

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Possible "disappearance"

22 April 1991

PHILIPPINES: Alejandro GAYON, aged 27
Conchito LABAY, aged 20
Fernando LABINI, aged 19
Rodolfo, resident of Kawayan, Calbayog City

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the four persons named above, who may have "disappeared" following their abduction on 2 April 1991 in Tacloban City by armed men believed to be members of the security forces.

A woman who was abducted with the four and later released, said that she, another woman and the four men, were travelling home from a beach resort in San Jose, Tacloban City when the abduction took place. She said the driver of the jeepney (bus) in which they were travelling suddenly stopped behind a jeep parked at the roadside. After a few minutes, four armed men alighted from the jeep and ordered the group to step out of the jeepney at gunpoint.

The four men and one of the women were then told to enter the jeep, and one of the women was left behind. The five were handcuffed inside the vehicle and ordered to identify themselves in pictures shown to them by their assailants. All said they could not do so. They were then said to have been blindfolded and the jeep drove away. During the drive the men pleaded for the woman to be released because she was the mother of a three-year-old child. At approximately 7 pm the woman was released but the four others were taken to an undisclosed location. The released woman said they had all been abducted on suspicion of membership of the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the outlawed Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has recorded five cases of "disappearance" or incommunicado detention in the first four months of 1991. Of these five, one was subsequently found dead, and is believed to have been the victim of an extra-judicial execution by members of the security forces. More than 50 people were reported to have "disappeared" in the Philippines during 1990. 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. At least 15 people, whose detention was denied by security forces, subsequently reappeared after a period in police or military custody. The majority were still missing at the end of the year.

"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 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 ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern for the safety of the four named above, and urging the authorities to act immediately to clarify their fate and whereabouts;

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

- urging the government to ensure that all those suspected of committing human rights violations are brought promptly to justice and tried before a civil court.

APPEALS TO:

President Corazon Aquino
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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 3 June 1991.