



URGENT ACTION * URGENT ACTION * URGENT ACTION * URGENT ACTION

UA Date: 07 February 2010

UA Title: **Voters Education by women NGO, tagged “insurgency” by govt. soldiers**

UA Case: Threat/Harassment

Victim/s: Ma. Ira Pamat, married, of Tagbilaran City, Bohol; Executive Director, Women’s Development Center, Inc. (WDC); Member, Solidarity and People’s Advocacy Network (SPAN)

Place of Incident: Tagbilaran City, Bohol

Date of Incident: 31 Jan. 2010

Perpetrators: Intelligence Unit of the 2nd Special Forces Battalion of the Special Forces Regiment (Airborne), SOCOM of the Philippine Army based in Barangay Riverside, Municipality of Bilar, under its battalion commander Lt. Col. Alfred Sanchez

Account of Incident :

An intelligence report, maliciously implicating to insurgency the voters education conducted by the Women’s Development Center (WDC), was circulated by the 2nd SF Battalion. The irresponsible report, published in the Jan.31, 2010 issue of the Bohol Chronicle, nastily and spuriously named Ira Pamat, Executive Director of WDC, as part of a certain District White Area Committee (DWAC), a structure of the underground CPP-NPA. It even cited that its intelligence unit has “monitored the meeting of the Women’s Development Center in the afternoon of Jan. 9, at Sitio Taytay, in Brgy. Montesuerte, Carmen”. The meeting that they referred to, was actually a voters education on the automated election system which will be used, for the first time, by the country in its forthcoming May 10 elections.

Believing that educating the people about the new system is the best way to lessen the possibility of automated election cheating, the WDC vowed to conduct massive voters education campaign. Yet, the women's NGO reaped not appreciation for this noble act but only false irresponsible statements from the Philippine Army unit in the province who, as defenders of the people mandated by the constitution, should have been the first one to provide a safer and conducive environment for women to partake in the effort of raising the awareness of the people about poll automation.

This is not the first time WDC is vilified and implicated to insurgency by the military. Since 2001, especially during the height of political killings in Bohol from 2006-2008, it has been included in the military's anti-insurgency smear campaign and black propaganda tirade. The vilification campaign culminated to the extra-judicial killing on April 2006, of Leizelda Cuñado, then staff of WDC, by an active member of the military's Barangay Intelligence Network (BIN).

The WDC, founded in 1989, is a nongovernment organization registered in the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission. It focused on giving assistance to women and children in the rural, coastal, and urban communities through organizing, education and trainings, and services. It is also a member of the Philippine Misereor Partners (PMP) and other network of partners committed to educate People's Organizations (POs) and the Bohol constituents about the first automated election in the country. It is therefore mandated to conduct voters education as it presently does to its partner POs all over Bohol. The WDC also sits as member, of the Provincial Development Council which also have, as member, the Philippine army unit in the province and the Bohol Integrated Water Resources Management Board, both bodies Chaired by Gov. Erico Aumentado. Ira Pamat, WDC's Executive Director, represents her group and sits alongside the military's representatives, during meetings of these said councils. Despite this however, the military did not spare her from their indiscriminate attack. It is obvious that they are trying to discourage NGOs and any concerned person from disclosing the vulnerabilities of poll automation and the big probability that instead of efficient election, automated election system may become GMA's version of modernizing cheating to ensure a bogus victory of her administration's candidates.

ACTION REQUESTED:

Please send letters, emails or fax messages calling for:

1. The military to stop circulating false and baseless “intelligence report” implicating NGOs to insurgency and even maliciously accusing their personnel as members of the underground movement.
2. The military, through Lt. Col. Alfred Sanchez (commanding officer of the 2nd SF BN) to issue a “Public Apology” for publishing a false report that maligned the good reputation of WDC and its personnel.
3. The Philippine Government to be reminded that it is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that it is also a party to all the major Human Rights instruments, thus it is bound to respect the rights of its citizens.

You may send your communications to:

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Tagbilaran City, Bohol

Governor Erico Aumentado
Bohol Provincial Capitol
Tagbilaran City, Bohol

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

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