

EXTRA 42/99

Possible**PHILIPPINES Prudencio Bati-on, 37, trade union organizer**

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Prudencio Bati-on, who has not been seen since 1 March 1999. It is feared he may have been forcibly "disappeared" in connection with his peaceful political activities.

The police and the intelligence services of the Armed Forces have reportedly denied that he is in their custody.

Prudencio Bati-on, a trade union organizer for the Socialist Workers' Movement (Sosyalistang Kilusan ng Manggawa), was last seen in Bagong Barrio, Caloocan City, Metro Manila.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the early 1970s over 1,600 people, most of them alleged critics or opponents of successive governments, have reportedly "disappeared". Despite clear and substantive evidence implicating state security personnel in these "disappearances", however, none of the suspected perpetrators have been tried, nor have the victims families received redress. The fate of the majority of those "disappeared" remains unknown.

Most of these "disappearances" occurred in the context of armed conflict and counter-insurgency campaigns under the governments of former Presidents Ferdinand Marcos (1965-86) and Corazon Aquino (1986-92). Many of the victims were members of legally-constituted student, labour, religious, political or human rights organizations which the authorities often claimed were fronts for the CPP and its armed wing the New People's Army (NPA). Other victims included those who were peacefully critical of government or military policy.

Under former President Fidel Ramos (1992-98) the number of reported "disappearances" declined markedly as the scale and intensity of armed conflict diminished. Amnesty International has welcomed this decline but is still calling on recently elected President Joseph Estrada to resolve past cases of "disappearances", to confront the issue of impunity and to address the conditions which continue to allow periodic "disappearances" to take place today.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/E-mails/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to take all necessary steps to establish the whereabouts and guarantee the safety of Prudencio Bati-on, who has not been seen since 1 March 1999;
- stating your concern that he may have been detained because of his lawful and non-violent activities, and urging that if he is in custody he either be released immediately or charged promptly with a recognizable offence under existing laws;
- asking the authorities, if he is found in custody, to ensure that he is not tortured and is allowed access to his family and to lawyers of his choice;
- urging that if he is found to have been held in incommunicado detention, measures are taken to investigate and prosecute those responsible.

APPEALS TO:

Secretary of the Interior and Local Government

President Joseph Estrada
Dept of the Interior and Local Government
PNCC Complex
Epifanio de los Santos Avenue
cnr Reliance Street
Mandaluyong
Metro Manila
Philippines

Telegrams: President, Manila, Philippines

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

Salutation: Dear President Estrada

Secretary of Justice

Serafin Cuevas
Department of Justice
Padre Faura, Ermita, Manila
Philippines

Telegrams: Secretary Justice, Manila, Philippines

Faxes: + 63 2 521 1614.

E-mails: doj@earp.com

Salutation: Dear Secretary Cuevas

COPIES TO:

Chairperson, Commission on Human Rights

Aurora Navarrete-Reciña
SAAC Building
U.P. Complex
Commonwealth Avenue
1100 Quezon City
Philippines

Police Director General Roberto Lastimoso
Philippine National Police
National Headquarters
Camp Crame
Quezon City
Philippines

and to diplomatic representatives of Philippines accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 12 April 1999.