

**EXTERNAL (for general distribution)**

**AI Index: ASA 35/13/93**

**Distr: UA/SC**

**UA 269/93      Extrajudicial Execution**

**11 August 1993**

**PHILIPPINES: William Rom, tribal activist**

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Amnesty International is deeply concerned at the killing of William Rom, head of the Research and Documentation Desk of SILDAP-Sidlakan, a tribal support group based in Butuan City, Mindanao. This information reached Amnesty recently. It is the second time in six months that a tribal activist engaged in non-violent activities has been killed by members of the Citizen Armed Geographical Unit (CAFGU), an official militia used by the military in counter-insurgency operations. (The other tribal activist, who was killed in February 1993, was Chris Batan. See Urgent Action 49/93, ASA 35/02/93, of 26 February 1993.) In the last eighteen months alone Amnesty International has documented evidence of CAFGU involvement in 41 extrajudicial executions throughout the Philippines.

The murder occurred on 17 July 1993 in Katikuyan, Surigao del Norte as William Rom and Carolina Salas, also a SILDAP-Sidlakan worker, were on their way back to Butuan City after conducting a research appraisal among the Mamanwa tribal community. After following them for a short time four CAFGU members approached William Rom and Carolina Salas and accused them of belonging to the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). Despite being told that the two workers had simply been evaluating a 7-year-old Literacy and Socio-Economic Project in Katikuyan the CAFGUs attacked them with machetes, killing William Rom and slashing Carolina Salas' cheek. Carolina Salas subsequently managed to escape.

Amnesty International deplores the extrajudicial execution of William Rom, and the attack on Carolina Salas. It calls on the Philippine Government to conduct an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation of the killing and to bring the suspected perpetrators promptly to justice. It also urges the government to take immediate steps to guarantee the basic human rights of all members of tribal communities in the Philippines.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

SILDAP-Sidlakan is a non-governmental organization working on behalf of tribal communities in Northeastern Mindanao. Beside the Literacy and Socio-Economic Project mentioned above, the organization also maintains health, research and publication programs for the Mamanwa tribal community in Surigao. Organizations established to defend tribal community interests have often been labelled by the military as fronts for the CPP/NPA and leaders or members of these organizations have become the victims of extrajudicial execution, "disappearance" and other violations.

The forces deployed by the government against the NPA and other armed opposition groups have included the Philippine National Police, the Philippine Army and the official militia, the CAFGU. Despite considerable evidence of CAFGU involvement in

human rights violations a leading military official said in August 1992 that military training of CAFGU members had "corrected" this problem and the government proposed a substantial budgetary increase for the CAFGU in 1993.

Evidence compiled by Amnesty International however, contradicts these claims. Between August 1992 and August 1993 the organization has learned of 41 extrajudicial executions. In 19 of the 41 cases CAFGU members are reported to have carried out the killings. This indicates that judicial and institutional measures to protect human rights have had little impact on the behaviour of CAFGU members. In May 1993 a senior military official announced that the CAFGU would be **Page 2 of UA 269/93**

disbanded, possibly within one year. Amnesty International has repeatedly urged the government to dismantle the CAFGU as soon as possible, and in view of continuing reports of CAFGU involvement in the perpetration of human rights violations is again calling for its immediate disbandment.

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

- expressing concern that William Rom was killed on 17 July 1993 by members of the Citizen Armed Geographical Unit (CAFGU);
- calling for an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation of the killing and for the perpetrators to be brought promptly to justice;
- asking to be kept informed of the progress of any such investigation;
- urging the government to take immediate steps to guarantee the basic human rights of all members of the tribal communities in the Philippines;
- reiterating calls by Amnesty International for the government to take immediate steps to dismantle the CAFGU.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS TO**

1. President Fidel V. Ramos  
Malacañang Palace  
Manila, Philippines

**Telegrams: President Ramos Malacañang, Philippines**  
**Faxes: + 632 832 7795 (via Dept. of Foreign Affairs)**  
**+ 632 731 1325 (via Press Secretary)**  
**Telexes: 40414 Malcom PN; 45618 RMC PM; 63370 PRES PN; 82361 PU**

**Salutation: Dear President Ramos**

2. General Lisandro Abadia  
AFP Chief of Staff  
Camp Aguinaldo Quezon City

**Telegrams: Chief of Staff Abadia Quezon City, Philippines**  
**Faxes: + 632 832 3793 (via Dept. of Foreign Affairs)**

**Salutation: Dear General Abadia**

3. Sedfrey Ordoñez  
Chairman  
Commission on Human Rights

Integrated Bar of the Philippines Bldg  
Doña Julia Vargas Avenue  
Pasig 1600, Manila  
Philippines

**Telegrams: Chairman Ordoñez Human Rights Commission Manila, Philippines**

**Faxes: + 632 631 6449**

**Salutation: Dear Mr Ordoñez**

**COPIES OF APPEALS TO THE FOLLOWING NEWSPAPERS:**

1. The Editor

Mindanao Life

Blk 13 Opal Street

SM Village

Bangkal, Davao City, Philippines

2. The Editor

Mindanao Mirror Bulletin

270 R Magsaysay Avenue

Davao City, 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 23 September 1993.