



APPENDIX 2.6

SELECTIONS FROM *PHILIPPINES: TESTIMONIES ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS*

In addition to the appendix 2.5, these selections (Mercado and Dimanaran 1986, 66–69) show the variety—in terms of methods (torture to hamletting), victims (an individual clergyman to entire barangays), and geographic scope (from Luzon to Mindanao)—of victims of military abuses during the Marcos regime. It should be noted that all of these violations happened *after* martial law was supposed to have been lifted on 17 January 1981.

REV. ROMEO BUENAVIDEZ

The Church in the Philippines is not immune to state repression. Priests, pastors, nuns and lay-workers who help the poor and the oppressed have been looked upon with suspicion. Some have been received violent treatment from the military; Fr. Tullio Favali and Pastor Potenciano Ejano were both brutally murdered; Fr. Rudy Romano was abducted by military men; Frs. Edicio de la Torre and Teodoro Remigio continue to languish in jail. The list of victims from the religious sector continues to lengthen.

Below is the affidavit of Reverend Romeo Buenavidez, pastor of the United States of Christ in the Philippines in Santiago, Agusan del Sur. Pastor Benavidez was arrested for no apparent reason and was tortured while under detention on the mere suspicion that he was a rebel.

The Tanodbayan (ombudsman in a resolution on the case, recommended the prosecution of Candido Sotto, barangay captain, and Sgt. Angelio Artizado for unlawful arrest, robbery and unnecessary violence and arbitrary detention, and Lt. Fabio Guantero for arbitrary detention. However, the charges for serious physical injuries were dropped allegedly for insufficiency of evidence despite a medical report confirming the injuries of Pastor Buenavidez and the corroborative statements of other witnesses. Pastor Buenavidez's statement follows:

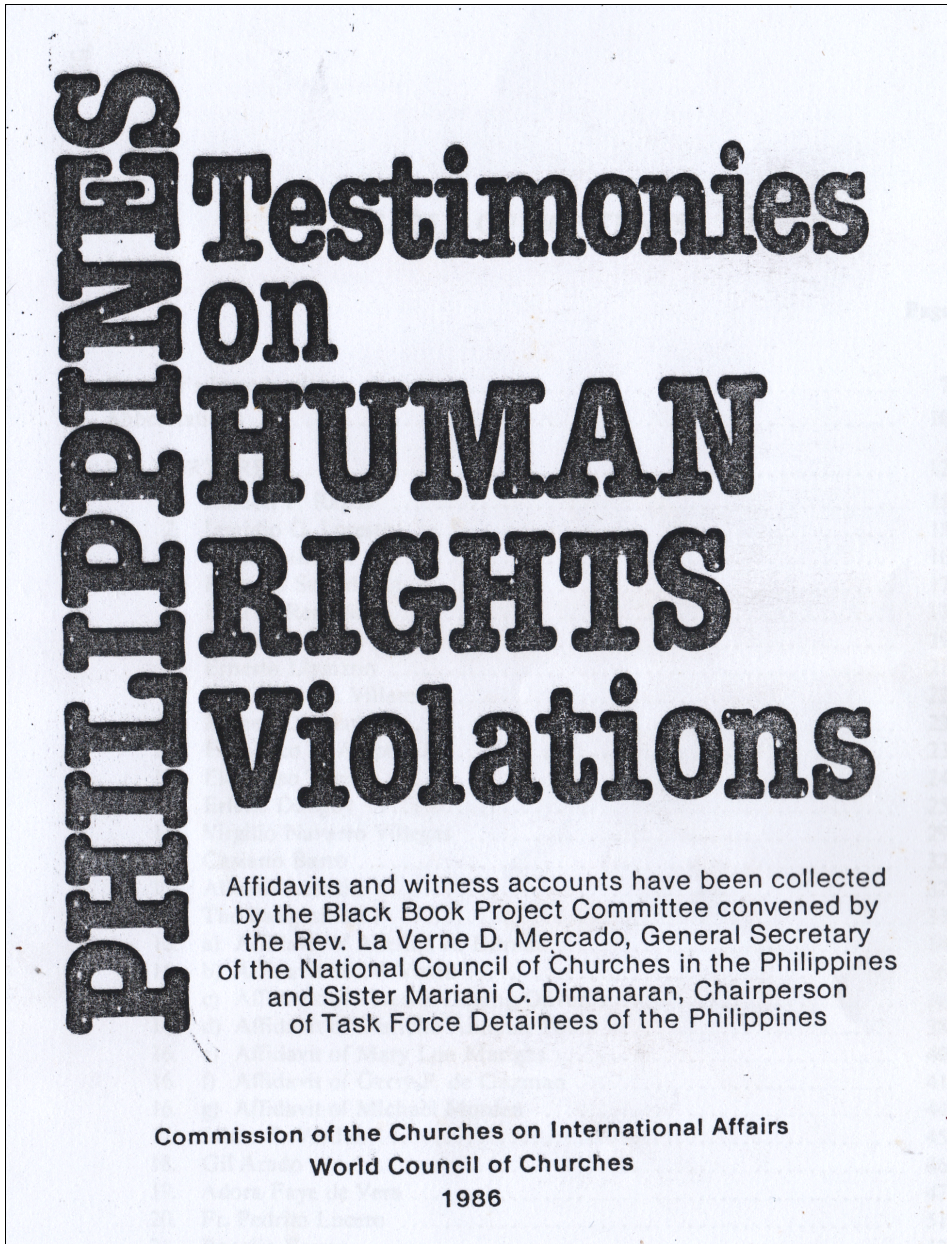


Figure 1. Front matter of the book.

Source: Mercado, La Verne D., and Mariani C. Dimanaran. 1986. *Philippines: Testimonies on Human Rights Violations*. Geneva: Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches.

“I have been a pastor in Surigao since 13 June 1980.

In the afternoon of 2 August 1981, Sunday, I attended a conference of the JJACOBS Cooperative Parish in preparation for the fellowship of the members of the cooperative parish in the area. The conference was at the house of Mr. Adriano Monoy. It started at about 3:30 p.m. and was attended by Pastor Pencilito Moran, Pastor Jesus Mosende, Mr. Adriano Monoy, Mr. Evangeline Morales, Mr. Porfirio Manoy, Mrs. Nimfa Morano, Mrs. Geronima Dagon-ay and myself. JJACOBS represent the Jaliobong, Jabonga, Colorado, Bangonay and Santiago parishes.

The Conference ended at about 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon. Immediately after the conference, I, Pastor Pencilito Moran, Mr. Porfirio Monoy, Mrs. Nimfa Morano and Mrs. Geronima Dagon-ay went to the yard of Mr. Evangelino Morales where we waited for transportation to our respective destinations. I was bound for Santiago where I am stationed while the others were bound for Colorado.

While we were waiting, I was approached by the Barangay Capatain of Bangonay, Candido Sotto. At first he held my arm and told me to come with him. When I turned to face him, he grabbed my collar and shirt, aimed a pistol at me, and said: “Arestado ka?” (You are under arrest!). I asked him what crime I had committed. He answered that I was a traitor. I told him that I am pastor of the United Church of Christ of the Philippines and I had not committed any crime. He however, persisted, pulled me and brought me to a place by the road where I was made to sit on a bench. He gave the pistol to another person who pointed it at my head. The barangay captain took hold of an Armalite and aimed at me.

Mr. Porfirio Monoy tried to intervene by asking the barangay captain what it was all about, but he was told, guns aimed at him and the others, not to follow us. My companions could not do anything.

From the bench where I was made to sit, I was brought inside the house of the barangay captain. I was interrogated and threatened. He poked his Armalite rifle at me and said ‘Mao na kini and imong katapusan Do’. (This is now your end). He kept on insisting that I was a rebel. When I insisted that I was not a rebel not had I committed any crime, he slapped and punched me. There was a soldier in civilian clothes who also struck me in different parts of the body.

I was confined there for about an hour. From his house, the barangay captain brought me to the guardhouse of the 37th PC Battalion near the junction of the National Highway and Jabonga Road. In the guardhouse, I was guarded by a man whom the others

addressed as Sergeant, together with five or six other men in a fatigue pants and T-shirts.

Then they interrogated me. They told me to admit that I was a rebel. They took turns slapping me, hitting me with their fists and kicking me in the different parts of the body. The sergeant punched me at the side, stepped on my thigh and kicked me on the breast and elsewhere. He repeatedly told me to confess and everytime I denied this charge, he would hit me. Later the sergeant took off his shirt as he was already perspiring. He got a wet towel, rolled it tight and used it to hit my head with everytime I told him that I was not a rebel. It was painful and I almost lost consciousness. I even heard somebody suggest that I be 'salvaged', meaning liquidated.

I did not know the names of my torturers, but I was told later that they belonged to the 57th PC Batallion stationed at that time in Bangonay.

Later, four persons were brought before me. Based on their appearances, I believe that they were farmers. At first two were brought before me. They were asked by the sergeant and the barangay captain to identify me. The farmers answered that I was the pastor of a church. The sergeant and his men were not satisfied with these answers. They insisted that the farmers state that I was a commander of the rebels. When the farmers refused, they were beaten in the same manner that I was. They were slapped, punched and kicked by the same people who had maltreated me. One farmer vomited blood as a consequence. Then two other farmers were brought before me, they too were interrogated and beaten.

I did not know the farmers then. It was only later that I learned that their names were Wilhelmo Montil, Avelino Dingding, Criso Dingding, and Boni Langquino.

During my interrogation, Barangay Captain Sotto took my Seiko wristwatch. The sergeant took my wallet containing P300.00 cash. The interrogation lasted about two hours.

Together with the four farmers, we were brought to the poblacion of Jabonga in a police jeep and placed in the municipal jail. While in jail, I was again interrogated by a man in civilian clothes armed with rifle.

After an hour, I was taken out of jail and made to ride another jeep accompanied by nine men including the driver and the barangay captain. When we reached Bangonay, the barangay captain and three men disembarked. When we reached Sumilihon, a Barangay in Butuan

City, another person alighted. Then we proceeded to Butuan City proper and when we reached an abandoned gasoline station in front of Banco Filipino, I was blindfolded.

I do not know the place where I was brought. They removed my blindfold when I was inside the bathroom of a house. They placed a cot covered with a raincoat inside where I was made to lie down.

I only knew the name of the group's leader when I was surrendered to the judge. He is Lt. Fabio Quantero of the Military Intelligence Group. However, his group was not the same group which maltreated me at the guardhouse.

I was confined in the bathroom from Sunday night to early Thursday morning when I was made to ride a jeep lying down on the back seat with my hands tied.

One of the men who guarded me while I was in the bathroom threatened to poison my food and make me drink acid if I did not admit my connections with the rebels. He also punched me several times. Once he took a knife and poked it at my stomach, breast and neck, just under my chin. I suffered a slight wound. He claimed that some of his relatives had been killed by rebels in Tungao. I told him that I had nothing to do with the rebels.

In that long Thursday morning trip, I could not determine our destination as I could only see the top of the trees as I was lying down. We stopped once to eat but I was not allowed to get out of the jeep. After some time I was again blindfolded. When it was removed, I found myself inside an office where there were people in civilian clothes.

Later, I was again blindfolded because they said that their boss would interrogate me. Obviously, they did not want me to see the face of their chief. However, I heard somebody suggest that my blindfold be removed as I was only the pastor of the church. When it was removed, I saw more people in civilian clothes. They asked me questions about my identity and activities.

Then I was brought of the office and learned for the first time that I was in Cagayan de Oro City when I saw the signboard "Camp Evangelista". I was brought to another office which I heard from the people around was the CSU. There I was made to write down the events that transpired from the time I was arrested in Bangonay. When they saw that I was writing down the manhandling I received in the course of my interrogation, one person warned me not to include it for my own safety. Somebody prepared a statement and ordered me to copy it in my own handwriting. In that statement, it was stated that I

had been fairly treated by the Military Intelligence Group and that I was inhibiting myself from filing charges against them. Because of fear of again being harmed. I had no other choice but to copy the prepared statement and to sign it.

After that I was brought to the office of the fiscal to have my statement sworn to, but the fiscals were then ordered out of the office except a certain Fiscal Pelaes who refused to have my statement sworn to before him. So I was brought to a certain person whom I cannot identify. He asked me if the signature was mine. When I answered yes, he immediately signed the statement.

After that I was brought back to Butuan City to the house where I had been previously confined. I learned then that it was a box factory in Agusan Pequeno, a barangay in Butuan.

I was released on Friday when I was brought by Lt. Guantero and his men accompanied by Atty. Gambe to the office of the Judge at the capitol building. In the office I met Atty. Gonzales who informed me that a petition for a writ of habeas corpus had been filed against barangay captain Sotto and others.

I was also informed later that the soldiers responsible for my maltreatment were Sgt. Angelito Atizada, CIC Froilan Bringas, CIC Maximo Icat, CIC Armando Macundo, CIC Ric Daquil, C2C Cinsorcio Fernandez and C2C Aquil Musa, all of the 37th PC Battalion.

I was also examined by Dr. Teodoro Vesages of the Santos Clinic and Hospital who confirmed in this findings that I had indeed been manhandled.

BARANGAY GAID AND DIVISORIA IN DIMASALANG TOWN: STA CRUZ, SAN ISIDRO, BUENASUERTE AND MALIBAS IN PALANAS AND TYBO IN CATAINGAN IN THE PROVINCE OF MASBATE IN THE BICOL REGION (P. 147-49)

Between January and July 1985, there were at least six major forced evacuations of residents in the town of Dimasalang Palanas and Cataingan in Masbate, an island province off the coast of the Bicol Region in Southern Luzon. Some 373 families were forced to flee after the military intensified counterinsurgency operations in the area. Many of the evacuees never returned to their homes out of fear of harassment from the military. Some of them stayed in evacuation centers in the towns while others sought refuge with relatives and friends in outlying

barangays. These displaced families received no assistance whatsoever from the government's social services bureaus.

Here are the brief descriptions of the forced evacuations and the signed plea of representatives of the official barangays:

First Evacuation

On 27 January 1985, 20 families from Sitio Pook and Batiris of Brgy. Sta. Cruz and 15 families of Bgy. Malibas left their homes after armed Muslims, accompanied by Pat. Rodencio Espinas, illegally searched and threatened the residents allegedly in connection with the earlier disappearance of two Muslim traders. In a separate incident, eight military men led by St. Elpidio Dalisdig arrested and tortured a farmer suspected of being with the NPA. The house of a resident, Enrito Arizala, was burned while another resident, Berning Nuevo, 45 was salvaged.

For two months the evacuees stayed in temporary shacks along the coast of Bgys. Looc, Napucnod and the poblacion in Palanas.

Second Evacuation

Approximately 30 families from Sitio Timga, Bgy. Gaid in Dimasalang town left their homes for 15 days after the military burned the houses of Procopio Alicante and Dionisio Buhat and strafted several others, allegedly for giving food to the NPA. Some residents evacuated to the barangay proper of Gaid while others stayed with their relatives.

Third Evacuation

After a series of violent military abuses, the whole barangay of San Isidro in Palanas was vacated by fear-sticken residents, 1 March 1985. Noli Banitoy was abducted and tortured by government troopers. Eight days later Joaquin Adelan, Barangay Captain of San Isidro and his son, Santos, were killed separately by combined operatives of the PC INP and ICHDFs. After the killings the military ordered the residents to vacate the place or else something would happen to them.

The evacuees stayed along the coast of Barangays Napucnod and Palanas town proper for two to our weeks.

Fourth Evacuation

On 14 March 1985, 41 families from Barangay Buenasuerte, municipality of Palanas were forced to evacuate after they were harassed by military men in the course of their operation. A farmer-resident Placido Malana, 30, was picked up and heavily tortured in the military detachment in Dimasalang. Residents also reported that their houses were indiscriminately fired at during these operations.

The displaced families built temporary shacks along the coast of Barangay Napucnod and Looc in Palanas and remained there for about two months.

Fifth Evacuation

Some 25 families of Divisoria, Dimasalang, fled to the town proper and other neighboring barangays after the military looted them of their valuables and threatened to kill them for allegedly supporting the NPA. The soldiers also strafed some houses and manhandled three residents in the course of the military operation.

Sixth Evacuation

On 19 July 1985, 142 families or about 800 person fled their homes and sought refuge in neighboring barangays of San Rafael, Estampar, Curbada and Nadawisan until the second week of August. The evacuation was triggered by a series of killings on 30 April. Nonito Cuyos, an ICHDF and son of the barangay captain, was killed by unidentified armed men: on 16 July, his mother, barangay captain Pilang Cuyos, was likewise killed by armed men, believed to be members of the NPA. After the slaying, Pilang's son, PC Sgt. Carlito Cuyos, threatened to kill all residents he suspected of being sympathizers if they could not pinpoint the killers of his mother and his brother.

The Sworn Statement of the Representatives of the Affected Barangays

"We, the representatives of the victims of forced evacuations in Barangay Gaid, Divisoria, Sta. Cruz, San Isidro, Buenasuerte, and Malibas in the municipalities of Palanas, Dimasalang and Cataingan of the Province of Masbate, are confirming our previous reports on military abuses that have happened for some time now.

In this connection, we would like to let the people know the effects of the incidents to our lives. Since the first military operation last January 1983 until its peak in March 1985, the economic life of our communities has been paralyzed. Some of our properties like chickens, flashlights, cash, bolos and kitchen utensils were stolen either by the raiding military men or the bad elements in our communities. Some of our properties were destroyed. Our rice was scattered on the ground, our plates were broken and worse, some of our houses were burned.

The series of incidents were really painful to us. Some of us, men and women, were reprimanded on suspicion of being members of the NPA, even the very old who could hardly move were tortured on mere suspicion of giving food to the NPA.

These military abuses intensified when “salvaging” of civilians began. The victims were really innocent people.

Until justice is given, the pain will forever remain in our hearts and in our conscience.

We are ready to stand for the statements that we have executed to bring the truth in to the public.

Signed this 15th of September 1985 at Palanas, Masbate.

Signatories:

1. Robito Raymundo
2. Concepcion Abit
3. Albino Cermiola
4. Francisco Rubio, Jr.
5. Generoso Nito
6. Religiosa Bacatoy
7. Gerry Amante
8. Dioscoro D. Abujuela
9. Elisa B. Haalyahay
10. Gerardo Almazor
11. Manule Banaag
12. Nestor Tamayo

The signatories are representatives of the following barangays:

1. Gaid, Dimasalang, Masbate
2. Divisoria, Dimasalang
3. Sta[.] Cruz, Palanas
4. Malibas, Palanas
5. Tuybo, Cataingan

