

URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

The Philippines: Localisation of Mr. Norbeto Murillo, arbitrarily detained

Saturday 8 November 2008, by [FIDH](#), [OMCT](#) (Date first published: 6 November 2008).

New information

PHL 003 / 1008 / OBS 177.1

Arbitrary detention / Judicial proceedings /

Ill-treatments

Philippines

November 6, 2008

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), has received new information and requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in the Philippines.

New information:

The Observatory has been informed by the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP) that Mr. Norbeto Murillo, a technical consultant for the farmers' organisation Life and Food for Leyte Evacuees (LFLE) [\[1\]](#), who had disappeared on October 29, 2008, was found to be detained at the Manila City Jail.

According to the information received, on October 31, 2008, Major Libay of the Task Force Usig of the Philippine National Police (PNP) confirmed that Mr. Norbeto Murillo had been brought and detained at the Custodial Centre, Camp Crame, in Quezon City.

On November 1, 2008, the Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance (FIND) and Mrs. Violeta Murillo, the wife of Mr. Norbeto Murillo, visited him in Camp Crame. Based on Mr. Murillo's account, right after he was arrested inside the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) compound (See background information), he was immediately blindfolded and was brought to a "safe house" of the PNP. There, he was interrogated about his involvement with the progressive movement, and his alleged participation in the multiple murder case that was filed against Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) Chairperson Jose Maria Sison and several co-accused, in relation to the communist purges that occurred during the late 1980s in Samar, Leyte. Mr. Murillo said that the interrogation lasted for several hours depriving him of much needed sleep. Also during the interrogation, his abductors threatened to physically torture him if he does not cooperate with them.

Around 9:00 am on November 1, 2008, Mr. Murillo was brought to Caloocan City Hall extension in

Novaliches, Quezon City, where the interrogation continued. After an hour, he was then brought to Manila City Hall by his captors where he signed a document in front of a person introduced to him as a prosecutor.

On November 3, 2008, Mr. Murillo was transferred to the Manila City Jail, where he is currently detained. A arrest warrant against Mr. Murillo was issued by the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 32.

Mr. Murillo was an active member of the progressive movement during the 80's and early 90's but has since left the mainstream to work with farmers organizations as a technical consultant assisting them with their land issues.

The Observatory expresses its deep concern with Mr. Noberto Murillo's arbitrary detention, which constitutes a further evidence of the increased repression against human rights defenders in the Philippines, and recalls that the Philippines has been elected as a member of the Human Rights Council until 2010 and has, in this regard, committed to "uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights" [2]. Accordingly, the Observatory urges the Philippines to comply with Article 12.2 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998, which states that "the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any threats, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration".

Background information:

On October 29, 2008 in the morning, Mr. Noberto Murillo was abducted by three men, who reportedly identified themselves as operatives of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG), outside the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) building.

Mr. Murillo was abducted after having held a meeting at the DAR to follow up on the documents regarding a LFLE land claim for alienable and disposal land in Leyte. According to Mr. Paulo Dellosa, LFLE Chairperson, the three men showed Mr. Murillo a warrant of arrest and introduced themselves as CIDG operatives after which they forcibly dragged him to a waiting FX vehicle.

There were reportedly around 10 alleged CIDG operatives including intelligence agents who entered the DAR compound an hour before Mr. Murillo and Mr. Dellosa arrived, according to the security officer assigned on that day. It was also learned that a Toyota Revo was used in the abduction and carries a plate number XKN 290. The security guard also spotted some AUVs and motorcycles used by the operatives aside from the Revo.

On October 30, 2008, the Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance (FIND) accompanied Mrs. Violeta Murillo to the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) to report the incident.

Actions required:

Please write to the authorities of the Philippines urging them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Noberto Murillo and of all human rights defenders in the Philippines;
- ii. Ensure his immediate release since his detention is arbitrary as it merely aims at sanctioning his human rights activities;

iii. End all forms of harassment, including judicial harassment, against human rights defenders in the Philippines, and guarantee in all circumstances that they be able to carry out their work without any hindrance;

iv. Conform with all the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, especially its Article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels” and above-mentioned Article 12.2;

v. More generally, ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by the Philippines.

Addresses:

· H.E. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic, New Executive Building, Malacanang Palace, JP Laurel St., San Miguel, Manila 1005, Philippines ; Tel: +632 564 1451 to 80 ; Fax: +632 736-1010 / 742-1641 / 929-3968; Cell#: (+ 63) 919 898 4622 / (+63) 917 839 8462; E-mail: corres.op.gov.ph / opnet.ops.gov.ph / kgma.yahoogroups.com;

· Mr. José de Venecia Jr., Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rm. MB-2, House of Representatives, Constitution Hills, Quezon City, Philippines; Tel: +632.9315001;

· Hon. Purificacion Valera Quisumbing, Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights, SAAC Building, Commonwealth Avenue, U.P. Complex, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines; Tel: + 632 928 5655; Fax: 632 929 01 02; drpvq@yahoo.com

· Mr. Raul Gonzales, Minister of Justice, Department of Justice, Building Padre Faura, 1004 Manila, Philippines; Tel: +63 (2) 523-8481; Fax: +63 (2) 521-1614; Email: sechbp.info.com.ph

· Director General Oscar Calderon, Chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP), Camp General Rafael Crame, Quezon City, Philippines; Tel: +632 726-4361/4366/8763; Fax: +632 724-8763; Email: bluetree73@gmail.com

· Ambassador Enrique A. Manalo, Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the United Nations in Geneva, 47 Avenue Blanc, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland, Fax: +41 22 716 19 32, Email: mission.philippines.ties.itu.int

· Embassy of the Philippines in Brussels, 297 Avenue Moliere, 1050 Brussels, Belgium, Tel: +32 2 340 33 77 / 2 340 33 78, Fax: +32 2 345 64 25.

Please also write to the diplomatic missions or embassies of the Philippines in your respective country.

Geneva-Paris, November 6, 2008

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

Defenders and aims to offer them concrete support in their time of need. The Observatory was the winner of the 1998 Human Rights Prize of the French Republic.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

E-mail: Appeals.fidh-omct.org

Tel and fax FIDH + 33 (0) 1 43 55 20 11 / +33 1 43 55 18 80

Tel and fax OMCT + 41 (0) 22 809 49 39 / + 41 22 809 49 29

Footnotes

[1] LFLE represents farmers who were displaced from their farmlands in Leyte during the late 80's due to the effect of former President Corazon Aquino's "Total War Policy"; after being displaced from Leyte these farmers sought temporary refuge at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines under then University President Nemesio Prudente.

[2] See OP9 of UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/251.