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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 111/93

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - PHILIPPINES

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Saudi Arabia - 14 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 105

Yugoslavia/Kosovo - 23 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 104

Sudan - 29 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 88

Myanmar - 8 October

Document and news release on all concerns in Myanmar, including violations against women. The researcher will be in Thailand, available for interviews, at the time of the launch.

## TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Iraq - 8 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 105

Zaire - 16 September

Document and news service item on Zaire's worst human rights crisis since end of civil war in 1960s - extrajudicial executions, "disappearances", torture, arbitrary detention, etc. IS will send to international media.

North Korea - 1 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 88

Togo - 5 October

Document, Section-level action and news service item on human rights violations by army, impunity and foreign government support of army. IS will send to international media.

Francophone Summit - 11 October

News release and document will only be available in French and will be sent to francophone sections and international media. If you are not a francophone section and want a copy of either, please contact the IS press office. There will also be a news item on Mauritius, which is where the summit is taking place. We won't be actively seeking publicity on the Mauritius item.

## FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

EJEs and "Disappearances" - 20 October (international)

Iran - 3 November (international)

Venezuela - 10 November (international, linked to EJEs & Disappearances)

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**PHILIPPINES: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES RELEASE OF PEASANT LEADER - URGES URGENT REVIEW OF PLIGHT OF 400 OTHER POLITICAL PRISONERS**

Jaime "Ka Jimmy" Tadeo, Chairman of the *Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas* (KMP), the Peasant Movement of the Philippines, was released from prison on parole on 6 August 1993, after more than three years in detention.

Jaime Tadeo was imprisoned after conviction on a charge of misappropriation of funds (*estafa*) originally brought against him under the Marcos administration in 1982. Amnesty International considers that he may in fact have been detained for his lawful and non-violent activities as a peasant activist and for his role as leader of the KMP.

Jaime Tadeo was arrested without a warrant at the national office of the KMP in Quezon City on 10 May 1990. The timing and circumstances of his arrest indicated that it may have been carried out for reasons of political expediency rather than in accordance with normal judicial procedures. The arrest occurred in the context of widespread demonstrations over the continued presence of United States military bases in the Philippines, and over the government's agrarian reform policy. In both these areas Jaime Tadeo and the KMP had been active and outspoken critics of government policy. One day before his arrest, Jaime Tadeo had been threatened by nine unidentified men armed with automatic weapons, believed to be members of the security forces. After stopping Jaime Tadeo and a companion in the street the armed men reportedly said: "Your days of criticizing the government are numbered".

The ostensible legal basis for the imprisonment of Jaime Tadeo was the *estafa* charge brought against him in 1982. At that time the government's National Grains Authority (NGA) - now defunct - alleged that he had misappropriated a large quantity of unmilled rice while employed as manager of a farmers' cooperative. The NGA filed a civil and a criminal case. The civil suit was dismissed by a regional court in 1985 for lack of merit, but in 1987 Jaime Tadeo was found guilty on the criminal charge of *estafa* and sentenced to a minimum of four years and a maximum of 18 years' imprisonment. The ruling was upheld by the Court of Appeals, and a petition for review was denied by the Supreme Court in January 1990.

**The political background**

Serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial execution, "disappearance" and arbitrary detention, have occurred in the context of armed conflict between government forces and the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), outlawed until mid-1992. The majority of victims of human rights violations are civilians whose peaceful political, social, religious or human rights activities have brought them into conflict with government policy and practice. Such people are frequently accused or "labelled" by the military of being NPA sympathizers, and their organizations named as "fronts" for the CPP/NPA. Once labelled in this way, individuals are portrayed by the security forces as legitimate targets within the counter-insurgency campaign.

In May 1992, after Fidel Ramos was elected president of the Philippines, a series of peace initiatives were introduced, including moves toward negotiation of a political settlement with the CPP/NPA. An amnesty program was announced and in the ensuing months a number of political prisoners were released, including some prominent CPP/NPA leaders. However, by September 1993 more than 400 political prisoners were estimated to remain in jail in the Philippines. Many of these prisoners are accused of criminal activities, such as illegal possession of a firearm. Some have been convicted, others have been detained without charge or trial for many months pending court hearings. Amnesty International believes that among this group are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for peaceful political activity. Available evidence suggests that the charges against such prisoners have been fabricated in order to provide a credible legal basis for the detention of those whose lawful political activities are unacceptable to the security forces.

**Amnesty International urges the Government of the Philippines to treat its review of all cases of political prisoners as a matter of high priority. It calls upon the authorities to ensure that all those detained solely for non-violent political activities are immediately and unconditionally released.**

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