



## Urgent Appeal for Action on the Arbitrary Arrest and Detention of Human Rights Defenders

Dear friends,

Please join us in calling for immediate release of human rights defenders Juan Alexander Reyes, a trade union organizer, and women's rights activist Nenita de Castro. Reyes and de Castro are among the members of progressive organizations who were arbitrarily arrested and detained for trumped-up charges by state security forces after they were wrongly accused as members of New-People's Army.

The practice of filing trumped-up charges against members and leaders of progressive organizations continues as a policy and practice of the State in an attempt to silence progressive organizations and communities. Duterte's Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) continue to criminalize the work of political dissenters, activists and human rights defenders, enabled by state policies and US-driven counter-insurgency programs such as Oplan Kapayapaan.

Let us continue to call for the rescinding of Oplan Kapayapaan, a counter-insurgency program which targets peoples struggling for genuine social change and for the release of all political prisoners who remain in jail for trumped-up charges.

### ACCOUNT OF THE INCIDENTS:

Around 3:00 in the afternoon of June 2, 2018, **Juan Alexander Reyes**, 47, was with fellow trade union organizer **Francisco Garcia** on their way home after a meeting with Sandigan ng mga Manggagawa sa Quezon City (SMQC) members when a white SUV with a plate number ABB-9926 blocked their way at Kapilian St., Bgy. San Antonio, Muñoz, Quezon City. Five (5) men got out of the vehicle; one of them pointed a gun at Reyes' head and forcibly put handcuffs on his wrists. Reyes and Garcia were pushed inside the SUV but minutes after, Garcia was told to get out of the SUV and he was left near Muñoz area.

With Reyes' family informed of his abduction and a blotter reported at the local police station, a quick reaction team, led by Karapatan Metro Manila, was formed to look for Reyes. At 4:00 in the afternoon, his fellow workers from Defend Job called the Criminal Intelligence and Detection Group – National Capital Region (CIDG-NCR) hotline and asked for Reyes. They were told that he was taken in at around 4:00 p.m. They immediately went to the CIDG-NCR office in Camp Crame.

When Reyes' relatives reached the CIDG-NCR compound, police officers on duty denied they have custody of Reyes. At 11:00 in the evening, when they saw that there were no police officers in the office, Reyes' relatives shouted his name. They heard a response from the detention area and they saw Reyes through a window. They were able to talk to him briefly.

Reyes told them that while inside the SUV, a bonnet was placed in his head. It was already six (6:00) in the evening when he was brought to the CIDG-NCR office, where he was interrogated and asked about his fellow organizers in COURAGE. Reyes is a former organizer of

COURAGE (Confederation for the Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees). He was also threatened and harassed by the police and military when he was still working with group.

Reyes was shown a warrant of arrest for arson and illegal possession of firearms and explosives, alleging his involvement with the New People's Army (NPA). But Reyes noticed that the warrant had an "RFI" (release for further investigation) mark.

On the morning of June 3, 2018, the police officers admitted to Karapatan paralegals that they have Reyes under their custody, but denied knowing his case and referred them to the CIDG-Manila who were the arresting officers. They also told Reyes's family to wait until his inquest that day in a Quezon City court. The CIDG-NCR also said that the arrest was a request from the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP).

In Butuan City, on May 31, 2018, **Nerita de Castro** was at home when combined elements of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) Davao and Caraga and the Army's 402nd Infantry Battalion arrived and illegally arrested her.

De Castro was brought to CIDG in Davao City. She was denied the right to call her family and lawyer to inform them of her arrest. Under the custody of the CIDG, she experienced constant interrogation from CIDG personnel, officials of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), the Presidential Management Staff and members of the Philippine National Police in Caraga.

Only after 24 hours of detention was she informed of trumped-up murder and frustrated murder charges filed against her in a court in Lianga, Surigao del Sur.

On the day the arrest, the military and police released a statement alleging De Castro as a high-ranking finance officer of the New People's Army (NPA) Komisyon sa Mindanao and the secretary of the Regional White Area Committee of the North-Eastern Mindanao Region. De Castro denied all the allegations and insisted that she is not involved with the NPA and is a small business owner in Butuan City. In fact, De Castro has been a volunteer of Gabriela Women's Partylist since 2006 and devotes her time promoting women's rights in Caraga. She was also a member of Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP) in the '80s and also became a member of Karapatan in Surigao del Sur during the '90s. De Castro was also part of Pulso Micro Media Services (PMMS) from the '90s until 2006 and served as its executive director. De Castro is currently detained at CIDG in Davao City.

### **Recommended actions:**

Send letters, emails or fax messages calling for:

1. The immediate release of Juan Alexander Reyes and Nenita de Castro;
2. An end to criminalization of political acts through filing of criminal charges against activists or persons targeted by the military and other state security forces;
3. The Philippine Government to withdraw its counterinsurgency program Oplan Kapayapaan, which victimizes innocent and unarmed civilians, and members of progressive organizations; and
4. The Philippine Government to adhere and respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Human Rights Defenders and all major Human Rights instruments that is a party and signatory.

**You may send your communications to:**

You may send your communications to:

H.E. Rodrigo Duterte  
President of the Republic  
Malacañang Palace,  
JP Laurel St., San Miguel  
Manila Philippines  
Voice: (+632) 564 1451 to 80, 784-4286  
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E-mail: [op-proper.gov.ph](mailto:op-proper.gov.ph) or send message through  
<https://op-proper.gov.ph/contact-us/>

Hon. Jesus Dureza  
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Hon. Jose Luis Martin Gascon  
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Please send us a copy of your email/mail/fax to the above-named government officials, to our address below:

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