

Justice for Freddie "Fermin" Ligiw, Edie Ligiw and Licuben Ligiw!

We denounce in the strongest possible term the massacre of Freddie 'Fermin" Ligiw, Edie Ligiw and their father Licuben Ligiw which we together with the family and the community strongly suspect to be perpetrated by the 41st IB 503rd Bgde, 5th ID of the AFP.

We do not subscribe to the AFP's claim that the massacre was perpetrated by the NPA. It is a well known fact that the NPA is gaining broad support from the Filipino people including the Cordillera peoples. The NPA will not massacre civilians as this would result to losing their so-called mass base, apart from being known of their strict adherence to International Humanitarian Laws.

Freddie "Fermin" Ligiw was a member of Anakbayan. All three were members of KASTAN (Kakaillian Salakniban Tay Amin ti Nagtaudan), the provincial chapter of Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) in Abra. They are Tingguians and members of binodngan tribe of Baay-Licuan.

The organizations which the three were affiliated with have been subjects of various forms of political vilification from the AFP unit, accusing these organizations as fronts of the New Peoples' Army (NPA) and maliciously implicating the members including the victims as supporters of the armed revolutionary group.

Being active members of politically vilified organization and the circumstances surrounding the incident strongly point to the involvement of the military unit.

Earlier on February 19, 2014, the 41st IB conducted a military operation in the area of Lenneng, Domenglay, Baay-Licuan. Against his will, the 41st IB took Freddie "Fermin" Ligiw with them to serve as a guide in the military operation against NPA unit suspected to be present in the area.

According to the victim's family, on March 2, they left Edie and Licuben at their *pacalso* (farm hut) while they went home at Sitio Sucaw, Domenglay, Licuan-Baay. On the same day, Fermin told his family that he will go for work at the small scale mining area, but will see first his father in the pacalso.

The three were expected to go home that night but they did not show up. The following day, the family of the victims went to look for them. They were not at the pacalso nor in the small scale mining site.

Search teams mobilized by community leaders and local government officials from Lenneng, Baay-Licuan, and neighbouring barangays and municipalities were mobilized to locate the three.

Upon receiving the report, Josephine Cariño, the barangay captain of Domenglay, immediately reported the disappearance of the three to the PNP station located at Poblacion, Licuan-Baay. The barangay captain also made the incident known to the 41st IB stationed in Licuan-Baay.

The family reported the incident to the Abra Human Rights Movement through a text message in March 6.

On March 7, 2014, the search team composed of about fifty (50) residents of Domenglay, Licuan-Baay found a shallow grave near the victims' palaso. The residents suspected that the missing family members were buried there. They did not proceed to exhume the bodies because they were instructed to wait for the PNP to conduct the crime scene investigation.

The exhumation took place at around 1:30 p.m. on March 8. According to the family, the bodies were piled up in the grave. The body of Eddie was at the bottom. On top of him was the body of his father, Licuben. Fermin's body was on top. All were in fetal position. Their hands were tied. Eddie and Fermin were gagged.

The 41st IB headed by Lieutenant Colonel Domingo have been conducting military operations in the area on or around the time the three went missing. Following the discovery of the 3, the AFP and barangay captain began spreading information that the New People's Army, KASTAN and CPA are behind the massacre.

News reports by several national dailies including GMA network account that the three were discovered in a mass grave of suspected New People Army. The report was coming from 1st Lt. Rowena Abayon, spokesperson of the 5th ID. Abayon further stipulated that the three were last seen in March 1 with 15 NPA fighters.

We challenge Bgen. Felix Brawner to subject his troops, the 41st IB, for impartial investigation.

We call on President Benigno Aquino as Commander in Chief of the AFP to order the necessary investigation of the 41st IB and prosecution the perpetrators of these appalling massacre as well as other human rights violations.

We reiterate the peoples' long standing call for the complete withdrawal of military units in Abra and the rest of the Cordillera region.

Justice for Freddie "Fermin" Ligiw, Edie Ligiw and Licuben Ligiw!

Stop the militarization!

Stop the culture of impunity!

Stop Oblan Bayanihan!

References:

Atty. Reynaldo Cortes

0918-962-9190

Chairperson

Cordillera Human Rights Alliance

Atty. Jennifer Asuncion

Vice Chairperson

0917-555-3118

Audrey Beltran

0917-562-3647

Deputy secretary general