

**P**resident Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III, was elected as the 15<sup>th</sup> President of the Philippines in May this year, in the midst of the people’s disgust with Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s rule characterized by fraud, corruption scandals, abuse of power and bloody human rights record. Noynoy, heir to Cory and Ninoy Aquino who are both publicly admired as icons of democracy, gave a most welcome promise of *pagbabago* (change) and *daang matuwid* (a straight path).

But data and statistics mirroring the human rights situation under Noynoy’s presidency in the first quarter (July to September 2010) of his stint in Malacanang do not augur well for the people.

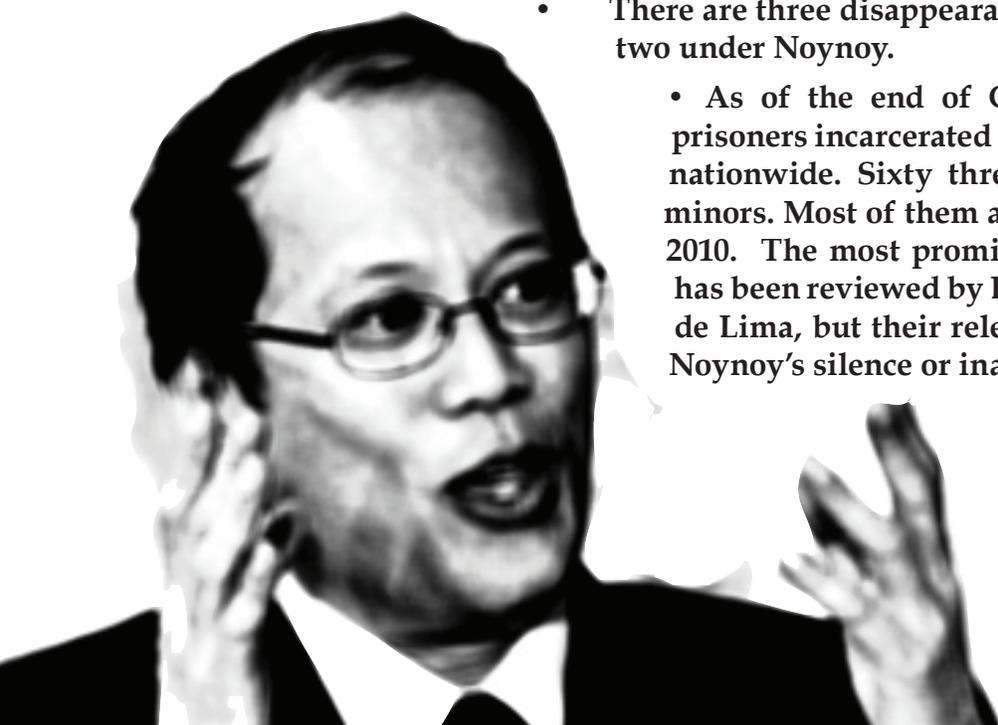
There are **16 victims of extra-judicial killings** most of them peasants (11). The rest are from among the indigenous people (3) and local government officials (2). Two of them are women. Human rights defenders make up 75% of those killed. Half of them are members of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP or Philippine Peasant Movement) while three are from Bayan Muna and another three from Katribu.

There are **two *desaparecidos***, both of them male. Reports specify **15 who were tortured** out of the **22 who were illegally arrested**. More than **800 residents** left their homes and cropland due to forced evacuation brought about by intense militarization in the countryside.

Compared to the human rights record of GMA for the same months of her initial year (July to September 2001):

- There are 18 victims of EJK under GMA compared to the 16 under Noynoy in different parts of the country except in ARMM where reporting of human rights violations is inconsistent. Among the victims are 12 human rights defenders killed under Noynoy while four under GMA. Five are women under GMA while two under Noynoy.
  - There are three disappearances under GMA compared to the two under Noynoy.
    - As of the end of GMA’s term there are 371 political prisoners incarcerated in various jails and detention centers nationwide. Sixty three of them are women and six are minors. Most of them are still detained as of September 30, 2010. The most prominent are the Morong 43 whose case has been reviewed by Department of Justice Secretary Leila de Lima, but their release is still kept hanging because of Noynoy’s silence or inaction.

**So where is the promised change?**



### Bodies of victims of extra-judicial killings (EJK) litter Noynoy's "daang matuwid"

Barely a week after Noynoy Aquino's inauguration on July 5, **Fernando Baldomero**, a second-term municipal councilor in Lezo, Aklan was shot and killed in front of his rented house in Bgy. Estancia, Kalibo, Aklan. He was chairman of the Bayan Muna Aklan chapter and a member of SELDA, an organization of former political detainees.

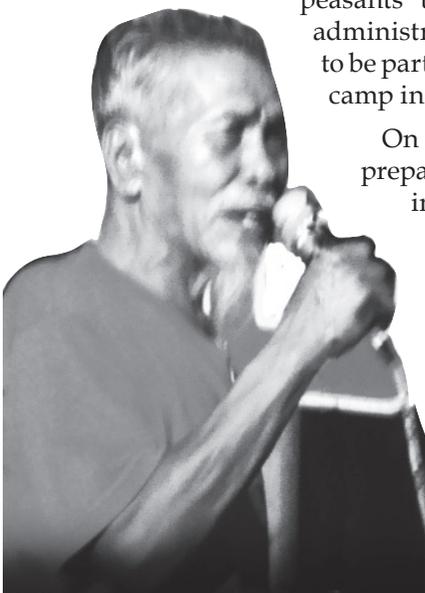
Baldomero was boarding his motorcycle with his 12-year old son to drive the latter to school when two medium-built men on a black motorcycle stopped in front of them. One of the men, wearing a helmet and a pair of sunglasses thus covering his face, got off and shot Baldomero three times. It all happened in front of Baldomero's terrified son. The killer and the one driving the motorcycle immediately sped off. Witnesses mentioned a rifle slung on the back of the latter.

The victim was rushed to the nearest local hospital, but was declared dead on arrival. His son suffers grave psychological trauma after having witnessed his father's assassination.

Baldomero has been a constant victim of political repression. During the 2010 election campaign, men on a motorcycle lobbed hand grenades at his family's house in Bgy. Sta. Cruz Biga-a, Lezo, Aklan. Surprisingly, nobody was hurt. In 2005, while he served as barangay councilor, he was arrested, detained and accused by the police of being a member of a New People's Army (NPA) unit allegedly responsible for anti-government military actions in Guimbal, Iloilo and San Remigio in Antique. Baldomero was released after he was cleared of the charges.

**Pascual Guevarra**, was a 78-year old peasant leader of the Alliance of United Farmers (Almana 3100) which is an affiliate of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP). Almana is fighting the revocation of deeds of the 3,100 hectare of farmland transferred to the peasants under the Corazon Aquino administration in 1991. The land used to be part of Fort Magsaysay, a military camp in Laur, Nueva Ecija.

On July 9, Tatay Pascual was preparing dinner for his family in the out-kitchen behind his house when a medium-built man in his mid to late 30s walked in and aimed a gun at him. The assailant was fair skinned, around 5'5" in height and wore a light blue shirt, denim pants and hat. Tatay Pascual looked up from what he was doing on the hearth and saw the gun aimed at him. Despite



Pascual Guevarra speaking in a protest action in 2009. (Tanggol Magsasaka)



his advanced age, he wrestled with his attacker but was eventually overpowered and shot twice on the chest.

His daughter, who was in the bathroom, watched what happened while hiding in fear of the gunman. Having heard the gunshots, Tatay Pascual's grandson, Ronnel Vilorio, rushed to the kitchen and saw the assailant standing over his wounded grandfather. He grabbed the gunman from behind and tried to wrest the gun away. The assailant was able to break free and ran away after shooting Ronnel who was hit on the shoulder.

**Casiano Abing**, was a Bayan Muna member and sheriff of the Regional Trial Court of Balangiga, Eastern Samar. He was resting in the house with his family in the evening of August 25 when they heard a knock on the door at around 7:00 p.m. Their helper went to check who the visitor was and called out to Casiano when the visitor asked for him. After Casiano went down to go to the door, his family heard gunshots. They later found Casiano sprawled on the floor and wounded. The assailant fled after the shooting.

Casiano was able to say that his assailant did not look familiar to him. He was rushed to the nearest hospital, but had to be transferred to another with better equipment in Tacloban City, but which was an hour and a half away. Casiano was pronounced dead on arrival.

At around 7:30 in the evening of September 3, **Reynaldo Labrador** was taking a rest, his children were having dinner and his wife, Leonisa, was doing the laundry. Two men arrived. One wore a black jacket and hat that hid the upper part of his face. The other was identified as a paramilitary Citizens Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) member Berto Repe. The two told Leonisa that they have a document to give personally to her husband. Leonisa offered to receive the document but the two insisted that Reynaldo must receive it himself. Leonisa went to wake up her husband.

As Reynaldo was about to receive the document, the man in black jacket pulled out a handgun and shot him once in the head and twice in the chest. One of his daughters saw what happened and immediately ran out of the house to call the neighbors for help. Leonisa gathered the other children and quickly ran to escape the assailants. She saw the perpetrators running away from their house.

The supposed document to be delivered to Reynaldo was a piece of paper, on which the words, "You are evil! You should be liquidated!" are written in the local dialect.

On the early evening of September 9, **Vicente G. Felisilda** and his older brother, **Allan**, were drying copra at their kiln which was about 30 meters away from Vicente's house. At around 7:00 pm, a man wearing a black jacket walked towards them and asked if they were preparing copra. As Allan replied, the man suddenly pulled out a .45 caliber pistol and shot Vicente twice. Allan, who quickly ran away, was also shot but was not hit. He hid at the edge of a gorge some 15 meters away from the kiln and where it was dark. He felt helpless as he heard his wounded brother's groans. After about 20 minutes, another shot rang out and Allan dove into the gorge and hid. Vicente's groans ceased.

Hearing the shots, Vicente's wife, their relatives and some neighbors went to the kiln to check. They got there at around 11 p.m. as Allan was coming out of hiding. They all found Vicente dead, in a fetal position and bathed in blood.

### **EJKs made worse by massacre**

Four members of the Masbate People's Organization (MAPO), a local affiliate of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) were massacred on September 7 in Mobo, Masbate. At around 9:00 a.m. neighbors **Vicente Flores**, **Richard Oliva** and **Melecio Monacillo** went hunting in the forested area at the boundary of Bgy. Mapuyo and Bgy. Mabuhay. Monacillo's son, **Jonathan**, 21, joined them. At noontime, the group rested in the house owned by Eliseo and Rosie Albao. Tired from hunting, they fell asleep.

Soon afterwards, some members of the 9th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army (IBPA) arrived and stormed Albao's house. The soldiers immediately fired at the sleeping farmers. Oliva, already wounded, was still able to jump out the window, but he was sprayed with bullets by other soldiers who were outside the house.

### **Soldiers terrorize a community**

Communities in Surigao del Sur are again terrorized by the military conducting counter-insurgency operations in the area. Elements of the 36th IBPA have been in **Baranggay Mahaba, Marihatag, Surigao del Sur** since 23 March 2010. Soldiers were encamped in village community buildings and civilian facilities. Residents were accused of being NPA members and supporters, and were being forced to admit that they were members of the NPA or were bribed to "return to the fold of the law".

On August 7, additional contingent of soldiers from the 75th IBPA arrived. Some fired their guns in the direction of the community after a humvee truck pulling artillery fell into a ravine resulting in the death of one soldier and injury to two others.

Fearing for their lives, residents evacuated their homes, left behind their livelihood and took refuge in the Marihatag Municipal Gym in San Isidro. Local officials of Marihatag sought a dialogue with the commanding officer of the 36th IBPA, Lt. Col. Rene Canete, and 1Lt. Serihim Temperante. The residents pleaded with the soldiers to leave. The latter justified their presence by citing the anti-insurgency campaign against the NPA. But they promised not to camp near the community. They gave assurance that the rights of the residents would be respected. Some of the residents decided to go back on August 23.

Three days later, **eight (8) farmers**, including a minor, working in an abaca farm were illegally arrested and subsequently tortured under tactical interrogation.

### **Farmers become victims of enforced disappearance**

In the course of forced evacuation in Marihatag, Surigao del Sur, farmers **Agustito Ladera** and **Renato Deliguer** were forcibly disappeared. There were reports that two men were arrested by the military and then turned over to the police. But the request of their relatives to search military camps and police detention centers were denied. Ladera and Deliguer have joined the ranks of desaparecidos.

### **Legal offensive against Karapatan continues**

Intimidation, harassment and legal offensive against human rights defenders continue under Noynoy Aquino.

Criminal charges were filed in September against **Kelly Delgado**, Secretary General of Karapatan in the Southern Mindanao Region. Accusers were Brig. Gen. Eduardo del Rosario and Datu Ruben Labawan, both implicated in the killing of **Julius Tamundez** on August 2 by members of the Integrated Tribal Defense Forces, which was under their command.

Del Rosario and Labawan, in a press conference, accused Delgado of masterminding a plot to assassinate Eastern Mindanao Command Spokesperson Lt. Col. Randolph Cabangbang. It was alleged that the objective was to avenge the abduction and brutal killing of Rebelyn Pitao, a young teacher who was the daughter of NPA commander, Leoncio Pitao.

This is the most recent of a series of military harassment and intimidation of Delgado which started in 2008.

### **Maybe it's Aquiroyo after all?**

One of the benchmarks of Noynoy's electoral campaign was the promise to go after Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, and hold her accountable for all her crimes and transgressions.

From January 21, 2001 to June 30, 2010 which is the end of her intensely repressive rule, a total of **1,206** people have been victims of EJK, **153** of whom are women and **475** are human rights defenders. There are a total of **206** victims of enforced disappearance, **31** of whom are women and **68** are human rights defenders. More than 2000 have been arbitrarily arrested for their political beliefs. In spite of all these gross human rights violations GMA continues to enjoy a grand time living off the fruits of her stolen wealth that is the base of her political patronage and support.

### **A glimpse of the future?**

Very near the end of Noynoy's 100 days as President and Commander-in-Chief, we see no glimmer of change and his straight path is marred by the blood of victims of political killings. His government's extension of Oplan Bantay Laya, his quoting from the U.S. Counter Insurgency Guide and his declaration that his government's counter-insurgency will be characterized by respect for human rights only shows how loose his grasp of human rights and democracy is. And much less the priority he gives to human rights.

As always, it is on the people's shoulders that the responsibility of protecting and defending human rights, justice and democracy rests.

***Walang pagbabagong maaasahan kay Noynoy Aquino! (No hope for change under Aquino!)***

***Biguin ang terorismo ng papet na estado! (Defeat puppet-state terrorism!)***

***Itigil ang pampulitikang pamamaslang! (Stop political killings!)***

***Palayain ang Morong 43 at lahat ng bilangong pulitikal!***

***(Free the Morong 43 and all political prisoners!)***

***Ipaglaban ang karapatang pantao! (Fight for human rights!)***

***Ibalik ang usapang pangkapayapaan! (Resume peace negotiations!)***



**Let us join the national democratic movement in its December 1 to 10 commemoration of the International Human Rights Day culminating in a human chain and march-rally on December 10 at Mendiola. See you there!**