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An urgent appeal for support from the Alter Trade Foundation (Philippines)

Monday 19 February 2007, by [Alter Trade](#), [GUANZON Federico](#), [LOPEZ Edwin](#), [MUGAR Norma](#) (Date first published: 11 February 2007).

From: Alter Trade Foundation atfinc gmail.com

February 11, 2006

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Again, we write you on the issue of rebel taxation and their continuing harassment on Alter Trade and our social development work. [1] This time they have marked Alter Trade leaders for summary execution.

As you may already know, this conflict initiated by the CPP-NPA-NDF in Negros Island started in May 2001 when they served Alter Trade a demand letter urging us to transfer P30M to the CPP treasury. They demanded an initial payment of P5 million with the balance subject to negotiation. Thinking that they wanted to talk to the officers of Alter Trade, we asked them to meet us at an undisclosed place with Bishop Emeritus Antonio Y. Fortich who was then the chairperson of Alter Trade Foundation. But for reasons they alone know the rebels refused to meet with us and accused us of setting them up.

Last year, in late July 2006, a letter from the CPP Regional Committee Secretary again reiterated their May 2001 demand. But even before we could convene our Board of Directors to discuss the matter the New People's Army burned one of our trucks on August 13, 2006 at Toboso, Negros Occidental as a "punishment for our refusal" to accede to their demand.

When our European partners appealed in our behalf to the NDF Office in The Netherlands, Mr. Jalandoni, Chairperson of the NDF Negotiating Panel, wrote them a letter dated October 7, 2006 implying that the Revolutionary Proletarian Army (RPA), not the NPA, was responsible for the Toboso truck-burning. [2] However, in a statement dated January 24, 2007, (or more than five months after the incident) Mr. Frank Fernandez of NDF-Negros finally admitted that the NPA burned our truck in Toboso. To justify their action, Fernandez accused the Alter Trade leaders of being "big NGO bureaucrats, promoters of semi-colonial unfair trade and anti-communist propagandists of the US-Arroyo regime." [3]

Fernandez's statement ended with the threat: "The NPA will punish these NGO bureaucrats of Alter Trade Corp as equivalent to the exploitation, oppression and sufferings that ATC inflicted on the masses." This is a death sentence imposed on Alter Trade leaders by the CPP to be carried out by its armed wing, the NPA.

It is very disheartening to receive this threat-letter. Truth is, we are not just worried, we are afraid. We are discouraged to go on with our work in the face of all these dangers. However, after a period of reflection, we have come to the realization that we just cannot turn our backs to the mission of

serving the rural communities of Negros.

What we are doing now is the unfinished task of the late Bishop Antonio Fortich that he bequeathed to us in the last years of his life. Our initial successes in poverty alleviation assure us that we are on the right track towards the fulfillment of the Bishop's dream of a better life for the Negros poor. We cannot forsake our beloved bishop. We cannot give up our social development work even in the face of rebel harassments. We cannot abandon our farmer beneficiaries, our co-workers and staff who rely for their livelihood on Alter Trade's programs and operations. We have to stand steadfastly for them and for our social mission for the poor of Negros.

The Alter Trade Group has grown over the 18 years of operation and its direct and indirect beneficiaries have expanded to over 32,500. We just cannot abandon them. Alter Trade has journeyed a long way and stopping at this point will certainly affect negatively all the people we serve.

Thus, we have decided to stand our ground. But we could not of course fight these armed groups the way they fight, that is, through armed violence. What we could only do is ask them to drop their demands, to show them that what they are asking and doing will not only harm the Alter Trade Corporation but also its beneficiaries—and in the long run, even their own revolutionary organizations. The CPP-NPA should come to realize that what they are doing will only bring harm to the marginalized sectors in the Philippines, the very people that they have vowed to serve.

We are aware however that this decision may enrage the CPP and it will deal with the matter more violently. Thus, we ask for your support. We again ask you to send another appeal to the NDF International Office, in our behalf, for an immediate stop to rebel harassments on Alter Trade. We also request you to write the President of the Republic of the Philippines, the Office of the Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process, the Delegation of the European Union and the Embassies of The Netherlands and Norway to ask them to advise the NDF International Office to stop harassment on Alter Trade and other similar social development programs.

Sincerely yours,

NORMA G. MUGAR

President, Alter Trade Corporation

FEDERICO A. GUANZON

President, Alter Trade Manufacturing Corp.

EDWIN MARTHINE O. LOPEZ

Executive Director, Alter Trade Foundation Inc.

Note

1. See the previous appeal on ESSF website: [Appeal for moral support](#)
2. See Alter Trade's letters: [A letter to Bread for the World on CPP-NDF-NPA "taxation" policy in Negros](#) and [Fair Trade: a letter to "The Philippine Star"](#), Carol Wills' and Thomas Speck's letters: [Harrassment of Alter Trade: a letter to Luis Jalandoni, NDF](#), and [Alter Trade \(Negros\) under threat: a letter to Gloria Macapagal Arroyo](#)

3. This NDF-Negros statement and Alter Trade's answer on ESSF website: [Alter Trade \(Negros\) under threat: the NDF statement and the Alter Trade answer](#)

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