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## Enforced disappearance of gardener in San Fernando town, Cebu province

- Case** : **Enforced disappearance**
- Victim/s** : **GARY AGUILAR SANTOS**
- 48 years old, male
  - Working as a gardener at the house that was leased by the arbitrarily arrested and detained Wilma Austria Tiamzon, Benito Tiamzon, et al.
- Place of Incident** : Sitio Boloc-boloc, Barangay (village) Sangat, San Fernando municipality, Cebu province
- Date of Incident** : March 22, 2014
- Alleged Perpetrator(s)**: Combined elements of the Philippine National Police (PNP) of San Fernando, Cebu; the PNP Crimininal Investigation and Detection Group; Intelligence Security Group of the Philippine Army; and Central Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines

### Account of the Incident:

**Gary Aguilar Santos** is employed as a gardener hired by Rex and Lorraine Villaflor. The couple leased a house in Brgy. Sangat, San Fernando town, Cebu province who later sub-leased it to another couple, Benito Tiamzon and Wilma Austria Tiamzon.

On March 22, at around 2:30 p.m., the Villaflors, Tiamzon and Austria were arrested at Aloguinsan town while they were on their way to Negros Oriental. Also arrested were Jeosi Nepa, Joel Enano and Arlene Panea. The group was brought the next day to Camp Crame Custodial Center at the PNP National Headquarters, Quezon City. (*See Urgent Appeal on the arrest of Tiamzon, Austria et al.*)

According to news reports, in the afternoon of March 25, at least fifteen members of the Cebu PNP Intelligence and Investigation Division and the PNP San Fernando conducted a search of the Villaflors' rented house at around 5:15pm, by virtue of a warrant purportedly issued by a Judge Soliver Peras of the Regional Trial Court in Cebu City for firearms and explosives in the said house. Members of the raiding team said in their media interviews that they did not find any firearm or explosives. There was no news of the gardener Santos' whereabouts.

According to Lorraine Villaflor, her last communication with Santos was on March 22 at around 4:00 p.m., a few hours after they were arrested. Upon hearing the news report on the search operations at their house, Lorraine and Rex expressed their concern about the gardener who was left alone at the house, immediately after their arrest.

Paralegals of Karapatan-Cebu conducted an inquiry on March 26 at the PNP San Fernando about the details of the police search. The Karapatan team also went to investigate at the rented house in Sitio Boloc-boloc, wherein one of the caretakers of the house reported that no one was seen inside the house since March 22.

While the paralegals were interviewing residents near the Villaflors' rented house, an unidentified man was seen watching the group. The man is suspected to be a civilian intelligence agent.

Further inquiries at the PNP San Fernando were made by Karapatan on April 1 to check if Santos is in police custody. The police however denied that they have Santos.

As of writing, the whereabouts of Gary Aguilar Santos is still unknown.

**UA Date** : April 14, 2014

### **Recommended Action:**

Send letters, emails or fax messages calling for:

1. The immediate surfacing and release of **Gary Aguilar Santos**.
2. The immediate formation of an independent fact-finding and investigation team composed of representatives from human rights groups, the Church, local government, and the Commission on Human Rights that will look into the enforced disappearance of Gary Aguilar Santos.
3. The end to the policy of labeling and targeting of human rights defenders as "members of front organizations of the communists" and "enemies of the state."
4. The withdrawal of Oplan Bayanihan, the Philippine government's counterinsurgency program, that victimizes innocent and unarmed civilians.
5. The Philippine Government to observe the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all the major Human Rights instruments that it is a party and signatory to.

You may send your communications to:

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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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