

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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"Disappearance"

6 February 2015

PHILIPPINES

Bonifacio Sabanal (aged 19)

Rufino Sabanal (aged 40)

Mamerto Lupicio (aged 25)

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of three men -- Bonifacio Sabanal, Rufino Sabanal and Mamerto Lupicio -- all of them members of the Federation of Internal Refugees in Negros, who "disappeared" shortly after their arrest on 6 July by military personnel from the Alpha Company, 61st Infantry Battalion (IB) and Citizens' Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) members under its command. The military authorities reportedly accused the men, two of whom were recent evacuees, of being couriers for the New People's Army (NPA) insurgent group -- an allegation denied by their relatives.

According to eyewitnesses the three were detained in barangay San Antonio, Himamaylan at about 3:30 pm, 6 July, while they were on their way to harvest a relative's crops in sitio Cunalum, barangay Carabalan, Himamaylan. On 9 July, after learning that they were still missing, relatives and friends went to the detachment of the 61st IB in barangay Carabalan, Himamaylan, to inquire after their whereabouts. They were told that the three had been released in the evening of 7 July, and that two local Council members had witnessed the signing of their release papers. However, as of 6 September they had not returned to their families and they remain missing. According to one report, the three men were seen at the headquarters of the 61st IB on 8 July, the day after they were allegedly released. According to this report, they were "kneeling and pleading" before CAFGU members, and bore signs of having been ill-treated.

Relatives filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus before the Regional Trial Court of Negros Occidental, at Himamaylan on 10 July 1990, naming the Commander of the detachment at barangay Carabalan, Himamaylan as respondent. According to reports the petition was dismissed because the respondent claimed that the three had been released, and produced release papers signed by the local Council members.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

"Disappearances" have been reported at an alarming rate in the Philippines in the last year. Amnesty International received information regarding more than 40 reported "disappearances" in the period from December 1989 to August 1990, compared to a total of about 40 reports during 1989. The majority of the "disappeared" have been members of lawful non-governmental organizations alleged by the authorities to be front organizations for the outlawed Communist Party of the Philippines or its armed wing the New People's Army. In some cases, the "disappeared" have been found to be in incommunicado police or military detention, and in others they have been found dead, sometimes bearing signs of torture or ill-treatment.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/Telexes/Faxes/Express and Airmail Letters:

- expressing concern for the safety of Bonifacio Sabanal, Rufino Sabanal and Mamerto Lupicio, who "disappeared" shortly after their arrest on 6 July 1990, by personnel of the 61st Infantry Battalion and CAFGU members under its command;
- noting that eyewitnesses claimed to have seen the three in military detention on 8 July, one day after military authorities said they were released;
- urging that the whereabouts of the three men be made known immediately and that they be promptly released from custody or charged with a recognizable criminal offence;
- urging that all measures be taken to protect their physical safety.

APPEALS TO:

General Fidel V. Ramos
 Secretary of National Defense
 Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo
 Quezon City
 The Philippines Telex: 22471 DND PH; 42004 DCSLOG PM
 Fax: +63 2 832 3793 (via Ministry of Foreign
 Affairs)
 Telegrams: Defense Secretary Ramos, Quezon,
 Philippines

President Corazon Aquino
 Office of the President
 Malacanang
 Manila
 The Philippines Telexes: 40414 MALCOM PN; 45618 RMC PN;
 63370 PRES PN; 82361 PRES PU;
 Faxes: +63 2 832 3793 (via Ministry of Foreign
 Affairs)
 Telegrams: President Aquino, Manila, Philippines

COPIES TO:

Mary Concepcion Bautista
 Philippines Commission on
 Human Rights

IBP Bldg Complex
 Dona Julia Vargas Avenue
 Pasig, Metro Manila
 Philippines

Col. Emilio Buyco
 Commander
 61st Infantry Battalion
 Philippines Army
 Hda. Benedicto, Binalbagan
 Negros Occidental
 Philippines

and to diplomatic representatives of the Philippines in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with your section office or the International Secretariat if sending appeals after 16 October 1990.