

Who's next in line for the Arroyo Death Squads? Stop the spate of political killings NOW!

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Last Thursday's murder of Kilusan para sa Pambansang Demokrasya leader Annaliza Gandia may be seen as another statistic in the spate of political assassinations carried out against leftist leaders and activists. The number has reached 124 since Arroyo came to power and has grown by the day. Annaliza is the tenth victim in a span of only two weeks. Beyond the statistical reportage of these political murders however is the fact that those slaughtered were not pigs or chickens but human beings ---mothers and wives, fathers and husbands, sons and daughters of typical Filipino families. They were not rebel combatants but unarmed political activists working in people's organizations. The impunity by which they were slain could only evoke horrendous memories of the dark years of the Marcos dictatorship era.

The report of a fact-finding mission in Central Luzon organized by the Citizens' Council for Human Rights (CCHR) reveals the assassins to be para-military thugs who operate in several towns of the region under the command of the Philippine Army's 7th Infantry Division headed by Brigadier General Jovito Palparan. (See the CCHR Fact-Finding Report)

Yet the political killings occur not only in Central or Northern Luzon but have gone widespread across the nation --- indicating that the source of the problem is beyond the "Palparanic character villains" of the military establishment. It is a national policy that could only emanate from the highest official of the country whose political survival rests on the rule of force and deceit.

Laban ng Masa, along with its affiliate organizations, holds the Arroyo regime primarily responsible for this spate of extra-judicial killings. We will pursue the case in international human rights organizations until justice is rendered to the victims of extra-judicial killings.

Left and progressive groups will not be silenced by the cowardly acts of this illegitimate regime. We will persevere in the struggle to seek justice and freedom for Filipinos until this regime is ousted and a reform-oriented transitional revolutionary government is installed.