

# **FACT SHEET ON THE ARREST OF 43 HEALTH WORKERS IN MORONG, RIZAL**

UA case type:

Violation of Domicile; Destruction of property;  
Divestment of Property; Illegal Search and Seizure;

Illegal Arrest; Illegal Detention; Threat, Harassment and Intimidation, Fear for Safety

Victim(s):

Illegally Arrested and illegally detained (partial list)

- \* Dr. Mary Mia, Health Education and Training Services coordinator for Council for Health and Development (CHD)
- \* Dr. Alexis Montes
- \* Gary Liberal, Registered Nurse (Jose Reyes Medical Memorial Center)
- \* Teresa Quinawayan, Midwife
- \* Lydia Ubera, health worker
- \* Reynaldo Makabenta, health worker
- \* Delia Ocasla, health worker
- \* Jane Ballea, health worker
- \* Janice Javier, health worker
- \* Franco Remoroso, health worker
- \* Ailene Monasteryo, health worker
- \* Pearl Irene Martinez, health worker
- \* Ellen Carandang, health worker
- \* Dany Panero, health worker
- \* Rayom Among, health worker
- \* Emily Marquez, health worker

Threat, harassment and intimidation; Violation of domicile

- \* Dr. Melecia Velmonte
- \* Bob Velmonte
- \* Bernardo Landag
- \* Two caretakers

Place of the incident:

Residential compound of Dr. Melecia Velmonte in Bgy. Maybangcal, Morong, Rizal

Date of the incident:

06 February 2010, at 6:15 in the morning

Alleged perpetrator(s):

Joint elements of the 202nd Infantry Brigade of the Philippine Army (202nd IBPA), and Rizal Philippine National Police (PNP) headed by Colonel Aurelio Baladad, commander of the 202nd Infantry Brigade of the Philippine Army based in Tanay, Rizal and Police Superintendent Marion Balonglong of the Rizal PNP.

On February 1, around 40 medical practitioners and health workers participated in a First Responders Training, sponsored by the Community Medicine Foundation, Inc. (COMMED) and Council for Health and Development (CHD) at Dr. Melecia Velmonte's Farm, a conference and training facility in Morong, Rizal.

Dr. Velmonte is a renowned and respected infectious disease specialist and a consultant at the Philippine General Hospital. Her farm is a regular venue of health trainings, with participants coming from both the communities and the academe.

According to initial reports gathered by Karapatan, at 6:15 am on February 6, 2010, around 300 heavily armed elements of the military and police forced their way into the farm of Dr. Melecia Velmonte in Bgy. Maybangcal, Morong, Rizal. At gunpoint, the military forced

the caretaker to open the gates. Inside, the soldiers fanned out to different directions. They also kicked the main door to get into the building.

When Dr. Velmonte and her son, Bob demanded for a search warrant, they were merely brushed aside by the military.

All medical practitioners and health workers, were ordered to line up at the garage, frisked, and handcuffed. The victims were also questioned and photographed by the military, while another took a video recording of the interrogation. The male victims were then blindfolded with old shirts brought in by the soldiers and secured with packaging tape. All of the personal belongings of the victims were also taken by the military.

When the participants were already handcuffed, it was only then that Police Superintendent Marion P. Balonglong showed Bob a search warrant for a certain Mario Condes of Bgy. Maybangcal, Morong, Rizal, charged with illegal possession of firearms. The search warrant dated February 5, 2010 and issued by Judge Cesar A. Mangrobang of Branch 22 of the Imus, Cavite Regional Trial Court, did not indicate the exact address of the Velmonte compound.

Bob asserted that the warrant did not specify their address, and that Mario Condes, who is subject of the warrant, is not even the owner of the house, but he was ignored by the authorities.

Outside the compound, were eight (8) vehicles. Along with the four (4) 6 x 6 military trucks were two (2) Armored Personnel Carriers (APC), a KIA Pride car, and an ambulance. Some of the vehicles had no plate numbers while the rest of the license plates were either covered, or smeared with mud.

The health workers were forced into the military trucks and were brought to Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal, headquarters of the 202nd Infantry Brigade of Philippine Army.

The military declared that the victims were members of the New People's Army because of the explosives allegedly found inside the compound. However, according to witnesses, the military conducted the search of the compound's premises only after all of the victims, as well as the residents, were already outside the buildings. Witnesses also said that the military have brought in with them plastic bags with the GMA Kapuso logo printed on it.

Allegedly found were C4 explosives, a pistol with seven bullets, 3 grenades (one allegedly found under a pillow); beside the grenade were some improvised landmines. However, Bob said that they were not issued a receipt of the inventory of the said firearms and explosives.

The illegal search of the Velmonte compound ended at past 9:00 in the morning of Saturday, February 6, 2010.

The military and police arresting team were led by Col. Aurelio Baladad and Police Superintendent Marion Balonglong.

In the afternoon of the same day, Karapatan Deputy Secretary General Roneo Clamor, husband of Dr. Merry Mia, Olive Bernardo, Karapatan Services Head, along with Karapatan counsel, Atty. Ephraim Cortez, Dr. Geneve Rivera and Dr. Edelina De La Paz, chairperson of Health Action for Human Rights (HAHR), went to Camp Capinpin to inquire about the victims. They were not allowed to enter the camp premises.

As of this writing, the military has not allowed any of the relatives of the victims to see anyone of them.

Recommended action:

Send letters, emails or fax messages calling for:

1. The immediate release of the health workers who are illegally arrested and illegally detained at Camp Capinpin, Tanay, Rizal.
2. The government to ensure the safety of the victims and that they are not harmed; their belongings be returned immediately to them.
3. The immediate formation of an independent fact-finding and investigation team composed of representatives from human rights groups, the Church, local government, and the Commission on Human Rights that will look into raid and illegal arrest of the health workers conducting health skills training in Morong, Rizal.
4. The military to stop the labeling and targeting of human rights defenders as “members of front organizations of the communists” and “enemies of the state.”
5. The Philippine Government to be reminded that it is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that it is also a party to all the major Human Rights instruments, thus it is bound to observe all of these instruments’ provisions.