

PRESS RELEASE  
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## KARAPATAN STATEMENT ON THE SC DECISION

# ON JONAS BURGOS' ABDUCTION AND DISAPPEARANCE

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KARAPATAN welcomes the Supreme Court's decision ordering the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), specifically Lt. Harry Baliaga and the incumbent Chief of Staff, to surface activist Jonas Burgos who has been missing since 2007.

The decision affirms what KARAPATAN has long found out: that state security forces are responsible for the disappearance of Jonas Burgos, along with the many other cases of enforced disappearances that happened under the GMA regime and are still happening until the present.

By this time, the AFP should stop denying responsibility over the disappearance of Jonas Burgos in the same way it denied having Sherlyn Cadapan and Karen Empeño in their custody when the Supreme Court ordered the same last May.

We reiterate that Jonas, Sherlyn, Karen and thousands like them became victims of human rights violations because of the counter-insurgency program implemented by the Arroyo administration – the Oplan Bantay Laya I and II - that targeted activists and other human rights defenders. We urge the Aquino government to learn the lesson of the past regime and immediately rethink implementing the same policies of the past government and his own brand of the counter insurgency program – Oplan Bayanihan - which engender unreported displacement of communities in areas pinpointed by the military as allegedly under the strong influence of rebels.

We call on President Noynoy Aquino to use his power as Commander-in-chief of the AFP to order the military to abide by the Supreme Court's order to surface Jonas Burgos and ensure that those responsible for his abduction and disappearance will be punished. Only then can decisions of the Courts have teeth and effect the lessening of, if not totally ending, impunity.

We strongly urge President Noynoy Aquino to go after Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who was dropped by the courts as a respondent to the case. One year is more than enough time for President Noynoy to act on serving justice to all the victims of human rights violations of the past regime. It is hard to believe that GMA is ignorant of these heinous cases of human rights violations that happened when she was the commander-in-chief of the Philippine Armed Forces.

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