



# CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

*For the Defense of the Ancestral Domain and for Self Determination*

March 10, 2014

## **Condemn the Massacre of the Ligiw Family by the 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion!**

The Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) strongly denounces the massacre and brutal killing of Freddie "Fermin" Ligiw, Edie Ligiw and their father Licuben Ligiw on March 2, 2014 in Sukaw, Domenglay, Baay-Licuan, Abra by elements of the 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion, which has a notorious track record of rights violations in Abra, such as indiscriminate firing, arrest and detention, harassment and intimidation of community members. The victims' bodies were recovered on March 8 by *kakaillian* in a shallow grave near the victims' *pacalso*, a temporary shelter for farmers and small-scale miners. Their hands were bound and their mouths were gagged. They were piled on top of each other. They were obviously buried, in the perpetrators' hope that they won't be found, that no one will know. Fermin was a member of Sidakan-Anakbayan, and with his brother and father, members of the Lenneng-Killeng Tingguian Farmers Association (LEKITIFA). These organisations are members of KASTAN (Kakaillian Salakniban tay amin a Nagtaudan), the CPA Abra chapter. The victims were active leaders of the people's campaign against destructive mining in Baay-Licuan.

Data gathered by the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance (CHRA) shows that as early as February 19, elements of the 41<sup>st</sup> IB conducted military operations in Lenneng, where Fermin was forcibly taken to serve as a guide in the military operations against suspected NPA presence in the area. Family members last saw Fermin, Edie and Licuben on March 2 at their *pacalso*. The three were expected to be home in sitio Sukaw the same evening, but they never showed up. The family searched for them the following day. Search teams were later organised to continue looking for the victims, until the grave was discovered on March 7. Fermin was scheduled to meet with CHRA and the Abra Human Rights Alliance on March 4 or 5 to give his account of when he was coerced to be a military guide. He never made it to the meeting.

Not so long in late February, a fictitious organisation Ifugao People's Council circulated posters in Banaue entitled '*Rupa ken Nagan dagiti NPA nga Agsusweldo*' with malicious accusations against Jude Baggo, CHRA secretary general; Emerson Soriano, CPA Staff; Beverly Longid, KATRIBU President and former CPA chairperson, among other personalities, whose names and photos appeared in the posters, in still another desperate attempt to vilify defenders and advocates of indigenous peoples rights and human rights. In another northern Luzon province just recently as well, peasant leader Romulo dela Cruz was abducted on March 1<sup>st</sup> in Isabela. He has not been surfaced until now.

At least 43 indigenous peoples were killed in cold blood under this current PNoy regime, which has long-proven it is no different from the past Arroyo regime. It is the same fascist regime that instigates, plans and executes this national policy of terrorism across the country. Today it is called Oplan Bayanihan and is masked with deception and pronouncements of respect and recognition of human rights and international humanitarian law, but in reality, its concrete examples include the bombings in Malibcong and Sagada last year and the rape of young women in the mining community of Mankayan in 2012. As in Arroyo's Oplan Bantay Laya I and II, Oplan Bayanihan is implemented by the Armed Forces, and is therefore accountable for countless rights violations, including PNoy as commander in chief of the AFP. We demanded from PNoy justice for all victims of human rights violations under the Arroyo regime, but all it did was add to the number of killings, harassment and enforced disappearance of human rights and development workers, activists and advocates.

What does government intend to do with the increasing number of victims, orphaned children, families and communities when it has the knack allowing such injustice to prevail? Clearly, there is no room for human rights and justice under this regime, and we the people must rage against a State that breeds lawlessness and human rights violations. PNoy must step down, lest he is ousted. If the State can go on with the killings and vilification only because of people's political beliefs, then who will protect and defend the people? The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which Philippine government is a signatory, states that "*Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law...*" Therefore, let us not allow this culture of terrorism and impunity to continue. Let it be known that the people have a right to defend themselves, to mobilise for our human rights, and to rise against fascism

and extra judicial killing as what happened to the Ligiw family, and against a terrorist and fascist regime.  
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Reference:  
ATB Anongos, Secretary General