



TFDP-Mindanao

URGENT ACTION

UA 009

11/10/88

CASE : MASSIVE EVACUATION AND DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTIES

VICTIMS : Residents of Sitios Kiantay, Bok, Datal Lawa all of barangay Upper Sepaka, Surallah municipality, province of South Cotabato, Mindanao, Philippines.

About 101 muslim families fled their homes and 70 houses were razed to the ground as an aftermath of an encounter between the government troopers and the combined forces of the New People's Army (NPA) and Bangsa Moro Army (BMA) a military arm of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), in sitios Kiantay, Bok, Datal Lawa all of Barangay Upper Sepaka, Surallah town.

The encounter happened at around 6:30 in the morning of September 6, 1988 while the residents were busy preparing for the day's activity. The firefight lasted for almost an hour which drove the residents away leaving behind their belongings including a 20-hectare land planted with rice due for harvesting and seek refuge in barangay Upper Sepaka proper.

When the residents went back five days later, some of the abandoned houses were looted of their belongings worth thousands of pesos; Seventy (70) houses were burned down; and the unharvested rice were leveled to the ground and ravaged.

Witnesses (those residents who were not able to go far and hide) revealed that they saw the combined elements of the 38th Infantry Battalion, 6th Infantry Division, Philippine Constabulary and B'laan (a tribal minority) Integrated Civilian Home Defenses Force (ICHDF) looted, destroyed and burned the houses. Most of the evacuees, when interviewed, also accused the said group as responsible.

Moreover, residents claimed that the soldiers butchered dogs and used the utensils left behind by the fleeing residents. For them using their utensils with dog's meat is an act of mockery and sacrilege to their belief and tradition.

At the moment, the evacuees are temporarily staying with their relatives in Upper Sepaka proper waiting for help for them to rebuild their houses and start farming again.

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Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP) is a human rights organization established by the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines. TFDP believes in the inviolable dignity of the human person and his/her basic inalienable rights to life; to freedom and to the means necessary and suitable for the proper development of life. TFDP, therefore, strives to live up to the imperative of "action on behalf of justice... appear as a constitutive dimensions of the preaching of the Gospel of the Church mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from the very oppressive situation" (1971 Synod of Bishops Statement).

URGENT ACTION



RECOMMENDED ACTION:

1. Send material and financial aid to the evacuees and arson victims of Sitios Kiantay, Bok, and Datal Lawa of barangay Upper Sepaka, Surallah, South Cotabato to help them rebuild their homes and start farming again.
2. Send telegrams/express letters/airmail letters urging the authorities to conduct an immediate and thorough investigation in the burning of 70 houses and indemnify the victims.

SEND APPEALS TO :

Pres. Corazon Aquino
Malacañang Palace, Manila
Philippines

Sec. Fidel Ramos
Department of National Defense
Camp Crame, Quezon City

Gov. Esmael Sueno
Office of the Governor
Koronadal, South Cotabato
Philippines

Mayor Jose Sison
Office of the Mayor
Municipal Building, Surallah
South Cotabato, Philippines

Mayor Antonio Damandaman
Office of Mayor
Municipal Bldg. Sto. Niño
South Cotabato, Philippines

Capt. Benhur Mongao
Commanding Officer
456th PC Company
Koronadal, South Cotabato
Philippines

Capt. Gonzaga
38th IB Checkpoint
Bai Sarapenang, Bagumbayan
Sultan Kudarat, Philippines