

Dear Friends,

Warm greetings!

As part of the campaigns for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence, we are launching a petition letter to demand action from the Philippine government to stop the atrocities against women and stop the use of rape as a tool of war against the people.

In the course of the implementation of Philippine Pres. Benigno Aquino III's counter-insurgency program Operation Plan Bayanihan, massive deployment of military personnel in the communities nationwide has further opened the doors for the escalation of human rights violations. There is an alarming rise of violent attacks on women and girls in areas where military personnel are deployed. The GABRIELA Alliance of Filipino Women have documented at least seven (7) cases of abuse, ranging from sexual harassment, rape and gang rape by Armed Forces of the Philippines regular units and its paramilitary wing the Citizens Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) over the past two years of the Aquino administration.

The incidence of rape in the Philippines is indeed alarming. But this situation is being exacerbated when the supposed protector of human rights -- the state machinery such as the military, police and its auxiliary armed groups, is directly involved as perpetrators.

We therefore demand that Pres. Aquino, as commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, to stop the lies, direct his state security forces to stop their attacks on Filipino women and girls, and stop cuddling these new breed of post-Palparan butchers and rapists. Holding the perpetrators of sexual abuse from the ranks of the military and police accountable for their gruesome actions is one step towards ending impunity and bringing justice to the hapless victims.

You can support this call by signing the attached petition letter. Upon signing, you may return the letter to us on or before December 10, or send it directly to the Office of the President, Secretary of the Department of Justice and the Armed Forces of the Philippines. We also hope that you can distribute this to your network so that we can gather more signatures.

We are also attaching the brief backgrounds about the cases.

In solidarity,

Malen

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GABRIELA is a grassroots-based alliance of more than 200 women's organizations, institutions, desks and programs in the Philippines. We seek to wage a struggle for the liberation of women and the rest of our people.

Summary of cases of military and police abuse against Filipino women

Mutya, 17 years old

October 16, 2011 was the first anniversary of the 16th IB Philippine Army Camp at Baras Rizal. Mutya, then 17 years old, was invited to the said anniversary by PFC Alexander Barsaga along with her two friends. They were fetched from their homes by 3pm, when they arrived at the camp they were given cakes and water for snack. After eating they mysteriously have fallen asleep. When they woke up, Mutya and the others were brought to their house at 7pm. Mutya's grandmother noticed that she acts differently, staring blankly and didn't want to eat. The following day she started acting violently, screaming "ALEXANDER BARSAGA YOU'RE UNDER ARREST, CHILD ABUSE, BUKAS PUPUGUTAN KA NA NG ULO!" (Alexander Barsaga, you are under arrest for child abuse, tomorrow you will be beheaded!), doesn't want to sleep and singing by herself. The family brought her to a "faith healer" first then to the National Center for Mental Health wherein the attending psychiatrist said that she has signs of being raped. When the family was able to acquire a medico legal report from Camp Crame, they immediately filed a case of Qualified Rape in Relation to Child Abuse against the three suspects namely PFC Alexander Barsaga, PVT. Rocky Domingo, Jr. and PFC Ronnie Castro, all members of the 16th IB. The case is currently on trial, despite this, the family experiences harassments, and is offered bribes from the families of the accused and Mutya is still in need of continuous psychotherapy and medication.

Elaine, 13 years old

Elaine was only 13 years old when she got pregnant. When her mother asked about it, Elaine admitted that Amado Balmes, her uncle a member of the 4th Batangas Civillian Armed Forces Geographical Unit or CAFGU had been sexually abusing her since the age of 8. Because of his position, other people in the community is afraid of him including Elaine's brothers who actually saw incidents of her being abused years ago but couldn't respond out of fear. The family immediately went to the Police Station in Lobo, Batangas and filed a case of rape against the accused last June 1, 2011. However, the complaint was dismissed by Asst. Provincial Prosecutor Ma. Antonette Capuno-Beloso last October 18, 2011 due to "insufficient evidence". The family filed a motion for reconsideration but it was dismissed after one month. They filed a case at the Department of Justice and were granted a change of trial venue. They are waiting for the Resolution from San Pablo, Laguna Hall of Justice. Currently, Elaine is in need of psychotherapy due to trauma but is having difficulty in accessing free medical services due to financial constraints.

Rose, 14 years old

Rose is a 14-year old high school student from Muntinlupa. Last June 28, 2012 at 4pm while entering the communal bathroom, her distant uncle Valeriano L. Masaglang Jr, a military student in a camp at Tanay Rizal, Camp Capinpin also entered the bathroom and pushed her inside. He raped her at gunpoint and threatened to kill her parents if she screams. The rape stopped when they heard her uncle was knocking at the bathroom and looking for her. The accused ordered Rose to put on her clothes and pushed her outside. When they got out of the bathroom, her parents were outside and shocked. She couldn't stop crying and told her aunt what happened. They immediately went to the police but she lost consciousness and decided to bring her to the Philippine General Hospital

where she was confined for three days. While waiting for her to get well and processing their evidences such as the medico legal report, the family received harassments that they have no evidence against the suspect and should just settle the case outside of court. Other people introducing themselves as relatives of the accused and working for the police also harassed them, cajoling them to settle the case. When Rose's uncle was arrested illegally, her family immediately filed their complaint against the suspect last July 28, 2012. Their case is currently pending at the prosecutor's office and waiting for resolution. Rose drop out of high school because of the case and has an undiagnosed pain in the abdomen and is having recurring urinary tract infection.

Isabel and Katrina, 16-year old

On the afternoon of February 20, "Isabel" went home to her parents' house looking disoriented and was having a hard time walking. She has been missing for three days. While she rested, her sister investigated through her things and found a box of Mister Donut, a kilo of pork, a brand new cellphone, a 1,000 Peso bill and a military poncho (raincoat) in Isabel's bag. When Isabel went to school two days later for her graduation practice, the teachers observed her unusual behavior. Her sister confronted her and Isabel confessed that on February 17, she was taken by a Captain Danilo Lalin a.k.a. Vince Valdez in a military camp in Ifugao and then raped her. He was a boyfriend of her highschool friend. Upon recounting the details, her sister noticed the lapses and gaps and Isabel seemed to be dazed and is having difficulty recounting the incident. Her family brought her to the Mankayan Municipal Police Office Station and to Benguet General Hospital and was found positive for rape and fungal infection, however based from the degree of vaginal laceration, the medico legal officer suggested the possibility that she was gang raped. She was also diagnosed as mentally depressed.

Katrina, also 16 years old, is a friend of Isabel and a victim of rape. Last 2011 Katrina was courted by Captain Lalin whom she met though texting. When they finally met in November, "Vince Valdez" then revealed that his real name was Captain Danilo Lalin of the Highlander 86, 50th Infantry Battalion in Mankayan, Benguet. Capt. Lalin carried on intimate relationship with "Katrina". When "Katrina's" family forbade her from seeing Lalin, she began acting up, skipping classes and lying about her whereabouts. She said Lalin promised her marriage. But on February, Lalin began courting "Isabel".

Mankayan is a highly militarized community because of the presence of mining companies and strong community resistance against mining and militarization.

Vanessa, 30 years old

On December 31, 2010, around 5:00 a.m. Vanessa, a 30-year old vendor was waiting in Carriedo area in Sta. Cruz, Manila for her husband who went looking for coffee, they were actually on their way to the church. While waiting, a uniformed police named PO3 Antonio Bautista of Manila Police District who was with another man on a shirt printed with "Press" stopped in front of her.

The man on white shirt told her to come with them to the Police Station for she's being arrested for vagrancy with the rest of other women. Reaching MPD HQ, she was led to Integrity Task Force Office, MPD's section assigned in investigating erring cops. Inside, PO3 Bautista took her P4,000.00 cash and raped her, and was told to remain quiet so as not to "wake up the Colonel". Her husband arrived looking for her and they left the MPD. Hours later they returned to the MPD HQ at UN Avenue to file a complaint and later had a medico legal examination. The case was dismissed last August 23, 2012 due to insufficient evidence under Judge Jaime Santiago of Manila RTC Branch 3. Despite their case being dismissed the couple tried to make their life normal by making their living as a vendor, however they are having great difficulty because they still receive death threats from the accused.

Rose, 15 years old

On June 21, 2011, Rose, 15 years old, was brought to the barangay hall of Barangay 637, San Miguel, Manila by Chairman Angelo Murillo for allegedly violating the city-imposed curfew for minors. But then, Murillo later told her that he will introduce her to people from whom she could earn money and pimped her to members of the PSG. She was brought inside the PSG barracks inside the Malacanang compound and was later raped by PSG S/Sgt Walter Candelaria and another civilian. After the incident she was allowed to return home and she went to Barangay Councilor Angelina Marzan who accompanied her to the police station. The victim and her father, a tricycle driver filed a case of anti-trafficking and child abuse against the accused. The case is still pending and Rose is staying at DSWD for her security.

President Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III

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**JUSTICE FOR ALL VICTIMS OF MILITARY SEXUAL ABUSE!
END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN!**

STOP MILITARIZATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN THE PHILIPPINES!

We, women from different countries around the world, would like to call your attention on the cases of sexual abuse against women and girls living in militarized areas in the Philippines, committed no less by the Philippine military personnel under your command. As the commander-in-chief, we demand that you take immediate and necessary action, by ordering the immediate, thorough and fair investigation on these cases and ensuring that perpetrators are punished.

Over the past two years of your administration, the GABRIELA Alliance of Filipino Women documented at least seven (7) cases of abuse, ranging from sexual harassment, rape and gang rape by the Armed Forces of the Philippines' regular units and its paramilitary wing the Citizens Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU).

One of these cases involves an alleged gang rape committed by elements of the 16th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army stationed in Baras, Rizal Province. The victim, a 16-year old girl, and her friends were invited to a party celebrating the unit's anniversary. According to their recollections, they might have been drugged and abused by several soldiers led by a certain Alexander Barsaga. The victim eventually became mentally ill, and her family, who pressed charges against the alleged perpetrators, is now being alternately harassed and cajoled with offers of cash settlement to pressure them into withdrawing the case.

Another case is that of a 13-year old girl who was raped and impregnated by her uncle, a member of the paramilitary Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) in Lobo, Batangas Province last year. Later on, her sisters reported that they have witnessed how she has been being molested since the age of 8, but did not report the incidents out of fear that he would use his CAFGU affiliation to harm them and to get the case dismissed. The GABRIELA chapter in Southern Tagalog is also looking for a missing 15-year old girl, believed to be held in a military camp in Catanauan, Quezon Province.

May we remind your administration's obligation to ensure the fulfillment, promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls as stated in Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW), the Optional Protocol thereto, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol thereto, which the Philippines has all signed and ratified, as well as your obligations under the United Nations Security Resolution 1820 on sexual violence against civilians in conflict and post-conflict zones. It is thus your responsibility to ensure that any such violations of these conventions should be punished because you are answerable not only to the Filipino people but also to the rest of the world.

These continuing violations of women's and human rights belie the pronouncements of Philippine Army Chief Lt. Gen. Emmanuel Bautista that the military is seriously addressing human rights problems after the reign of terror sowed by fugitive retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan. It is clear from the growing incidences of military depredations against women and girls that the military's counterinsurgency mindset of inflicting terror on civilians is operational and deeply ingrained in your administration's *Oplan Bayanihan* counterinsurgency campaign.

Rape is already a grave crime. The incidence of rape in the Philippines is indeed alarming. But this situation is being exacerbated when the supposed protector of human rights -- the state machinery such as the military, police and its auxiliary armed groups, is directly involved as perpetrators.

We call on you, as commander-in-chief of the AFP, to stop the lies and command your new breed of post-Palparan butchers and rapists to stop their attacks on Filipino women and girls. Punishing all perpetrators of sexual abuse from the ranks of military and police personnel is one step forward to end impunity in human rights violations.

As the President of your people, to whom you have sworn to serve, it is your duty to protect the rights of the most vulnerable members of the population especially women and children against all kinds of abuse.

As part of the international community committed to protecting and promoting the rights of women and children, we call on you to do your duty to ensure that perpetrators of military sexual abuses be made responsible and justice be delivered to the victims and their families.

SIGNED:

Name:

Designation/Position:

Organization:

Address/Country: