

Appeal for moral support

Tuesday 19 September 2006, by [Alter Trade](#), [LOPEZ Edwin](#), [MUGAR Norma](#) (Date first published: 5 September 2006).

Dear Friends,

Once again we are being harassed by NPA (New People's Army) guerillas who demand revolutionary taxes on our fair trading operations. We have met a similar situation several years ago, with the RPA (Revolutionary Proletarian Army) who also demanded revolutionary taxes from our social enterprise. We cannot and we have not paid any rebel tax to any group. They will use their rebel tax collections on war materials to expand their revolutionary war. We believe in our own way of initiating social change through non-violent, gradual, but nonetheless dynamic, means of improving the people's quality of life. Whatever profits we gain are plowed back to soft-loans and capability building for small producers.

Last Sunday, NPA rebels burned our truck that was gathering farmers' banana harvest for their regular marketing to consumers' cooperatives. The farmers were deprived of their weekly income. And should we be prevented from our marketing operations from hereon, more farmers will lose their access to market for their organic goods. They are the real victims of this rebel atrocity.

In behalf of our 5,000 farmer beneficiaries and 300 employees and staff of Alter Trade, we ask for your support in putting a stop to this dastardly act.

Sincerely,

EDWIN MARTHINE O. LOPEZ
Executive Director
Alter Trade Foundation Inc.

[See next appeal on ESSF website: [An urgent appeal for support from the Alter Trade Foundation \(Philippines\)](#)]

August 15, 2006

Dear Friends,

We write you once again to ask for your help.

Last Sunday, August 13, 2006, some 20 armed men belonging to the New People's Army torched one of our trucks loaded with Balangon that we had just purchased from our partner-beneficiaries. The incident happened in Sitio Bato-bato, Barangay Tabun-ak, Toboso, Negros Occidental. The reason is that we refused to give in to their demand for so-called revolutionary tax.

Five years ago, we sought your help on the same problem. That time we received a letter from the Communist Party of the Philippines-Negros Island Regional Party Committee demanding that "P30

million [be] turned over to the Party treasury.” The said letter urged us to “take positive response to the will of the Party” and reminded us that “whatever action [we] take will be dealt with accordingly by the Party.”

We brought the matter up to Philippine authorities, foreign governments who are involved the GRP-NDF peace process, and to you our partners in the fair trade movement. Because of your intervention, the CPP-NPA-NDF did not pursue their demand but warned us that the problem is not over yet because they will get back at us “as soon as the situation allows.” Maybe the situation now has allowed them to get back at us, with the breakdown of the peace talks.

ATC’s profits from its operations are used to provide production assistance to its growers, set-up alternative livelihood to the communities. It is therefore impossible for ATC to accede to the CPP’s demand for payment of P30 million (which is more than US\$600,000) because there simply is no budget for such. Acceding to this demand would mean depriving the thousands of farmer-beneficiaries of the support they expect from the company. We just could not sacrifice the farmers’ welfare, thus, we have decided not to give in to the demand of the CPP.

We could not of course fight these armed groups the way they fight-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 the poor farmers we are serving. However, as in the previous encounter, we believe that the voice of Alter Trade alone will not be loud enough for them to listen. We again need all the support we can muster so that together we can convince their leaders to reconsider their demand. We need you to write the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and ask them to help us. The GRP is now trying to revive the peace talks with the CPP-NPA-NDF and we believe that the problem we have stated is an important issue that should be tackled in the peace talks.

Too, we need you to write the CPP-NPA-NDF leaders to try to convince them that what they are doing to us is not right. We also need you to write the Royal Norwegian Government, who is involved in the talks as a neutral third party, to bring up the matter with both the GRP and the CPP-NPA-NDF.

Please send them e-mails, letters, fax and telegrams. Below are their e-mail and slow mail addresses, telephone and fax numbers:

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo
President of the Republic of the Philippines

New Executive Building

Malacañang Palace Compound,

J.P. Laurel St., San Miguel, Manila

Phone: +63 2 564-1451 to 80; +63 2 735 8005

Fax: +63 2 736 1010; +63 2 929 3968

E-mail: corres.op.gov.ph

Hon. Jesus Dureza

Secretary

Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process

2404 Tektite Tower, Exchange Road

Ortigas Center, Pasig City

Phone: +63 2 636 4765

+63 917 793 0086

Fax: +63 2 929 8149

Mr. Luis Jalandoni
Chairman, NDF Panel

NDF International Office

P.O. Box 19195

3501 DD Utrecht, The Netherlands

Phone: +31 30 23 10 431

Fax: +31 30 23 22 989

Email: ndf@ndfp.cjb.net

The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
7. Juniplas 1, P.O. Box 8144 Dep, 0032

Oslo, Norway

The Embassy of the Royal Norwegian Government
Ambassador Stale Risa
21F Petron Mega Plaza Bldg.

358 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave.

Makati City, Philippines

Phone: +63 2 886 3245 to 49

Fax: +63 2 886 3244

We urgently need your support. Please help us.

Sincerely yours,

Norma G. Mugar

President