

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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PLEASE ORGANIZE UP TO 10 APPEALS PER SECTION

UA 292/91 Harassment/fear of extrajudicial execution

29 August 1991

PHILIPPINES: Emong LACSON, community activist

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Emong Lacson, an interpreter and urban community activist. His name is reported to have appeared on a list of people wanted for arrest by the Philippine National Police (PNP) in connection with their political activities. A fellow activist and neighbour of Emong Lacson was recently the victim of an apparent extrajudicial execution by PNP members shortly after his arrest.

According to reports, a member of the Intelligence Bureau of the PNP told Emong Lacson and his wife that the PNP had a list of people for whom arrest orders would be issued. The PNP member said that Emong's name appeared on the list. While this in itself did not cause undue concern, fears that Emong Lacson was in danger were greatly increased when, on 8 August 1991, a fellow activist, Mr. Fernando Baldomar, was abducted and killed, reportedly by agents of the Capital Command (CAPCOM) of the PNP. Fernando Baldomar was forcibly arrested at 9.15 pm. His body was found sometime later by his wife and relatives at a funeral parlour.

In 1988 Emong Lacson had acted as interpreter for a Swedish film company which made a documentary about the "Smokey Mountain" rubbish tip in Manila. Hundreds of Filipinos live on or around the rubbish tip, surviving by foraging through the waste material and recycling or selling it. In assisting a foreign film company to focus on the social and economic hardships of those living on "Smokey Mountain", Emong Lacson may well have earned a reputation among the security forces for being a "communist sympathizer".

Relatives of Emong Lacson have reported that in 1988 the military authorities carried out a series of abductions of community activists. A number of those who were arrested "disappeared" into military custody and their whereabouts are still unknown. It is believed that some of them may have been killed by members of the security forces.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Harassment and threats against those active within community, church and trade union organizations, and against human rights advocates, have occurred within the context of an armed conflict between government forces and the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the outlawed Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The government's "total approach" to counter-insurgency has given rise to a practice known as "red-labelling", whereby members of the security forces publicly accuse individuals of being communists or subversives directly involved with the armed insurgency movement. Some of those labelled are known to have been placed on an "Order of Battle", a list of persons wanted by the security forces for alleged subversion or membership of the CPP/NPA. The evidence strongly suggests that when individuals have been targeted in this way by the security forces the likelihood of their becoming the victim of an extrajudicial execution or "disappearance" is greatly increased.

The accusations of subversion or "communist sympathies" are untested and unproven by the courts and are denied by the organizations and individuals in question. Amnesty International believes that the practice of "red-labelling" has served to blur the distinction between members of the armed opposition and those involved in a range of non-violent social and political activities. In many cases it has served to legitimate and encourage acts of repression, including serious human rights violations.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Emong Lacson, who is believed to have been targeted by the military authorities and saying that your concern is increased by reports that his neighbour and fellow activist was recently killed after being abducted by members of the security forces;
- urging the authorities to take immediate and effective steps to protect the safety of Emong Lacson;
- urging the authorities to carry out a thorough investigation into the death of Fernando Baldomar, with the results to be made public;
- calling on the government to put an end to the practice of "red-labelling" and to ensure that Filipinos are free to carry out community and social activities without fear of being subjected to human rights violations.

APPEALS TO:

1.

Silvestre H. Bello III
Secretary of Justice
Department of Justice
Padre Faura Street
Ermita, Manila
Philippines

Dear Secretary Bello

Telegrams: Justice Secretary Bello, Manila, Philippines

Faxes: +63 2 521 1614

2.

General Cesar P Nazareno
Director General
Philippine National Police
Headquarters of the Philippines Constabulary
Camp Crame, Novaliches
Metro Manila, Philippines

Dear General

Telegrams: Director General Philippine National Police, Camp Crane, Metro Manila, Philippines

3.

General Renato S. de Villa
Secretary of National Defense
Department of National Defense
Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo
Quezon City
Metro Manila, Philippines

Dear General

Telegrams: Defense Secretary de Villa, 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 10 October 1991.