

PUBLIC

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UA 201/05 "Disappearance"/Fear for safety

**PHILIPPINES Armando Barquillo (m) aged 40
Lirio de Castro (m) aged 21, tricycle driver**

Leftwing political activist Armando Barquillo and his associate Lirio de Castro were abducted on 26 July by men believed to be agents of the army Intelligence Service. They are believed to have "disappeared", and their lives are in grave danger.

Armando Barquillo is the acting chairperson of a local chapter of the legal leftist party Anakpawis (Toiling Masses). He left his home in the town of Tansa, in Cavite province, at 8am on 26 July, together with tricycle driver Lirio de Castro, to meet an acquaintance at a public market in Cavite City.

According to eyewitnesses, some time between between 9 and 11am at least eight heavily built armed men approached the two men as they were sitting in an eatery in the market. Some of the armed men reportedly took hold of the pair from behind, tied their arms with packing tape, and hit them over the head with their pistols. Others kept bystanders back at gunpoint as they dragged the two men into a red Mitsubishi Pajero 4x4.

On 24 July, two days before the abduction, Armando Barquillo had told his family that a red Pajero had tailed Lirio de Castro's motorcycle, on which he was riding pillion, sideswiped it and pushed it off the road before speeding off. Both men were cut and bruised.

A fact-finding investigation led by the human rights group Karapantan (Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights) were unable to trace the two men, intensifying concerns that they may be held incommunicado and are at risk of ill-treatment or torture.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Leftist activists "disappeared" as a matter of routine under the government of President Marcos, who was overthrown in 1986. "Disappearances" continued under the Aquino government that followed, but began to decline in the early 1990s. They are still reported periodically, however, along with other grave human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions and torture, in the course of anti-insurgency operations against the armed wing of the legal Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the New People's Army (NPA), which has been fighting the government since the 1970s.

Apart from suspected NPA members, those at risk of human rights violations include community activists, priests and church workers, lawyers, members of legal leftist political parties (including Anakpawis and Bayan Muna (People First) seen by the authorities as sympathetic to the broader communist movement, and journalists.

During 2005 the number of suspected CPP-NPA sympathisers reportedly attacked or killed has risen sharply. So far this year at least 20 activists identified with progressive leftist groups are reported to have been extrajudicially executed. The authorities have persistently failed to conduct effective, swift and impartial investigations into these crimes and bring those responsible to justice, leading to a climate of impunity in the Philippines.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Armando Barquillo and Lirio de Castro, who were reportedly abducted on 26 July in Cavite City by men suspected to be agents of the army's Intelligence Service;
- urging the authorities to establish the men's whereabouts immediately, and guarantee their safety;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that if they are found to be in custody they are humanely treated, and given access to medical care, as well as to their families and lawyers of their own choosing;
- calling for assurances that if they are in detention, they will not be tortured or ill-treated, and will be either released immediately or charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- urging the authorities to send a clear message to all armed forces personnel that human rights violations, including forced "disappearances", will not be tolerated under any circumstances and that those found responsible will be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
President of the Republic
Malacañang Palace Compound
New Executive Bldg.
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Salutation: Dear President Macapagal - Arroyo

Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr.
Secretary of National Defense
Department of National Defense
3rd Floor, DND Building
Camp Aguinaldo
EDSA, Quezon City
Metro Manila
Philippines

Fax: + 63 2 911 6213

Salutation: Dear Secretary Cruz

COPIES TO:

Hon. Purificacion Valera-Quisumbing
Chairperson, Commission on Human Rights
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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 13 September 2005.