
November 20, 2009

Her Excellency, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
President of the Republic of the Philippines
New Executive Building
Malacañang Palace
J.P. Laurel Street, San Miguel
Manila NCR 1005
Philippines
Fax: 63-2 735 6167

re: IAI Solidarity and Protest against illegal forced evictions and killings at Pasay City

Dear Madam President,

I am writing to you on behalf of the International Alliance of Inhabitants (IAI), an international network of social organizations (inhabitants' associations, tenants' unions, homeless and poorly sheltered people's committees, housing cooperatives and social centres, volunteers' and migrants' associations), which for many years has been committed to the defence of housing rights 'without frontiers'.

Besides, I am member of the UN-Advisory Group on Forced Evictions.

It is with great dismay and concern that our organization wishes to call your attention to the violent and bloody demolition of the shanties of nearly four hundred families around the Rajah Sulayman Lumba Ranao Grand Mosque along Roxas Blvd., Pasay City on November 18, 2009. The government employed a 700-man team composed of a demolition squad, around 150 policemen and rescue personnel, according to media reports.

Three residents reportedly died and many others were injured when stone throwing took place between the residents and the demolition crews and when policemen opened fire with their M-16 rifles. Some 376 families were rendered homeless.

Many residents are now staying inside the Mosque to protect it from being demolished.

The affected residents say they did not receive new notices of demolition. They got one in August but citing Urban Development and Housing Act (R.A. 7279) they say the government should issue a new one since a demolition notice's effectivity is only for 90 days. There were no consultations.

And no relocation. The relocation site proposed by the government is legally contested by the De Leon family and the case is pending in the Supreme Court. They think then that the government was not serious with its relocation offer.

We wish to call the attention of your Government that the Philippines, a democratic country, is notorious for human rights violations, not only political rights abuses such as forced disappearances, but economic rights abuses as well such as forced evictions. You are aware no doubt that the United Nations has declared forced evictions as /prima facie/violations of human rights, in particular the right to adequate housing.

And may we call the attention of your Government that the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has twice already, in its Concluding Observations in 1995 and 2008, pointed out that large-scale forced evictions are taking place in the Philippines. Moreover, it says " The Committee regrets that most of its previous recommendations relating to the prevention of illegal forced evictions (E/C.12/1995/7, paras. 31 and 32) have not been acted upon by the State party, and remains deeply concerned about the large-scale forced eviction of urban families carried out for the purpose of urban renewal and beautification, which has reportedly affected over 1.2 million people in the period between 1995 and 2008. It is also concerned about the lack of effective consultation of, and legal redress for, persons affected by forced evictions, and the inadequate measures to provide sufficient compensation or adequate relocation sites to families who have been forcibly removed from their properties. (article 11) In line with the recommendations contained in paragraphs 31 and 32 of its previous concluding observations, the Committee urges the State party, as a matter of priority, to ...(c) undertake open, participatory and meaningful consultations with affected residents and communities prior to implementing development and urban renewal projects; (d) ensure that persons forcibly evicted from their properties be provided with adequate compensation and/or offered relocation, in accordance with section 28 of the

UDHA and the guidelines adopted by the Committee in its General Comment No. 7 (1997) on forced evictions; and (e) guarantee that relocation sites are provided with basic services (including drinking water, electricity, washing and sanitation facilities) and adequate facilities (including schools, health care centres and transportation) at the time the resettlement takes place. (E/C.12/PHL/CO/4, par 30, 24 November 2008).

We, expressing our full solidarity with affected people and their organisations, therefore, strongly recommend that:

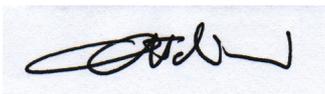
1. the Philippine Government, in particular the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) and the Pasay City government, should stop the demolition of the houses of the residents living around the mosque as well all further attempts to demolish the mosque until:

- an adequate consultation process is conducted between the government, the evicted residents and their leaders;
- agreements freely entered into by and satisfactory to the affected families and the government have been reached.
- The agreements to cover such issues, but not necessarily limited to, as on-site development, adequate relocation site, with basic services and proximity to the residents' work and sources of income, and acceptable to the affected residents, compensation for the houses and other possessions destroyed during the demolition and for those who died and those injured.

2. the Philippine Government should investigate and punish those involved in the violent and bloody demolition incident, including policemen who fired their guns in violation of a Philippine National Police manual strictly prohibiting the use of firearms during demolition. In this regard, it is highly recommended that the Commission on Human Rights be given a leading role in the investigation.

Our organization will monitor developments related to this case. We hope that your Government will not fail to do what is good and right for the evicted Muslim community and families.

Respectfully yours,



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IAI coordinator

Cc:

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