

BATINGAW; BELL; HERALD; The New Voice of Filipino Migrants in Australia

Scores of leftist activists were killed by unidentified assailants, often reportedly linked to the armed forces. Peace talks between the government and armed groups – Muslim separatists in Mindanao, communist rebels – made limited or no progress. Arbitrary arrests, unlawful killings, torture and “disappearances” were reported in the context of military counter-insurgency operations. Armed groups were responsible for 683 politically motivated murders too many...



STOP THE KILLINGS IN THE PHILIPPINES

From the 2006 Report Summary on Human Rights Situation in the Philippines by Amnesty International



In this Edition

ISSUE

3

JULY '06

- Statements: On the Human Rights Situation in the Philippines
- Features: International Solidarity to STOP the KILLINGS in the Philippines
- Reflections: Rubbles and Riches
- Profile: Philippine Australian Solidarity Association

Criticism and Good Governance

by George Kotsakis
Chairperson - Migrante Melbourne



Total disregard for human rights seems to be the order of the day in the Philippines.

Mainstream media - print or otherwise- in the Philippines, Australia and the world - has been bypassing the stories as if they are non-essential, non-event happenings not worth the ink or saliva. Yet statistics from groups documenting these killings since the ascension of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in 2001 have attested that 687 civilian were killed in her watch. This year alone from January to 27th June, 87 civilians have been extra-judicially slain.

Notably those that have been summarily executed in cold blood were from the most vocal groups of Filipinos raising issues on the day to day hardship of citizens. They were gunned down for just wanting and calling the attention of the country's leader about their plight, about the injustice they don't deserve, about the rights that have been denied them.

All of them are asking that the government do all its best to extricate the Filipinos from the quagmire of hopelessness; free them from the quicksand of poverty, from the military stranglehold that kills their long, besotted and cherished liberty. All of them were ordinary people: lay persons, religious pastors, barangay captains, community leaders, political organizers, union leaders, workers, journalist, wives, and children - from what the incumbent denigrates as the opposition to good government.

There must be a reason why for all the outcry of even the once rabid supporters of the government, no justice, no investigation have been carried out or if there could be one nothing has come out of it. The national police that were instructed to investigate the murders have yet to put their act together.

Helen Clarke, New Zealand's Prime Minister, in her meeting with President Gloria Arroyo, has expressed deep concern about the spate of this murderous rampage occurring under Macapagal-Arroyo's watch. This sharp rebuke prompted Pres. Arroyo to form an investigative committee. To date this committee has not produced any conclusive findings leading us to believe that it was formed as a gesture to appease the international community- no more, no less.

Why should George Vigo, a catholic peace advocate and his wife, Masel Alave-Vigo and a staff worker be killed for airing the inadequacies of the local government? Why kill Andy Pawikan, a UCCP licentiate pastor who preached that justice should reign not only in heaven but especially now on earth and during Pres. Arroyo's regime.

Countless others from the mining communities were gunned down because they are vocal in exposing the exploitation of natural resources by greedy transnational corporations. Do tell me, have these companies brought what they have committed to bring, the so called *prosperity*, to the community or to the country? What the big mining companies have given the Filipinos for the plunder were even more miseries.

Just look at two current mining projects which involve Australian interests. La Fayette, an Australian mining company in Rapu-Rapu island of Albay spilled its mine tailings into the coastal areas of the island. And Climax Company Ltd and Arimco mining in Isabela and Nueva Vizcaya threaten to displace 55,000 people and pollute the Cagayan River which over 1.7 million people rely for water. The toxic mine tailings disasters initially have been covered up the complicit national and local governments. Communities are left to fend for themselves without compensation or restitution for the disasters. This rampant exploitation of our natural resources without any regards for the lives of our *kababayan* is obviously rape of the motherland by imperialist nations.

If good administration were to be measured in the action of its leaders then this murders must be accounted for by the leaders. To answer by brute force the questions of governance of the country only shows that this government is grossly inadequate and ineffectual. To put forward a charter change can not solve Philippine society's problems.

A leadership which professes to serve the people would logically fashion an administration that is just, democratic, progressive and partisan to the welfare of the people. On the other hand, a self-serving leader will most likely turn out to be autocratic.

Any government must have its citizens' best interest foremost in mind. It must see to it that its people is cared for, protected and nurtured. We have not seen this with present government. It scores zero so far in its service to the people. It has not protected her premier bread earner (no less than 10 million overseas contract workers) instead used them as milking cows to earn more praise to its imperialist overlord and to maintain her malice and extravagance. It has neglected to protect her citizens, and has instead gone on a rampage to silence her critics and declared an all out war against her sons and daughters. This current government clearly has not served and provided for its people.

A fundamentally egalitarian and sound political system is a continuing struggle of Filipinos. The Mabinis, the Silangs, the Gomburzas and countless Katipuneros are wailing from their graves. Let us not forget the sacrifices that these heroes have selflessly given to free the country from tyrants from within and from without. Always in the brink but never attained, Filipinos have yet to experienced genuine political, economic and cultural freedom. When it does come, how sweet is victory.

Filipinos, this is your time! Let us fight for a government that will truly serve the interest of the majority - the ordinary people. Demand Good Governance. It is your right.

ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THE PHILIPPINES**GMA is giving the go-signal for more political killings through murder fund**

Migrante Melbourne condemned Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's 1B peso murder fund in to order to crush the insurgency in two years, warning that this would result in more murders of leftist activists by government-sponsored death squads. Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo ordered the release of 1 billion pesos (A\$27 million) to fund the military's anti-insurgency operations against the New People's Army (NPA) and order the military to crush the insurgency in two years.

"We lament the effects on Mrs. Arroyo's pronouncement," said Migrante Melbourne secretary Reyvi Marinas. "Her declaration of a 'total war' policy will further result in gross violations of already appalling human rights condition in the country."

"Arroyo's announcement practically funds more political murders," said Marinas, referring to the spate of targeted assassinations of leftist activists by government-sponsored death squads.

From January 21, 2001 to May 31, 2006, the report claims there have been 679 victims of political killings, 350 victims of frustrated killing, with 168 persons abducted and remain missing. Of those killed, 301 were social activists. 44 children have allegedly been killed and 5 unborn babies died with their mothers due to military and paramilitary operations that have also uprooted numerous families according to reports by Human Rights group Karapatan.

"Mrs. Arroyo is giving a go signal to the military that they may intensify attacks on unarmed civilians and "collateral damage is ok. From now on, we shall hold Mrs. Arroyo directly responsible for any and all extrajudicial killings that may take place," added Marinas.

Stop the killings!
Justice for all the victims of state repression!
Uphold human rights!

Migrante Melbourne will co-host on 14th July 2006, 5:30pm in front of State Library, Swanston Street a Lantern Vigil to Stop Political Killings in the Philippines. For further information call 1300 3666 74

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About Batingaw

Batingaw is a bi-monthly newsletter expressing views, news and analysis from Migrante Melbourne. An important aspect of developing this newsletter is an intimate knowledge of and close involvement in all aspects of the Philippine and Australian struggles for justice, democracy and fair-go.

Contributing to Batingaw:

Articles, photographs, cartoons, clippings, comments or a few lines are all very welcome. All material should be sent electronically to: melbourne@migrante.org.au. Readers are encouraged to contribute whatever they can by sending donations to the above address.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

International Solidarity to **STOP** the **KILLINGS** in the Philippines



“The Arroyo regime has repeatedly used force and state terror against the people and those whom her armed forces perceive to be enemies of the state.”

Blood is being spilt across the globe with US President George Bush’s “war on terror”. Human rights violations are viciously rampant and the effects have left thousands of people displaced, incapacitated, killed and their families rendered destitute. Citizens of Afghanistan, Iraq, are only some of those victimized by this US war of aggression. Other citizens of the world are being subjected to the same or even more atrocious human rights violations like in the Philippines.

The Philippines has been declared by the US government as a “second-front” in its “war on terror”. At the same time, in recognition of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s unflinching support to US wars of aggression, she was named as head of the anti-terror task force in the ASEAN, and the Philippines declared as a major “Non-NATO ally”.

As a country already beset with severe political and economic crises, human rights violations have become more than ever a major concern of Filipinos under the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (GMA) Regime. Entering into its fifth year of governance, the GMA regime has repeatedly used force and state terror against the people and those whom her armed forces perceive to be enemies of the state.

On February 24, the paranoid President claimed that she quashed a coup plot by her soldiers who had only wanted to join the march of the people at EDSA, a major thoroughfare to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the People Power 1 uprising. That claim was followed by the illegal declaration of a State of National Emergency or Presidential Proclamation 1017. By virtue of this declaration she completely banned protest actions. Two mobilizations were violently dispersed followed by the illegal arrest of protesters, arbitrarily detaining them and charging them with inciting to sedition that day.

During the declaration of a state of national emergency, President Arroyo also targeted media establishments. Immediately upon the declaration, a radio station critical of the President, was shut down. A broadsheet, The Daily Tribune was ransacked on Saturday, February 25 along with a tabloid publication, Abante. The government agency National Telecommunications Center proposed guidelines to be strictly followed by the members of the press in an attempt to muzzle media.

But a broad opposition defied and resisted Proclamation 1017. After a week the President ordered its lifting.

But it does not end there. Anakpawis (Toiling Masses) Representative Crispin Beltran, 73 years old and suffering from various ailments, continue to be detained, five other legislators, Bayan Muna (People First) Partylist Representatives Satur Ocampo, Teddy Casiño, Joel Virador; Anakpawis Congressman Rafael Mariano and Gabriela Women's Party Representative Liza Maza are still under protective custody of the Philippine Congress. Malacañang vowed to continue the crackdown against the opposition; media and known anti-Arroyo dissenters are under threat of warrantless arrests. Protest marches are continually being dispersed as policies like the Calibrated Pre-emptive Response (CPR) and Batasan Pambansa 880 or the "no permit-no rally" edict are still in place and being implemented.

In fact on the day that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo lifted Proclamation 1017, Bayan Muna member Arthur Caloza, a 28 year old peasant and Bayan Muna member from Nueva Ecija, was killed by elements believed to be from the Philippine Army. Five days later, Crisanto "Santi" Teodoro, a BAYAN Secretary General and Bayan Muna coordinator from Malolos, Bulacan was shot several times while he was driving home on March 10. Earlier that day, Bayan Muna Secretary General Elena "Baby" Mendiola survived a slay try as assassins missed in fatally shooting her while she was sweeping her front yard in Echague, Isabela. (as of May 10, 2006 assailants gunned down Elena Mendiola and her partner Ric Balauag in front of their friend's home in Isabela, Cagayan Valley, Philippines.)

Even prior to PP 1017, the country has been gripped with state terror, under the government's campaign to eliminate terrorists in support of US President George W. Bush's war of terror. The human rights organization, KARAPATAN or Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights, documented 874 cases of human rights violations with 99,011 individual victims from January to November 30, 2005. The violations affected 14,302 families in 288 communities.

This year there are already 75 members of progressive people's organizations and ordinary citizens killed from January upto May 29.

In a statement released after GMA "lifted" PP 1017 on March 4, 2006, Amnesty International expressed its concern over continued violations of human rights in the country: "...Amnesty International continues to be gravely concerned at reports of an ongoing pattern of political killings of members of legal leftist organisations in various provinces nationwide.

Over recent years, the number of reported attacks by unidentified armed men on members of legal leftist political organisations, including Bayan Muna (People First), Anakpawis (Toiling Masses) and others, have increased. There are now fears that repeated statements by senior government officials linking such organizations directly to communist armed groups, in addition to the recent arrest or threatened arrest of many of the congressional representatives of such organizations, threatens to create a climate within which further political killings may take place.

Amnesty International calls on the authorities to fulfil their obligation to protect the right to life, not least by conducting prompt, thorough, impartial and effective investigations of all such killings. Such investigations should then lead to the prosecution and punishment of those responsible. In order to combat impunity, the authorities must also send a clear, unequivocal message to all members of the police, military and other security forces that involvement in, or acquiescence to, such unlawful killings will never be tolerated.

Amnesty International is also concerned about apparently political motives behind recent selective arrests and launch of criminal proceedings. Although the recent alleged coup conspiracy reportedly involved persons from across the political spectrum, there are reports that the political Left in particular may have been targeted for a repeated series of arrests on a variety of spurious charges."



MORE NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM MIGRANTE MELBOURNE ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE

Visit us on the web at www.migrante.org.au

MIGRANTE Melbourne stand against workplace laws of the Howard Government

As migrant Filipinos we are part of Australia's social fabric whose human and worker's rights are being trampled upon and eroded systematically through the Howard Government's anti-people and anti-worker legislative push.

Migrante strongly agree with the union movement's assessment of the five major impacts of the Workplace Relations Amendment (Work Choices) Bill 2005 introduced to Parliament in March this year.

Migrante do not believe in the government sales talk that instituting these regressive industrial changes are necessary to spur our country's economic growth.

As we embraced our adopted homeland, Australia, we pinned our hopes on its egalitarian values and vaunted century-old social contract in which ordinary and working class Australians get a fair share of and benefit from its economic growth and are assured protection in tough and extreme times.

We now find that these ideals are fast disappearing and that we must now brace ourselves, together with the rest of the Australian people, to fight to regain and reaffirm these very basic of people's and worker's rights

THE NEW LAWS WILL:

- ▶ Remove protection from unfair dismissal for millions of Australian workers.
- ▶ Make it easier for employers to push workers onto individual contracts that undercut pay and employment conditions.
- ▶ Strip back awards to make it easier to cut penalty rates, overtime pay, holiday loadings and public holidays.
- ▶ Change the way minimum wages are set to make them lower by a Board appointed by Government.
- ▶ Restrict unions to visit workplaces and can be hit with fines of \$33,000 even if they ask for workers to be protected from unfair dismissal or individual contracts.

Women Electoral Lobby (WEL) NSW Honoured Filipina with Edna Ryan Award

Jane Corpuz-Brock, former President of Migrante - Australia is the first Filipina to be honoured with the Edna Ryan Award. Her citation stated: " Since migrating to Australia in 1996, Jane Corpuz-Brock has trained many women in life skills, computer literacy, and shown them how to get information about government services, as well as raising their awareness on domestic violence, and equity and access issues. Jane is a volunteer worker with Migrante-Australia, a community-based Filipino organization. She spent many weeks educating the community to support the campaign for justice for Cornelia Rau, and with other organizations was involved in the successful action which led to Vivian Solon Alvarez being found. In both her paid and volunteer capacity, Jane's work is a testimony to the commitment of women to support each other." This award was named in memory of Edna Ryan who campaigned and lobbied for women to have the same minimum wage as men.

The Edna Ryan Award was held on 12 May 2006 at the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts in Sydney. Jane on her speech read the poem "What Makes A Hero" written by Prof Jose Maria Sison, who is currently being politically persecuted by the Philippine government under the US-Gloria Macapagal Arroyo regime. Prof Sison is now a political refugee in The Netherlands. He is being tagged by as a "terrorist" by the governments of United States, Australia and other developed countries. But in a court hearing in The Netherlands, the representative of the Council of the European Union stated that there are no criminal charges, investigations and prosecutions against Prof Sison, in the Philippines at the time of updating the Foreign Terrorist List.



Migrante Australia Slams DENR decision allowing Lafayette to resume operation

Migrante Australia joined the ranks of protestors from various multi-sectoral groups in the Philippines to condemn the resumption of mining activities in Rapu-Rapu, Albay. The mine spills released extremely high levels of cyanide into the nearby creeks and caused damage to the marine and environmental hazards in Rapu-rapu and (nearby) coastal municipalities.

Migrante joins National Day of Action protest on IR Laws



Despite being busy, some of the members of Migrante Melbourne joined the tens of thousands of workers in the National Day of Action protest against Federal Industrial Relations (IR) law at Central Business District Melbourne on the 28th of June 2006.

Workers assembled at Federation Square, Southern Cross Station, Spring Street, and Trades Hall before they marched and converged at the corner Bourke and Swanston Streets.

Federal Opposition Leader Kim Beazley and Premier of Victoria Steve Bracks, ACTU President Sharan Burrow, were among the union leaders and politicians who led the protest and addressed the crowd.

Migrante believes that IR law is unjust to workers' rights and conditions. The unfair dismissal, sacking, and lower wages affect the lives and future of ordinary families. Migrante is calling the support of all Filipino workers to oppose the implemented IR laws.

Migrante to co-Host Human Rights Mission in July

A Human Rights Speaking Tour will be co-hosted by Migrante Australia in July 30 to August 9 to raise awareness on the increasing human rights violation in the Philippines. A member of the Philippine congress, a human rights advocacy leader and a representative from the labour centre in the Philippines are expected to visit. Various meetings and gathering are being organised by Migrante Australia wide.

Pinoyera.com launched in Sydney

PinoyEra.com is the slick online publication (webzine) produced by the progressive pinoy writers based in Sydney. PinoyEra.com promises to link up with those who have roots in the Philippines and friends of other nationalities from all over the globe in order to provide a comprehensive view of the world from a Filipino Australian perspective. Pinoy Era also hopes to offer news and analysis on the social, economic, political and cultural life in the Philippines.

Gabriela to co-host forum of 'Violence Against Women at Work'

Gabriela Australia will co-host a forum on *Violence against Women at Work* this coming 30th July 2:30 pm at Function Room, Laverton Civic Centre, Laverton. The forum aims to provide avenues of sharing between Filipino women on various forms of violence experienced at work.

PASA bring parliamentarians' attention to Philippines human rights issues

Positive feedbacks have been received by Philippine Australian Solidary Association (PASA) from a recent discussions and national mail-out to Federal and state parliamentarians highlighting concerns on the systematic political killings and human rights violations in the Philippines.

FROM SAUDI WITH TEARS

Stranded OFWs in shelters abroad write letters, not to the government, but to a migrant workers organization pleading for help.

BY AUBREY MAKILAN, bulatlat.com

Migrante International chair Connie Bragas-Regalado had been wearing her reading glasses, poring over several letters, her face all red. No, she was not blushing over a love letter. Her face was red with anger and she was gnashing her teeth as she read letters from stranded overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

Cases

On a table in front of Bragas-Regalado is a brown envelope containing letters from about 50 female OFWs secretly given to a Migrante member in KSA. The letter-writers were staying at the Bahay Kalinga, a shelter in KSA for stranded and run-away OFWs. One gets an idea how the OFWs in the shelter share things no matter how little they have, as shown by the letters written by different people on the same kind of stationery or simple pad paper.

The OFWs wrote about cases ranging from unfair labor practices to rape. Some letters were like short profiles while others are in short bio-data form. Although the letters were dated April, Bragas-Regalado received the envelope only this May, when a fellow Filipino went home.

All letters have a common plead: "*Sana po ay matulungan n'yo ako.*" (I hope you could help me.)

At the shelter

At the start, migrants may find the shelters their safe haven until they experience "life" there, said Bragas-Regalado.

In KSA, Bahay Kalinga can accommodate only a hundred people, she said. However, two weeks ago, Migrante learned from Maria Jinalyn Rejano, a rape victim staying in that shelter, that there were already about 300 stranded Filipino migrants there.

The letters started coming in after Migrante found out in 2004 that mobile phones of OFWs at the Kuwait shelter were confiscated by Embassy personnel.

"*Kukumpiskahin nila e 'yun na nga lang ang paraan para maka-connect sila sa mga pamilya nila sa Pilipinas at malaman ang kondisyon nila,*" (They confiscated the phones which were their only means of connecting with their families and telling them of their condition) said Bragas-Regalado.

When the group learned about this, they immediately wrote to Embassy officials in host countries confiscating mobile phones.

Although the confiscation stopped, she said that OFWs were allegedly told not to report anything, particularly to Migrante.

"*Siguro para di malaman na wala silang ginagawa,*" she added. (They probably didn't want anyone to know that they're not doing anything.)

But instead of being thankful, most wrote complaints about the inefficiency of government officials in Philippine embassies to act on their cases.

"*Bulok ang sistema ng emabahada dito (sic) ang trato sa amin ay parang preso (sic) kulang sa pagkain, tubig at personal na gamit (sic) maraming nagdo-donate na pagkain pero walang nakakarating sa amin at ibinubulsa ng nangangasiwa sa*



HELP US: Migrante International chairperson Connie Bragas-Regalado pores over letters from Saudi-based, abused female OFWs staying at Bahay Kalinga

amin," wrote Emma Manao. (The embassy's system here useless. They treat us like prisoners, we lack food, water and personal needs. There were many food donations but none reaches us because it gets pocketed by the one who administers over us.)

Manao's contract was already finished, but although she already has her plane ticket, she still lacks travel documents and an exit visa.

No response

Whenever Migrante members based in other countries announce plans to go home to the Philippines, OFWs in different shelters in those countries would send letters for their families or for Migrante, telling them their condition and case status.

Based on these letters, Migrante would write the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) about the OFWs' conditions at the shelter. Bragas-Regalado would meet with DFA officials and case officers to get updates on their reported cases.

Last May, they reported 38 cases of stranded OFWs but there was no response from the DFA as of this writing. "*Kung walang nagtitiyagang mag-follow up, walang mangyayari,*" she said. (If nobody will follow it up, nothing will happen.)

Worse, Bragas-Regalado said they can only monitor those inside the shelters where only women were accommodated.

"*E pano na 'yung mga lalaki, pakalat-kalat lang sila?'*" she said.

Meanwhile, in Hong Kong, OFW organizations under Migrante's network have the "Bantay Konsulado." This campaign evaluates the performance of the Philippine consulate in HK and exposes anomalies. *Bulatlat*



STOP THE KILLINGS IN THE PHILIPPINES join us in a Lantern Vigil

Friday 5.30 pm, 14th July 2006 in front of State Library,
Swanston Street, Melbourne, VIC

From 2001 when Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo assumed the Philippine presidency to 19th June 2006, Karapatan (Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights) has documented 613 political killings. Of this number of victims, 298 belonged to cause-oriented organizations and the rest were civilians who have been accused of being active in or supporting the people's democratic movement.

Join Us in Demanding

Justice for the victims and the end of killings, abduction and harassment of
human rights and community activists in the Philippines

A Joint Initiative by: Philippines Australia Solidarity Association, Philippine Caucus for Peace, Migrante Melbourne and Gabriel- Australia

For further information - contact 1300 3666 74, Andrew Morrison - 0415 365109; Danny Fernandez - 9369 3158

REFLECTIONS

Rubbles & Riches

by Katrina Kotsakis

Has the alarm clock ever gone off and you just hit the snooze button and continued sleeping? Imagine if you couldn't turn it off because it was a rooster, a pig screaming or someone's car horn. Our little luxuries, like the snooze button don't exist to many people in the Philippines, even kids my age.

On a recent holiday to the Philippines it was very obvious to me the differences in priorities of the children there. I was greeted with kind gestures of extravagant meals and gifts for merely coming to visit, I was honored by all this but I started to think, this did not come easy. While being driven around by my uncle or in a taxi I noticed the teenagers, or young children selling little snacks on the side of the street just hoping that they can make enough money to eat for one day, because, it'll be one more day.



Staying in the province with my cousins, I woke up late and just hung around the house doing nothing, not knowing that my cousins woke up many hours before me, even before the sun rose, to do work. They don't have the luxury of sleeping in or being able to just sit around, work has to be done. It was hard to believe that my cousins, my nieces and nephews who were younger than me were already priding themselves on the work that they had to do. They didn't complain, they didn't push the work aside, they knew it had to be done. Waking up as early as five they fed the pigs, cleaned the house and cooked breakfast for their relatives, while I sat back and watched. They did not need to be forced to do the work; they even offered to wash the dishes some nights so their older relatives could have a rest. It amazed me, the respect they had for their family and their work. To them, it was a way of life.

When I went there it was school break, so I had a lot of time to spend with my cousins. It came to my attention that lots of kids don't even go to school. It is not insisted like the education here, some don't have enough money to go to school but others just don't go so they can help to feed their family and provide life's necessities by working. Working in sari-sari stores, selling rice cakes or snacks along the street, doing chores for their parents, anything to help lessen the load already on their parents.

Their respect for family is carried into the respect for things. They value everything they have and take great care of even little things like a watch. My little niece had a watch that was given to her by her grandparents, when it broke she was devastated. For me, it was replaceable, but for her it was a sacred little thing that she kept safe, so when it broke she didn't know what to do. You wouldn't think that a watch is a luxury but for many children in the Philippines it is.

The longer I stayed in the Philippines the more I realized that everything was for the family. Children who did not go to school, who woke up early to feed the pigs, who sold snacks along the street side, all did it to help out the family, to help their parents, to try and have a great chance at life. The differences between me and them are huge. I do not wake up early to work, I do go to school and I don't sell snacks on the side of the street. I take my little luxuries for granted, if my watch breaks I buy a new one, if my alarm clock starts to ring, I press the snooze button. There are lots of things in my life different than many children in the Philippines, and going there and actually experiencing and seeing it, made me realize how lucky I am. If at the end of all this I can come out saying that even though there are many differences between me and the children in the Philippines, I can say that even if they don't have many little or big luxuries they have the luxury of knowing that whatever they do to help, how ever hard they work, they know that at the end of the day, they will always have their family, and that is one luxury that we should all have and deserve.



Philippines Australia Solidarity Association (PASA) and its Campaign for Human Rights in the Philippines ...

PASA was established in 2003 with the aim of promoting and developing mutual support and solidarity between the peoples of Australia and the Philippines and raising awareness on issues such as peace, justice, cultural diversity, national identity, globalisation, workers' and other issues.

Since its formation, PASA has continuously campaign on several issues in both the Philippines and Australia. In May 2004, PASA helped organised an international Election monitoring team, to monitor the 2004 presidential election in the Philippines amidst claim of human rights violation, harassment and killings of President Gloria Arroyo's political opponents. Five representatives from Australia joined the international delegations. Even then the Australian delegations reported massive cheating and anomalies at the election and harassment, abduction and even assassination during the electoral campaign period.

With the increase of abduction and political murders since 2001 when Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo assumed the Philippine presidency, PASA gave more focus on its campaigns for Human Rights in the Philippines. Aside from regular statements and information distribution to the public, PASA also holds education foras and host international speakers. In May 2005, PASA decided to solicit the support of Australian parliamentarians. After all Australia gives military aid to the Philippines and today Australia conducts joint military exercises with the Philippine military and also has a Security agreement with the Philippines. PASA sent letters of appeal to all the Federal members of Parliament and also to the members of Victorian State parliament.

As of 21st of June this year, Karapatan an independent Human Rights organisation in the Philippines has recorded more than 950 human rights violations victimising more than 99,000 individuals and more than 14,300 families. Karapatan has also documented a total of 615 politically motivated murders from 2001 when Arroyo took office to 21st of June 2006. Of this number of victims, 300 belong to cause oriented organisations. This year alone, already 83 victims had fallen to Arroyo's total war policy against progressive organisations and progressive dissenting opinion.

PASA will continue appealing to the Australian public and to the Australian Government to support our campaign to end the killings of activists and human rights advocate in the Philippines and to compensate the victims of Human rights violations. PASA will also call on the Australian government to ensure that the Australian military aid and the Australian military personnel in the Philippines are in no way contributing directly or indirectly to the harassment, abuse and killings of the Filipino people.

Get Involved!



Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____

Email: _____

I would like to:

- become a member of Migrante Melbourne
- be updated with information from Migrante Melbourne
- donate to Migrante Melbourne

Migrante Melbourne is a voluntary community organisation of Filipino and Filipino-Australian migrants and workers promoting and upholding their welfare, human rights and workers' rights. It also deepens members' awareness of the root reasons of the Filipino hegira to over 180 countries and settlement issues in their adopted homelands.

Visit us on the web at www.migrante.org.au

**SEND TO PO BOX 606, LAVERTON VIC 3028 or
CALL US on 1300 3666 74**

Events and Activities

01 July 2006: TIPANAN SA MELBOURNE

DESCRIPTION:

6 to 11 pm Civic Centre, Cnr Railway Ave. & Crown St., Laverton. BYO; Or you can purchase food & drinks at the venue. Price: Adult - \$10.00; children under 16 - \$5.00; Children under 6 - free. A chance to be with friends and acquaintances. A day of fun ... dancing and dancing; singing; games and raffle.

For further details call Migrante Melbourne on 1300 3666 74

14 July 2006 Lantern Vigil against political killings in the Philippines

DESCRIPTION:

5.30 pm in front of the State Library, Swanston St, Melbourne. Organised by PASA and Migrante Melbourne. Members of PASA and Migrante will light lanterns and display the names and details of the victims to protest the continuous killings in the Philippines and to show empathy to the families and friends of the victims.

21 July 2006 - Celebration of Songs and Dance

DESCRIPTION:

Cultural presentations/fund raising activity for the Migrante Shelter based in Manila, Philippines. Organised by Anibeth Desierto and Migrante Perth Venue: University of Western Australia Club, Hackett Drive, Crawley, W.A.

Contact: Anibeth Desierto - Ph. 0402 941935

30 July - 09 August - Philippine Human Rights Mission to Australia

DESCRIPTION:

Migrante Melbourne will co-hosts to a visiting member of the Philippine congress and an officer of the Labour Centre KMU. Dinner with friends, a forum and other activities will be organised. Details of the activity will be announced later.

30th July - Forum: 'Violence Against Women at Work'

CO-HOSTED BY: GABRIELA AUSTRALIA

DESCRIPTION:

Gabriela Australia will co-host a forum on *Violence against Women at Work* this coming 30th July 2:30 pm at Function Room, Laverton Civic Centre, Laverton. The forum aims to provide avenues of sharing between Filipino women on various forms of violence experienced at work.



Affix Stamp

To: _____

 *batingaw*

Migrante Melbourne : : PO Box 606, Laverton, VIC 3028