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APPEAL FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

Call for justice for the victims of killing and arbitrary arrest in the Bicol region, Philippines

Dear friends,

Please join us in our call for justice for the victims of killing and arbitrary arrest in the Bicol region.

Assassination of rights defender and his son in Albay province

At around 8:00 p.m. of February 26, 2014, **Rosaldo Rayteran** was driving home to Matara village after plying his jeepney route from Polangui town. With him was his 18-year-old son, **Rasty**.

When they reached Barangay (village) San Pascual, two masked men onboard a motorcycle blocked their path and began shooting at them. Rosaldo and Rasty were immediately killed.

Prior to the incident, Rosaldo received threats on his life as coordinator of Albay People's Organization, a human rights organization. On December 10, 2013, he was a speaker at a program sponsored by Kadena Bicolandia in Matacon, Polangui to commemorate human rights day.

Coconut worker killed, another arrested and detained in Sorsogon City

On January 30, 2014, cousins **Henry Orbina** and **Bryan Gallega** were waiting for a jeepney in Brgy. Cabid-an, Sorsogon City, when a police from a nearby outpost approached them and asked them where they work. The two replied that they were workers at a coconut factory. After a few minutes, eight men walked towards them. Gallega saw two of the men pulled out their guns. Fearing for their lives, Gallega and Orbina ran away.

Gallega went inside a house, which belonged to the owner of a nearby gas station, upon hearing gunshots. Gallega heard Orbina say he was hit, so he went outside the house to help Orbina. He flagged down a truck to take them to the hospital, but the truck driver did not stop. Gunshots were fired again. Gallega could not carry his cousin back to the house, so he was forced to leave Orbina behind.

When the firing stopped, a number of policemen entered the house where Gallega was. The police took the names of the people inside the house, including that of the owner, his wife and his employees. They arrested Gallega and took his bag.

According to witnesses, Gallega was brought to the Philippine National Police (PNP) precinct in Brgy. Cabid-an, Sorsogon, while Orbina's remains were brought to a funeral parlor.

On the evening of January 31, Gallega was taken from his police detention cell, supposedly for a

ballistic examination. Gallega heard one policeman say, “*Patayin na iyan.*” (He should be killed.) His head was covered with a black cloth bag. In panic, Gallega screamed for help and tried to run back inside the precinct. The police immediately removed the cloth bag from his head.

The police charged Gallega with illegal possession of firearms and explosives.

On February 17, 2014, Sorsogon City Prosecutor Alma Zacarias dismissed the charges stipulating that the search conducted was unlawful, and that the alleged evidence used against Gallega was inadmissible. The Prosecutor added that Gallega’s “alleged admission that he had a handgun could not be taken against him because his right under custodial investigation, particularly the right to counsel, was violated.” The order for Gallega’s release was issued.

Unlawful arrest and arbitrary detention of Karapatan-Bikol spokesperson and Albay rights defenders

On February 24, 2014, almost 100 member-consumers of the Albay Electric Cooperative (Aleco) and their supporters held an assembly inside the Aleco compound. The Aleco consumers protested the impending take-over of the San Miguel Energy Corporation (SMEC), owned by the Cojuanco clan, on the consumers’ electric cooperative which they asserted will result to increased electricity rates.

At past 10:00 a.m., around 18 policemen, led by police chief Rommel dela Rama and Inspector Reynaldo Castuera, arrived and ordered the protesters to leave the premises. Some of the policemen were in civilian clothes.

Dela Rama threatened that the group will be dispersed if they refuse to leave. **Paul Vincent Casilihan**, Karapatan-Bikol spokesperson and **Atty. Bartolome Rayco**, chairperson of the Aleco Multi-Sectoral Stakeholders Organization (AMSSO) and of National Union of People’s Lawyer (NUPL)-Albay chapter asserted they were exercising their rights as member-consumers of Aleco.

At around noon, police chief Dela Rama said the protesters will be arrested if they do not leave. But Rayco and Casilihan insisted that there were no legal grounds for the police to arrest them.

Dela Rama then ordered his men to arrest Casilihan immediately. The police chief pointed to Casilihan and shouted, “*Posasan na yan! Hulihin ito!*” (Handcuff him! Arrest him!)

Uniformed policemen gathered around Casilihan. Seeing this, Kilusang Mayo Uno member **Hernan Certeza** approached Casilihan’s, but he too, was arrested.

Police grabbed Certeza, pushed him to the ground and handcuffed him. **Karl Anthony Canata**, a 17-year-old artist of the Kaboronyogan Cultural Network was also handcuffed and pushed into a police car with Certeza and Casilihan.

Dela Rama likewise ordered the arrest of Atty. Rayco who was escorted by policemen inside the police vehicle. The police confiscated the protesters’ jeepney and other belongings.

Canata, Certeza and Casilihan suffered bruises while Canata’s elbows were wounded. Canata’s handcuffs were only removed upon insistence of the lawyer. He was transferred to the City Social Welfare and Development (CSWD) at around 2:00 p.m.

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

URGENT ACTION Prepared by:

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