JUSTICE FOR THE KILLING OF WILLIAM BUGATTI!

The Philippine Task Force for Indigenous Peoples Rights (TFIP) grieves the loss of an indigenous leader, development worker and human rights defender. William Bugatti, an Ifugao, leader of the Ifugao Peasant Movement and staff of the Ifugao Resource Development Center (IRDC) is one victim of extrajudicial killings of indigenous peoples under the Aquino administration. This was after he was shot while on his way home at 7 in the evening on March 25, Wednesday along the Ifugao Highway at Bolog, Kiangan Ifugao. Around 40 cases of such extrajudicial killings have been recorded by a national indigenous peoples organization.

The TFIP condemns this act done to an Ifugao activist who only worked for the genuine development of Ifugao farmers and their communities and provided paralegal services to those suffering human rights violations. He also went to farmers’ communities to orient the farmers of their rights to the land as indigenous peoples and as stipulated in national and international instruments. The organizations to which he belonged also conducted trainings on sustainable agriculture and enhancing indigenous knowledge to increase productivity and mitigate or adapt to the effects of climate change. He also took part in TFIP’s researches on the food security situation in an Ifugao village and on indigenous knowledge of another community on agriculture. He was a loving husband and father to his wife and children and most of the time engaged in livelihood activities in Lagawe such as driving a tricycle while doing volunteer work with the IRDC and IPM in order to provide for his family.

Despite these, he was falsely accused as “utak ng NPA” or “brain of the New People’s Army” while working at his office in Lagawe, the capital town of the province of Ifugao. This vilification of him and other development workers and farmers was seen in a “Target Persons” list of the 5th ID and the 86th IB Philippine Army in Tinoc, Ifugao, a municipality with alleged NPA elements. This is also true to other victims of extrajudicial killings in the country, most of whom earned the wrath of big companies and state agents due to their strong opposition to large scale mining and other destructive projects in their territories.

We once again pose a challenge to concerned government agencies in Ifugao and the Philippines, including the Commission on Human Rights, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, Philippine National Police, National Bureau of Investigation, among others. These agencies must thoroughly investigate this case and punish the real perpetrators. The vilification of farmers’ organizations and development NGOs, especially those based in the countryside must be stopped. These organizations are
providing much-needed services to farmers, which the government seldom and if ever, inadequately provides. William was a valuable asset to his community and his death is great loss for all of us.

Justice for William Bugatti and all other indigenous peoples who are victims of extrajudicial killings!

Stop the vilification of development workers, indigenous leaders, farmers’ organizations, indigenous peoples’ organizations and support NGOs!

Stop the killings of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines!