



ASIA/PHILIPPINES - Investigations concerning Father Tentorio are being carried out at a slow pace, stop to impunity: Civil Society writes to President Aquino

Kidapawan (Agenzia Fides) – To put an immediate end to the impunity that reigns in Arakan Valley and throughout the island of Mindanao; to promote justice and transparency with every means in the case of the murder of father Fausto Tentorio, PIME missionary killed on October 17 in Arakan. This is what civil society in Mindanao ask for, in an appeal to President Benigno Aquino, on the eve of the demonstration of solidarity and prayer to be held from 26 November to 29 in Mindanao, dedicated to the missionary killed and promoted by the movement "Justice for Father Tentorio", which brings together more than 50 among associations and religious congregations in Mindanao.

The movement has promoted the appeal and started collecting signatures to support it. The text sent to Agenzia Fides, recalls that "after Father Tentorio's assassination human rights violations in Arakan have intensified because of the rampant militarization and impunity". On 20 October, three days after the murder of Fr. Fausto, Ramon Batoy was killed, another victim of extrajudicial killings in Arakan. The military, the text continues, "are continuing to detain and torture two other indigenous farmers of the village", accusing them of being members of the communist rebel of the New People's Army. As a result, more than 150 families have left Arakan, fearing further human rights abuses at the hands of the military.

"It is impunity that allows government forces to commit atrocities", notes the manifesto, which also challenges the slow pace of investigations into Tentorio's case and the attempt to involve some of its collaborators in the murder. Civil society stresses its demands: an independent inquiry into the killing of the missionary and the tribal leaders and the immediate release of the other natives, to create an atmosphere that encourages witnesses and ensure their safety; to withdraw all military detachments from Arakan; stop military atrocities and abuses; dismantle the paramilitary group Gantangan. The group, denounces the document, recruits indigenous as guards of the mining companies, continues to threaten and kill tribal people who defend their ancestral lands and oppose the militarization of their communities. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 25/11/2011)