

URGENT ACTION * URGENT ACTION * URGENT ACTION * URGENT ACTION

UA Date: 5 April 2007

UA Title: **Nine-year old child killed by soldiers in Compostela Valley Province, Philippines**

UA Case: Summary Execution

Victim/s: GRACEL GALACIO

- 9 years old
- Female, daughter of Gregorio and Virginia Galacio
- A resident of Purok-6, Barangay Kahayag, New Bataan, Compostela Valley Province, Philippines
- Second Grade Pupil at the Simsimin Elementary School, New Bataan, Compostela Valley Province, Philippines

Place of Incident: Purok-6, Barangay Kahayag, New Bataan, Compostela Valley Province, Philippines

Date of Incident: 31 March 2007, at around 8:00 in the morning

Alleged Perpetrators: More or less 30 armed military elements belonging to the 8th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army led by 2nd Lt. Francis John Gabawa, platoon commanding officer

Account of Incident –

On March 31, 2007 at around 8:00 in the morning, Gracel Galacio, 9 years old, and her brother Gary, 6 yrs old, asked permission from their parents Gregorio Galacio and Virginia Buya to go to the nearby river to take a bath. They brought with them a green plastic bag containing soap.

At around 8:30am, the kids heard gunfire. Gary called out to her elder sister and hurriedly ran off out of fear leaving Gracel behind.

Meanwhile, Gregorio and his wife with their two other young daughters ran away from their house when they heard the sound of gunshots. Prior to this, Virginia was supposed to follow Gracel and Gary to the river, also to take a bath.

After the gun fire, Gracel was found dead a few meters away from their house. She was hit on the right elbow and a fatal bullet hit the left side of her head which blew off her brains.

On April 2, 2007, the Philippine Daily Inquirer (a national broadsheet) came out with an article saying that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) claimed that Gracel was a child warrior and that she was killed during an encounter between the AFP and the NPA's.

The soldiers showed to the Barangay Captain a photo of the dead Gracel with an M-16 lying beside her.

A resident who fled the area reported that the gunfire came from above them or "*sa taas*" where the platoon size members of 8th Infantry Battalion under 2nd Lt. Francis John Gabawa were positioned on that day.

The neighbors and Barangay Capt. Eulogio Almasa attested that there was no rifle and ammunitions seen beside Gracel's remains when they found her. Almasa also vouched to the fact that the girl, or any member of her family, is a not a member of the New People's Army (NPA).

In fact last March 27, 2007, Gracel Galacio finished second grade at the Simsimin Elementary School, New Bataan, Compostela Valley Province with class citations.

Gracel was almost the same height as the rifle, which when loaded would be too heavy for even an adult to carry, much more a small nine-year old like Gracel.