

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: ASA 35/08/92
Distr: UA/SC

UA 88/92

Harassment/death threats

16 March 1992

~~PHILIPPINES: Marcelo FAKILANG, community leader and human rights advocate~~

On 26 January 1992 at around midnight, a group of soldiers arrived at the home of Marcelo Fakilang in Sadanga, Mountain Province. Upon being told to come back the following morning, the leader of the group reportedly threatened to blow up the house and the soldiers fired their guns into the air. The soldiers returned on 31 January, seized Marcelo Fakilang and took him to an ator (an indigenous, village centre), where he was reportedly struck with rifle butts, stones and a knife. As a result of the beating Marcelo Fakilang suffered a broken rib, a head wound and severe bruising to the face and limbs. On both occasions the soldiers were identified as members of the 68th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army, accompanied by members of the militia Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU).

Amnesty International believes that threats and other forms of harassment of Marcelo Fakilang may have continued since then and it is concerned for his safety. It urges the military to take immediate action to stop threatened or actual violence against civilians engaged in lawful political activity.

Military authorities had reportedly accused Marcelo Fakilang of being a communist sympathizer and had alleged that he received a monthly allowance from the underground National Democratic Front. Marcelo Fakilang has vigorously denied these allegations and has insisted that his activities are lawful. Amnesty International believes that the attempted murder and harassment of Marcelo Fakilang may have been connected to his lawful political activities and his outspoken criticism of human rights abuses by the military. Marcelo Fakilang is Chairman of the Mountain Province Chapter of the Cordillera People's Alliance, an organization working in defence of indigenous people's rights in the region. He is a candidate for the mayorship of Sadanga town in the forthcoming general elections.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human rights violations in the Philippines have occurred in the context of the government's counter-insurgency campaign to defeat the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the outlawed Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The harassment of Marcelo Fakilang has taken place against a background of increased military presence in the Cordillera region of Northern Luzon. The 68th Infantry Battalion was deployed in Sadanga in early January 1992 and, along with other military units in the region, has put pressure on local residents to join the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU), a militia force deployed by the military in counter-insurgency operations.

According to reports from residents in Sadanga and Bontoc, newly recruited CAFGU members have been assigned to identify suspected NPA members. Those

identified have been given two days to "surrender", sometimes after threats that they and their families will be killed. In some cases their properties have been destroyed by soldiers. Other community activists have reportedly been placed on the military's "Order of Battle" a list of people identified as "communist sympathizers". Those whose names appear on the list are known to be at risk of harassment, arbitrary arrest or extrajudicial execution. CAFGU members are known to have been responsible for human rights violations throughout the Philippines and Amnesty International has called for all CAFGUs to be disbanded by the government.

Page 2 of UA 88/92

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/express and airmail letters:

- expressing urgent concern for the safety of Marcelo Fakilang, following harassment and beating by soldiers reportedly from the 68th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army and CAFGUs in Sadanga, Mountain Province;
- urging military authorities to ensure that all military actions are carried out within the framework of the law;
- calling on the military to put an end to the practice of forced recruitment of CAFGUs;
- calling on the military to end the practice of labelling suspected communist sympathizers and to prohibit the use of the "Order of Battle" to target those whose lawful political activities are deemed unacceptable by military authorities.

APPEALS TO

1) Lt. Col Jovito Palparan
702 Brigade
c/o Danonoy, Sagada
Mountain Province
Philippines

Dear Lt. Col Palparan

Telegrams: Commander, 702 Brigade, Mountain Province, Philippines

2) Brig. Gen. Miguel Abaya
Regional Military Command 1
Camp Dangwa, La Trinidad
Benguet
Philippines

Dear Brig. Gen. Abaya

Telegrams: Commander, Camp Dangwa, Benguet, Philippines

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) Roy Pilando
Governor, Mountain Province
Capitol Building
Bontoc
Mountain Province
Philippines

2) 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. Please check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 27 April 1992.