

Justice for Engr. Delle Salvador! Justice for the People of Lacub

Statement of the Family
of Engr. Fidela Bugarin – Salvador
October 16, 2014

We, the family of Engr, Fidela "Delle" Bugarin-Salvador grieve for the untimely death of the mother, a sister, and a wife, who was killed in Lacub, Abra, during the military operations of the 41st Infantry Battalion, Philippine Army (41st IBPA), last 4-6 September 2014.

Adding insult to injury, the Northern Luzon Command, Philippine Army - AFP, on their social media page, claimed in their September 11, 2014 post that Engr. Fidela Salvador was killed in a legitimate encounter on the night of September 5, 2014. They accused her as a member of the New Peoples' Army (NPA). They unjustly weave lies about who she is and how she was killed.



Her body was fetched by the Pineda Funeral Homes in Bangued, Abra from the 503rd Brigade Head Quarters in Brgy. Barbarit, Lagangilang, Abra after a call was made by the 41st IBPA at around 4 P.M. of September 6, 2014. She was reportedly airlifted by the AFP from their Bantugo, Lacub Detachment. According to her Death Certificate, she died last September 5, 2014, at Mt. Kiboot, Guniguinabang, Lacub Abra.

Engr, Fidela Bugarin-Salvador is a Development Worker, conducting monitoring activity of the projects previously and currently being implemented by the Cordillera Disaster Response and Development Service (CorDis RDS) and the Center for Development Programs in the Cordillera (CDPC, Inc), in Lacub, Abra when she was killed and accused later as a member of the New People's Army. She is not and has never been a member of the NPA.

Her body was brought home to Baguio by staff of Cordillera Human Rights Alliance (CHRA) on the night of September 7, 2014. She arrived at the St. Peters Chapel, Marcos Highway, Bakakeng Central, Baguio City, at around 11:00 in the evening.

Upon seeing her cadaver, we felt the need of an autopsy. We could not believe the story being peddled by the AFP on the circumstance of her death. We made this request as a step to establish the truth behind her death. We requested the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI CAR- Baguio) to conduct the procedure. It was performed by the Medico-Legal Officer, Dr. Ronald R. Bandonill last September 8, 2014, at 2:30 pm.

The Autopsy Report

The Autopsy report was released on 18 September 2014. Prior to this, a case conference with Dr. Ronald Bandonill was held last 15th September 2014. Here he discussed salient points of his examination of Engr. Fidela's body.

The report states that, Engr. Salvador's cause of death is described as:
+HYPOVOLEMIC SHOCK secondary to GUNSHOT WOUNDS, POSTERIOR TRUNK AREA+
+BLUNT TRAUMATIC INJURY, BACK OF THE HEAD, Contributory+.

Nine Bullets entered the body of Engr. Fidela. The damage they brought to her vital organs (heart and lungs) should have killed her instantaneously. But the finding that the **blunt traumatic injury** (comminuted fracture – meaning skull broken into particles) at back of her head as contributory cause of death, and the contusions, massive lacerations, massive hematoma, among the significant findings of the autopsy would paint a scenario that directly question the validity of the AFP claim that she was killed in an encounter. It is pointing to **possible torture**.

An officer of the PNP - Abra, legal department also stated that the 41st IB did not submit a report on Engr. Delle to the SOCO. Yet, they have in their possession her ID – a photo of which is posted in their social media page.

The NSM Report

The National Solidarity Mission, organized by various regional and local human rights organizations and held within various barangays in Lacub, Abra on September 28 - October 1, has affirmed that Engr. Delle Salvador was a victim of Extrajudicial Killing in Lacub, Abra, in the course of military operations by the elements of 41st IBPA.

- * That nobody saw that the body of Engr. Delle Salvador was taken within the vicinity of the encounter on the 5th of September 2014.
- * That the communities affirmed that there are projects of CorDis RDS, CDPC, Inc., and other NGOs in Lacub. These NGOs and people's organizations they are in partner with have long been targets of political persecution mainly from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).
- * That on September 6, 2014, the body of Engr. Delle Salvador was airlifted from Bantugo military camp in Lacub to Barbarit, Lagangilang, Abra, the 503 Brigade, PA, AFP.
- * From there, her remains were fetch by the Pineda Funeral Homes and brought to Bangued, where staff of Cordillera Human Rights Alliance (CHRA) identified her.

Participants of the NSM have shared that the people of Lacub have been harassed and threatened by elements of the Philippine Army, compromising their socio-economic and psychological welfare. Civilians were used as human shields and guides in combat operations by the AFP endangering their lives and putting their

families in stressful situations. Even children are not spared as the AFP built their camp near the school.

Our Prayers, Our Call

Life is sacred. It is not for man to claim it especially in unjust ways. Given the facts stated by the autopsy report - that her death was not just through the barrel of a gun and that the evidence of her body points to probable torture, we thirst for truth and justice. Already her death gives us inconsolable grief and unfathomable pain. But the question of how she died and why she died remains a question.

If it is true that she died in an encounter, how can the contusions all over her body be explained? If the entrance of bullets to her body is at her lower back, why are there contusions in her right lumbar area? Why was the fracture in her skull at the back of her head not caused by gunshot; how can her skull be broken into small pieces? How can the head injury be contributory to the cause of death, if she really figured herself in an encounter?

Why was there no eyewitness to the retrieval of her body in the encounter site when they were retrieved in the morning of 6th September as per report by the AFP? Where was she really taken by the AFP? Was she alive when the 41st IBPA took her? Why is there a need for the AFP to paint a picture of her as the machine gunner according to the report of the AFP to Rep. Luz Ilagan, Gabriela Partylist, during the budget hearing in Congress?

So many questions begging for answers. Reports of the AFP do not address them but rather produce more painful questions.

It is our strong belief that Engr. Delle Salvador was taken alive – mistreated before death as evidenced by the autopsy findings, and unjustly accused as an NPA who died in a legitimate encounter for the AFP to justify the extrajudicial killing.

Today, on the 40th day of day of her death, as we commemorate the life and works of Engr. Fidela Bugarin – Salvador, and as we try to pick up the pieces and rebuild our life shattered by this tragic event, the family, relatives, friends of Engr. Fidela Bugarin-Salvador, and the UCCP community, long for justice to be served! So long as our questions remain unanswered with definite conviction, so too shall we not cease our search for truth and justice.#