



## ANSWERS TO QUESTIONNAIRE OF THE UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

*Theme: "Large-scale development projects and human rights defenders"*

- 1. Please indicate what you see as the main challenges and opportunities of a human rights-based approach to development, with particular attention to large-scale development projects and the role, protection and effective participation of human rights defenders. What do you think are the best measures to mitigate the challenges? Kindly provide examples of good practices in this respect.**

Karapatan identifies two main challenges to a human rights based approach to development:

- a. The counter-insurgency program of the Philippine government (Oplan Bayanihan)** which results to militarisation of communities where such large-scale development projects (i.e. mining, building of malls and/or business districts) will be or are being implemented.

Peace and development of Oplan Bayanihan is, in essence, the same combat and intelligence operations that is implemented alongside Civilian Military Operations (CMO). The so-called development projects are primarily being implemented in the areas not to improve and develop the people's quality of life but to dampen their spirit to fight for their rights and what is rightfully theirs.

The so-called development projects rob the masses of their sources of livelihood. Big landlords re-concentrate hectares upon hectares of land into their hands. Foreign agri-business and mining corporations plunder the lands and resources of the Philippines. Countering people's resistance, President Benigno Aquino recently announced the strengthening of paramilitary groups such as the Special Civilian Armed Auxiliary (SCAA) as force multiplier to secure mining corporations and other similar "development" efforts.

Karapatan documented the bulk of human rights violations in areas where there is a strong people's movement against government projects and those of private corporations that threaten their livelihood, homes and the environment.

Caraga region in Mindanao is one of the most militarized areas in the country. It is also one of the richest in natural resources, even bannered as the mining capital of the Philippines by the previous Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo administration. The Lumad communities, a group of indigenous people of the southern Philippines, had resisted the

entry of mining corporations, having learned their lesson from decades of destructive logging in their ancestral lands. In the past decade, there had been renewed attempts by government to open the area to extractive mining, bringing about waves of military operations.

From February to November 2012, widespread and intensified military operations in the hinterlands triggered the flight of peasants and indigenous peoples from the towns of Cabadbaran and Kitcharao in Agusan del Norte and from Alegria town in Surigao del Norte. The evacuees went to Butuan City in Agusan del Norte to appeal for help to stop the bombings and military encroachment on their communities.

The earliest wave of evacuations began in February, when 68 families fled barangay Ferlda, Alegria, Surigao del Norte and sought sanctuary in barangay Ombon, about 18 km away. On Feb. 6, about 80 soldiers arrived and occupied the barangay hall and other public facilities, while some stayed beside civilian houses. The military's presence in the community resulted in numerous cases of rights violations.

On February 28, at 8pm, the remaining families were ordered by the soldiers to hurriedly gather in a house after hearing gunshots in the nearby mountains. That night, six families decided to evacuate, but the soldiers came with them and positioned themselves between civilians during the trek. The soldiers said that they accompanied the families to protect them, but it was clear to the residents that they were being used as shields because the soldiers walked in the middle of the group. As they passed through Purok 2 and 3 of Bgy. Ferlda, 52 Mamanwa (a Lumad group) families joined the evacuees, swelling the number of those who arrived in Brgy. Ombon to 58 families.

On March 23, soldiers opened fire at three Mamanwas who went to get firewood in sitio Omaw in Camam-onan village. Balodoy Enano was hit in the arm, while Bukas Prada and Toto Calingasan were able to run to safety. Balodoy later saw soldiers of the 30th IBPA who told him not to say that they were the ones who shot him. The soldiers gave Balodoy one tablet each of paracetamol and mefenamic acid, and left him on his own. The victim passed out from blood loss and hunger, but was able to walk and reach help the next day.

**TABLE 3**

Victims of Extrajudicial Killing and Enforced Disappearance under the Noynoy Aquino Government  
BY REGION

July 2010 to Dec 2012

REGION	Extrajudicial Killing	Enforced Disappearance
Ilocos	3	0
Cordillera Administrative Region	1	0
Cagayan Valley	4	0
Central Luzon	8	0
National Capital Region	10	0
Southern Tagalog	21	3
Bicol	34	3
Western Visayas	9	4
Central Visayas	1	0
Eastern Visayas	7	0
Northern Mindanao	6	0
Caraga	4	3
Socsksargen	7	0
Western Mindanao	3	0
Southern Mindanao	14	1
ARMM	5	0
Women	17	
Organized	67	

There are more than 45 Lumad, farmers and other activists in the Caraga region whose names have been maliciously inserted in existing warrants of arrest by state security agents. In the whole island, there are more than 159 individuals facing fabricated malicious charges in an attempt by the government to prevent them from carrying out their work for human rights. Warrants of arrests, subpoenas were issued and other forms of harassment and intimidation were committed.

The case of Genasque Enriquez illustrates the wanton disregard for due process of law. Genasque is an officer of the indigenous group Kasalo in the Caraga region. A Manobo, Genasque is the second nominee of Katribu Partylist. He has frequented media outlets for interviews, constantly espousing the indigenous people's struggle to assert their right to self-determination.

However, the AFP, in its failure to ward off armed attacks by the New People's Army on mining firms in Caraga, filed retaliatory fabricated charges against leaders of people's organizations and the peasantry.

The case of Genasque Enriquez finds resonance in a similar plight of human rights defenders Benjamin Labastin, a teacher at La Salle University-Ozamiz who was arrested as he was lecturing to his students; Helen Igloria, a community health worker who was nabbed at her home in Dipolog City for malicious charges of frustrated murder; and Anelfa Gemilo, a Blaen woman leader, who was framed and falsely accused of being an NPA courier after she led communities to fight for fair prices for their harvests and for reduction in prices of farm inputs.

**b. Use of the military, police, paramilitaries or private security agencies to counter peoples' opposition to such "development" projects;**

The government wants to quell resistance to maldevelopment projects in resource-rich regions areas, such as logging, mining and other extractive industries, as well as agribusiness plantations for bio-fuel or export agricultural products.

In the Southern Mindanao region, the government focuses on the three mining areas, Mt. Diwalwal and Pantukan in Compostela Valley and Mati in Davao Oriental. In pantukan, Compostela Valley, locals battle against the encroachment of large-scale mining companies, Nationwide Development Corporation (Nadecor), Napnapan Mineral Resources, Inc. (NMRI) and Russel Mining and Minerals, Inc., an American company.

The government awarded the three companies contracts covering more than 7,000 hectares of land with deposits of gold, bronze, copper and silver. Soldiers have encamped in Napnapan village since the start of the operation of the NMRI and Russel Mining in 2011.

Soldiers figured on the search and rescue operations in the aftermath of the landslides in Pantukan town. The recurrent killer landslides in the area are the consequence of large-scale logging from the 1950s as well as both large- and small-scale mining in the past decades. But in between disasters, the AFP maintains soldiers in Pantukan to secure the equipment of large

mining companies and to quell the people's resistance against the encroachment of these companies into their communities. The presence of armed soldiers does not deter the occurrence of crime, but even cause the deaths of residents, as shown in two separate cases of killings that happened in Napnapan village, Pantukan in 2011.

In another case of human rights violation, **Jimmy Liguyon**, 37, leader of the Matigsalog tribe and village chair of Dao, San Fernando, Bukidnon was shot in front of his house by Alde Salusad, a member of a paramilitary group on March 5, 2012. Salusad, accompanied by other paramilitary, even declared that he killed Jimmy because he refused to sign a certification for Sanmatrida, or the San Fernando Matigsalog, Tigwahanon, Manobo Tribal Datu Association.

The Sanmatrida is facilitating the entry and operation of mining companies in Lumad areas. It has laid claim to 53,000 hectares in 12 villages, and is being resisted by tribal leaders including Liguyon.

Salusad and Sanmatrida are closely linked with the 8th IBPA based in Halapitan, San Fernando. In 2011, Liguyon received death threats and was harassed by Salusad's group. San Christo, a mining company affiliated with Indophil, is reportedly interested in the area. Indophil is one of SMI-Xtrata-Copper's partners in mining activities in Tampakan, South Cotabato.

After Jimmy was killed, Salusad and his paramilitary group kept prowling around the community. Eighty three individuals, mostly Jimmy's relatives and members of local indigenous organization Kasilo, evacuated and sought sanctuary in the Provincial Capitol grounds in San Fernando, Bukidnon.

At the November 9 Mindanao public hearing of the Committee on Human Rights of the House of Representatives, Brig. Gen. Romeo Gapuz of the 4th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army (IDPA) admitted that Benjamin "Nonong" Salusad, surrendered to the AFP in 2011 under the rebel returnee program and is now a member of the CAFGU. Even prior to the killing of tribal leader Jimmy Liguyon, Salusad and his group had been linked to two other cases of extrajudicial killing. They are also involved in cases of abduction, coercion, threats, harassment and divestment of properties in Bukidnon. Salusad and several others, including his son Alde, have pending warrants of arrest. While the AFP continues to deny the links between the military and NIPAR (New Indigenous Peoples' Army), Gapuz admitted that they are "coddling" Nonong Salusad.

Demolition projects also bring their share of human rights violations. Two urban poor leaders who consistently defended their right to housing were killed last year. The residents of urban poor communities and their leaders continue to be under attack, especially during violent demolition operations of the police.

**Ernesto Gulfo**, 52, chair of the Alyansa Kontra-Demolisyon Malabon chapter, was shot dead on May 30, inside his home in Catmon, Malabon City. Gulfo was also the chair of the Alyansa ng Nagkakaisang Samahan ng Maralita sa Malabon. He was among those who led the people's barricade to stop the May 21 demolition of 30 houses in Catmon. The city government

is pushing for the demolition of the houses of 1,500 families to clear the area for the Community Mortgage Program.

On the eve of the protest against Pres. Aquino's State of the Nation Address (SONA) on July 22, **Marilou "Malou" Valle**, 43, president of the Samahan sa Sitio Damayang Nananambakan-Kadamay, was shot and killed in front of her house in Happyland, Bgy 105, Tondo, Manila. Her two children heard the gunshots and saw barangay tanods (village guards) and brothers Benjamin or Ben and Raffy Tejas leaving their house. Malou's 16-year-old son rushed to the nearest police station, PCP Sub-station 10, and reported the shooting, but the policemen did not take any action. The Tejas brothers went back and threatened the victim's family and their neighbours, and again fired shots at Malou's lifeless body.

That same night, the Tejas brothers and several companions forced their way into the house of Malou's brother **Gerry Bacani**, and shot him. Gerry and his 20-year-old son Ninoy were both wounded.

Four months prior to the killing, on March 4, the Tejas brothers and their other relatives had threatened Malou and her teenage daughter at home, because Malou distributed Kadamay leaflets in the community. In turn, Malou filed cases of grave threat and child abuse. The Tejas brothers did not attend the last hearing on July 20, two days before they killed Malou. On July 31, Malou's family filed murder charges against the Tejas brothers at the Manila City hall.

A youth was also killed in a violent demolition where police used live bullets to disperse barricades. **Arnel Leonor**, 20, a youth resident of **Silverio Compound**, Parañaque was killed in one such violent demolition on April 23. The residents of Silverio Compound put up a barricade to stop the demolition of their homes and the wet market that was acquired and partially paid for by a past local administration for the Community Mortgage Program. The current administration, however, had reportedly made deals with Henry Sy's SM Development Corporation. Scores were wounded or hurt in the shooting and mauling by the police.

Thirty three people, including eight minors, were arrested. Some of them were just passing by, but were also charged with resisting arrest and disobedience to lawful order.

## **2. Opportunities of a human-rights based approach to development/best measures to mitigate the challenges**

Karapatan recommends two resolutions to promote a human-rights based approach to development:

- a) **Government authorities should heed call of the communities/human rights defenders** such as their call for the scrapping of the Mining Act, the Public-Private partnership program, Executive Order 546, and other anti-people policies;

### *Mining Act*

Since the early 1980s, mining companies have opened large open cast mines, depleting mineral reserves, disrupting and polluting water supplies and destroying

large swathes of mountainside. These problems were compounded in 1995 when the Philippine Congress approved Republic Act 7942, the Mining Act, liberalizing mineral exploitation, including foreign investment.

The commercial mining activities as well as the logging operations of various corporations affect both the present and future generations of the indigenous peoples. If perpetuated, it will destroy the ancestral domain, culture and identity of the people. The evidence is very much reflected in the cases of Toronto Ventures in Zamboanga and Lafayette Mining Corporation in Rapu-rapu Island.

Such forms of rights violations have brought about a resistance by the people to claim their rights to land, culture and identity. But it has been met with various human rights violations manifested in arbitrary arrest, persecution, torture, killings, destruction of property and land by military forces including extrajudicial killings.

In South Cotabatao, where there is a strong opposition of residents against the open-pit mining operations of Australian mining company Xstrata-SMI, the military conducted operations to pave the way for the entry and plunder of this corporation. Anti-mining activists Eliezer “Boy” Bilanes was killed in 2009, reportedly because of his leading role in the campaign against the Xstrata-SMI mining operations. The plunder of the rich natural resources and the militarization in the region continued under the U.S.-Noynoy Aquino regime. Like in several provinces in the whole of Mindanao, the military are deployed especially in areas where mining and agri-plantation operations of multinational corporations are being conducted.

Karapatan calls for the immediate scrapping of the Mining Act.

#### *Public-Private partnership program*

Karapatan believes that, through the PPP, big business interests are protected and guaranteed by the State, even as it pushes the economy to further backwardness with no real industries that generate jobs. For 2012, the government was set to bid 16 new PPP projects that cover, among others, construction of road networks and airports to boost tourism in the country. These so-called development projects only show the lack of sincerity and seriousness of the government to tackle the root causes of poverty in the country. As long as issues such as landlessness and the lack of vital industries continue to be ignored by the government, economic growth and real development in the country will remain hampered.

Furthermore, the government aims to increase investment in mining export by 2016 through “generation of more investments in mining and mineral processing and mineral based manufacturing industries”. This means that there is focus on attracting more foreign direct investments (FDI) in mining. With Aquino’s new Executive Order 79, however, it is expected that lands and resources will increasingly be opened up for large-scale foreign and domestic mining companies<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Aquino’s EO 79 served as marching orders to the Investment Defense Forces – the Phil. Army, CAFGU and the paramilitary groups that are accredited as Special Civilian Armed Auxiliary (SCAA) – to clear the mining areas,

Thus, the Aquino administration continues its counter-insurgency operations through Oplan Bayanihan, to quell dissent and opposition to such policies and situations. The Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) is known to have caused displacements of thousands of people in the urban and rural areas.

#### *Executive Order 546*

Executive Order 546 directs the Philippine National Police to undertake active support to the armed forces of the Philippines in internal security operations for the suppression of insurgency and other serious threats to national security, and amends provisions of Executive Order 110 series 1999.

Karapatan calls for the dismantling of paramilitary forces such as the CAFGU and SCAA through the revocation of Executive Order 546 and other similar policies. This decree legitimizes the use of civilian military groups as force multipliers in combating rebel groups. What the government does not say is that these groups are also used to protect operations of mining firms.

Since martial law up to the present dispensation of Pres. Noynoy Aquino, paramilitary groups— then called the Civilian Home Defense Force (CHDF), and currently known as the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) today— have been synonymous with terror and human rights abuses, as they are seen as crucial elements of counter-insurgency programs such as Marcos’ Oplan Katatagan/Operation Sagittarius and Noynoy’s Oplan Bayanihan. They are meant to silence the legitimate opposition of the people to anti-poor projects of the government.

The New Indigenous People’s Army Reform (NIPAR), a known paramilitary group under the control of the 8th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army, struck anew in Brgy. Dao, San Fernando, Bukidnon, as they set up camp, threatened and harassed indigenous peoples in the area, resulting to the forced evacuation of 12 families to Malaybalay, in front of the Provincial Capitol. According to the residents, NIPAR and its leaders Alde and Benjamin Salusad (who have been mentioned earlier in this report) used brute force and harassment to force them to allow large-scale mining in their 52,000-hectare ancestral domain.

- b) **Big business, especially foreign-owned ones, should heed the call of the communities/human rights defenders** to stop their operations in communities and respect the ancestral lands, patrimony and sovereignty of the country

The Philippines is one of the world’s most mineral rich-areas yet foreign mining firms and their local partners rather than the Filipino people and mining communities have benefited. The government’s “flagship” mining project with Australian company Lafayette in Rapu-Rapu Island, Albay province started operating in 2005 but has already resulted in two destructive mine spills. Toxic

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and remove hindrances such as a resistant populace. In several instances, the military even tried to cover up the killings, claiming that the civilian victims were NPA rebels killed in an encounter with soldiers.

contamination in nearby coastal communities has caused already meager incomes of hundreds of small fishermen to collapse.

The continuing survival of indigenous peoples as distinct peoples is threatened by attacks on their rights to ancestral domain and on their livelihoods. The government continues to encourage destructive mining operations – the majority of its mining projects are in identified ancestral lands – and large dam projects.

**3. Please explain how, in your view, large-scale development projects can best be elaborated in order to the effective participation of human rights defenders. Please describe participation/ consultation mechanisms in place and provide examples of good practices.**

In Karapatan’s view, there is a big disparity between the perspectives of the human rights defenders and the people, on one side, and the view of the government and big business, on the other side, on the concept of “development.”

We oppose the neoliberal economic model where development strategies such as liberalization, privatisation and deregulation are being utilized, albeit with immense transgressions on the lives and rights of peoples across the globe.

In the Philippines, President Aquino has continuously pursued the path of mining liberalization. His administration aims to reinforce the extractive, export-oriented and import-dependent nature of the mining industry. More mineral areas are being reserved exclusively for mining operations, overriding any pre-existing land uses. The government vilifies movements and local governments opposing the entry of destructive mining operations in their jurisdictions, dismissing these as anti-mining and therefore anti-“development”. It favors the liberalization of the industry, blaming small-scale miners for environmental destruction. It projects large-scale mining operations as highly-regulated while downplaying their environmental and social impacts. It remains silent on its crimes against affected grassroots communities.

Human rights defenders and the communities of which they are part of believe that genuine development comes from the upliftment of their status when the policies on the domestic economy in along the framework of nationalist industrialization and agrarian reform.

This is in contrary to government’s and big business’ motivations in allowing the plunder of the country’s natural resources for the kind of development that is detrimental to the people’s interests – one that results to loss of land, resource and livelihood of peoples, environmental destruction, human rights violations etc.

With such view in mind, Karapatan asserts that the Philippines has no mechanisms that are rights-based and democratic.

**4. How do you think that human rights defenders can effectively monitor the impact of large-scale development projects? Please provide examples of successful experiences/ mechanisms in this regard and kindly address the issues below.**

The mechanisms that are in place on this regard are largely that of the civil society mechanisms and not by the State mechanisms. Karapatan's mechanism is an example that we can provide.

Effective monitoring of the impact of large-scale development projects is done through the concerted efforts of the local communities, people's organizations, and human rights workers in the area. Investigation and study of the communities, participatory methods in gathering and analyzing the communities' views on the projects, formation of advocacy and quick reaction plans are all part of Karapatan's global approach to monitor the impact of large-scale development projects.

**a. Kindly indicate how relevant information about large-scale development projects is made available and accessible to the public. Provide concrete examples if applicable.**

Relevant information about large-scale development projects is made available through the partnership of the communities, people's organizations and human rights organizations, urgent bulletins/alerts, situationers, information are published in the mainstream media; government authorities and big business officials are engaged in the area for dialogue, meetings etc.

The communities and organisations also organize protest actions by themselves. Last year, two waves of delegations from Mindanao which travelled to Manila brought to the attention of the public, media and national government officials in Manila the human rights situation in Southern Philippines, especially the killings of indigenous peoples' leaders who are fighting against large-scale mining operations and the highly repressive Oplan Bayanihan. Before the December 10 International Day of Human Rights, a delegation of more than 70 peasant and *Lumad* leaders, evacuees, victims and families of extrajudicial killings arrived in nation's capital to air their concerns and demands to the national government.

**b. How can defenders complain if they feel that human rights are unduly restricted or violated in the context of the implementation of large-scale development projects? Kindly provide concrete examples of mechanisms in place to seek redress at every stage of the process, that is, assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.**

In Karapatan's experience, we have assisted defenders, families and communities in accessing all available complaint mechanisms – local courts, Commission on Human Rights, Supreme Court, UN international bodies. We have done this in the several cases in Mindanao.

c. **How do you ensure that human rights defenders can peacefully voice their opposition to development projects without fear of intimidation or violence of any sort?**

We believe that this issue should be the State's main responsibility. Our role is that of supporting the initiatives of the defenders and their communities in organizing and mobilizing communities to pursue their own development models.

Moreover, there is no mechanisms that can assure the security of human right defenders as long as Oplan Bayanihan is operational since its methods are based on intimidation and violence. Members of various community-based and non-government organizations are harassed and threatened by the military, preventing these groups from rendering services in education, health and human rights.

On September 21, 2011, Bagong Alyansang Makabayan – Panay chapter education officer, **Geobelyn Lopez- Beraye** received a letter through postal service warning her that “helping” the Regional Committee of the CPP will put herself, and her family in danger. The letter was signed by a certain Alvin Salvador. It also said that a warrant for her arrest will come out soon, for charges of rebellion, extortion, arson with robbery and murder.

A month earlier, **Diogenes Primalion**, a taxi driver and former staff of Paghugpong sang Mangunguma sa Panay kag Guimaras (Pamanggas), also received a similar letter handed to him by two suspected ISAFP agents who boarded his taxi. One of the suspects alleged that Primalion was the rebel named “Ka Gomez.” The other suspect threatened Diogenes of being disappeared like Nilo Arado and Ma. Luisa Posa Dominado, activists in Panay who were abducted in 2006 and remain missing.

A staff of the international environment watchdog, 350.org, was a victim of the long tail of surveillance of the military. From July 29 to 30, 2011, **Vince Cinches**, a local coordinator for 350. org, was tailed by suspected intelligence agents while traveling to Dumaguete City from Cebu. One of the agents sat next to Cinches on the bus and began interrogating him on his purpose in Dumaguete City. The suspected agent told Cinches that there were “many NPAs and communists in the city already,” and that they have assigned soldiers in plainclothes to guard where Cinches will be staying. The agent also warned the environment advocate that he may become a victim of enforced disappearance.

These are just a few examples of the countless cases of harassment that activists and human right advocates must live with. Those for which threats do not materialize may consider themselves lucky since most cases of extrajudicial killings and abductions were initiated by similar methods of intimidation. We believe these threats feed the climate of terror in which activists are forced to work in and that they are made to discourage people to oppose large-scale development projects.

- 5. How, in your view, can business and corporations involved in large-scale development and investment projects be best monitored regarding corporate social responsibility principles and their engagement with human rights defenders? What is, in your view, the role of defenders in this process and how could their capacity to engage be strengthened?**

The State should be in the best position and with the prime responsibility to monitor businesses and corporations involved in large-scale development and investment projects, because in the first place, it is the State which provided them the approval for such operations in communities in the Philippines. Monitoring of the State should consider the immediate and strategic impacts of these investment projects on the lives of the people in the communities.

The defenders should be capacitated in their study, investigation and monitoring of the impact of these projects on the communities. They should be likewise capacitated to do advocacy work and engagement with local and national authorities and big business.

Instead, the defenders are being labelled as enemy of the State and are frequently eliminated, abducted or tortured by the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Business and corporations should ask the government to ensure that human rights are respected as a precondition for their investment.

- 6. How, in your view, should development cooperation programmes integrate the role of human rights defenders and the notion of a safe and enabling environment in recipient countries? How do you think can the expertise of human rights defenders on the ground be best used to design, implement, monitor and evaluate development cooperation programmes? How should security/ protection concerns be addressed when necessary?**

Development cooperation programmes should first of all acknowledge the role, capacity and rights of human rights defenders and the communities they represent in pursuing development projects in the Philippines. In fact, they should be the ones prioritised in terms of support in developing their expertise. As we mentioned in our precedent answers, rather, the opposite is happening: human right defenders are intimidated, abducted and assassinated by State agents who believe it is their duty to muzzle the opposition by all means possible.

Oplan Bayanihan prevents any attempts to resolve security issues. Instead of protecting the people, the military and the paramilitary groups terrorize the local populations located in the areas where the large-scale development projects are carried out.

The culture of impunity which ensures that the perpetrators of human rights violations can escape justice also prevents the resolution of security concerns. This problem comes from a justice system that is underfunded, understaffed, and backlogged. The lack of political will to resolve cases of human right violations is equally responsible for the persistence of this culture of impunity. The police and courts fail to conduct proper

investigations and prosecute those responsible for the crimes. At the same time, higher levels of government are tied up with corrupt local power holders who are directly responsible for the abuses. As long as this culture prevails, the safety of human right defenders and the communities they represent cannot be guaranteed.