

URGENT ALERT: MEMBER OF THE CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE (CPA) MISSING SINCE SEPTEMBER 17, 2008

URGENT ALERT Case Type: Enforced Disappearance

Victim: **JAMES M. BALAO**



- 47 Years Old, Male
- Member, CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE
- President, OCLUPAN CLAN ASSOCIATION
- An indigenous person belonging to the Ibaloi and Kankanaey tribes of Benguet

Place of the Incident: somewhere between his residence in Fairview, Baguio City and his family residence in La Trinidad, Benguet

Date of the Incident: 17 September, 2008

Alleged Perpetrators: unidentified elements of the Intelligence Security Unit (ISU) of the Armed Forces of the Philippines

Account of the Incident:

On the morning of September 17, 2008 at 7 AM James Balao left his residence in Fairview, Baguio City, intending to go to his family residence in La Trinidad, Benguet. He informed his family that he was going home that day through a text message at about 6:45 am. He was not able to reach home and has not been in contact with his family or friends since, nor have they been able to contact him.

In the first week of June, 2008 Balao began reporting regular surveillance to his family, which increasingly heightened until his disappearance last week. He had often observed white and blue vans tailing him from his residence on his daily chores.

According to a reliable source, Balao is even listed in the AFP dossier as the head of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) Education Bureau in the Ilocos and Cordillera regions.

The Cordillera Human Rights Alliance believes that the surveillance and enforced disappearance of Balao was perpetrated by state security forces as a part of their operations under Oplan Bantay Laya, a policy of categorizing legal people's organizations and their staff and volunteers as "front organizations" and "supporters" of the of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) or National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) or the New People's Army (NPA). This policy has led to the surveillance, harassment and intimidation, abduction and killing of members and leaders of progressive people's organizations all over the country.

Recommended Action: Your urgent response to this action alert is being sought.

Please send letters, emails or fax messages calling for:

1. The immediate surfacing and release of James Balao by his captors.
2. The authorities, particularly the Philippine National Police, to aggressively assist the Balao

family, the Cordillera Peoples Alliance and the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance in their search for James Balao.

3. The immediate termination of Oplan Bantay Laya which has labelled legal progressive organizations such as the Cordillera Peoples Alliance as “sectoral fronts” of the Communist Party of the Philippines, National Democratic Front of the Philippines and the New Peoples Army.
4. The Philippine Government to observe the Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) and other international human rights laws and declarations such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

You may send your communications to the addresses below. You may use the Letter of Concern accompanying this URGENT ALERT. Thank you very much.

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ATTY. SEDFRY CANDELARIA

Chairperson, Government of the Republic of the Philippines Section
Joint Monitoring Committee – CARHRIHL
6/F Immaculate Conception MultiPurpose Center,
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Please send us a copy of your email/mail/fax to the said government official to our address below.

URGENT ACTION Prepared by the:

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