

Manila, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2017

## **STATEMENT: Human rights defender Temogen “Cocoy” Tulawie faces yet again trumped up charge and warrant of arrest**

Manila. A warrant of arrest was issued against the peace and human rights activist Temogen “Cocoy” Tulawie by the Regional Trial Court in Sulu on 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2017.

Tulawie is accused of being involved in the case of the kidnapped German journalist Andreas Lorenz from the *Spiegel*-magazine. In 2000, Lorenz had been covering the story of the kidnapping of the German Wallert family on the Malaysian island of Sipadan, when he himself was abducted by the *Abu Sayyaf Group*. Tulawie played a crucial role in providing the hostage with basic necessities and advocating for his release.

Investigating Prosecutor Annie Marie Pierreangeli P. Ledesma filed the formal charges against Tulawie for *kidnapping and serious illegal detention with ransom* at the Regional Trial Court in Jolo, Sulu on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2017. The initial complaint against Tulawie was filed on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2017 only one month after Tulawie had filed a petition at the Office of the President to remove Ledesma from office on grounds of dishonesty, betrayal of public trust and grave misconduct.

Then foreign correspondent Olaf Ihlau, who reported about the kidnapping for the Spiegel, testified that *“the accusation that Cocoy kidnapped Lorenz is absurd”*. The American photo-journalist David McIntyre in addition attested that *“Cocoy was there to help us verify information, facilitate contact with the hostages and help us bring in goods and messages to and from the hostages”*.

*“It is too easy to misuse the Philippine judiciary to silence political opposition. People like Tulawie should be awarded for their work; instead they’re being put behind bars”*, says Dominik Hammann, country coordinator for the German human rights organization *International Peace Observers Network (IPON)*.

**IPON expresses its deep concerns over the continuing criminalization of HRD in the Philippines and calls on Philippine state authorities to immediately drop the charge against Tulawie!**

Temogen “Cocoy” Tulawie is a Philippine human rights activist from the southern province of Sulu, head of the regional bureau of the *Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS)* and founder of the local human rights group *Bawgbug*. It is not the first time that he is being criminalized. As a result of his peaceful activism and campaigning Tulawie was labelled as a member of the Abu Sayyaf and falsely accused of attempted and frustrated murder. Innocent, he was incarcerated for more than three years between 2012 and 2015. Only later, members of the Abu Sayyaf admitted that they had been forced to testify against Tulawie by state officials, which reveals the true motive behind the fabricated charges to bring his political activism to an end.



About IPON:

The International Peace Observers Network (IPON) is an independent, non-intervening and non-profit organization which accompanies HRD and monitors and informs about their situation in regards to human rights. The overall objective of IPON is to ensure that HRDs who are subjected to intimidations, threats, violence, and other forms of harassments can undertake their work free from harm and repression.

For questions or comments, you may contact:

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