



19th session of the Human Rights Council

Item 3

**Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children
Interactive Dialogue 7 March 2012
Delivered by Ms. Cristina Palabay**

Thank you, Mme. President,

CIVICUS Partner Karapatan thanks the Special Rapporteur Marta Santos Pais for her report and its focus on violence against children in schools. Together with the Children's Rehabilitation Center we have documented 631 cases of human rights violations against children in the Philippines from 2008 to 2011, many of these cases occurred in their homes, schools and communities. The latest child victim borne out of continued military operations under the Aquino counter-insurgency program Oplan Bayanihan is Sunshine Jabinez, an 8-year old girl, who was killed by a drunken soldier encamping in their village.

We have gathered reports on the active recruitment in the para-military Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) when they invite minors to drinking sessions, etc to encourage them to join the CAFGU. Soldiers turn day care centers and schools into their temporary camps while conducting military operations. Hence classes were suspended when there are operations, depriving the children of their right to education and to an environment conducive to learning without fear. This month, officials of the military in Mindanao threatened nuns in a Catholic school to remove their streamer calling for justice for an Italian Missionary who was recently killed.

From 2008 to 2011, 15 children were branded as child soldiers. These children were interrogated, illegally arrested, detained and tortured to admit that they were members of the NPA. Upon investigation, these children were proven to be children of residents of the communities where there were ongoing military operations. They have been taken from their communities based on allegations of being "child soldiers". These children aside from being uprooted from their simple lives have experienced severe distress and fear.

We appeal to the Special Rapporteur to look into these cases of state violence against children in the Philippines and urge the government to respect the Convention on the Rights of the Child and remind them of their obligation to respect the pledges and commitments during its UPR as well as its obligations in major human rights instruments. Thank you for your attention, Mr. President.