

UA 53/91

"Disappearance"

14 February 1991

PHILIPPINES : Ronaldo Regencia, aged 29

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Ronaldo Regencia, a farmer, last seen on 22 December 1990. He was reportedly arrested by members of the 42nd Infantry Battalion (IB) of the Philippines Army (PA) and members of the official paramilitary Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU), in barangay Lavides, General Luna City, Quezon province.

Security forces carrying out military operations in the town of General Luna arrived at barangay Lavides at around 10.30 on the morning of 22 December. They are reported to have gone to the home of Ronaldo Regencia and to have accused him of being a "peasant organizer".

According to eyewitnesses, Ronaldo Regencia was arrested and taken to the 42nd IB detachment at barangay Nieva in General Luna. His wife reported that she was unable to leave the house at the time of the arrest because she was unwell and because she was afraid to leave her young children. She was able to visit the military detachment later that day, but military authorities there said that Ronaldo Regencia had been released; they showed her release documents which were said to bear his signature.

However, when Ronaldo Regencia's wife arrived home there was no sign of her husband. She subsequently returned to the 42nd IB detachment with Ronaldo Regencia's parents and the Vice-Mayor of General Luna. The group inquired after the "disappeared" person but military authorities again denied that he was being held in custody.

Relatives have continued to inquire about Ronaldo Regencia and have been assisted by local political and religious leaders. However, they have been unable to obtain information about his fate and whereabouts from the military authorities.

On 11 February 1991, relatives heard through unofficial sources that Ronaldo Regencia was still alive and that he had been seen at a military detachment of the 42nd IB (Bravo Company) in barangay Nieva, General Luna. It was also reported that the military were using Ronaldo Regencia as a guide during evening military operations.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

"Disappearances" have occurred against a background of armed conflict between government and government-backed forces and the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the outlawed Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The majority of the "disappeared" have been members of lawful non-governmental organizations publicly labelled by the security forces as fronts for the NPA and CPP, or individuals suspected of NPA or CPP membership.

More than 50 people were reported to have "disappeared" in the Philippines during 1990. At least five of the "disappeared" are believed to have died or to have been killed while in custody and some appeared to have been tortured. At least 15 whose detention had been denied by security forces in 1990 subsequently reappeared after a period in police or military custody. The majority were still missing at the end of the year.

In an overwhelming majority of the cases in which there is clear and substantive evidence, the perpetrators have been members of government or government-backed forces.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern for the safety of Ronaldo Regencia, last seen on 22 December 1990 when he was reportedly abducted by members of the 42nd IB and a local CAFGU unit;
- urging that his whereabouts be made known immediately;
- calling for an immediate investigation into this case and asking to be informed of the progress of the investigation;
- calling on the government to ensure that those suspected of human rights violations are brought to justice;
- urging that effective measures be taken to protect Ronaldo Regencia's safety.

APPEALS TO:

Maj. Gen. Rodolfo Biazon
 Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines
 Camp Crame
 Quezon City
 Metro Manila, Philippines
Telegrams: Chief Staff Armed Forces, Manila, Philippines
Telexes: 22471 DND PH or 42004 DCSLOG PM
Faxes: + 63 2 832 3793 (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Brig. Gen. Guillermo Flores
 Commanding General
 Philippines Army Headquarters
 Fort Bonifacio
 Makati
 Metro Manila, Philippines
Telegrams: Commander Philippines Army, Fort Bonifacio, Manila, Philippines

Area Commander
 Southern Luzon (SOLCOM) Command
 Camp Nakar
 Lucena City
 Quezon Province, Philippines
Telegrams: Commander SOLCOM, Lucena, Quezon, Philippines

President Corazon Aquino
 Malacañang Palace
 Manila, Philippines
Telegrams: President Aquino, Manila, Philippines
Telexes: 40414 MALCOM PN, 45618 RMC PM,
63370 PRES PN or 82361 PRES PU
Faxes: + 63 2 832 3793 (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
+ 63 2 731 1325 (via Press Secretary)

General Fidel V. Ramos
 Secretary of National Defense
 Department of National Defense
 Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo
 Quezon City
 Metro Manila, Philippines

Telegrams: Defense Secretary Ramos, Quezon, Philippines
Telexes: 22471 DND PH or 42004 DCSLOG PM
Faxes: + 63 2 721 3988

COPIES TO:

Mary Concepcion Bautista
Chairman, Commission on Human Rights
IBP Building Complex
Dona Julia Vargas Avenue
Pasig Metro Manila, Philippines

and to diplomatic representatives of the Philippines in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 31 March 1991.