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URGENT ALERT FOR ACTION:
**Human rights activist, environmental advocate threatened and
harassed by military agents**
July 27, 2017

Dear friends,

Two human rights defenders - **Karapatan Secretary General Cristina “Tinay” Palabay and Ilocos environmental advocate Sherwin de Vera** - have recently experienced threats, harassment and intimidation from suspected State security forces.

On July 20, 2017, at around 10:20 p.m., Palabay received a call from a man who repeatedly asked her if she is “Tinay Palabay” and refused to tell her his name. He told Palabay that she should stop what she is doing because she is in the “list” of people whom they consider as “courageous,” and that he called because she is within his “AOR” (interpreted as “area of responsibility”). He accused Palabay of being involved in the alleged ambush of the Presidential Security Group by members of the New People’s Army (NPA) in Mindanao. Palabay denied knowledge and involvement in the reported incident, as she was in Manila leading the preparations for protest actions in time for the State of the Nation Address of Pres. Rodrigo Duterte and his extension of the martial law declaration in Mindanao. The unnamed caller told Palabay that she should stop whatever it is that she is doing because “times have changed” and “martial law is in place.” Palabay was also repeatedly asked on her whereabouts, and that she should be cautious because he will soon meet her.

Palabay took to Facebook to immediately recount the said incident and make public the threats against her. Netizens discovered, through quick search using the cellphone number (+639260779448) of the caller, that the number belongs to the Armed Forces of the Philippines Safety Battalion.

Palabay is an independent observer in the Joint Monitoring Committee of the Government of the Republic of the Philippine and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines on the peace agreement on human rights and international humanitarian law. She is a member of an organizing committee of the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), an advisor to the Urgent Action Fund for Women’s Rights (UAF), and Karapatan’s representative to the international coordinating group led by Front Line Defenders on the global campaign to stop the killings of human rights defenders. She leads Karapatan in engaging with international bodies such as the United Nations Human Rights Council and the European Union Parliament. Recently,

Palabay and three other Filipino activists conducted a speaking tour in the US on Philippine human rights situation and the GRP-NDFP peace talks. She also participated in the May 2017 Carter Center Human Rights Defenders Forum, organized by former US Pres. Jimmy Carter in Atlanta, US.

On July 19, suspected military personnel inquired with the campus security department of the University of Northern Philippines in Ilocos Sur province on the recent visit of environmental activist Sherwin de Vera to the said university. The day before, De Vera noticed unnamed men tailing him in Vigan City.

De Vera is coordinator of Defend Ilocos, a regional environmental network in Ilocos affiliated with Kalikasan People's Network, and a former human rights worker of Karapatan. He currently leads the campaign of Defend Ilocos and other people's organizations in the region against large-scale mining projects detrimental to the people's right to a safe and healthy environment. Recent mining projects in Ilocos are those of the Benguet Mining Corporation, Lepanto Consolidated Mining Company and Cordillera Exploration Company Inc.

Human rights workers of Karapatan and environmental defenders get threats constantly through SMS texts and phone calls from military agents, as they conduct advocacy for people's rights and struggles, research, documentation, paralegal and other direct services work. Many Karapatan workers and environmental activists have been killed, illegally arrested or detained, harassed and villified, in an attempt of State security forces to derail their work and silence their voices exposing human rights violations and the dire impacts of big corporate projects on the environment. This is due to the continuing counter-insurgency programs of the government, with Oplan Kapayapaan (Operational Plan Peace) under the Duterte administration, targetting activists and political dissenters as "enemies of the State." This situation is made worse by the extension of martial law in Mindanao and its possible nationwide coverage.

Recommended actions:

Publish statements and/or send letters, emails or fax messages calling for:

1. The immediate investigation of the incidents to be conducted by an independent body;
2. An end to the targetting of human rights defenders and activists;
3. An end to the Duterte administration's counter-insurgency program Oplan Kapayapaan which encourages State security forces to threaten, harass and intimidate activists, community leaders and civilians;
4. The immediate lifting of martial law in Mindanao and to stop the attempts for nationwide martial law in the Philippines;
5. The Philippine Government to pursue its commitments under the Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law

(CARHRIHL) which includes the right to freedom of thought and expression, freedom of conscience, political and religious beliefs and practices and the right not to be punished or held accountable for the exercise of these rights, and the right to free speech, press, association and assembly; and

6. The Philippine Government to adhere and respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all major Human Rights instruments that is a party and signatory.

You may send your communications to:

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Hon. Jose Luis Martin Gascon

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Please send us a copy of your statements and email/mail/fax to the above-named government officials, to our address below:

URGENT ACTION Prepared by:

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