

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: ASA 35/13/92

Distr: UA/SC

UA 144/92

Fear of "Disappearance"

7 May 1992

PHILIPPINES: Ruben de Vera, jeepney (civilian vehicle) driver

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Amnesty International has just learned of the possible "disappearance" of Ruben de Vera, a 25 year old jeepney driver from *barangay* (local administrative unit) Pis-anan, Antique, and is seriously concerned for his safety. He was reportedly arrested on 26 March 1992 by a member of the 6th Infantry Battalion (IB) of the Philippines Army (PA). Despite claims by the military authorities that he was released later the same day Ruben de Vera has not been seen since his arrest.

According to eyewitnesses, Ruben de Vera and a companion were riding a tricycle in *barangay* Pis-anan at about 11 pm on 26 March 1992 when they were stopped by a member of the 6th IB PA. The arresting soldier promised to take responsibility for the safety of Ruben de Vera and allowed the companion to return home. Ruben de Vera has not been seen since this incident.

Later the same night the mother of Ruben de Vera made inquiries at the Pis-anan detachment of the 6th IB PA, which reportedly denied that the arrest had occurred. On the following day, 27 March 1992, she located the soldier responsible for the arrest at the 6th IB PA Delta Company at *barangay* Cubay Sermon. He informed her that her son had been released on the night of 26 March 1992. The whereabouts of Ruben de Vera, however, remain unknown, although unconfirmed reports indicate that he may have been used against his will by the 6th IB PA as a "guide" in military operations.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Amnesty International has recorded nine cases of "disappearance" or incommunicado detention in the first four months of 1992. In the previous year at least 25 cases were recorded. Of these, at least six were believed to have been killed in custody. In 1990 more than 50 people were reported to have "disappeared" in the Philippines. Of these, at least five are believed to have died or to have been killed while in custody and some appeared to have been tortured. During the last two years at least 18 whose detention was denied by security forces subsequently reappeared after a period of police or military custody. The fate and whereabouts of the majority were unknown in March 1992.

"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 outlawed Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The majority of those held in unacknowledged or incommunicado detention have been members of lawful non-governmental organizations publicly labelled by the security forces as fronts for the NPA or CPP, or individuals suspected of NPA or CPP membership. In the overwhelming majority of the cases in which there is clear and substantive evidence, the perpetrators have been members of government or government backed

forces.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:**

- expressing concern for the safety of Ruben de Vera and urging the authorities to act immediately to clarify his fate and whereabouts;
- calling for an immediate and impartial investigation into this case and asking to be informed of the progress of this investigation;

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- urging the authorities to end the practice of using individuals as "guides" against their will during counter-insurgency operations.

**APPEALS TO**

1) President Corazon Aquino **Salutation: Your Excellency**  
Malacañang Palace  
Manila, Philippines  
**Telegrams: President Aquino, Manila, Philippines**  
**Telexes: 40414 MALCOM PN, 45618 RMC PM,**  
**63370 PRES PN or 82361 PU**  
**Faxes: + 63 2 832 7793 (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**  
**+ 63 2 731 1325 (via Press Secretary to the President)**

2) General Lisandro Abadia **Salutation: Dear General Abadia**  
Chief of Staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines  
Camp Aguinaldo,  
Quezon City, Philippines  
**Telegrams: General Abadia, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Philippines**  
**Telexes: 22471 DND PH or 42002 DCSLOG PM**  
**Faxes: + 63 2 832 3793**

3) Lt Col. Jupiter Batayula **Salutation: Dear Lt Col Batayula**  
Commanding Officer 6th IB  
Philippine Army Headquarters  
Patnongon, Antique  
Philippines  
**Telegrams: Commander, 6th Infantry Battalion, Antique, Philippines**

4) Brigadier General Fredericque Romero **Salutation: Dear Brigadier**  
Regional Commander, Region VI **General Romero**  
Camp Martin Delgado  
Fort San Pedro  
Iloilo City, Philippines  
**Telegrams: Commander Region VI, Iloilo City, Philippines**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

- 1) Mary Concepcion Bautista (Chairman) OR
  - 2) Paulynn Paredes Sicam (Commissioner) OR
  - 3) Abelardo Aportadera Jr (Commissioner)
- Commission on Human Rights  
IBP Building Complex  
Dona Julia Vargas Avenue

Pasig Metro Manila, Philippines

**Faxes:** + 63 2 631 6449

4) Senator Wigberto Tanada

Chairman, Senate Committee on Justice and Human Rights

Padre Faura, Manila, Philippines

**Faxes:** + 63 2 50 07 72

and to diplomatic representatives of the Philippines in your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 June 1992.