

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: ASA 35/10/93

Distr: UA/SC

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UA 157/93

"Disappearance"

17 May 1993

PHILIPPINES: Jose Soliven

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Jose Soliven, a 56-year-old farmer from *barangay* (administrative unit) Magsaysay, Mulanay, Quezon province, who "disappeared" on 30 March 1992 after being abducted by government forces.

More than a year after his "disappearance" his family have still been unable to trace him. A local human rights organization only learned of the disappearance at the end of April 1993 and has commenced action to seek his whereabouts. Amnesty International received confirmation of his continued disappearance the week of 10 May 1993. The organisation believes that immediate pressure on the Philippines' authorities will assist local efforts to uncover the fate of Jose Soliven.

Jose Soliven was last seen in *barangay* Tagbakan, Catanauan, Quezon province at about 3pm on 30 March 1992 when he was on his way home after selling corn in another town. Witnesses have described how he was taken away after being apprehended by several members of a Citizens Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) - a government-backed militia used by the military in counter-insurgency operations - as he alighted from a jeepney.

Following his abduction, Jose Soliven's wife, accompanied by local *barangay* officials, inquired about her husband's whereabouts at the 31st Infantry Battalion camp in Catanauan, Quezon. The military denied that Jose Soliven was in their custody. Two of his abductors were later identified as members of a CAFGU assigned to the army's 76th Infantry Battalion at Tagbakan *barangay*.

Jose Soliven is believed to have been targeted because he was suspected of supporting the NPA. His "disappearance" took place shortly after an armed encounter between the military and the New People's Army (NPA) in a nearby *barangay*. The military are said to have suspected that residents of *barangay* Magsaysay, where Jose Soliven lived, were helping the NPA.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

"Disappearance" and incommunicado detention in the Philippines have occurred against a background of armed conflict between government and government-backed forces and the NPA, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Victims of "disappearance", incommunicado detention and extrajudicial killings have come from all walks of life. They have included rural people living in zones of conflict, members of tribal communities, social and community workers, members of lawful political organizations, church workers, trade unionists and human rights lawyers.

Although many of those who "disappear" in the Philippines are presumed to have been killed in detention, it does sometimes happen that prisoners who have "disappeared" are traced alive in custody, even long periods after their arrest. If Jose Soliven is being held secret detention, he risks severe ill-treatment and torture.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Jose Soliven who was abducted by CAFGU members on 30 March 1992;

- urging the authorities to act immediately to clarify his fate or whereabouts;

- calling for an immediate and impartial investigation into this case and asking to be informed of the progress of any such investigation;

- reiterating calls by Amnesty International for the government to take immediate steps to dismantle the CAFGU.

APPEALS TO

1) President Fidel V Ramos
Malacañang Palace
Manila, Philippines

Telegrams: President Ramos, Manila, Philippines

Faxes: + 63 2 731 1325 (via Press Secretary to the President)

+ 63 2 832 7793 (via Department of Foreign Affairs)

Salutation: Dear President Ramos

2) General Lisandro Abadia
GHQ, Armed Forces of the Philippines
Camp Aguinaldo
Quezon City, Philippines

Telegrams: General Abadia, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines

Salutation: Dear General Abadia

3) Brigadier General Cesar Fortuno
Southern Luzon Command Chief
Camp Guillermo Nakar
Lucena City, Philippines

Telegrams: Brigadier General Fortuno, Camp Guillermo Nakar, Lucena City, Philippines

Salutation: Dear Brigadier General

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Sedfrey Ordonez
Chairman, Commission on Human Rights
IBP Building
Dona Julia Vargas Avenue
Pasig, Manila, 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 5 July 1993.