

An Overview

**LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT  
AND TRADE UNION REPRESSION  
IN THE PHILIPPINES**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	3
Repression and Human Rights	
Violations in the Philippine	
Labor Movement.....	4
A. Luzon .....	5
B. National Capital Region (NCR) .....	8
C. Visayas .....	10
D. Mindanao .....	13
Conclusion .....	15
Regional Distribution of	
Cases/Victims.....	17
CAFGU: Umbrella of Paramilitary	
Terrorism .....	18

**Cover:** *Nestle workers in Cagayan de Oro City raise their defiant fists as soldiers haul them to prison following the violent dispersal of their picketline.*

## INTRODUCTION

In June, 1988, President Corazon Aquino spoke before the delegates of the 75th International Labor Organization (ILO) Annual Conference and mouthed how her administration is protecting the interests of Filipino workers. But while she made her speech, leaders of the KMU, who were barred by the Aquino government from attending as delegates to the conference, presented the grim picture of labor repression in the Philippines, outside the ILO session halls.

The KMU, on March, 1988, had filed a complaint to the ILO against rampant violations of trade union and human rights under the Aquino administration. The complaint embodied over 1,000 cases of labor repression committed in just two years of Aquino in power. The government, however, sneered at the complaint saying it was a "black propaganda" aimed to discredit the Aquino administration.

But after almost a year, the KMU's struggle against labor repression was vindicated when the ILO Governing Body joined other critical local and international organizations in deploring the increasing anti-union violence in the Philippines. It also asked the Aquino government to "adopt vigorous measures" to disband vigilante groups.

The KMU lauded the ILO recommendations as a positive development in support of the Filipino workers' struggle against the US-sponsored Low Intensity Conflict or total war policy of the Aquino government. It believes, however, that repression in the Philippines would still continue unless a storm of local and international pressure is exerted for the government to comply with the ILO recommendations and end its total war policy.

Actually, the KMU has filed new evidences on the rising trend of repression in the Philippines with the ILO on March 13, 1989. This booklet was based on those documents presented covering the period from February, 1988 to January, 1989.

Through this booklet we hope that readers would realize the life and death struggle of the Filipino workers to end repression. We also hope that this would bring about an intensified international support in the interest of genuine justice, peace, freedom and people's development.

KMU INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT  
March, 1989

## REPRESSION AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINE LABOR MOVEMENT

The Filipinos are perhaps one of the lowest paid workers in Asia. With a minimum wage of US \$ 2.9 per day, which is often ignored by the employers than implemented Filipino workers could hardly make it against the increasing daily cost of living in the country that is pegged at US \$ 8.00 (UP School of Labor and Industrial Relations, January, 1989) to be at the poverty line. But mounting clamor for genuine concern to address the widespread deprivation of the workers remain unheard.

The government instead, declared war on the workers. President Corazon Aquino made her anti-labor policy clear in her October 22, 1987 speech before the business leaders where she ordered the dismantling of all picketlines and strict implementation of the deposed dictator Marcos' anti-labor laws such as BP 130 and BP 227. From then on, calls for wage increases, strikes against unfair labor practices and other labor-related issues had been systematically countered with force. This reality indicates that the Aquino government is not better, but even worse than the Marcos dictatorship which it replaced.

Last year the KMU presented more than 1,000 documented cases of trade union repression with the ILO. In 1988, the non-governmental Commission on Trade Union and Human Rights recorded a total of 325 cases of trade union repression, in addition to the 1,159 cases documented from 1986 to 1987. More so, these cases showed the various methods use to repress labor, which is becoming more vicious and violent than before. There is an obvious pattern of mobilizing vigilante groups and paramilitary groups (Alsa Masa, NAKASAKA, Tadtad, KADRE and others) in picketline dispersals, harassments, forced disaffiliation and union-busting.

In the Philippine experience, vigilante is taken to mean as an organization of armed civilians banded together for purpose of counter-insurgency. Even some religious fanatical and bandit groups are included in this category. These groups began to emerge shortly after President Aquino declared Total War on insurgents followed by the intensification of military operations in the country. Many vigilante groups have become notorious for harassing, torturing and executing peasants, workers, youth and urban poor whom they considered as targets in their counter-insurgency operations. Despite confirmed reports of these repressive acts, some government and military officials, including President Aquino, continue to promote and support vigilante groups.

The use of these groups is widely regarded as part of the US-sponsored Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) strategy that is directed not only against national liberation movements, but also at grassroots progressive organizations, like genuine trade unions, in the Philippines.

The escalation of trade union repression in the Philippines is basically aimed to bust, if not to outlaw and annihilate genuine and militant unionism in the country. This government policy is reflected in the statement made by General Fortunato Abat, Deputy Secretary of National

Defense. In his speech before businessmen last November 9, 1988, Abat threatened to outlaw KMU and other progressive sectoral organizations. Thus, it is not uncommon to see business, military, vigilantes and government officials conniving with each other in attacking unions, particularly those perceived to be militant. Their efforts are also evident in the perpetuation of Marcos-era anti-labor laws and in endorsing recently approved repressive laws, notably the Herrera Bill now signed by the President as the new Labor Code (R.A. 6715), and the "Kalakalan ng 20" bill which provides further incentives to businessmen.

These are all being carried out by the government in the name of "campaign for industrial peace towards national stability." That is, the subverting of labor demands in favor of capital, and the whiplashing of labor for capital's pleasure. This necessitates the unleashing of Total War which is the Low Intensity Conflict strategy at the grassroots. Through this, the Aquino government hopes to contain labor militancy to ensure a free and unhampered profit-making venture for foreign and big local business in the country and to induce more foreign investors to exploit cheap Filipino labor, in compliance with the dictations of the IMF-World Bank.

The indiscriminate use of force by the government to suppress workers' economic and political demands has resulted to a grim state of the labor movement in the country. Repression becomes widespread which affect not only the physical well being of the workers, but also their freedom to organize and be involved in trade union and political activities. These constitute outright violation of the ILO Conventions, notably Convention No. 87 on the freedom of association, which the Philippine government is a signatory. Furthermore, the Aquino government, in carrying out its war on labor and on the entire Filipino masses, violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As observed by respected international human rights groups such as the Amnesty International (AI) and the Asian Human Rights Organizations, the Aquino government has committed grave violations of the people's basic rights.

The following pages will show the picture of repression in the Philippines.

### A. LUZON

Luzon is the biggest island located in the north of Philippine archipelago. It is generally divided into different regions namely: Northern Luzon, Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog region. (The National Capital Region, though also a part of Luzon, will be presented separately.)

President Aquino's declaration of Total War has intensified militarization in these regions as manifested in the rapid emergence of vigilante groups, as well as in the deployment of military troops. Along with this widespread militarization of Luzon comes the escalation of repression in the region. Records of the non-governmental Commission on Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR) showed that 11 percent of the victims of

trade union repression monitored nationwide are found in Luzon in 1988. This figure represents only a small fraction of the abuses against workers considering the difficulty in monitoring cases of repression in the regions.

Documented cases of repression against workers in Luzon include the following: 35 workers arrested, 3 massacred, 1 killed in picketline, 1 missing, and 12 summarily executed or salvaged.

A recent example of atrocities committed against workers was the killing of Meliton Roxas last January 20, 1989 by suspected vigilantes. Roxas was the president of the United Filipino Employees (UFE) union in the Nestle factory in Cabuyao, Laguna in Southern Tagalog region. He was one of the 70 union officers terminated by Nestle management for leading a strike in Cabuyao last September 11, 1987, in support of the general strike on all Nestle factories in the Philippines to protest unfair labor practice.

Circumstances surrounding Roxas' death indicate that his execution was "well financed, highly sophisticated and politically motivated." Workers widely believed that his death was related to the long drawn labor dispute in Nestle.

The killing of Roxas is actually just the latest attack against UFE. Since their strike in 1987, their picketlines in different branches of Nestle were repeatedly dismantled by military and company-hired goons, with the tacit approval of the Department of Labor and Employment, leaving many strikers injured and many others arrested and detained.

The increasing role of military and vigilantes in labor disputes have not only brought physical repression among workers, but their operations in the guise of counter-insurgency have also caused psychological harassments to trade unionists. For example, the workers in five factories located in the industrial site in Bagong Bayan, Cavite (40 kms. south of Manila) have complained against the deployment of a platoon of soldiers near their workplaces last January 22, 1989. Soldiers from the 73rd Philippine Constabulary (PC) Battalion said they put up a detachment there as part of counter-insurgency operations. In a meeting between the military and union leaders last January 5, which was also attended by the Bagong Bayan parish priest Fr. Reyes, the workers demanded the pull-out of the soldiers from the area because their presence create undue tension and a climate of fear. Prior to the arrival of military, the workers reported that Governor Remulla of Cavite organized a march-rally around Bagong Bayan denouncing the unions which belong to the KMU as "communist."

A more heinous example of repression involving military occurred on May 1, 1988. That day, soldiers from 224th PC Company under Capt. Reynaldo Lanada opened fire at 7,000 workers celebrating Labor Day at Crossing, Calamba, Laguna (45 kms. south of Manila). Four workers suffered gunshot wounds while 200 marchers were injured in that frustrated massacre. Jaime Pabula, a worker from Sunripe Inc. in Magdalena, Laguna was seriously wounded and underwent a major surgery. The organized Labor Day rally had a permit from the mayor of Calamba but the soldiers did not honor it and violently dispersed the workers.

This incident was condemned by trade unionists abroad, but Presi-

dent Aquino simply responded by saying that the report on the frustrated massacre was "an exaggeration".

Aside from militarization, residents of Southern Tagalog are threatened with the proliferation of vigilante groups. The Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP) identified some of these groups which, it said, had either direct supervision or support from the military. The Solo Brothers, a vigilante group, is armed by the 312nd army brigade and local officials in Quezon, TFDP said. Another group, Doce Pares, which started in Bicol but is now based in Quezon and Laguna was reportedly armed with high-powered rifles, and is notorious for kidnappings, robberies, and harassments. These are part of the 42 vigilante groups in Southern Tagalog that serve as frontliners of military in counter-insurgency operations.

In Central Luzon, meanwhile, vigilante groups are also very active in fulfilling their part in counter-insurgency campaigns which victims are mostly peasants and workers. According to TFDP, there are at least 15 identified vigilante groups operating in the region. Included in these is the Angelino Simbulan Brigade which is suspected to have abducted two KMU organizers, Simplicio Anino and Raul Quiroz, last August 22, 1988. Anino, a member of the Association of Nationalist and Genuine Labor Organizations (ANGLO-KMU), and Quiroz, general secretary of Bukluran ng Manggagawa sa Pampanga, were travelling in a passenger jeep when armed men stopped them and took them away. Later, Quiroz was reportedly seen being taken to a house in San Vicente, Angeles City. Residents say that the house is regularly used by armed men believed to be members of vigilante groups operating in the city. The case was also documented by Amnesty International in its 1988 report.

A letter from Angeles City mayor, Antonio Abad Santos, who responded to numerous appeals to locate the two unionists said that his "efforts have been futile" and added that the prospects for recovering bodies of missing persons seemed dim.

In Bataan, another province in Central Luzon, most of the municipalities are now under military control. According to the TFDP, paramilitary forces such as the Integrated Civilian Home Defense Force (ICHDF) and armed vigilantes continue to operate along side with military. They can be found in towns of Bagac, Morong, Hermosa, Orani, Balanga, Marivelez, and Samal. Most victims of human rights violations in Bataan are peasants, according to the TFDP, since the town is basically agricultural. However, in towns like Marivelez where an export processing zone (BEPZ) is located, workers are also victimized by militarization. Not too long ago, officers of Bataan Labor Alliance (AMBA-BALA) complained about the presence of the 24th Infantry Battalion inside BEPZ, since January 22, 1989.

The military claims that its operation in Bataan is necessary even if it results to violations of human rights due to the insurgency situation in the area. In fact, this was the same logic they used in stopping and searching the participants of the Asia-Pacific Peoples Conference on Peace and Development last January 19, 1989. The peace activists which include workers and peasants, as well as foreign participants went to

Central Luzon to protest the presence of US military bases in that region. However, their caravan was delayed due to numerous roadblocks and military checkpoints along their route.

Militarization and vigilantism are also being experienced by miners in Central Luzon. They complained that the presence of military in the mines are causing fear among workers. The miners, such as those in Acoje mines in Zambales believes that this is aimed at harassing workers from joining militant unions like the KMU. This is basically brought about by the red-scare hysteria propagated by the government in line with its implementation of LIC.

## B. NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION (NCR)

The National Capital Region (NCR) or Metro Manila is composed of 4 cities (Manila, Quezon City, Pasay, and Kalookan) and 13 municipalities (Valenzuela, Malabon, Navotas, Marikina, Pasig, San Juan, Mandaluyong, Makati, Paranaque, Las Pinas, Muntinlupa, Taguig and Pateros). The NCR is the country's center of trade, commerce and industry as well as the seat of the government.

Of a population of about 7.6 million, 3 million are in the labor force of which 82 per cent are in different factories, offices, service industries, and/or self-employed. Around 55 per cent of the country's organized labor force can be found in NCR (Department of Labor and Employment, January, 1989).

Since most of the strategic and biggest industries in the country are located in Metro Manila spawning large concentration of workers and subsequently trade unions, a large proportion of trade union and human rights violations committed against the workers were recorded in the National Capital Region. The victims of abuses in NCR monitored in 1988 account for 52 per cent of the total number of victims monitored by the Commission on Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR) nationwide.

The forms of repression experienced by workers in the NCR varies but their degree of violence is as intense as that of other regions. For 1988, the CTUHR recorded a total of 165 workers arrested, 2 killed in picketlines, 5 disappeared, and 9 victims of frustrated massacre. Also included in their documentations are cases of militarization in workers' communities, torture, and surveillance. Perpetrators of these atrocities include different units of the Armed Forces of the Philippines including the Integrated National Police, company-hired goons, as well as vigilantes.

Trade union leaders are one of the favorite targets of assassinations and harassments considering the important role they have in organizing workers and in fighting for their rights. The most recent case of trade union-related murder was that of Ernesto Tullao who was killed by suspected company guards last January 26, 1989. Tullao was the vice-president of Samahan ng Manggagawa sa Hayahay union in Valenzuela who was very vocal and active in mobilizing its members to oppose the company's non-implementation of labor standards.

A strike is another occasion where the workers are susceptible to harassments and attacks which could result into injuries and even deaths.

A case of strike-related killing took place in Novaliches, Quezon City when company guards opened fire at picketing workers of Rewoodco furniture factory. A worker, Meliton Peru, was hit at the head and died hours later, while seven others sustained gunshot wounds in different parts of their body. Another strike at the same area at Johannesburg Packaging Corp., was attacked on November 6, 1988 by fully armed elements of the Northern Police District, injuring scores of workers. The hapless strikers, instead of being brought to the hospital for first aid and medical attention, were brought to prison where they were jailed for 3 to 50 days without charges.

Most victims of trade union repression are progressive and militant trade unionists. The Aquino government, to justify its Total War policy against progressive trade unions, has been attempting to link the KMU to the underground revolutionary movement and to the New People's Army (NPA). Numerous organizers and activists of the KMU were arrested, tortured, and harassed on charges ranging from assassination to inciting to sedition.

Ernesto Sarias, 30, married, organizer of ANGLO-KMU was nabbed by the elements of the Philippine Constabulary Investigation Service under Major Ruben Zacarias at Pandacan, Manila. Sarias was tortured and held incommunicado for two weeks since October 14, 1988 at Camp Crame Quezon City. Relatives of Sarias who were able to locate him said that he was tortured to make him admit participation in the ambush of Malabon Mayor Prospero Oreta and another military man in early 1988. The two were reportedly ambushed by urban partisans of the New People's Army.

Meanwhile, jeepney driver-leaders Medardo Roda and Deogracias Espiritu were arrested last November 21 and 23 respectively on charges of inciting to sedition. The two were among the leaders of the transport strike that paralyzed Metro Manila last November, 1988. The Western Police District which filed the case, qualified their acts as "sedition" in demanding "the lowering of prices of vehicular parts and prime commodities as well as electric and water bills."

Aside from the effects on the physical, moral and psychological integrity of the victims of repression, the legitimate activities of workers and trade unions are also greatly hampered. A case in point were the arrests of Rolando Adriano and Rene Cubilla, who are both members of Workers' Alliance in Malabon (AMMA-KMU) education committee. They were arrested by Valenzuela police for carrying "subversive materials, documents and paraphernalia." Cited as subversive materials are the KMU's standard books on Genuine Trade Unionism (GTU) and other political science books used as educational material as well as audio-visuals including a television and video cassette recorder and tapes on Nicaragua. The senseless labelling of KMU's educational manuals as subversive materials clearly demonstrates the ignorance of some government authorities on the rights of trade unions and underscores their vicious intent to declare activities of genuine trade unions illegal.

These arrests and harassments not only affect the workers' rights but could cut through the victims' personal life. One particular case is that

of unionist Nora Sioco who, together with Diosdado Justo, was arrested by Pasig police last June 27, 1988 on civil and criminal charges, arising from their strike in November, 1987. Sioco, who was five-month pregnant at the time of her arrest, gave birth prematurely on August 30 due to the mental anguish and unsanitary conditions of the jail. Before she gave birth, Sioco felt terribly ill and despite her pleadings, the police procrastinated before bringing her to the hospital. Sioco's child died three days later. Sioco lamented that, "What happened to me was the most horrible thing in my life and to my fellow workers."

As in other parts of the country, vigilante formations in NCR are already beginning to take its bloody effects on genuine labor organizations. In 1988, the Pasig Labor Alliance or ALMAPAS reported that police and military elements, together with management, in five factories in their area are starting to recruit some workers to form vigilante groups to harass KMU members active in their factories.

This recruitment process usually begins by inviting workers to seminars paid for and sanctioned by management. For instance, it was reported in Aris Clothing factory, also in Pasig, that workers who were then being organized by KMU were required to attend seminars. These seminars turned out to be anti-communist lectures conducted by military men and officials from CAUSA International, a right wing group actively supporting vigilantes. In the seminar the KMU was called a "communist front" and "agents of Satan".

Other vigilante groups namely KADRE, CRUSADERS and GUARDIAN, are being organized at San Miguel Corporation's Polo and Metal Closure plants, and B-Meg warehouses.

In Paranaque, a vigilante recruit at International Textile drew blood last October 20 when he shot and wounded Eduardo Nunez, a local union official, after a heated argument at the shopfloor.

Although not directly attributed to vigilantes, involuntary disappearance was reported in the same period. KMU staff Troy Clutario has been missing since July 31, 1989 after attending a meeting of the Labor Advisory and Consultative Council (LACC) outside Metro Manila.

### C. VISAYAS

The Visayas region is a cluster of six major islands in the Philippines: Panay, Negros, Cebu, Bohol, Leyte, and Samar. It is located in the central part of the archipelago, between the two biggest islands in the country - Luzon and Mindanao. The region's land area is approximately one-fourth of the country's total land area and comprises about one fourth of the country's 60 M population.

The Visayan economy is largely agricultural with sugar and coconut as the primary produce that are for export. All the six islands have large fishing grounds and forestry, and very rich in mineral resources, both metallic and non-metallic. In Cebu, there is the largest copper mines in Asia, the Atlas Consolidated Mining and Development Corporation (ACMDC). The biggest coal mine in Southeast Asia is located in the island of Semirara, Panay. According to the latest government survey, the

southern part of Negros has gold deposits, which is also the biggest in Asia. Bohol is the largest and most consistent producer of manganese in the country.

Ironically, the people in the Visayas are living in extreme poverty because of the unequal distribution of wealth, among others. In the Central and Eastern Visayas for instance, roughly more than half of the income of the area goes to the 25 percent elite only.

The region has 5.31 M labor force, of which 4.6 M are employed. According to the study of the Visayas Institute for Research and Trade Union Education (VIRTUE), a non-governmental labor research institute in the region, only 11 percent of the 1.5 M private sector wage-workers are organized.

For a long period, labor unions in the Visayas have been dominated by yellow or conservative unionism. Only at the beginning of the decade has the genuine trade unionism in the Visayas really took shape. But this development also marked the beginning of intensified labor repression in the region that continues to worsen under the Aquino administration.

The National Federation of Sugar Workers-Food and General Trades (NFSW-FGT), the Southern Philippines Federation of Labor (SPFL), and the Alliance of Workers in Cebu (AMA-SUGBO), all under the Kilusang Mayo Uno labor center, are the most affected labor groups in Visayas by this ongoing repression in the country.

In 1988, the CTUHR has documented 250 victims of trade union repression in the Visayas. However, cases of repression documented by the NFSW-FGT and other unions show a tremendous number of workers and their families victimized by militarization and vigilantism.

In Cebu, the labor union in Atlas mines, Panaghiusa sa Mamumuo sa Atlas (PAMA), an affiliate of SPFL-KMU, has been experiencing extreme repression from both the Atlas management and the government through the use of vigilantes. PAMA recorded a total of 42 cases of repression from January 1988 to January 1989 alone. Of these cases, 4 were killed, 5 were wounded in murder attempts and the rest involved strafing and death threats, all perpetrated by the KADRE vigilante group. Repression of workers in Atlas mines intensified after the KMU won the leadership of mine workers after the long years of domination by the Marcos-identified Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP). PAMA won the representation of the 10,000-strong workers in Atlas mines through a certification election held in 1985. With PAMA as the bargaining agent, the workers gained significant benefits among them: the regularization of 4,500 workers, increase in wages from P35 (\$1.5) to P75 (\$3.4), which have long been denied by the management.

The workers believe that this development has been the primary reason for the ongoing repression in Atlas mines, since a significant chunk in the company's profit had been won by the workers. In a larger context, however, what is supposed to be a management-labor issue has become a virtual struggle between the organized workers and the government with the involvement of military, vigilantes and local government officials in the Atlas conflict. The case in Atlas mines has increasingly become a laboratory for the government's Total War policy which regard trade

unionists as combatants in its counterinsurgency campaign. Owing to this, the workers could not exercise their rights as trade unionists effectively for fear of their lives.

Not a single perpetrator of the crimes committed against the workers had been charged in court despite the presence of evidences. This is largely because the vigilantes operate under the protection of the military — the 347th PC Company, which headquarter is sited inside the Atlas mines' compound. The vigilantes also enjoy the support of the local town mayor who is the head of People's Alliance Against Communism (PAAC).

On February 14, 1989, Atty. Wenifredo Orcullo, the legal counsel of PAMA was arrested and charged with "illegal association with the CPP." He was released the following day after posting P3,000 (\$150) bail. A Senate committee hearing headed by Senator Wigberto Tanada has confirmed the reports of rampant vigilantism and militarization in Atlas mines in line with government policies. Other testimonies and statements of foreign observers who have visited Atlas mines attest to this reality.

In sugar-producing Negros province, meanwhile, the National Federation of Sugar Workers-Food and General Trades (NFSW-FGT-KMU) has been the object of the landlords and local government officials ire, since mere "red scare tactic" failed to dampen the desire of the sugar workers to organize for the betterment of their lot. The minimum wage rate fixed for plantation workers of US\$2.45 per day was never followed by the landowners until the sugar workers organized themselves under the NFSW-FGT.

As of mid-September 1988, 183 members and leaders of the Federation had been illegally arrested, detained and tortured while four had been extrajudicially killed. On June 1, 1988 for instance, two members of the NFSW-FGT, Trinidad Saycon, 52, and her son Rodolfo, 20, were found dead near the farm they usually till in Sitio Lawak, Brgy. Bonifacio, Sagay, Negros Occidental. Both bodies bore several wounds.

Relatives of the victims expressed strong suspicions that elements of the Philippine Constabulary Forward Command (PCFC) was behind the killings. According to neighbors of Saycon, she is being accused as a top NPA commander. She was also active in several dialogues with landowners on the issue of farmlots and has been subjected to several harassments until her death.

The Federation's economic projects for its members are not spared by the military in their campaign against NFSW. Many farmlots had been destroyed and work-animals confiscated by the military. Also, members of unions and NFSW-FGT local chapters had been forced to renounce their union membership by the military, paramilitary groups and goons of the landlords to crush the NFSW-FGT. Among the recent cases of such harassments were that of Samuel Sabidalas, regional coordinator of NFSW-FGT in Leyte and that of Adelaida Dizon, member of NFSW-FGT.

Sabidalas, 34 years old was about to alight from a bus on December 23, 1988 when apprehended by elements of the 6th Infantry Battalion in Isabela, Negros Occidental. He was detained in the town hall and transferred to the 332nd PC Headquarters the following day and was also tortured. He was detained for four days without any charges and was released on December 27, 1988 on condition that he will not work with

NFSW-FGT anymore. Upon his release, however, Sabidalas rebuked what he had promised the military while under detention and "denounced the military's satanic desire to destroy NFSW-FGT through torture and detention."

While Adelaida Dizon, 46 years old, married, was arrested together with another worker, Rogelio Montano, by 12 members of PCFC headed by PC Sgt. Batag. Both were detained at Carmenchica Detachment without charges. Under detention, Dizon was raped by five elements of the PCFC. She was released after 22 days of detention on the condition that she withdraw her membership from NFSW-FGT.

Negros being another laboratory of the US-dictated Low Intensity Conflict strategy, has contributed much in the number of deaths of sugar workers affiliated with the NFSW-FGT. In military parlance, they call this campaign as "debasement tactic" coupled with "direct assault" to effectively quash the Federation which continue to grow and strengthen despite the escalating trade union repression.

#### D. MINDANAO

Mindanao is the second largest island in the Philippines located in the southern part of the archipelago. Known traditionally as the "land of promise" due to its abundant natural resources, Mindanao has now become known to have an increasingly upswing record on trade union repression and human rights violations.

According to the 1988 report of the Commission on Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR), victims of repression in Mindanao include 15 workers arrested, 1 killed in picketline, and 5 massacred. Other forms of repression include summary execution (salvaging), sowing of "anti-communist" hysteria among workers, forced disaffiliation from militant unions, and bombings.

A prominent example is the case of workers in Lapanday Development Corporation (LADECO), a banana-raising plantation located in Davao City, Mindanao. On September 8, 1988, Danilo Martinez, a union board member of the Lapanday Callawa Workers Union (LCWU-ANGLO-KMU) was shot dead in his house by two men belonging to the company-hired Philippine Eagle Security Agency. According to the union, the "security force" is composed of fanatical vigilante groups such as Pulahan ("Red"), Tadtad ("Chop-chop") and Kadre.

On October 17, 1988, another union member, Sanido Mao, was shot by two members of the security force. He was hit in the armpit but survived after a 10-hour operation in a hospital in Davao. His wife identified one of the assailants as a Kadre vigilante member.

Mao was the most recent casualty in the armed attacks against LADECO workers, while the death of Martinez is the tenth since the Lapanday union was organized in 1982.

The killing of Martinez and the murder attempt on Mao came at a time when the term of the LCWU as the bargaining agent of the 1,000-

strong union in LADECO expired last November, paving the way for a new union election. But prior to that, seventeen (17) fully armed men, apparently belonging to the Philippine Eagle Security Agency, arrived in LADECO. This was followed by the anti-communist seminars conducted by Jun Alcover, head of the Kadre vigilantes, accusing the LCWU-ANGLO-KMU as a "communist labor front." The vigilantes also figured in violent dispersal of strikes staged by the union in protest of militarization in LADECO. The heavy vigilante presence, aside from the battalion of the elite Scout Rangers soldiers, has created tension and a climate of fear among the workers. Subsequent harassments were inflicted to the union members such as forcing them to sign a waiver denouncing LCWU-ANGLO-KMU, in favor of a Kadre-controlled union.

What was supposed to be an ordinary labor-management affair was turned into an arena of terrorism where workers were subjected to checkpoints, bombings of their communities and other forms of physical and psychological torment, driving many of them to evacuate their communities. This "brand new" type of repression involving direct vigilante and military intervention in labor issues is certainly an infringement of the ILO Conventions which uphold workers' rights to freely organize and to function as regular trade unions.

Another gruesome case involving vigilantes was the killing of Oscar Bantayan on October 10, 1988. Bantayan is a KMU National Council member and the regional coordinator of National Federation of Labor (NFL-KMU) in southeastern Mindanao.

Bantayan was on his way home together with Romeo Dabalos, NFL organizer when vigilante groups fired at them. Bantayan was killed instantly while Dabalos survived after an operation at the Davao Doctors Hospital. The killing of Bantayan was owned by a vigilante group Ex-Cathedra Venganza, purportedly in retaliation for the death of one of their leader who was ambushed by the NPA. The senseless killing of Bantayan, however, indicates that trade unionists in the Philippines have now become targets for liquidation by the government-supported vigilante groups in the guise of counter insurgency. Because of this many labor leaders in Mindanao can't exercise their duties freely for fear of being killed. In fact many of them have received death threats from vigilante groups putting their lives in constant danger, thus affecting not only their work but also their families.

Investigations conducted by local and international human rights groups in Mindanao, and elsewhere in the Philippines, revealed that the emergence of vigilante groups and their activities are being supported by local government officials, military authorities and even the Catholic church hierarchy. And because of their rampant violation of trade union and human rights, a mounting call for their disbandment have been consistently raised by various sectors including the Senate Committee on Human Rights.

But the Aquino government, instead, ordered the creation of Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU), which is nothing but a vigilante group with a new name.

## CONCLUSION

The ILO Committee on Freedom of Association, on its 262nd report, said that "a genuinely free and independent trade union movement can only develop in an atmosphere free from violence, pressure and threats of any kind and where there is respect of human rights." This has also been declared by various human rights groups and trade unions in the national as well as in the international communities which are aware that the enforcement of the US-designed Low Intensity Conflict or total war policy by the Aquino government is anathema to a just and democratic society.

But the total war policy of the government is only one of the glaring violations of human rights in the country. The other cruel forms of oppression are indicated by the widespread poverty, hunger, and lack of genuine democracy among the majority of the Filipino people. This is also quite reflected in the signing of the new Labor Code (Republic Act 6715) last February without the proper consultation with the workers. The Labor Code which was sponsored by Sen. Ernesto Herrera, former secretary general of the conservative Trade Union Congress of the Philippines, provides for the exclusion of unfair labor practice, such as union busting, as a strikable issue thus suppressing the inalienable workers' right to effectively defend themselves. Aside from this, it did not repeal the Marcos-era labor laws which virtually ban strikes. The Labor Code is widely supported by the government, big business, and military despite the strong protests from progressive labor groups.

Taking a long view, to act only against the physical forms of repression such as strike breakings, killings of unionists, forced evacuations, and others, would not completely eradicate oppression which is rooted in the socio-economic and political structures.

To fully strive for genuine justice and freedom in the Philippines, it is necessary to realize the calls for an end to US control over the country's economy, politics and culture. Likewise it is important that the democracy of the elite and the military be replaced by a genuine people's democracy where the workers and peasants have the major role in shaping the future of the Filipino people.

Towards this end, the Filipino workers, along with the other sectors, can only rely on their united struggle to resist the attacks of the government, foreign interests, military, big business and all other state institutions.

But while we advance the struggle, we recognize the invaluable role of international solidarity in attaining victory. The KMU believes that whatever gain that the Filipino workers will have is a contribution to the struggle of the whole working class against oppression. Thus we appeal to the international community to:

- 1) Continue writing the Aquino government asking for the disbandment of vigilante groups, the scrapping of the new Labor Code and all anti-people policies, and an end to militarization and Low Intensity Conflict or total war.

- 2) Urge the ILO and the UN Commission on Human Rights to exert pressures to the Aquino government to end repression in the

Philippines.

3) Lobby your respective governments to stop sending aid, such as military aid, to the Aquino government because they are only being used against the Filipino people. Instead, ask that the aid be channeled to genuine people's organizations.

4) Further expose the anti-people Aquino government, which is being principally backed by the US government, by publicizing about the LIC and repression in the Philippines.

5) Send copies of letters and clippings to KMU.

**WRITE TO:**

President Corazon Aquino  
Malacanang Palace  
Manila, Philippines

Secretary Franklin Drilon  
Department of Labor and  
Employment  
Intramuros, Manila  
Philippines

International Labor Organization  
CH-1211 Geneva 22,  
Switzerland

Secretary Fidel Ramos  
Department of National  
Defense  
Camp Aguinaldo,  
Quezon City, Philippines

NUMBER OF VICTIMS					
Cases	Nationwide	Luzon	NCR	Visayas	Mindanao
1) Salvaging	31	12	3	13	3
2) Frustrated salvaging	13	1	2	7	3
3) Killed in picketline	4	1	2	—	1
4) Massacre	11	3	—	3	5
5) Frustrated massacre	13	1	9	3	—
6) Disappearance	14	7	5	1	1
7) Detention	250	28	115	97	10
8) Torture	25	1	5	14	5
9) Assault	118	—	108	8	2
10) Arrest	319	35	165	104	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>798</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>45</b>

Source: Report of the Commission on Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR) January - October, 1988

**CAFGU: Umbrella of Paramilitary Terrorism  
by: REDEMPTO ANDA**

**Background**

National liberation struggles in the Third World today are being fought by repressive regimes through the use of non-traditional approaches in counter-insurgency. In Central America, the United States developed and implemented a policy popularized as "Low-intensity conflict" or LIC.

LIC calls for the utilization of non-military or political approach to defeat insurgency. It departs from the traditional military concept of defeating one's adversary through superior military tactics and strategy.

While LIC advocates political rather than military approaches, its impact on human rights is no less brutal. For LIC, being a "total approach" of counter-insurgency, does not totally negate traditional military approaches but rather enhances and makes them more deadly, hence repressive.

Counter-insurgency programs, because of the preponderance of new ideas from experts advocating it, have accumulated a list of experiences some of which we see in action in the Philippine laboratory.

The Aquino government's counter-insurgency program is a notorious example of the application of the principles of LIC. Dubbed Oplan Mamamayan, it has been characterized by the government's support to and encouragement of right-wing groups.

Right-wing vigilantism in the Philippines is a phenomenon which can be credited to the Aquino government. It began in 1986 in Davao City with the creation of the Alsa Masa. The initial success of the Alsa Masa, seen in the slackening of NPA activity in the city, clothed the program enough sense to make it to the realm of national policy. Thus, the growth of the vigilantes has become phenomenal, no thanks to the direct initiative of the military establishment. Throughout the country, roughly 200 various vigilante groups operate under the menacing mantle of military authority.

Public pressure on the vigilantes soon placed the national government in a difficult situation. The claim that such groups are spontaneously organized by civic-minded citizens as unarmed volunteers just did not sell to the wider public opinion, both local and international. The prestigious Amnesty International (IA) came out with a well-publicized report documenting vigilante abuses and the accountability of the government.

*\*The author is presently the Secretary-General of the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA)*

*Reprinted from the Philippine Trade Union Report  
November-December, 1988*

The AI report was just one of the many strong criticisms received by the Aquino government because of its vigilante program. Other groups, such as the Ramsey Clark fact-finding mission and the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights made similar reports and denunciation of the vigilantes.

Pressure led the government to dissociate itself from the vigilantes. Two months ago, President Corazon Aquino announced that all vigilante groups will be disbanded. At first glance, the pronouncement sounded like a remarkable turnaround by Aquino from her publicly stated endorsement of the Alsa Masa and other similar groups.

### A new version of militarization

The controversy did not die. On the same instance that Aquino called for the disbandment of the vigilantes, she signed an Executive Order creating the Citizens Armed Force Geographical Units (CAFGU). E.O. 264 also seeks to replace the discredited Civilian Home Defense Force which was formed in the mid-70s by the Marcos regime.

The Secretary of National Defense issued the implementing guidelines of E.O. 264, later approved by the President. Recently, however, the Senate charged that the guideline is unconstitutional, having been undated in the first place. But in the provinces, training and recruitment of "civilian volunteers" to the CAFGU has actually already begun. The House of Representatives has already voted to allocate more than P500 million for the CAFGU program. At the same time, House Bill 12251, which essentially transforms E.O. 264 into a bill, was passed on second reading.

The approval of the CAFGU budget has favored the plans of defense department which seriously wanted to retain the paramilitary structure built by the vigilantes.

### Vigilante arrogance and power

In most parts of the country where right-wing vigilantes are very active, especially in Davao and Cebu City, the paramilitary groups remain as active as before despite the government order for their disbandment. Military officials have indicated their apprehension that the disbandment of the vigilantes would provide a vacuum which might be exploited by communist rebels.

In recent months, the defense establishment has mounted an oft-repeated campaign to brand left-leaning groups such as the KMU as communist front organizations. This type of harassment is accompanied by outright attacks against member of such groups by paramilitary organization. The killing of Oscar Batayan, Deputy Secretary General of the National Federation of Labor and Council member of the Kilusang Mayo Uno in Davao City last October 10 by a group which called itself Cathedra Venganza is a classic example.

Notwithstanding the inaction of local government agencies especially the military field commanders to disband, the vigilantes, neither Malacanang nor the Commission on Human Rights, has acted to imple-

ment the government's policies vis-a-vis the vigilantes. When confronted by questions why they have not been disbanded, local government officials join the vigilantes in saying that such groups are "not" vigilantes but rather unarmed "Bantay Bayan" which is supposedly legal. In reality, however, as in the case of the vigilantes in Cebu, vigilantes which have begun to hide behind the Bantay Bayan program, continue to bear arms and partake of regular military duties.

The case of the KADRE (translated Movement for Democratic Reforms), a vigilante group in Toledo City, Cebu is a strong example.

Almost all the members of KADRE are workers of the Atlas Consolidated Mining and Development Corporation (ACMDC) and their activities have largely been related to the harassment of the militant local union Panaghiusa Mamumuo sa Atlas (PAMA).

Since last year, some seven active unionists in Atlas have been killed reportedly by members of the KADRE. At the same time, the harassment of union officials and members has been without let up. KADRE has accused the union, which is affiliated with the KMU, as being a communist front.

The complicity between KADRE and the military, particularly the 347th PC Coy based in Don Andres Soriano village in Toledo, is common knowledge. Early last year, the local PC Commanding officer requested the management of Atlas to grant leave with pay to ten workers for military training. When the ten workers returned to work, they formed the core of the dreaded KADRE which began an intensified harassment campaign against the union and recruitment of members within the ranks of Atlas workers.

On August 9, 1988 a certain Jun Alamo, an acknowledge KADRE leader and one of the ten workers trained by the 347th PC Coy, barged inside the union office in Das and tried to kill union president Antonio Cuizon. Fortunately, Alamo's gun malfunctioned and the supposed victim was able to escape unharmed. Alamo, together with another KADRE member retreated, then later returned with 20 more KADRE members to strafe the union office. The incident was investigated by the 374th PC Coy but no arrest nor prosecution was made.

The active role played by the KADRE in Cebu actually renders the organization of the CAFGU in the area superfluous. In the first place, KADRE has been functioning as the de facto paramilitary organization in Toledo.

From documentation available so far, the vigilantes, CHDF and the soon-to-be formalized CAFGU, are one and the same. They serve as paramilitary forces whose distinct role is not only to assist the regular armed forces but to implement the more terroristic aspects of counter-insurgency. In the case of KADRE and paramilitary groups in Toledo, it is obvious that the activities of these groups are all geared towards destabilizing the militant union.

### Organizing the CAFGU

Considering the realities obtaining in the countryside—the prolif-

eration of vigilantes and military-initiated harassment of progressive sectors of society — the organizing of the CAFGU consolidates the structure of militarization in the country.

Contrary to official assurance that members of the new paramilitary organization will be more responsible than their predecessor, the CAFGU serves merely as an umbrella of paramilitary terrorism in the government's counter-insurgency program.

Defense officials explain the revised concept of military organization by highlighting the role of so-called "active auxiliaries." The active auxiliaries, to differentiate from the inactive reserves, actually form the backbone of the CAFGU. As reserves, whether active or inactive, they are integrated in the armed forces.

The CAFGU's accountability may be better than nothing at all, but whether the government will be strict against the abusers is another thing. In the country-side, military commanders regularly condone the abuse of paramilitary groups. Prosecution, if there is any, becomes more a semblance of justice than a genuine disciplinary action.

The guideline to E.O. 264 identifies a reservist or "citizen soldier" as someone who is a graduate of compulsory military training in high school or college. But it also loosens the classification by categorizing anyone who takes a "basic military course" as a reservist. This means that members of existing vigilante groups have a ready fallback option in case they are forced to self-destruct. They only need to sign up to any military training and they are automatically integrated into the armed forces. Indeed, military field commanders have assured members of vigilante groups and the CHDF that they will be prioritized in the recruitment process.

The manner of recruitment into the CAFGU poses a serious threat mainly to the organized militant forces which, even though legal, are categorized by the government and its military as subversive organizations. This is very true as illustrated in the case of Atlas in Toledo City, where a group of workers were actually trained by the PC unit and sent back to the company allegedly to mount a terror attack against the union.

The CAFGU, as a program designed to harness civilian manpower in counter-insurgency, has failed miserably during the early '50s when former President Ramon Magsaysay tried to organize the Barrio Self Defense Unit (BSDU). The BSDU, because of its orientation and role in the counter-insurgency, grew into the death squads which had passed on to the CHDF of Marcos. There is nothing which makes the CAFGU different from the others.

Published by:  
**KILUSANG MAYO UNO**  
**International Department**  
3rd Floor Jopson Bldg.  
510 M. Earnshaw St., Sampaloc  
Manila, Philippines

April, 1989