

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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PLEASE ORGANIZE UP TO TEN APPEALS PER SECTION.

UA 258/91

Possible "Disappearance"

25 July 1991

PHILIPPINES: Junifer Allan EMPLEO, aged 29

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Junifer Allan Empleo, a peasant organizer who has not been seen since he left for work on 16 June 1991. Relatives and colleagues believe he may have been the victim of a "disappearance" by members of an anti-communist vigilante group acting with the support of government forces.

Junifer Allan Empleo left his home in sitio Manga, Tisa, Cebu City on 16 June 1991 at approximately 8 am. Telling his wife he would be away for three to five days, he made for the town of Talisay. As a trainee organizer for the People's Ecumenical Action for Community Enlightenment-Partnership for People's Empowerment (PEACE-PPE), he had been assigned to meet members of the farming communities of barangays Bulacao, Candulawan and San Isidro to discuss proposed conversion of their land into an industrial zone. Leaders from these communities reported that Junifer Allan Empleo never arrived at his destination that day and he has not been seen since then.

Members of the non-governmental organization PEACE-PPE have expressed concern that Junifer Allan Empleo may have been the victim of a politically-motivated "disappearance" carried out by members of the vigilante groups Tadtad and KADRE. Both are said to be operating in the area and are known to have the support of the security forces. After beginning work as a peasant organizer Allen reportedly told his wife that several community leaders had informed him he was under surveillance by anti-communist vigilantes. In addition, after a farmers' protest demonstration on 10 June 1991 an anti-communist vigilante leader issued public warnings against farmers getting involved in anti-government activities.

Relatives and friends have tried in vain to locate Junifer Allan Empleo at hospitals, morgues and funeral parlours, and have visited local military camps and police stations. Both military and police officials have denied knowledge of the whereabouts of the missing person. On 28 June 1991, the Mayor of Cebu, Thomas Osmena, declared that he would initiate a prompt investigation to establish the whereabouts of Allan Junifer Empleo and ordered Lieutenant Romeo Cordova of Cebu City Police Station I to undertake an immediate inquiry into this case. Amnesty International welcomes Mayor Osmena's initiative and asks for the results of the investigation to be made public.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has recorded at least ten cases of "disappearance" or incommunicado detention in the first seven months of 1991. Of these, one was subsequently found dead, and is believed to have been the victim of extrajudicial 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 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 New People's Army (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.

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/faxes/express and airmail letters:**

- expressing concern for the safety of Junifer Allan Empleo and urging the authorities to take steps to clarify his fate and whereabouts;
- welcoming Mayor Thomas Osmena's initiative to conduct an inquiry, asking to be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and urging that the results of such an investigation be made public;
- expressing concern at reports of threats to members of peasant or farmers' organizations by members of anti-communist vigilante groups in the Cebu City area.

**APPEALS TO: (Please organize up to 10 appeals per section)**

Mayor Thomas Osmena

**[Salutation: Dear Mayor Osmena]**

Cebu City Municipal Hall

Cebu City, Philippines

**Telegrams: Mayor Osmena, Cebu City, Philippines**

Silvestre H Bello III

**[Salutation: Dear Undersecretary Bello]**

Undersecretary of Justice

Department of Justice

Padre Faure Street

Ermita

Manila, Philippines

**Telegrams: Undersecretary Bello, Department of Justice**

**Manila, Philippines**

**Faxes: +63 2 521 1614**

**COPIES TO:**

Mary Concepcion Bautista

**[Salutation: Dear Commissioner Bautista]**

Chairman

Commission on Human Rights

IBP Building Complex

Dona Julia Vargas Avenue

Pasig Metro Manila, Philippines

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 5 September 1991.