

24 March 2021

Philippines: Woman human rights defender Renalyn Tejero arrested

On 21 March 2021, police and military officers arrested woman human rights defender **Renalyn Tejero** in Cagayan de Oro City. She has been charged with ‘attempted murder’ and ‘murder’, and was allegedly included in the government’s list of individuals deemed to be "communist-terrorist group priority targets" in the Caraga region. Renalyn Tejero is currently being held at the Police Regional Office (PRO) 13’s headquarters at Camp Colonel Rafael Rodriguez in Butuan City.

[Renalyn Tejero](#) is a woman human rights defender and works as a paralegal for Karapatan, an alliance of individuals, groups and organisations, formed in 1995 for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Philippines. The alliance is committed to the defence of human rights and civil liberties through education, training, advocacy, research and network building.

On 21 March 2021 at 5:30 a.m., police and soldiers, wearing bullet-proof vests, arrested Renalyn Tejero in Cagayan de Oro City, citing an arrest warrant issued by a local court. She was handcuffed and her request to call her lawyer or family was denied, and for several hours following her arrest, her whereabouts were unknown. Legal due process was not followed with no subpoena served prior to the woman human rights defenders arrest, leaving her unaware of the murder allegations against her until she was arrested. Neither Renalyn Tejero or her lawyers have yet been granted access to the relevant documents citing the basis of her arrest and the allegations against her. Renalyn Tejero has had access to her lawyer since her arrest.

This is not the first time that the woman human rights defender has been the target of unfounded and fabricated accusations in connection with her human rights activities. In November 2020, the woman human rights defender was among of a group of individuals whose names and photos were included in large tarpaulin posters in Lianga, Surigao del Sur and Butuan City, red-tagging the individuals named. Numerous other posters were posted in public areas, accusing her of being part of the New Peoples Army¹.

With these accusations and arrest, Renalyn Tejero joins a group of human rights defenders who have recently been [targeted](#) for their alleged membership in “Communist Terrorist Groups”. Red-tagging² is a tactic that is repeatedly and systematically used by the authorities in the Philippines against human rights defenders to discredit them and portray their legitimate human rights work as a national security threat, with most arrests and extrajudicial killings of human rights defenders justified under this pretext. The terrorism charges typically levied against human rights defenders, including Renalyn Tejero, are fabricated and without merit. The charges against the woman human rights defender are a further example of the authorities’ tactic of intimidation and vilification of human rights defenders on false and baseless accusations.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the increasingly hostile environment for human rights defenders in the Philippines and the concerted efforts by the authorities to vilify and delegitimise their efforts to protect and promote human rights in the country. Front Line Defenders condemns the arrest of woman human rights defender Renalyn Tejero and the accusations made against her, which it believes to be in reprisal for her legitimate and peaceful work for the protection of human

1 An armed wing of the Marxist–Leninist–Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines, designated as a ‘terrorist group’ by the Philippines government.

2 “Red-tagging” refers to the broad trend of labelling by the Philippine authorities of human rights defenders, journalists, rural communities and others perceived as threats or enemies of the State, as having links to communist groups.

rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the Philippines to:

1. Immediately cease the investigation and drop all charges against Renalyn Tejero, as Front Line Defenders believes that she is being targeted solely as a result of their legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of the woman human rights defender, in consultation with her;
3. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Philippines and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

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