



CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

*For the Defense of the Ancestral Domain
and for Self Determination*

October 4, 2008

CPA, Balao Family Laud Baguio City Council Reso Supporting the Search for James Balao and to Condemn his Involuntary Disappearance

On September 29, 2008, the Baguio City Council unanimously passed a resolution condemning the involuntary disappearance of James M. Balao and extending full support to the Balao family, the CPA and the CHRA in search of James. Balao, an indigenous person belonging to the Kankanaey and Ibaloi of Benguet, is a founding member of the CPA who was missing since September 17, 2008.

In behalf of the Balao family, the CPA extends its sincerest thanks to and lauds the officials of the City of Baguio for this concrete step forward in our search for James. Such move is also a solid action in the recognition and assertion of our basic rights to life and security.

The CPA, its officers and members, have always been under threat by the State and victims of its terrorism, even in regimes before the US-Arroyo's. We have lost many of our valued colleagues who have done no harm but assert the rights of indigenous peoples, yet they were felled by State Terror which has significantly and gravely aggravated especially under this regime. Under this situation, the Council of Baguio City had stood by its constituents, including the CPA, its members and officers by passing resolutions during trying times when the CPA was under attack: on the unlawful arrest of Jose Cawiding, then secretary general of the Metro Baguio Tribal Elders and Leaders Assembly and former staff of the CPA Education Commission in 2007; and on the extrajudicial killing of CPA Elders Desk Regional Coordinator and Regional Council Member Markus Bangit in 2006.

The attack against CPA is an attack against the people. The city council's action through a resolution condemning the involuntary disappearance of James demonstrates they have not only stood by CPA but by the people, their constituents. These acts of solidarity and support to the Cordillera peoples' movement are significant and have inspired us to carry on, even with the intensifying state terror, knowing that they are behind us and recognize the importance of our work.

There is nobody more liable and accountable for James' disappearance than the State, through the AFP's military intelligence and security units, and even the PNP. We challenge the AFP and PNP, which have remained mum and indifferent about James' involuntary disappearance since September 17, to surface James Balao if indeed they truly are champions of people's rights and democracy.

We hope that other government institutions and more local governments in the Cordillera and all over the country, such as the provincial and municipal levels, would also concretely aid us in this situation that we, the CPA, and the Balao Family are in. Every part of the government should be doing their part because the government exists to serve and protect the people. We continue to appeal to the public and to the officials of Benguet to also urgently extend its support in our search for James Balao. James is the eldest of four children, and is the son of Mr. Arthur and Mrs. Jane Balao of La Trinidad and Atok.

James had unselfishly given himself in service to his fellow Cordillera indigenous peoples through his work as CPA and Clan President of the Oclupan Clan Association. Now is an opportune moment for us to fight for our right to life, our right to survive as humans and as indigenous peoples. Help us find James M. Balao. #

Reference:

Beverly Longid
Chairperson, CPA

