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FACT SHEET

Case Number:

Case: Killing/Frustrated Killing; threat

Victims: Killed in the incident are:

1. Arpe "Datu Lapugotan" Belayong, 40 years old, male, Higaonon, member of the local Higaonon organization Linundigan, married to Mayse Manguanta, with five (5) children ranging in age from one year to fifteen years old, from Mount Manalog, Brgy. Calabu-an, Esperanza, Agusan del Sur. He was a nephew of Datu Mampaagi Belayong, founding chairperson of Linundigan, who was killed in 2009; and
2. Sulte San-ogan, 21 years old, male, Higaonon, nephew of Arpe's wife Mayse, deaf-mute, also a member of Linundigan, single, neighbor of Arpe Belayong.

Wounded in the incident are two children of Arpe and Mayse Belayong, namely:

1. Michelle Belayong, 14 years old, female
2. Adeb Belayong, 4 years old, male

Harassed were staff of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, Datu Man-altuwan, and members of the local Higaonon organization Linundigan-Kalumbay during their formal meeting with Esperanza Mayor Nida Manpatilan

Date of Incident: June 6, 2011

June 30, 2011 at around 5 o' clock in the morning

Place of Incident: Mount Manalog, Brgy. Calabuan, Esperanza, Agusan del Sur

Perpetrator/s: Identified members of the SCAA and paramilitary group known as "Salakawan" meaning *enforcer of all laws*, formerly known as the Manpatilan private army called Wild Dogs, armed with garrand, M14 and carbine rifles, namely:

1. Laging Binsalan
2. Tala Mansinugdan
3. Edik Bat-ongan – kadre sa SCAA sa Brgy Salog
4. Person known as Ihag, part of the personal security detail of Mayor Nida Manpatilan, wife of former Mayor Deo Manpatilan

Former Esperanza Mayor Deo Manpatilan and his wife, current Esperanza Mayor Nida Manpatilan and their personal bodyguards

Motive: Clearing operations of the Salakawan to pave the way for the entry of logging and mining companies in the ancestral domain areas of the Higaonon Tribe claimed through the approved CADT by Deo Manpatilan, self-acclaimed Higaonon tribal leader, known warlord and local politician. Manpatilan's Wild Dogs that is now known as Salakawan, is an armed group that is locally feared, notorious for committing atrocities, including killings, against political opponents and local activists in the guise of anti-communist operations. Salakawan is known to also include the private armies and SCAA under the command of lumad aristocrats Ronald Manhumosay, Benhur Mansulonay and Mario Napungahan.

Background

In 2006, Higaonon communities opposed to self-acclaimed Higaonon tribal leader Ronald Manhumosay's CADT claim in the Higaonon ancestral domain areas in Agusan del Norte were harassed by his armed Bungkatol Liberation Front (BULIF), a paramilitary group formed by the Kahugpungan sa Nagkahiusang Minorya (KNM), a government-initiated tribal organization as part of the "Zone of Peace" effort under Oplan Lambat Bitag in 1992. It claims representation for the Higaonon in negotiations with the NCIP and TRICOM. **Datu Ronald Manhumosay** is the current president of the KNM. It is the holder of CADT 18, covering communities from Km.30 onwards along the Nasipit Lumber Company (NALCO) road.

Many Higaonon died in connection with this conflict, among them Somo Senga, whose killing was among those reported to UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston when he visited Mindanao in 2007.

Despite reports of killings and harassment perpetrated by private armed groups in claiming territories in the resource-rich Higaonon ancestral domain, the PNP and AFP has tolerated the continued arming of groups such as the BULIF and Manpatilan's Wild Dogs. With the addition of the AFP's Task Force Gantangan – Bagani Force, more rogue armed bands are roaming the mountains of these areas.

As the harassment escalated in 2007 that resulted in the closure of literacy-numeracy schools in Lawan-Lawan, Las Nieves Agusan del Norte, small Higaonon communities opposed to Manhumosay's claim were displaced deep into the mountains in the quadri-boundary of Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Misamis Oriental and Bukidnon. Those who relocated from Las Nieves, Agusan del Norte to escape Manhumosay's BULIF and went to the hinterland communities in Esperanza, Agusan del Sur are now prey to Manpatilan's Wild Dog.

In 2009, Datu Mampaagi Belayong, elder and founding chairman of progressive Higaonon organization Linundigan, was killed in his home in Brgy. Kinamaybay, Esperanza in Agusan del Sur by known members of the TFG-BF and BULIF in a joint operation. Despite first hand witnesses to the killing, no arrests were made in connection with this case. One of the known perpetrators in Datu Mampaagi's killing, Commander Bawang, has verbally attacked progressive organizations and their leaders and has vowed to wipe out their ranks.

As big investors in oil palm plantation and mining target the forest areas in Esperanza, CADT claims of lumad dealers Manpatilan, Manhumosay, Mansulonay and Napongahan become more valuable and stand to personally benefit them to the detriment of the lumad communities they claim to protect. Exploiting the prescriptions of the defective Indigenous People's Rights Law and its corrupt National Commission on the Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), instead of genuinely respecting the right to self-determination and concretely recognizing their ancestral domain,

these instruments have become tools for further exploitation and sellout of the natural resources that they have preserved for generations.

Circumstances

In March 2011, local Higaonon organization Linundigan, through their elder Datu Man-altuwan requested the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP) to establish a community school in Semontanan, Brgy. Calabuan in the mountains of Esperanza, Agusan del Sur. Understanding the need for such a lumad school and with the community's cooperation, RMP decided to respond positively to the request.

Arpe Belayong supported Linundigan's initiative to have the RMP school in their community. He was a father of three school-age children and also a member of the Parent-Teacher-Community Organization of their community school in Lawan-Lawan, Las Nieves from where they were displaced two years ago. Although he lived four-days-hike away from the village center of Semontanan in the middle of the forest, he welcomed the building of the school.

On May 11, 2011, Arpe was visited by Bontula, younger brother of Tala Mansinogdan, who told him that Tala was being held captive by Laging Binasalan, a known member of Manpatilan's Wild Dog, now Salakawan. On May 14, Tala himself visited Arpe and warned him that Laging released him on the condition that Tala convince Arpe to leave his Mansalog home and farm because it is Laging's territory. Arpe's wife Mayse asked that they be allowed to harvest their crop before leaving the area.

Meanwhile, on June 6, 2011, staff of RMP with Datu Man-altuwan, Brgy. Captain of Brgy. Calabuan and local members of Linundigan from Semontanan visited the office of Mayor Nida Manpatilan in Brgy. Poblacion, Esperanza, Agusan del Sur. Former Mayor Deo Manpatilan was also in Mayor Nida's office at the time. Only RMP staff, Datu Man-altuwan and Calabuan Brgy. Captain were allowed an audience with the Mayor.

During the interview, Deo Manpatilan repeatedly warned Datu Man-altuwan's decision to allow the RMP to start a school in Semontanan, saying that the children would be taught anti-government and subversive songs. He warned the Brgy. Captain and Datu Man-altuwan that should anything happen to the community related to RMP's running of the school, the Esperanza LGU cannot be held responsible and cannot intervene. In his parting shot, Deo Manpatilan reminded the RMP to strictly follow legal procedure with the Department of Education with regards to the opening of the school.

After their interview, Datu Man-altuwan was brought to Deo Manpatilan's home and was further warned about allowing the RMP into Semontanan. He was presented with the alternative of allowing a logging firm to help them build a school instead.

Despite the threats, RMP was able to get the support of Linundigan through their resolution, affirming their desire to have a community school in Semontanan.

On the third week of June, Tala returned to Arpe's home to inform him that Laging Binasalan and his Salakawan group was going to launch an operation to clear Mount Manalog.

On June 30, at around 5am, while Arpe was lying on the floor of his house with his wife Mayse and children Jea Mae, 1 year old, Adeb, 4 years old and Edjon, 8 years old, they heard men lying on the ground outside their house. About two meters from their house, Arpe's daughter Michelle, 14 years old and his nephew Solte, 21 years old were asleep in a neighboring house. All of a sudden, gunfire was directed at the house where Michelle and Solte

were sleeping. Solte jumped out of the house and was followed by gunfire. Michelle saw Solte fall to the ground as she was hit on the left leg and rolled down the hillside to hide below.

Men also entered Arpe's house and as he tossed Jea Mae to Mayse's arms, he was shot twice on the chest, falling over Adeb, who was still lying on the floor. After seeing Tala Mansinugdan and Laging Binsalan among the armed men who shot Arpe, Mayse jumped out of the house with Jea Mae and rolled down the hill to their farm plot below. She saw wounded Michelle and told her to hide while she ran two kilometers for help to house of Lagdam Hanghadon, her cousin and their nearest neighbors.

Learning of the events in Arpe's house, Lagdam's children Dexter, Donie and Jun-Jun Hangadon returned to the place of the incident at around 9am and saw Arpe's dead body lying over Adeb who was found alive with a leg wound and covered in his fathers blood. They saw the things in Arpe's house scattered all over the house and some piled over his body. They also retrieved Solte's dead body 3 meters away from Arpe's house. They also brought back Michelle whom they saw hiding in the nearby farm at the foot of the hill where their house was situated.

After placing the two dead bodies side by side inside the Belayong house, tying and wrapping them in cloth and plastic sheeting, they were not able to bury the bodies because they were worried that the armed men would go back for them. After arranging the corpses in the house, the Hangadon brothers took Michelle and Adeb back to Lagdam's house where they were reunited with their family.

For fear of the members of the Salakawan patrolling the mountains, it took 10 days for the family to find assistance and seek sanctuary in the lowlands. In the meantime

Michelle and Adeb are currently being treated for their bullet wounds. Mayse, Jea Mae and Edjon are recovering from their experiences.

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