



HOUSING AND LAND RIGHTS NETWORK

Habitat International Coalition

Urgent Action ! **Philippines : Violent Demolitions in Navotas City**

Joint appeal : PHL-FEDN-160310

Our organization received disturbing information from the Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN) of Habitat International Coalition (HIC) and their friends at Eviction Watch (EW) concerning the violent demolitions going on along R10 in Navotas City. The demolitions took place between 18 and 20 January 2010 and resumed again on March 4 2010. The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the city government have already demolished the houses of some 393 families. They are part of the 1,000 families the government wants removed to give way to its Road 10 widening project. Many residents did not accept the financial offer of P21,000 for each affected family from the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and insisted on receiving relocation as mandated by Philippine law and that your Excellency also promised on August 1, 2008. To break their resistance the government used baton-wielding and shield shoving policemen and water canon blasts by firemen. Many people were hurt. Most of them were women, including grandmothers. A number were arrested and later released. This is really sad, considering that March is supposed to be women's month.

Many of the evictees are living in lean-tos along R10 because they have nowhere else to go. Around 100 families are camping in front of the office of the DPWH in Port Area Manila to press their demand for relocation. The situation is dire because they risk being evicted by the government at any time.

This turn of events is a disappointment and completely contrary to what they had expected from your Government. They held on to the promise you made on August 1, 2008 when you met their leaders together with other leaders representing 11 urban poor communities affected by national government infrastructure projects, in Malacanang, the presidential palace. You agreed to their proposal that they would be relocated to Montalban/Rodriguez municipality. They say they like that place because it is relatively near their jobs and sources of income, has basic services like water, electricity, public transportation, clinics, hospitals, and schools. You also promised funds for house and lot development. They religiously attended meetings with various government agencies, local and national. The meetings dragged. The DPWH now offers only offer financial assistance, not relocation. The residents and their lawyers said this is contrary to Philippine law (RA 7279) and insisted that what you promised in Malacanang should be carried out.

Instead of a legacy of a decent house and a chance for a better future for their children when you leave as president in a few months, what they have are sleepless nights, fears for their children and elders getting sick, their children not going to school, income earners unable to work, fear of more violent evictions—more hunger, pain and misery. The demolitions rendered them homeless and even vulnerable to violations of their other rights, including the right to vote.

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Additionally, the Philippine government is a State party to legally binding international treaties such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (03 January 1976), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (20 September 1990), the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (04 September 1981), and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (04 January 1959). The Philippine government, therefore, is obliged and bound to respect, protect and fulfill the right to adequate housing of its citizens and to refrain from committing forced evictions.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), the body monitoring ICESCR treaty compliance, issued guidelines in its General Comment No. 7 on Forced Evictions (1997) which, inter alia, provide in para 17 "Evictions should not result in rendering individuals homeless or vulnerable to the violation of other human rights. Where those affected are unable to provide for themselves, the State party must take all appropriate measures, to the maximum of its available resources, to ensure that adequate alternative housing, resettlement or access to productive land, as the case may be, is available." Earlier in 1993 the UN adopted a resolution unequivocally declaring that "forced eviction us a gross violation of human rights, in particular the right to housing."

On 7 December 2006, the UN Special Rapporteur issued the "Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement" which state, in paragraph 6, that "forced evictions constitute gross violations of a range of internationally recognized human rights, including the human rights to adequate housing, food, water, health, education, work, security of the person, security of the home, freedom from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and freedom of movement."

On November 24, 2008 the UN Committee monitoring compliance of governments with the provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, called on the Philippine government as a State Party to the said Covenant to stop illegal forced evictions and to provide adequate relocation to evicted families (E/C.12/PHL/CO/4, paras. 29–30).

Understandably poor people's faith in you has been shaken. We urge the following urgent action toward remedy of the current vioaltions:

- Relevant government agencies, namely, the DPWH, National Housing Authority, and Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council to provide adequate relocation and compensation to the R10 families;
- An immediate stop to further evictions and demolitions;
- An investigation of those involved in the violent demolitions and punish those found guilty. The Philippines Commission on Human Rights should take the lead in the investigation.

Action!

We urge you to join in solidarity with the afected community in Navotas City by issuing letters of concern to the responsible authorities in the Philippines, calling for their urgent action to ermedy the violations.

Sample letter

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo,
Republic of the Philippines
Malacanang Palace
JP Laurel Street, San Miguel
Manila NCR 1005
Press Secretary and Presidential Spokesperson: ops_edp@ops.gov.ph

Dear Madam President,

Our organization received disturbing information from the Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN) of Habitat International Coalition (HIC) and their friends at Eviction Watch (EW) concerning the violent demolitions going on along R10 in Navotas City. The demolitions took place between 18 and 20 January 2010 and resumed again on March 4 2010. The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the city government have already demolished the houses of some 393 families. They are part of the 1,000 families the government wants removed to give way to its Road 10 widening project. Many residents did not accept the financial offer of P21,000 for each affected family from the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and insisted on receiving relocation as mandated by Philippine law and that your Excellency also promised on August 1, 2008. To break their resistance the government used baton-wielding and shield shoving policemen and water canon blasts by firemen. Many people were hurt. Most of them were women, including grandmothers. A number were arrested and later released. This is really sad, considering that March is supposed to be women's month.

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This turn of events is a disappointment and completely contrary to what they had expected from your Government. They held on to the promise you made on August 1, 2008 when you met their leaders together with other leaders representing 11 urban poor communities affected by national government infrastructure projects, in Malacanang, the presidential palace. You agreed to their proposal that they would be relocated to Montalban/Rodriguez municipality. They say they like that place because it is relatively near their jobs and sources of income, has basic services like water, electricity, public transportation, clinics, hospitals, and schools. You also promised funds for house and lot development. They religiously attended meetings with various government agencies, local and national. The meetings dragged. The DPWH now offers only offer financial assistance, not relocation. The residents and their lawyers said this is contrary to Philippine law (RA 7279) and insisted that what you promised in Malacanang should be carried out.

Instead of a legacy of a decent house and a chance for a better future for their children when you leave as president in a few months, what they have are sleepless nights, fears for their children and elders getting sick, their children not going to school, income earners unable to work, fear of more violent evictions—more hunger, pain and misery. The demolitions rendered them homeless and even vulnerable to violations of their other rights, including the right to vote.

Additionally, the Philippine government is a State party to legally binding international treaties such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (03 January 1976), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (20 September 1990), the Convention on the

Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (04 September 1981), and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (04 January 1959). The Philippine government, therefore, is obliged and bound to respect, protect and fulfill the right to adequate housing of its citizens and to refrain from committing forced evictions.

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Finally, may we remind your government that on November 24, 2008 the UN Committee monitoring compliance of governments with the provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, called on the Philippine government as a State Party to the said Covenant to stop illegal forced evictions and to provide adequate relocation to evicted families (E/C.12/PHL/CO/4, paras. 29–30).

Understandably poor people's faith in you has been shaken. We therefore earnestly urge you Madam President to:

- Instruct relevant government agencies, namely, the DPWH, National Housing Authority, and Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council to provide adequate relocation and compensation to the R10 families;
- Order a stop to further evictions and demolitions;
- And, investigate those involved in the violent demolitions and punish those found guilty. The Commission on Human Rights should take the lead in the investigation.

We sincerely wish that in the waning days of your Presidency hope will be rekindled among the poor, especially the women of R10.

Respectfully yours,

[your name and organization]

CC:

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Hon. Leila M. De Lima

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