



2/F Erythrina Bldg., #1 Maaralin cor Matatag Sts.,

Brgy. Central, Diliman, Quezon City 1100 PHILIPPINES

Voice/Fax: (+632) 435 4146

---

## **Alarming Wave of Harassment Against Activists, Church Workers, Schools, Artists this October**

Dear friends and colleagues,

This October 2018, the Duterte regime has stepped up its attacks against human rights defenders, wrongly tagging them once again as “terrorists” and circulating malicious accusations against activists, both online and offline. In the context of the intensifying human and people’s rights violations committed with impunity in the Philippines, we urgently seek your support in yet another wave of attacks against Filipino activists and church workers who work with poor communities in the country, as well as schools and artists who uphold academic freedom and freedom of expression.

Prior to this alarming spike in harassment incidents, the military was already floating the idea of a “destabilization plot”, sans the infamous “Red October” name. The September 21 protest in Luneta was met with the same accusations. However, following the commemoration of the 46th anniversary of martial law which culminated in a series of peaceful protests, contrary to the pernicious shadow that the military is trying to cast the protests in, State forces have again refocused their relentless attacks against various sectors.

Karapatan has noted a series of harassment and intimidation efforts against rights defenders, ranging from surveillance of activists, to illegal arrests and enforced disappearances. It is notable that these activists and church workers are members of progressive organizations and church-based institutions, repeatedly red-tagged by the Duterte regime. The spike in attacks are a compounded result of the government’s peddling of its fictitious destabilization plot hilariously dubbed as “Red October,” the military and police’s collaboration through the Inter-Agency Committee on Legal Action (IACLA), and the regime’s counterinsurgency program.

In this light, join us in calling for an end to these forms of harassment and intimidation against activists and church workers. Unlike the perpetrators of these violations, no doubt backed by this repressive government, human rights defenders continue their work despite the risks they face. Let us strengthen the call to resist the worsening curtailment and disregard for people’s rights and an end to all repressive policies by the Duterte regime. We emphasize that these accusations aimed at red-tagging activists not only render them more prone to attacks, but justify violations against them. We thus call on friends, networks, and all organizations to mobilize to collectively show that the people will not tolerate such blatant violations to people’s rights and those who advocate for it.

### **ACCOUNT OF INCIDENTS:**

**September 28, 2018:** Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) Rev. Felix C. Espra Jr., parish priest of Tigbao, Zamboanga del Sur, reported that the walls of his chapel were painted with the markings “IFI=NPA.” Another set of painted markings were found along the highway in Brgy. Lacupayan, Tigbao, Zamboanga del Sur with the following texts: “UCCP=NPA,” “IFI=NPA,” and “Bishop Ablon=NPA.” Those who made markings wrongfully links church institutions such as the IFI and the United Church of Christ of the Philippines (UCCP) and IFI Bp. Ablon to the New People’s Army, the armed group of the Communist Party of the Philippines, virtually considering

---

them as combatants or fair game for offensives by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). IFI Bishop Antonio Ablon is also the current chairperson of Karapatan Western Mindanao chapter.

**September 30, 2018:** Karapatan also received reports that banners were being hanged at bridges in Balibago, Angeles, and Pampanga with the following text: “Karapatan, terrorist protector”.

**October 1-5, 2018:** Karapatan received text messages maligning the organization and its regional chapter in Cagayan Valley. The messages were sent to Karapatan’s secretary general and the organization’s public information number, both of which are available to the public as references for press releases and statements. The numbers, 09556810452 and 09557396541, circulated messages wrongfully tagging Karapatan as a legal front of the New People’s Army, and of being “*huwad na makatao* (anti-people).”

**October 2, 2018:** The military released a list of institutions supposedly linked to the “Red October” plot to oust the Duterte regime. The list, which was initially composed of 10 universities, increased to 18. The military later on admitted that the list is not verified, but not after openly red-tagging and endangering these institutions and its respective staff, teachers, students, and personnel. The 18 schools tagged were Adamson University, Ateneo de Manila University, De La Salle University, Emilio Aguinaldo College, Eulogio Amang Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology, Far Eastern University, Lyceum of the Philippines University, Philippine Normal University, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, University of the East—Caloocan, University of the East—Recto, University of Makati, University of Manila, University of the Philippines—Diliman, University of the Philippines—Manila, University of Santo Tomas, San Beda College. Administrators of said schools have already denied such links, and condemned the military for their careless, dangerous tagging. The military also alluded that the showing of martial law films were part of the said plot, thereby dragging the names of renowned filmmakers into their malicious red-tagging streak.

**October 4, 2018:** Gerry Basahon, peasant leader of the Misamis Oriental Farmers Association and Gabriela Misamis Oriental provincial coordinator Merlita Dorado were illegally arrested by State forces on the basis of trumped-up charges of attempted murder and frustrated murder. Basahon and Dorado were among the 11 members and leaders of progressive peasant and Lumad organizations who were falsely charged with the same offenses. The two were released on bail on October 12, 2018.

**October 4, 2018:** Banners with the text: “*Karapatan at CPP-NPA ay iisa at parehong terorista*” (Karapatan and CPP-NPA are one and both are terrorists) were seen hanged along footbridges in Quezon Avenue.

**October 5, 2018:** Three Lumad leaders were illegally arrested by elements of the 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion – Philippine Army (IBPA) in Sitio Poog, Maitom, Tandag City, Surigao del Sur, Caraga region. Enecito Catapte, chairperson of the Sustinidong Ipalambo ug Dependahan ang Lumadnon Kahiusahan Alang sa Sumusunod nga Kaliwatan (SIDLAK), along with fellow members Junie Catapte and Lito Delicona were taken by soldiers and are currently held at the 36<sup>th</sup> IBPA headquarters in Tandag City. Prior to their arrest, the victims were repeatedly “invited” by soldiers to the military camp. SIDLAK is an indigenous organization advocating for the defense of their ancestral domain, opposing the entry of mining and logging concessions.

**October 5, 2018:** The Community Technical College of Southeastern Mindanao (CTCSM) reported the tailing of its faculty and students when a delegation visited families in Kidapawan, North Cotabato to render health and cultural services. A blue Toyota Revo, with license plate XFK 795, was tailing the group while en route to their destination. On October 7, while on their way back to Davao City, they noticed the same vehicle still following them. This prompted the group to seek refuge at a nearby church institution.

**October 6, 2018:** Two men visited the office of the Kalikasan People’s Network for the Environment (KPNE) in Matulungin St., Brgy. Central, Diliman, Quezon City, and claimed to be doing a survey. The suspicious men asked if there was an “Ilocano” staying in the office. When a KPNE staff asked for their agency and identification cards, the two immediately left. KPNE linked the harassment incident to the recent visit of Sherwin De Vera, the organization’s regional coordinator in the Ilocos region. De Vera visited the office 2 days prior to the incident. De Vera has been the target of continuous harassment and intimidation efforts, with a trumped-up case lodged against him and his name included in the Department of Justice’s proscription petition, on top of several posts red-tagging him on social media.

**October 10, 2018:** Another set of malicious vandals were again seen at the Pulot Bridge and the highway along the said bridge in Brgy. Pulot, Ozamiz City. “IFI=NPA”, “UCCP NPA”, and “Bishop Ablon = NPA” were again written in the vandals and were reported by Fr. John Sanchez of the Diocese of Ozamiz, Iglesia Filipinia Independiente. This was the same message in other previous vandals.

**October 11, 2018:** Striking workers of SUMIFRU, a Japanese multinational company, were violently dispersed by elements of the military, police, and the company’s security personnel. Around 400 workers were injured while 2 were reportedly arrested. The workers are organized under the union Nagkahiusang Mamumuo sa Suyapa Farm (NAMASUFA), an affiliate of the National Federation of Labor Unions- Kilusang Mayo Uno (NAFLU-KMU). The union was certified by the Department of Labor and Employment as a Sole and Exclusive Bargaining Agent (SEBA) since 2010. The Supreme Court also released a decision in 2017 stating that there is an employer-employee relationship between the workers and the company. The workers mounted their strike on October 1, 2018, to demand the regularization of workers and to push the company to negotiate with them on the basis of a Collective Bargaining Agreement proposal filed in August 2018.

**October 11, 2018:** Malicious posts are being circulated by anonymous pages in social media, red-tagging members and officers of the Ilocos Human Rights Alliance (IHRA) and spreading false rumors. Mary Ann Gabayan, secretary general of IHRA, was not only tagged as a terrorist, but was also accused as a mistress of a local official. Sherwin De Vera, meanwhile, was also tagged as terrorist and “kotong Lord ng Ilocos”. These posts are circulated by accounts and pages on Facebook believed to be operated by State agents.

**October 13, 2018:** Lolita Muya, trustee of the Salugpongan Ta’Tanu Igkanogon Community Learning Center (STTICLC), was tailed by an RS 125 XRM type motorcycle while she was leaving from a meeting in Davao City. She was onboard the school’s vehicle when they noticed they were being tailed. A similar tailing incident was reported by the victim on October 8.

**October 13, 2018:** Peasant advocates Yolanda Diamsay, 46, Eulalia Ladesma, 44, Edzel Emocling, 23, and Rachel Galario, 20, were illegally arrested by combined elements of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG), the 7<sup>th</sup> IBPA, and the Nueva Ecija police. They were charged with trumped-up charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives. As of this writing, Emocling has posted bail but Ladesma and Diamsay remain in the custody of the CIDG in Cabanatuan. The daughter of Ladesma recounted how her mother, along with Diamsay, were mauled and beaten. Ladesma was kicked several times while forcing her to admit to being “Ka Mariz” while Ortiz’s left eye was swollen and hand marks were visible in her neck due to strangulation.

**October 15, 2018:** Adelberto Silva, 71, a peace consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), was arrested with labor union organizer Ireneo Atadero, 55, agriculturist and organic farmer Ediesel Legaspi, 60, GWP consultant Hedda Calderon, 63, and driver Julio Lusania, 53, in Sta. Cruz, Laguna by combined elements of the CIDG, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division - 1<sup>st</sup> IBPA, and the Intelligence Service of the AFP (ISAFP). Trumped-up criminal charges of illegal

possession of firearms and explosives were filed by the military and the police against the victims, after evidence were planted against the latter's belongings. A release order for Calderon, Atadero, and Legaspi was already issued by a Laguna prosecutor on October 17, but the said order was immediately amended after the police submitted additional false evidence. All five are now facing the non-bailable offense of illegal possession of explosives

**October 18, 2018:** Joey Torres, regional peasant organizer of Bayan Muna, and Anakpawis member Cesar Carreon were reported to be missing. As of this writing, Karapatan is still trying to ascertain the details of their disappearance.

**We call on the Philippine government to:**

1. Conduct an immediate investigation of the reported incidents to be conducted by an independent body;
2. Stop the labeling of members and leaders of progressive people's organizations and activists as "terrorists" both online and offline. Stop the threats, intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders;
3. Immediately abolish the Inter-Agency Committee on Legal Action (IACLA), a joint committee created by the police and the military to file trumped-up charges against activists and rights defenders. This agency further legitimizes and systematizes the political persecution and illegal arrest and detention of rights defenders and activists;
4. 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;
5. Adhere to, respect and implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and all major Human Rights instruments that it is a party and signatory.

**We urgently appeal for your support and solidarity through:**

1. Issuing statements of solidarity for circulation to the public and media circles. Publish these on your websites, social media platforms among others. Please send a copy to [karapatan@karapatan.org](mailto:karapatan@karapatan.org).
2. Reporting malicious posts on social media and flagging said posts, users, and pages as false news or hate speech.
3. Conducting or joining mass actions and campaigns to support rights defenders under attack.
4. Assisting efforts to raise financial and material support for the legal defense and safety fund for the activists and human rights defenders. Please email [karapatan@karapatan.org](mailto:karapatan@karapatan.org) on the details.

You may send your communications to the following Philippine-based authorities:

Mr. Rodrigo Duterte  
President of the Republic  
Malacañang Palace,  
JP Laurel St., San Miguel,  
Manila, Philippines 1005

Voice: (+632) 564 1451 to 80

Fax: (+632) 742-1641 / 929-3968

E-mail: [op@president.gov.ph](mailto:op@president.gov.ph) or send message through <http://op-proper.gov.ph/contact-us/>

Mr. Jesus Dureza

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process

Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP)

7/F Agustin I Building, F. Ortigas Jr. Road,

Ortigas Center, Pasig City

Telephone:+63 (2) 637-6083

Trunkline: +63 (2) 636-0701 to 07, local 823 or 824

Fax:+63 (2) 638 2216

Email: [peace.opapp@gmail.com](mailto:peace.opapp@gmail.com)

Ret. Maj. Gen. Delfin Lorenzana

Secretary, Department of National Defense

DND Building, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo,

Segundo Avenue, Quezon City 1110

Trunkline:+63 (2) 982-5600

Email: [publicaffairs.dnd@gmail.com](mailto:publicaffairs.dnd@gmail.com) or through <http://www.dnd.gov.ph/contact-us.html>

Mr. Menardo Guevarra

Secretary, Department of Justice

Padre Faura St., Ermita, Manila

Direct Line: 521-1908; 526-5462

Trunkline: 523-84-81 loc. 211/214

Telefax: (+632) 523-9548

Email: [osecmig@gmail.com](mailto:osecmig@gmail.com), [osec@doj.gov.ph](mailto:osec@doj.gov.ph), [communications@doj.gov.ph](mailto:communications@doj.gov.ph)

Mr. Jose Luis Martin Gascon

Chairperson, Commission on Human Rights

SAAC Bldg., UP Complex, Commonwealth Avenue

Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines

Voice: (+632) 928-5655, 926-6188, 920-9510

Telefax: (+632) 929 0102

Email: [chairgascon.chr@gmail.com](mailto:chairgascon.chr@gmail.com)

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

KARAPATAN Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights

National Office

2/F Erythrina Bldg., #1 Maaralin cor Matatag Sts., Brgy. Central,

Diliman, Quezon City 1100 PHILIPPINES

Telefax: (+632) 435 4146

Email: [karapatan@karapatan.org](mailto:karapatan@karapatan.org)

Website: [www.karapatan.org](http://www.karapatan.org)