

## Statement on the UMDJ Five

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The abduction of the Union of the Masses for Democracy and Justice (UMDJ) members namely, its chairman Virgilio Eustaquio, Ruben Dionisio, Dennis Ibona, Jim Cabauatan and PO3 Jose Curameng of the Special Operation Group (SOG)-the Intelligence Division of the Quezon City Police- on May 22, 2006 exposes very clearly the standing policy of the Arroyo government to repress groups and individuals identified with the opposition. This is executed without hesitation to utilize any means, legally or not, just to render silent all political dissent.

The Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (ISAFP) admission that they have custody of the UMDJ 5 fifty-hours later and the whole government's inconsistencies in their statements and declarations of denying information serves as proof of the veracity of this standing policy of political repression. It must be remembered that on January 17, 2006, President Arroyo came up with Executive Order 493 (EO 493) giving birth to IALAG or the Inter-Agency Legal Action Group whose primary task is to "address specific offenses that constitute threats to national security." With IALAG, it is impossible that Malacañang do not have any idea of the operation as it is highly probable that Malacañang, through the Office of the National Security Adviser (the office that heads IALAG), gave the go signal to the operation.

As was the case before, it again sighted allegations that cannot be proven less the actual commission of the crime. Kill GMA plot, Rebellion, alliance with the "communist groups", etc. are old tunes repeated here and there to give justification to governments illegal actions of warrantless arrests, involuntary disappearances, torture and so on.

The Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) condemns and questions the Arroyo government's latest move that infringed the rights of the 5 UMDJ members. It is saddening that it took place even as the GMA government won a seat in the newly-formed United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), where it made extensive commitments to protect and uphold human rights in the country.

The GMA regime must prove itself worthy of its place at the UNHRC, instead of giving extensive yet vague commitments, it should take measures that will safeguard and promote people's rights including redress for the victims.