

1 December 2017

Philippines: Two human rights defenders shot and killed

On 28 November 2017, two human rights defenders were killed and a third wounded in the Negros Oriental province in Philippines.

On 28 November 2017, **Elisa Badayos**, **Eleuterio Moises**, and **Carmen Matarlo** were shot by two unidentified men wearing black jackets and using black handguns at around 2:40pm at Brgy. San Ramon, Bayawan city in the Negros Oriental province. Elisa Badayos and Eleuterio Moises were pronounced dead on arrival at a hospital. Carmen Matarlo was wounded but is now in stable condition. The three HRDs were traveling on the same motorcycle along with two other colleagues on another motorcycle. The victims' colleagues noticed a motorcycle tailing them and shortly after heard six gunshots. Fearing they would be next, they kept driving to a safe distance. By the time they came back to the crime scene, the assailants had already left.

[Elisa Badayos](#) was the coordinator for Karapatan in Negros Oriental Province. [Karapatan](#) is a prominent human rights coalition in the Philippines. Elisa Badayos served as an organiser of urban poor communities in Cebu and also worked with Desaparecidos, an organization of families of the disappeared. [Eleuterio Moises](#) was a member of local peasant organization Mantapi Ebwan Farmers Association. [Carmen Matarlo](#), 22, is the provincial coordinator of Kabataan in Cebu, which is a group of progressive youths.

According to Karapatan, the three HRDs were on a fact finding mission in Bayawan from 26-28 November 2017 to investigate reported human rights violations committed in the area by members of a private army of a local political clan in the area. Karapatan Negros and Farmers Development Centre – Cebu, a local NGO, allege that the armed men are under the orders of the Gaudiels, an influential local political clan. They harass residents and target peasant organisations that support the land rights of local residents. The victims were attacked on the last day of their fact-finding mission.

On 30 November 2017, the Secretary General of Karapatan, [Cristina Palabay](#), released a statement reporting that the victims had gone to a police station prior to the attack to report an earlier incident on the same day where they were harassed by armed men and blocked from conducting their investigations.

According to Karapatan, there have been 98 victims of extrajudicial killings between July 2016 and September 2017. The climate of impunity that prevails in the Philippines has resulted in a serious deterioration in the situation for human rights defenders in the country. Defenders of economic, social and cultural rights, including land and environmental defenders, are the most likely victims of killings. There are numerous reports of HRDs becoming the target of violence, intimidation and harassment, including by government officials, when they seek information about projects, investors or a project's approval process, which often involves corruption. If they persist in this work despite the threats, they can face judicial harassment or extra-judicial killing.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the killing of Elisa Badayos and Eleuterio Moises, which it believes was solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful activities in the defence of human rights in the Philippines.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Philippines to:

1. Strongly condemn the killing of Elisa Badayos and Eleuterio Moises;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of human rights defenders Elisa Badayos and Eleuterio Moises, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Take all necessary measures, in consultation with the defenders, to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Carmen Matarlo, as well as all human rights defenders working in the Philippines;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Philippines are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.