

June 1, 2013

Stop the Bombings in Abra! Scrap Oplan Bayanihan! Respect Human Rights!

This morning we received reports from communities and Abra Human Rights Movement, our chapter in Abra, that the 503rd Brigade, through air strikes, indiscriminately bombed Malibcong, Abra in their combat operations almost hurting two minors (13 years old and 17 years old, both females) who were on their way to gather vegetables.

Two bombs exploded at Bolan/Pugopog east of Barangay Duldulao at around 9 am.

Another bomb exploded at the Allikoman ricefields - around 180 meters from residential houses of Barangay Alligang according to the sms forwarded to us by residents in the area.

One of the bombs fell on the Pugo ricefield at Barangay Lat-ey, 150 meters away from the community's powerhouse.

We are seriously concerned over the safety and security of the communities in Malibcong, Abra. We do not know if there are civilian casualties because the military operation in the said area is still ongoing.

The Abra Human Rights Movement with Fr. Benitez, the parish priest in the area is scheduled to talk to Captain Martinez of the 503rd Brigade to demand for the bombings to stop today.

We condemn these air strikes perpetrated by the 503rd Brigade hurting the civilians and destroying their sources of livelihood. Even in times of armed conflicts and counter-insurgency operations, the military is bound by international human rights instruments and the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CAHRIHL) so as not to endanger the lives and dwellings of civilians.

We urge the military to stop the bombings in Malibcong, Abra. With the ongoing military operation, the affected communities suffer from severe psychological stress due to fear for their security. It limits their mobility and disrupts their daily lives. These are clear violations of human rights and the continuity of military operation in the area would further lead to more and worse cases of violations.

We call on the Commission on Human Rights and other concerned government agencies to investigate the bombings and to immediately issue recommendations to protect the welfare of the affected communities.

We call on the Aquino government to stop Oplan Bayanihan, the military's counter-insurgency plan aimed at crushing the insurgency in the country, but in doing so, has harmed the civilians through relentless military operations.

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**Malibcong municipality is the ancestral territory of 3 tribes namely Banao, Gubang and Mabaka. It is divided into three (3) districts based on tribe, namely: Malibcong district (Banao tribe), Bangilo district (Gubang tribe), and Mataragan district (Mabaka tribe). It is further divided in 12 barangays based on political administrative division. The biggest tribe is Banao composing of 46% of the population. Collectively, the people in these areas are known as the Mabagu (Mabaka-Banao-Gubang) tribe. Total population based on most recent census is 3,675 of 700 households. Its adjoining tribes are Binongan tribe of Lacub municipality, Banao tribe of Daguioman municipality and Binongan tribe of Baay-Licuan municipality. Malibcong has an aggregate area of approximately 316.10 square kilometer and accounts to about 7.95% of the province's total land area of 3,975.55 square kilometer.*

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