



19th session of the Human Rights Council

Item 3

Working Group on Arbitrary Detention Interactive Dialogue 6 March 2012 Delivered by Ms. Cristina Palabay

Thank you, Mme President,

As CIVICUS partners we thank the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention for their report and engagement and would like to take their attention to the following:

Despite the denial of the current administration of Philippine Pres. Benigno Aquino III of the existence of political prisoners in the country, Karapatan has documented 81 political prisoners arrested under his presidency. As of December 31, 2011, there are a total of 347 political prisoners, 28 of them women, 12 peace consultants, and 41 are elderly and sick.

Among these political prisoners are artist Ericson Acosta, film student Maricon Montajes, peace consultant Alan Jazmines, farmers Moreta and Jesus Alegre and sickly Rolando Panamogan. Of late, political prisoner and peace consultant Ramon Patriarca was threatened by a local court to be transferred to a military camp, where he was tortured upon his arrest.

We believe that the arrests and detention of these individuals are being conducted to suppress their right to air legitimate grievances over state policies. Trumped up charges are filed against them to justify various infirmities on the legality of their arrests. Thus, the political nature of their arrests and continued detention is purposely hidden.

Altogether Karapatan has documented 350 victims of illegal arrests under the Aquino government, majority of victims are peasants, indigenous peoples, leaders of the urban poor and environmental activists.

Threats of arrests, harassments and trumped charges continue to hound right defenders. Seventy two leaders of people's organizations in Southern Tagalog, including church worker Pastor Edwin Egar, Karapatan worker Doris Cuario, and trade union counsel Remigio Saladero Jr., are in danger of being issued warrants of arrests for charges previously dismissed by the courts.

We appeal to the Working Group to look into these cases of arbitrary arrests and detention in the Philippines and urge the government to respect its pledges and commitments during its UPR as well as its obligations in major human rights instruments. Thank you for your attention, Mme. President.