

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: ASA 35/30/91  
Distr: UA/SC

UA 318/91

Harassment/Death threat

27 September 1991

PHILIPPINES: Wilfred D. Asis, human rights lawyer

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Attorney Wilfred D. Asis, a human rights lawyer and member of the Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG). Attorney Asis has received a death threat which is believed to have been issued by members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The threat may have been related to Attorney Asis' activities as defence counsel for six people accused of membership of the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the banned Communist Party of the Philippines. The six had been acquitted of subversion on 22 August 1991.

Shortly after the charges were dismissed, on 29 August 1991, Attorney Asis received a letter from a man named Guyong, who claimed to represent the National Democratic Front (NDF), the underground united front organization controlled by the CPP. The letter began by praising Attorney Asis for his human rights activities but went on to say he was being "*investigated*" for the killing of two persons named Leo and Mike. The letter concluded by offering "*condolences*" for Attorney Asis' forthcoming death.

Attorney Asis has stated that he knows of no persons by the names of Guyong, Leo or Mike. He writes: "*it is beyond me to 'author' somebody's death and I have never considered doing so. I believe that life is God's gift and only He has the right to take it back*".

On 9 September 1991 Attorney Asis informed members of the Philippine National Police of the threat to his life. A police superintendent is reported to have told him that elements of the Philippine Armed Forces may be contemplating "*getting rid of him*". The superintendent also reportedly advised Attorney Asis to seek the assistance of the Secretary of Justice as he did not wish to attend to this "*problem*".

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At least six human rights lawyers have been killed in the past three years in apparent extrajudicial executions in the Philippines; of these, three were Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG) lawyers who had been active in defence of human rights and in reporting abuses by members of the security forces. In July 1991 human rights lawyer Vidal Tombo was shot and wounded by unidentified armed men, probably because of his defence of suspected NPA members (see UA 250/91, 22 July 1991).

In addition to those killed, dozens more have received death threats or other kinds of intimidation in recent years. In May 1990, FLAG lawyer Soledad Jubilan received a series of death threats believed to have emanated from members of the Philippines Constabulary (PC) in North Cotabato province (see UA 234/90, ASA 35/16/90, 6 June 1990). In January 1991 FLAG lawyer Nerio G. Zamora received a death threat from the provincial PC commander in Bohol (see UA 09/91, ASA

35/01/91, 14 January 1991 and update 5 June 1991). In March 1991, human rights lawyer Romeo Capulong was followed by unidentified men believed to be connected to military intelligence forces (see UA 121/91, ASA 35/13/91, 3 April 1991).

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:**

- expressing concern for the safety of Attorney Wilfred D. Asis following receipt of a threat to his life;
- urging the government to provide appropriate and adequate protection to protect the life and safety of Attorney Asis and to ensure that he is not subjected to further threats to his life;
- asking the government to conduct an immediate and impartial investigation into this incident, for the results to be made public and the suspected perpetrators to be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO**

General Renato S. de Villa  
Secretary of National Defense  
Department of National Defense  
Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo  
Quezon City  
Metro Manila, Philippines

**Dear General**

**Telegrams: Defense Secretary de Villa, Quezon, Philippines**  
**Telexes: 22471 DND PH or 42004 DCSLOG PM**  
**Faxes: + 63 2 721 3988**

General Lisandro Abadia  
Chief of Staff of the Armed  
Forces of the Philippines  
Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo  
1110 Quezon City  
Metro Manila, Philippines

**Dear General**

**Telegrams: Chief Staff Armed Forces, Manila, Philippines**  
**Telexes: 22471 DND PH or 42004 DCSLOG PM**  
**Faxes: + 63 2 832 3793 (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**

General Cesar P Nazareno  
Director General  
Philippine National Police  
Headquarters of the Philippines Constabulary  
Camp Crame, Novaliches  
Metro Manila, Philippines

**Dear General**

**Telegrams: Police Director General Nazareno, Metro Manila, Philippines**

**COPIES TO:**

Silvestre H. Bello III  
Secretary of Justice  
Department of Justice  
Padre Faura Street  
Ermita, Manila  
Philippines

Mary Concepcion Bautista  
Chairman  
Commission on Human Rights  
IBP Building Complex  
Dona Julia Vargas Avenue  
Pasig Metro Manila, Philippines

and to diplomatic representatives of the Philippines in your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat or your section office if sending appeals after 7 November 1991.