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9 February 2023

## **Philippines: Woman Human Rights Defender Jennifer Awingan-Taggaoa from Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) faces charges of rebellion**

On 7 February 2023 woman human rights defender **Jennifer Awingan-Taggaoa** was released on bail from the Abra Provincial jail where she was imprisoned since her arrest on 30 January 2023. Jennifer Awingan-Taggaoa, along with six other human rights defenders, is facing charges arising from an incident on 27 October 2022 in Gacab, a district in the municipality of Malibcong, located in the province of Abra. The event in question was an ambush by the New Peoples Army (NPA) who attacked four soldiers of the Philippine Army, causing two deaths.

[Jennifer Awingan-Taggaoa](#) is a researcher at Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA). She is a native of Barangay Limos, Pinukpuk, Kalinga, and was one of the founding members of the Asia-Pacific Indigenous Youth Network, now Asia Young Indigenous Peoples' Network.

Following the incident on 27 October 2022, the six human rights defenders were issued with an arrest warrant on 24 January 2023. Jennifer Awingan-Taggaoa was subsequently arrested on 30 January 2023. Four of the human rights defenders are members of CPA, namely Windel Bolinget, Steve Tauli, Lulu Gimenez and Sarah Alikes; while the other two, Niño Oconer and Florence Kang, are human rights defenders from the Ilocos working as Northern Dispatch's Ilocos correspondent and Executive Director of Ilocos Centre for Research, Empowerment and Development respectively. The police report on the arrest, accused her of the offence of rebellion, named her as the secretary of the Regional Urban White Area Committee of the Ilocos-Cordillera Regional Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Even though her warrant did not recommend bail, the Abra Regional Trial Court granted bail "[as a matter of right](#)" since the prosecution still has to bring stronger evidence in support of their claims, to prove the allegations.

During the hearing, it was also highlighted that the affidavits of the soldiers who survived the ambush only named two alleged NPA members as perpetrators; and the other six accused human rights defenders were not among those identified as assailants. Furthermore, the human rights defenders were charged as members of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Front Line Defenders believes that the charges filed against Jennifer Awingan-Taggaoa and six other human rights defenders are directly related to their work in defence of the human rights of social justice, the rights of indigenous peoples, national freedom and democracy in the Philippines. Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned for the psychological wellbeing of the seven human rights defenders.

### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the Philippines to:**

1. Immediately drop all charges against Jennifer Awingan-Taggaoa and the six human rights defenders as it is believed that these are as a result of their legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;

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2. Ensure that the ongoing investigation into the threats, intimidation and false accusations against the human rights defenders be thorough and impartial, with a view to bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of CPA members and other human rights defenders accused as well as of the members of their families;
4. Take measures to ensure that government officials or other public figures refrain from making statements or declarations stigmatising the legitimate work of human rights defenders;
5. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in the Philippines and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisal and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment, threats, intimidation and arrest.