



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD)

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AFAD Calls on the Philippine Government to Pursue Justice on Burgos Disappearance



The Asian Federation Against Enforced Disappearance (AFAD) expresses its utter dismay that the case against the alleged abductor of forced disappeared victim Jonas Burgos lost in the lower court. This is a travesty of justice and a manifestation of the longstanding culture of impunity that is deeply embedded in Philippine society. The 9-page decision penned by Presiding Judge Alfonso C. Ruiz of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court (QCRTC), Branch 216, absolved Major Harry Baliaga Jr. of the crime of arbitrary detention of activist Jonas Burgos. This absolution passed despite the presence of a witness who identified Baliaga as the abductor of Jonas in a restaurant inside a Quezon City Mall, as well as other

circumstantial evidence that connected the former to the abduction of the latter.

Enforced disappearance is the forcible deprivation of liberty through abduction and imprisonment, which is perpetrated by state agents, followed by a refusal to acknowledge such deprivation. It is a crime against humanity when committed in manner which is massive and systematic. The Philippines is the only country in Asia that has a law criminalizing enforced disappearance known as the Republic Act 10353 or the Anti-Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance Act of 2012. Despite the existence of said law, enforced disappearance is still widely used in stifling political dissent, and in fact, there are still some 2000 cases of enforced disappearances in the Philippines from the 1970s up to present. Under R.A. 10353, the disappearance of Burgos is a continuing crime.

It has been 10 dreadful years since Jonas was forcibly abducted leading to his disappearance. AFAD commiserates with the family of Jonas Burgos, and remains in solidarity in their call for justice. AFAD also calls on the Philippine government to order the military to surface Jonas Burgos. Furthermore, AFAD strongly suggests that the Burgos family should file a case using the R.A. 10353, a law which was enacted after 16 long years of campaigning by families of the disappeared.

Despite the tragic turn of events, Edita Burgos, mother of Jonas, promises to continue the fight until Jonas is resurfaced. In an interview with her, Edita reflected: “These are imperfect institutions made up of imperfect people. But we have a perfect God and in His and our perfect time, justice will be served. Then I will find Jonas. I do not agree with the decision, but I respect it. God bless us all.”

Signed:



KHURRAM PARVEZ

Chairperson



MARY AILEEN D. BACALSO

Secretary-General

Photo from: <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/files/2016/04/edithaburgos.jpg>