



Ongoing Harrassment and Murder of UCCP Members in the Philippines

July 2010

RONEL RAGUING was a single, 24 year old male from sitio Tamusi, Talalac, Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental. He was an active member of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) Talalac Sta. Catalina and of the Talalac United Farmers Association an affiliate of the Kapunongan Alang sa Ugma sa Gagmayang Maguuma sa Oriental Negros- - Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KAUGMAON-KMP).

Ronel Raguing was reported missing by his family on 30 January 2009 to the Sta. Catalina Police Station. No substantive investigation was undertaken to account for the disappearance.

According to Virginia, Rondel's mother, her son was headed to Kalbasahan, Milagrosa the day of his disappearance, to check on his squash farm there. He was expected back the next day.

His brother went to Kalbasahan to trace the whereabouts of Ronel. According to eyewitness accounts compiled by human rights organisation KARAPATAN Negros Oriental, Rondel was last seen in the company of soldiers from the 79th Infantry Battalion. He was dragged to a wooded section near Kalbasahan. Another civilian was reported to have been with the team of soldiers.

On 9 March 2009 a team of National Bureau of Investigation-Cebu personnel (police detectives) and KARAPATAN acting on information gleaned from the mission, exhumed decomposing remains of two men in Junob, Nagbinlod, Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental. The bodies were positively identified by the families as that of Ronel Raguing and Julito Quirante.

Ronel's body bore stab wounds and was hog-tied when buried. Traces of torture were evident on both bodies.

The organisation to which Rondel belonged was active against the bio-fuels project in the area. For that reason members of the organisation were harassed and labelled as communists. According to KARAPATAN, Ronel Raguing was constantly harassed by soldiers of the 79th Infantry Battalion based in Pob. 4, Siaton , Negros Oriental.

The case was filed at the Commission of Human Rights (CHR) in Dumaguete City. Unfortunately, no one was brought to justice for the murders. The case was eventually archived by the CHR without proper investigation except ferocious denials from the military.

ELIZABETH ONCIANO is a 31 year old woman of sitio Avocado, Talalac, Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental. She is an active UCCP member, vice chairperson of the farmers organization Talalac United Farmer's Association (TALUFA) and member of ANAKPAWIS political party.

On 19 January 2010, just three days after she gave birth, a drunken soldier named Ronnie Corpuz "visited" her house. The soldier maliciously touched one of Elizabeth's daughters. When reprimanded by Elizabeth, the soldier apologised.

Soldiers of the 79th Infantry Battalion were pressuring members of the community to vote for candidates that the military endorsed in the lead up to the May elections in the Philippines.

On 3 May 2010 at around 5 am, Elizabeth spotted a man in civilian clothes walking not far from her house. She surmised the man was a soldier as she noticed that the sack he was holding contain what looked like a rifle.

Later, she was shocked to discover that a group of soldiers were huddled by a grassy field in front of her house. All of a sudden the soldiers rose, aimed their M16 rifles and rushed to her house. In terror, her five daughters scattered in varying directions away from the house.

Elizabeth grabbed her sleeping three month old son from the bed and rushed outside losing sight of her daughters. Reaching the trail by the river, she was stopped by 1st Lieutenant Torres Anda and eight soldiers of the 79th Infantry Battalion. Her clothes bag was searched by the soldiers despite her protests.

Torres told her that communist rebels were sighted by her house but could have fled because Elizabeth called out to them to alert them. She told him that her shouts were meant for her daughters not for anyone else.

She was accused of supporting the communist rebels and giving military information to them. The soldiers insisted even suggesting that her husband was a rebel himself.

She denied all their accusations but the soldiers called her a liar and a communist informer. When she went back to her house, she discovered that her belongings had been searched by the soldiers.

Elizabeth Onciano continues to fear for her and her family's safety. The incident adversely affected her farm duties as she is now afraid to go out to her field and till her farmland.

What you can do

Write polite and respectful letters to (a letter to the Philippines will require a \$1.50 stamp):

His Excellency Benigno Aquino III
President of the Republic of the Philippines
Malacañang Palace
JP Laurel St., San Miguel
Manila NCR 1005
PHILIPPINES
Fax: (+632) 742 1641 / 929 3968
E-mail: corres@op.gov.ph / opnet@ops.gov.ph

Atty. Leila De Lima
Secretary, Department of Justice
DOJ Building
Padre Faura St., 1004 Manila
PHILIPPINES
Fax: (+632) 521 1614
Email: soj@doj.gov.ph

Salutation : Dear Secretary

Salutation: Your Excellency
His Excellency Ernesto H. De Leon
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
of the Philippines to the Commonwealth of Australia
Embassy of the Philippines
PO Box 3297
Manuka ACT 2603
E-mail: cbrpe@philembassy.org.au

Salutation: Your Excellency

Points to make in your letters:

- Express deep concern of the murder of Ronel Raguing from Talalac, Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental in January 2009.
- Request an immediate re-opening of the investigation of Ronel's murder, with the intent of bringing those responsible to justice.
- Express deep concerns at reports that Elizabeth Onciano of sitio Avocado, Talalac, Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental has been subjected to intimidation and harassment by soldiers of the 79th Infantry Battalion.
- Seek assurances for her and her family's safety.
- Ask that a thorough and independent investigation be carried out into the threats and harassment, with those responsible being appropriately disciplined or charged.