

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of "disappearance"/Fear of ill-treatment

31 March 1994

PHILIPPINES Wilfredo (Fred) Sibayan, aged 40, human rights worker

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of human rights worker Wilfredo Sibayan. He was arrested on 28 March 1994 and is currently believed to be in incommunicado detention in a military camp north of Manila. Relatives were able to see him briefly on 29 March and he reported being under constant interrogation since his arrest. Wilfredo Sibayan has not been accompanied by a lawyer. There are also fears for his health as he suffers from high blood pressure and a kidney complaint.

On the morning of 28 March Wilfredo Sibayan left his home in Manila to go to work at the national office of the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA). He was arrested by plainclothes members of an intelligence security unit of the Philippine Army. No warrant of arrest was delivered and Wilfredo Sibayan was not informed of the reason for his arrest. He was taken first to a police station at San Mateo, before being blindfolded and taken in a van to the military detachment in Makati. On 30 March he was allegedly transferred to Camp Aquino, San Miguel, Tarlac.

Wilfredo Sibayan has been publicly accused by military intelligence of being a leader of the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Prior to his abduction, Wilfredo Sibayan had been under surveillance at his home and at work. Over the last year he had, on three separate occasions, found bullets in front of his house. In the Philippines this is known to mean that the recipient is being issued with a death threat.

Human rights workers in the Philippines believe that Wilfredo Sibayan has been detained for his human rights activities. He has been staff secretary at PAHRA's national office for almost a year and before that was a volunteer for the Children's Rehabilitation Centre, an organization assisting families and children who have been traumatized by civil conflict in the Philippines.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human rights violations in the Philippines have occurred within a context of protracted armed conflict between government and government-backed forces and the NPA. The security forces' "total approach" to counter-insurgency has involved the portrayal of certain civilian organizations as legitimate targets within the counter-insurgency campaign. These have included human rights, religious, community and legal rights organizations. Members of these lawful organizations are frequently publicly accused of being members or sympathizers of the NPA. Once labelled in this way, they are vulnerable to human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and ill-treatment, "disappearance" and extrajudicial killing.

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

- expressing urgent concern at the incommunicado detention of Wilfredo Sibayan, arrested in Manila on 28 March 1994;
- calling upon the authorities to act immediately to guarantee the safety and wellbeing of Wilfredo Sibayan;
- stating that you believe Wilfredo Sibayan to have been detained for lawful

and non-violent activities and urging the authorities to release him immediately from detention;

- calling upon the authorities to cease the practice of arbitrary and incommunicado detention and to bring those responsible for these abuses to justice before a civilian court.

APPEALS TO

1) President Fidel V. Ramos

Malacañang Palace

Manila, Philippines

Fax: +63 2 731 1325 (via press Secretary)

Fax: +63 2 832 3793 (via Department of Foreign Affairs)

Telex: 40414 Malcom PN; 45618 RMC PM; 63370 PRES PN

Telegrams: President Ramos, Malacañang, Manila, Philippines

Salutation: Dear President Ramos

2) Franklin Drilon

Secretary of Justice

Padre Faura

Ermita, Manila

Philippines

Fax: +63 2 586 916

Telegrams: Secretary Drilon, Dept of Justice, Philippines

Salutation: Dear Secretary Drilon

3) Lt Gen Arturo T. Enrile

Commanding General

Philippine Army

Fort Andres Bonifacio

1202 Makati, Manila

Philippines

Telegrams: Lt Gen Enrile, PA HQ, Fort Bonifacio, Manila, Philippines

Salutation: Dear Lt Gen Enrile

4) Commanding Officer

Northern Luzon Command

Camp Servillano Aquino

San Miguel

Tarlac

Philippines

Telegrams: Commanding Officer, Camp Servillano Aquino, Tarlac, Philippines

Salutation: Dear Commanding Officer

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Sedfrey Ordoñez

Commission on Human Rights

IPB Building

Doña Julia Vargas Avenue

Pasig, Manila

Philippines

Fax: +63 2 631 6449

Salutation: Dear Chairman Ordoñez

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 19 May 1994.