

**PUBLIC**

**AI Index: ASA 35/003/2005**

**15 March 2005**

**UA 67/05**      **Possible "disappearance" / Fear for safety/ Health concern**

**PHILIPPINES**      **Angelina Bisuna Ipong (f), aged 61, human rights worker**

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Angelina Bisuna Ipong was abducted on 8 March by armed men who reportedly claimed to be police officers. Her whereabouts are unknown and there are fears for her safety. There are also concerns for her health as she is said to have a heart condition.

According to reports, a vehicle without number plates entered Anastacia Mission Village in Misamis Occidental province, western Mindanao, on 8 March. At least 10 armed men wearing civilian clothes and balaclavas got out of the vehicle. Some of the men reportedly searched Angelina Ipong's house and seized six mobile phones, before handcuffing her and driving her away in the direction of the nearby city of Ozamiz. The men did not have a warrant for her arrest.

Before her arrest, Angelina Ipong, a leftist activist and human rights worker, was reportedly engaged in discussions with local activists about the progress of the peace process between the Philippine government and the communist National Democratic Front (NDF), which represents the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), and its armed wing the New People's Army (NPA).

With anti-insurgency operations against suspected NPA members usually led by the military, relatives and colleagues of Angelina Ipong have attempted to establish her whereabouts by reporting her apparent "disappearance" to the commanding officer of the First Infantry Tabak Division of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The commanding officer denied any knowledge of the incident.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Over the past decade the number of "disappearances" in the Philippines has declined markedly. However, they continue to be reported periodically, along with other human rights violations including extra judicial executions and torture, in the context of government anti-insurgency operations against the New People's Army (NPA). The NDF represents the CPP and NPA in the continuing peace negotiations with the government.

Apart from suspected NPA members, those at risk of human rights violations include civilians who are accused of being NPA 'sympathizers'. Also at risk are activist members of lawful political rights organisations and human rights groups which have been periodically labelled by military officials as "recruiters" or "fronts" for the NPA.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:**

- expressing concern for the safety of Angelina Bisuna Ipong, who was reportedly abducted on March 8 in Anastacia Mission Village in Western Mindanao, by men claiming to be police officers;
- urging the authorities to immediately establish her whereabouts and guarantee her safety;
- if she is found to be in custody, calling on the authorities to ensure that she is humanely treated, and given access to medical care for her heart condition, as well as to relatives and a lawyer of her choice;
- calling for assurances that if she is in detention, she will not be tortured or ill-treated, and will be either released immediately or charged with a recognizably criminal offence;

- urging authorities to send a clear message to all armed forces personnel that human rights violations, including forced “disappearances”, will not be tolerated under any circumstances and that those found responsible will be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo  
President of the Republic  
Malacañang Palace Compound  
New Executive Bldg.  
J. P. Laurel St.  
San Miguel, Manila  
Philippines

**Fax:** + 63 2 735 6192/ 736 1010

**Email:** [corres@op.gov.ph](mailto:corres@op.gov.ph) or [opnet@ops.gov.ph](mailto:opnet@ops.gov.ph)

**Salutation:** Dear President Macapagal - Arroyo

Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr.  
Secretary of National Defense  
Department of National Defense  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, DND Building  
Camp Aguinaldo  
EDSA, Quezon City  
Metro Manila  
Philippines

**Fax:** + 63 2 911 6213

**Salutation:** Dear Secretary Cruz

**COPIES TO:**

Hon. Purificacion Valera-Quisumbing  
Chairperson, Commission on Human Rights  
SAAC Bldg., Commonwealth Ave., UP Complex  
Diliman, Quezon City  
Philippines

**Fax:** + 63 2 929 0102

**Email:** [drpvq@chr.gov.ph](mailto:drpvq@chr.gov.ph)

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 26 April 2005.