Philippines have occurred within a context of protracted armed conflict between government and government-backed forces and the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines. The security forces' "total approach" to counter-insurgency has involved the portrayal of certain civilian organizations as legitimate targets within the counter-insurgency campaign. These have included religious, community and legal rights organizations. Members of these lawful organizations are frequently publicly accused of being members of or sympathizers with the NPA. Once labelled in this way, they are vulnerable to human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrest and detention, "disappearance" and extrajudicial killing. Individuals who are threatened are especially at risk.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Sonia Soto;
- urging the authorities to take immediate steps to stop the harassment of Sonia Soto and to guarantee her safety and that of her family;
- calling upon the authorities to investigate this case, and to ensure that appropriate judicial measures are taken against those responsible.

#### APPEALS TO

1) President Fidel V. Ramos  
Malacañang Palace  
Philippines

Faxes: +63 2 832 7793 (Via Department of Foreign Affairs)  
+63 2 731 1325 Via President's press Secretary

Telexes: 40414 Malcom On, 45618 PMC PM, 63370 PN

Salutation: Dear President Ramos

2) General Umberto Rodriguez  
Chief  
Philippine National Police  
Camp Crame  
Quezon City, Philippines

**Telegrams: General Rodriguez, Camp Crame, Quezon City, Philippines**  
**Salutation: Dear General Rodriguez**

3) Major Lino Calingasan  
Commanding Officer  
172nd PNP Battalion HQ  
San Fernando  
Pampanga, Philippines

**Telegrams: Major Calingasan, 172nd PNP HQ, San Fernando, Pampanga, Philippines**  
**Salutation: Dear Major Calingasan**

4) Hon. Bren Guiao  
Governor of Pampanga  
Provincial Capitol  
San Fernando  
Pampanga, Philippines

**Telegrams: Governor, Provincial Capitol, San Fernando, Pampanga, Philippines**  
**Salutation: Dear Governor Guiao**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

Sedfrey Ordoñez  
Chairman  
Commission on Human Rights  
IBP Building  
Julia Vargas Avenue  
Pasig, Manila, Philippines

and to diplomatic representatives of the Philippines accredited to your country

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat,  
or your section office, if sending appeals after 14 April 1994.