



PAMBANSANG SAMAHAN NG MGA NARS NG PILIPINAS, INC.

(PHILIPPINE NURSES ASSOCIATION, INC.)
Member, INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES

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STATEMENT DENOUNCING ABDUCTION AND ILLEGAL DETENTION OF 43 HEALTH WORKERS AND TO DEMAND THEIR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

We, the Filipino nurses from the different parts of the country, join the collective outrage over the illegal detention of 43 health workers who were abducted early morning of February 6, 2010 by some 300 fully armed, combined elements of the 2nd Infantry Division of the Philippine Army and the Rizal Philippine National Police while holding a health skills training seminar in a private farmhouse in Morong, Rizal.

We demand their immediate release from the military camp where they are being illegally held with no formal charges filed against them but for mere allegations and suspicions of “subversive” association.

The organizers of the training activity, namely the Council for Health and Development and the Community Medicine Foundation, affirmed that those abducted were doctors, nurse, midwife and civilian health volunteers affiliated with health NGOs or representatives of people’s organizations who gathered to learn, harness health knowledge and skills that they will use to serve poor communities and undeserved sectors in far-flung areas.

The house owner, a respected medical specialist at the PGH also condemned the brazenness of the armed troop and raged at the impunity by which the illegal raid and the arrest were done. The doctor, an advocate and supporter of community health service attested to the training seminar where she was also a resource person.

This incident is disturbing to say the least, as it imperils people’s initiatives and efforts to build their own capacities and capabilities to manage their health needs in the absence of adequate public service. For health professionals like us, who may be considering the option of public service in the countryside, this incident is terrifying. For it is not only material comfort that one will be giving up when one chooses the selfless path of service to the poor, but possibly one’s life as well.

We call on the civilian authorities, specifically the Department of Health, to assert its civilian supremacy over the military by demanding for the unconditional release of the health workers whose rights were severely violated when they were arrested not in the act of doing a crime, but while pursuing their civic calling.

We demand that the 43 health workers be surfaced immediately and brought to the proper legal courts to face off their military accusers and man-handlers.

We demand a stop to the harassment of health workers serving in the countryside.

FREE the 43 Health Workers NOW! Uphold the People’s Right to Health!

**Signed February 15, 2010 at the Philippine Nurses Association,
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