Here is the link to all OMNI newsletters:  
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/  
For a knowledge-based peace, justice, and ecology movement and an informed citizenry as the foundation for change.

See OMNI’s newsletters on Civil Liberties, Guantanamo, Human Rights Day, War on Terror, Torture, and related subjects.

Building a Culture of Peace Through Truth, Justice, and Accountability. These materials enable us better to be WE, THE PEOPLE, informed citizens demanding a constitutional democracy.

From its beginning OMNI celebrated Human Rights, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the U.S. Bill of Rights, Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and our Human Rights Committee has actively opposed the death penalty and other human rights violations. Let us widen and deepen this commitment in the years to come by supporting the “emerging global ethos that says to the worst perpetrators of human-rights atrocities: ‘Think twice before you kill or torture.’”

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Graffiti Prosecutions
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Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute newsletter@mcli.org via uark.edu

For your convenience, the table of contents is listed below. As always, you can contribute to our efforts at: www.mcli.org/donate

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MCLI Recognized in the Congressional Record, October 22nd,
On Friday, October 22nd, Congresswoman Barbara Lee made a statement in the Congressional Record applauding MCLI's work on the passage by the California State Legislature of ACR 129, making California the first state in the nation to agree to publicize and make periodic reports on the U.S.-ratified UN human rights treaties. This is a very exciting honor for MCLI and also a testament to the diligent work that MCLI has continued to do despite economic hard times that beset us along with all other social justice organizations.

Congressional Record October 22, 2010

Victory for Human Rights Law in California!

Dear MCLI friends and allies,

Great news! Today California became the first state to pass legislation to publicize and report on the three ratified human rights treaties!

Earlier today, the CA State Senate voted to approve Assembly Concurrent Resolution (ACR) 129, the legislation MCLI sponsored and Assemblymember Bill Monning of the 27th Assembly District authored. ACR 129 requests the state Attorney General prepare templates for use by cities, counties, and state agencies on which they can make complete and accurate reports to the UN treaty committees. As you may know, the State Assembly voted to support the resolution earlier this month so now, with the approval of both houses of the legislature, it is the Law of the Land in California! We are deeply grateful to Assemblymember Bill Monning for authoring and shepherding the measure to passage, and to Senator Loni Hancock for jockeying it through the Senate.

As Assembly Member Monning writes, ACR 129 signals that "the Legislature finds it important to address human rights issues, and presents an opportunity for California can become a leader among the states in fulfilling reporting obligations under these treaties and protocols by taking steps to ease the task of compiling and organizing data for cities, counties and state agencies." To read the rest of the Assm. Monning's analysis click here.

The passing of this resolution is a first step, but now the real work begins! It is critical that social justice issues become viewed as part of the human rights framework. As Rev. Daniel Buford, President of MCLI's Board of Directors and Prophetic Justice Minister at Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, testified before the Assembly Appropriations Committee, the three treaties have proven to be very
helpful in working on justice in the killing of Oscar Grant by BART police officer Johannes Mehserle last year.

Also, in the preparation of the city of Berkeley ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) report this year, an extensive community consultation process culminated in a town meeting of residents to debate and modify the draft report. This process has heightened concern in the city about issues such as racial disparity in asthma rates and the ongoing incidence of hate crimes in the community.

This is a great way to end the week!
Yours for human rights,
George Lippman
Executive Director
Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute (MCLI)
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MERCENARIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS
“Beyond WikiLeaks: The Privatization of War”
Sunday 26 December 2010
by: Jose L. Gomez del Prado, UN Working Group on Mercenaries, t r u t h o u t | Report

The United Nation Human Rights Council, under the Universal Periodic Review, started in Geneva on November 5, 2010 to review the human rights record of the United States. The following is an edited version of the presentation given by Jose L. Gomez del Prado in Geneva on November 3, 2010 at a parallel meeting at the UN Palais des Nations on that occasion.
Private military and security companies (PMSC) are the modern reincarnation of a long lineage of private providers of physical force: corsairs, privateers and mercenaries. Mercenaries, which had practically disappeared during the 19th and 20th centuries, reappeared in the 1960s during the decolonization period, operating mainly in Africa and Asia. Under the United Nations, a convention was adopted which outlaws and criminalizes their activities. Additionally, Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions also contains a definition of mercenary. These non-state entities of the 21st century operate in extremely
blurred situations, where the frontiers are difficult to separate. The new security industry of private companies moves large quantities of weapons and military equipment. It provides services for military operations, recruiting former military as civilians to carry out passive or defensive security. However, these individuals cannot be considered civilians, given that they often carry and use weapons, interrogate prisoners, load bombs, drive military trucks and fulfill other essential military functions. Those who are armed can easily switch from a passive-defensive to an active-offensive role and can commit human rights violations and even destabilize governments. They cannot be considered soldiers or supporting militias under international humanitarian law, either, since they are not part of the army or in the armed forces chain of command, and often belong to a large number of different nationalities.

PMSC personnel cannot usually be considered to be mercenaries, for the definition of mercenaries as stipulated in the international conventions dealing with this issue does not generally apply to the personnel of PMSCs, which are legally operating in foreign countries under contracts of legally registered companies. Private military and security companies operate in a legal vacuum: they pose a threat to civilians and to international human rights law. The UN Human Rights Council has entrusted the UN Working Group on the use of mercenaries, principally via the following mandate: To monitor and study the effects of the activities of private companies offering military assistance, consultancy and security services on the international market on the enjoyment of human Rights ... and to prepare draft international basic principles that encourage respect for human rights on the part of those companies in their activities.

During the past five years, the Working Group has been studying emerging issues, manifestations and trends regarding private military and security companies. In our reports, we have informed the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly about these issues. Of particular importance are the reports of the Working Group to the last session of the Human Rights Council, held in September 2010, on the Mission to the United States of America, on the Mission to Afghanistan and the general report of the Working Group containing the draft of a possible Convention on Private Military and Security Companies for consideration and action by the Human Rights Council. In the course of our research, since 2006, we have collected ample information which indicates the negative impact of the activities of "private contractors," "private soldiers" or "guns for hire," whatever denomination we may choose to name the individuals who are employed by private military and security companies as civilians but are also generally heavily armed. In the cluster of human rights violations allegedly perpetrated by employees of the companies the Working Group has examined, one can find: summary executions, acts of torture, cases of arbitrary detention, trafficking of persons and
serious health damages caused by PMSC employee activities, as well as attempts against the right of self-determination. It also appears that PMSCs, in their search for profit, neglect security and do not provide their employees with their own basic rights and often put their staff in situations of danger and vulnerability. . . . Full report at end of this newsletter (Dick)

CCR and Sex Abuse Survivors Seek ICC Vatican Prosecution
Vincent Warren to jbennet 9-14-11 alerts@ccrjustice.org

Dear CCR Supporter:
I am writing to tell you about an historic moment in the fight for justice and international human rights.
Yesterday, on September 13 at the Hague, CCR and the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), a survivor-led support group for clergy sex abuse victims, formally urged the International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor to investigate the Vatican for crimes against humanity. Together, we filed a lengthy and detailed complaint charging that Vatican officials tolerate and enable the systematic and widespread concealing of rape and child sex crimes throughout the world. In addition, more than 20,000 pages of supporting materials were submitted, consisting of reports, policy papers, and evidence of the crimes by Catholic clergy committed against children and vulnerable adults.
SNAP is the world’s oldest and largest support group for clergy abuse victims. It has existed for 23 years and has more than 10,000 members. Despite the word “priest” in its title, it has members who were molested by religious figures of all denominations, including nuns, rabbis, bishops, and Protestant ministers. Go to www.snapnetwork.org to learn more about SNAP and how you can take action to support their work and demand justice.
Clergy sex crimes have been perpetrated and concealed in nearly every country. In the United States alone, church authorities admit that nearly 6,000 priests have been publicly accused of molesting children over the past few decades. SNAP estimates that there are as many as 100,000 American victims of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, and that in other nations, where child-protection laws may not be as robust as in the United States, the number of victims is equally staggering.
SNAP and CCR are embarking on a 12-city tour throughout Europe to demand that local church authorities turn over relevant documents and encourage other victims of sexual abuse by clergy to come forward and provide additional evidence to add to the complaint. In addition to The Hague, they visited Amsterdam yesterday, and will visit Brussels and Berlin on the 14th; Paris on the 15th; Vienna and London on the 16th; Dublin and Warsaw on the 18th; and Madrid on the 19th. Their travels will culminate in Rome on the 20th, where they will bring the case to the Vatican’s door.
Visit www.ccrjustice.org/iccvaticanprosecution for more detailed
information and complete documents concerning this critical step towards seeking international justice. For a complete list of media coverage, click here.

CCR is tremendously proud to be partnering with SNAP, and we look forward to a long and supportive relationship. As always, we are grateful for your consistent support and actions that enable CCR to continue to expose injustice and defend human rights.

Sincerely,
Vincent Warren, Executive Director

HISTORY OF HUMAN RIGHTS


**Martin Niemöller: "First they came for the Socialists..."**

| Related Articles | Comments | E-mail updates | How to cite this article |

Martin Niemöller, a prominent Protestant pastor who opposed the Nazi regime. He spent the last 7 years of Nazi rule in concentration camps. Germany, 1937.

— *Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz*

Martin Niemöller (1892-1984) was an ardent nationalist and prominent Protestant pastor who emerged as an outspoken public foe of Adolf Hitler and spent the last 7 years of Nazi rule in concentration camps.

Niemöller is perhaps best remembered for the quotation:

*First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out -- Because I was not a Socialist.*

*Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out -- Because I was not a Trade Unionist.*

*Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out -- Because I was not a Jew.*

*Then they came for me -- and there was no one left to speak for me.*

The quotation stems from Niemöller's lectures during the early postwar period. Different versions of the quotation exist. These can be attributed to the fact that Niemöller spoke extemporaneously and in a number of settings. Much controversy surrounds the content of the poem as it has been printed in varying forms, referring to alternating groups such as Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews, Trade Unionists or Communists depending upon the version. Nonetheless his point was that Germans -- in particular, he believed, the leaders of the Protestant churches -- had been complicit through their silence in the Nazi imprisonment, persecution, and murder of millions of people.
At the same time, however, Niemöller, like most of his compatriots, was largely silent about the persecution and mass murder of the European Jews. Only in 1963, in a West German television interview, did Niemöller acknowledge and make a statement of regret about his own antisemitism (see Gerlach, 2000, p. 47).

Further Reading


Wolfgang Gerlach, *And the Witnesses were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Jews* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2000)

CEDAW

As you are contacting your Senators, please note that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is up for ratification. The United States is one of only a few countries that have never ratified CEDAW. And since 1980, the United States has ratified similar treaties on genocide, torture, race, and civil and political rights. Ratifying the CEDAW treaty would continue that important tradition. Ratification requires 67 Senators to stand together for women and has no financial cost. [http://capwiz.com/wand/issues/alert/?alertid=15222281&PROCESS=Take+Action](http://capwiz.com/wand/issues/alert/?alertid=15222281&PROCESS=Take+Action)

RIGHT TO DIE: NEW FILM, YOU DON’T KNOW JACK


From UNA/USA: US ELECTED TO UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Dear Dick,

Before the week is out, we wanted to make sure you heard the good news: This past Tuesday, the United States was elected to a three-year term on the UN Human Rights Council!

All of you who responded to our action alert earlier this year calling on the Obama Administration to run for a seat on the Council played an important part in this significant accomplishment, which reverses America's policy of self-isolation from the world's preeminent human rights forum.

As UNA-USA president Tom Miller said in a statement following the vote, "Today's election of the United States to the Human Rights Council is an important step forward in our country's recommitment to the promotion of ideals first championed by Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt in
her groundbreaking effort to secure General Assembly adoption of the
Universal Declaration of Human Rights more than 60 years ago,

HUMAN RIGHTS ADVANCING: ACCOUNTABILITY
“Perhaps the most significant human-rights development of
the past twenty-five years has been the growing demand for
accountability,” William Schulz, Former Exec. Dir. Of
Amnesty International USA. Here are the main
achievements:
War-crimes tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia;
British Law Lords 1999 decision to strip Augusto Pinochet
of his sovereign immunity from prosecution;
Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa;
International Criminal Court indictment against the sitting
president of Sudan, Omar Hassan al-Bashir;
Conviction of Alberto Fujimori of Peru;
Present trials of Khmer Rouge leaders in Phnom Penh.
(Harper’s Magazine June 2009).
[Dick: Add the prosecution of Charles "Chuckie" Emmanuel, a
US citizen, the son of former Liberian president Charles
Taylor. Emmanuel is charged with committing acts of
torture as head of the Demon Forces, Taylor’s paramilitary
unit. He is the first to be prosecuted under a 1994 law
that makes it illegal for a US citizen to commit torture
overseas. See: “Child’s Play,” Harper’s Magazine (June
2009).]

Coralie Koonce <livantern2002@yahoo.com> wrote:
Lynn McCullough writes about the Constitutional definition of who is or is not an American citizen.
But a more important point concerns the definition of a person. Artificial persons, which McCullough
briefly mentions in passing, are corporations. For over 100 years, corporations have claimed the same
benefits as human beings, while escaping most of the responsibilities and penalties connected to being
human.
Corporations existed in the Founders’ day, but they were strictly limited in scope and time. The
corporation dissolved when its limited mission ended--perhaps the building of a road or canal. Under
the circumstances, the Constitution did not cover corporations because they had no power of their own
and were no threat to the republic.
Through the latter half of the 19th century, various court decisions ended the restrictions on
corporations culminating in the 1887 decision declaring corporations to be persons. These were activist
judges, but not liberal ones. They were pro-business and in some cases probably corrupted.
The idea of artificial persons is certainly not in the Constitution, but without being a lawyer, I don't
know if it is in fact unconstitutional. It was certainly a bad idea, as multinational corporations today have far too much power.

It seems to me that McCullough's argument makes Guantanamo prisoners into a different sort of artificial person. Not being American citizens, they are not protected by our laws, and not being captured uniformed combatants, they are not prisoners of war protected by the Geneva Conventions. So what are they? They are foreign nationals in some kind of limbo category called "terrorists" even though many of them were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time, or turned in by somebody else for the reward. I remember that about five years ago, the military released several prisoners from Guantanamo that were young teenagers and old toothless men who had been caught in the net. How do we know they are terrorists unless there is some kind of official proceeding with evidence? Holding them for years without any sort of adjudication is absurd and worthy of a regime like Stalin's. The right of habeas corpus began many centuries in English law. I don't think that the United States is served by being stingy with basic legal rights now recognized across the world. ---Coralie Koonce

EDUCATION IN HUMAN RIGHTS
EMBREY HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM AT SMU (2006-)
$1 million for the first four years to fund student scholarships, travel, and course development. In 2010 $390,000 added for two more years. Focus esp. on past hr abuses to create socially responsible global citizens by learning through history. The program in 2010 had 70 courses and 179 students preparing fora human rights minor

THREE GLOBAL CASES: Lianhai, Thalib, Philippines

**Chinese 'Toxic Milk Father' Zhao Lianhai Jailed For Food Safety Protests**

**CHRISTOPHER BODEEN** 11/10/10 11:05 AM ET  Associated Press

Get World Alerts

BEIJING — A father who organized a support group for other parents whose children were sickened in one of China's worst food safety scandals was convicted and sentenced Wednesday to 2 1/2 years in prison for inciting social disorder, his lawyer said.

Zhao Lianhai had pushed for greater official accountability and compensation for victims and their families after the 2008 scandal that shocked China. His sentence appeared particularly severe because the case related to a public safety incident that the embarrassed leadership had pledged to tackle in a bid to restore consumer confidence.

"We'd expected it to be much less than that. It is such a harsh sentence," lawyer Li Fangping said. "The crimes he was accused of were nothing more than what regular citizens would do
to defend their rights."

Zhao, a Beijing resident whose young son was among the nearly 300,000 children sickened by melamine-tainted milk, vowed to appeal and began a hunger strike to protest the verdict, Li said.

Zhao set up an online forum to share information about the poisonings in 2008 after his son, then 3, was diagnosed with kidney stones.

"When he heard that his sentence was two and a half years, he was appalled, and he pushed away a sign that was in front of him, and said, 'I'm not guilty. I want to appeal.' He tried to remove his prison uniform, and refused to be handcuffed," Li said.

Amnesty International condemned the sentence.

"We are appalled that the authorities have imprisoned a man the Chinese public rightly view as a protector of children, not a criminal," said Catherine Baber, the human rights group's Asia-Pacific deputy director.

Zhao, a former reporter and media advertising salesman, has been jailed since he was taken away by police in November 2009.

His sentence appears to be part of a trend of growing intolerance for government critics and independent social activists. Environmentalists, AIDS activists and lawyers who took on sensitive cases have disappeared, been locked up, or otherwise harassed, while this year's Nobel Peace Prize recipient, dissident writer Liu Xiaobo, is serving an 11-year prison sentence for subversion handed down after he co-authored a call for widespread reform of the authoritarian, one-party political system.

Li said prosecutors leveled three charges against Zhao: That he organized a gathering of a dozen parents of sick children at a restaurant, held a paper sign in front of a court and factory involved in the scandal as a protest, and gave media interviews in a public place.

Six children died and hundreds of thousands were sickened by baby formula tainted with melamine, which can cause kidney stones and kidney failure. The industrial chemical, used in the manufacture of plastics and fertilizer, was added to watered-down milk to increase profits and fool inspectors testing for protein.

Several dairy industry figures were prosecuted and punished, including three people given the
death penalty.

The general manager and chairwoman of Sanlu, the company at the heart of the scandal, was given a life sentence. Dozens of officials, dairy executives and farmers have been punished for allowing the contamination to take place.

November 09, 2010

Widow of Poisoned Indonesian Human Rights Activist Munir Calls on Indonesia To Hold His Killers Responsible

We look at the case of Munir Thalib, an Indonesian human rights activist and a prominent critic of the Indonesian government and military. He was poisoned to death aboard a flight to Holland in September 2004. An off-duty pilot was found guilty for his death, but prosecutors ignored the findings of an independent investigation that pointed to the involvement of Indonesia’s State Intelligence Agency. We speak with his widow, Suciwati Munir, who has led the struggle for justice in her husband’s murder.

East Timor and Indonesian Action Network, John Miller
Allan Nairn, www.allanairn.com
Leahy Law: No financial support to countries with atrocious military.

U.S. Lifts Ban on Training Indonesian Special Forces Unit

(from Democracy Now July 23, 1010)

The Obama administration has lifted a twelve-year-old ban on the training of the notorious Indonesian military unit known as Kopassus. Defense Secretary Robert Gates made the announcement in Jarkata after meeting with Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyon. Gates said the lifting of the ban does not "signal any lessening of the importance we place on human rights and accountability." But the move has been condemned by many human rights groups. John Miller is the national coordinator of the East Timor & Indonesia Action Network.

John Miller: "Kopassus is Indonesia’s notorious special forces. Any of the major events of the last 30, 40, 50 years in Indonesia, human rights violations by the Indonesian military from
Suharto’s seizure of power in 1965 to the invasion and occupation of East Timor to ongoing conflict in West Papua, Kopassus troops have been among the leading human rights violators."

John Miller went on to say resumed U.S. training of Kopassus would violate the Leahy Law, which prohibits military assistance to units with unresolved human rights violations.

**John Miller**: "The Bush administration which had raised the issue of training Kopassus a few years ago, even their State Department said it would violate the Leahy law. What has change in the last two years is not clear to us."

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**HUMAN RIGHTS STRUGGLE IN PHILIPPINES**

From: KARAPATAN Public Information <karapatan.pid@gmail.com>  
Subject: [Karapatan HR update] MEDIA RELEASE: Govt must initiate prosecution proceedings vs. GMA, cohorts -- HR Defenders, victims of HRVs and their kin  
To:  
Date: Monday, June 28, 2010, 12:34 AM

PRESS STATEMENT – 28 June 2010  
Reference: Marie Hilao-Enriquez, Chairperson  
Human Rights Defenders, Families of Victims of Human Rights Violations  
Call on the 15th President to Render Justice to the Victims of HR Violations by initiating prosecution proceedings against GMA and cohorts  

Today, as the country prepares for the inauguration of the 15th President of the Republic, Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III, the human rights watchdog, KARAPATAN, together with the organization of families of victims of human rights violations Hustisya, Desaparecidos and SELDA appealed to the President-elect to give flesh to his promise of ‘daang matuwid (an honest, straight path)’ in his campaign platform by holding accountable with committing human rights violations the just-finished Arroyo administration and institute prosecution proceedings against her and the identified state security perpetrators of these crimes.  
"We ask P-Noy to carve a different path from previous administrations after Marcos, including her mother, President Cory, in rendering justice to victims of human rights violations by using the government
machineries and resources to prosecute perpetrators of torture, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and other human rights violations. We human rights defenders and families of victims ask this of him so that we can start, as a nation, the fight against impunity and corruption,” thus, appealed Karapatan Chairperson Marie Hilao-Enriquez. “This way too, a national political will to go after human rights violators will be demonstrated to the victims and the public; a clear signal to the perpetrators will be delivered,”

Enriquez further added.

The KARAPATAN Chairperson said that the human rights alliance, has noted that administrative as well as criminal cases have been filed against known or identified violators and the organization hopes that these cases will now assume a faster process in the courts for resolutions that will lead to the conviction of perpetrators.

‘Aside from government filing of charges against GMA, our organizations are ready to file cases against her here and abroad. Our lawyers are now preparing for this eventuality as we bid farewell to a hated Arroyo administration,” declared Enriquez. “On June 30, 2010, as soon as Arroyo exits as the President of this Republic, we are ready with the lawsuits that we will file against her in Philippine courts,” added Karapatan’s Chairperson.

Karapatan asserts that rendering justice to victims of human rights violations must be a top priority of any new administration. Rendering justice means prosecuting and punishing the guilty parties in these violations, indemnifying the victims; declaring a promise not to do similar transgressions again. Thus, Karapatan also strongly urges the Aquino administration to scrap the Oplan Bantay Laya and desist from implementing a similar counter-insurgency campaign. Thus, healing the nation can start on this affirmative action in favor of the victims and not on the elite rhetoric of reconciliation that only means forgetting the sins of the past and giving political accommodations to former erring officials.

The “daang matuwid” referred by P-Noy in his campaign sorties can thus be given substantive meaning in rendering justice to victims of human rights violations in this manner. JUSTICE TO VICTIMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS! PROSECUTE THE GMA REGIME FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS!

28 June 2010
Reference: Evangeline Hernandez (09158562151) – Spokesperson/Convener (Hustisya)

Hustisya to Aquino: Justice & human rights should be priority agenda too

In a press conference today by Karapatan and the victims’ organizations of Hustisya or Victims of the Arroyo Regime United for Justice, the Desaparecidos or Families of the Disappeared for Justice, and SELDA or the organization of former political prisoners; Hustisya spokesperson, Evangeling Hernandez expressed the families’
continuing desire to achieve justice for their loved ones under the incoming Aquino administration.

“We have had enough of Arroyo and her implementation of the anti-insurgency program Oplan Bantay Laya (OBL) 1 and 2, which brought pain and wrought havoc on our lives.” Hernandez declared, “What we want is genuine justice and we bring our plea to President Noynoy Aquino, as he assumes office as Chief Executive on June 30, 2010: aside from the eradication of corruption, please include justice and human rights part of your priority agenda, too.”

The mother of Benjaline Hernandez, a former student journalist and human rights worker killed in April 2002 in Mindanao under the Arroyo regime, Mrs. Hernandez expressed her frustration and the difficulties families of victims of human rights violations like them had to endure under the outgoing administration.

“For more than nine years, families of victims of the atrocities of the Gloria Arroyo regime suffered in dealing with the deaths, disappearance, torture and incarceration of their loved ones. They even had to face security concerns just so their families can feel safe again, despite harassments by state forces; In the process they left their homes, left their livelihood and their children’s schooling interrupted; moreover, they had to suffer being accused of being uncooperative by those who pretend to look into their cases when in fact they lack action or are not acting on them.” Hernandez, said.

The human rights group Hustisya most especially cited the dismissal of strong cases like those of Eden Marcellana and Eddie Gumanoy, by the Department of Justice in 2004; the acquittal of Aniano “Silver” Flores in the murder of Choy Napoles in 2002 and with the release on bail of TSgt. Antonio Torilla, one of the perpetrators in the killing of Benjaline Hernandez who was massacred together with three other human rights volunteers in 2002, as well as the dismissal of several other respondents in the case.

“We want to move forward, but are chained into snail-paced court processes; fear for our lives due to threats by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the continuing implementation of Oplan Bantay Laya,” the disappointed mother turned human rights defender said. But despite her frustration, Hernandez promised one thing, that the aggrieved families like her’s will now, more than ever, persevere into pushing for the filing of more cases as well as the review of past cases forcibly buried into oblivion by the different courts and government agencies to ensure that Arroyo will be punished.

“Especially now,” she continued, “Paalis na lang siya, marami pa din silang pinapatay (She’s already on the exit, yet many are still being killed).”

Hernandez pointed to the three cases of killings in June alone – that of Edward Panganiban, a labor leader who was shot and killed in Laguna on June 2; the murder of two peasants Julito Etang and Borromeo Cabilis who were abducted on June 1 then their corpses found two days later in Mobo, Masbate and the killing of Benjamin Bayles, a
human rights worker from Negros Occidental on June 14. Bringing to 1, 206 the total of extrajudicial killings documented by Karapatan as Arroyo’s regime comes to a close. Three other journalists were slain in a span of five days – Desiderio Camangyan of Davao Oriental killed on June 14; Joselito Agustin also shot and killed in Ilocos Norte on June 16 and Nestor Bedolido, silenced on June 19 in Digos City, Davao del Sur.

“Arroyo is ruthless and we will not allow her to leave unscathed or unpunished,” Mrs. Evan Hernandez said further indicating that the families are hungry for justice, “We will not be deterred nor will we allow continued impunity to stop us,” she concluded. ###

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KARAPATAN is an alliance of human rights organizations and programs, human rights desks and committees of people’s organizations, and individual advocates committed to the defense and promotion of people’s rights and civil liberties. It monitors and documents cases of human rights violations, assists and defends victims and conducts education, training and campaign. It was established in 1995. ARAPATAN Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights