

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Set free our teachers – Sec. Lapus

Taking the ‘father’ role of all the basic education teachers in the country, Education Secretary Jesli Lapus sent an urgent call to set free six kidnapped teachers in Zamboanga without any condition.

“They prepare our young for the future and now their own future is uncertain,” he pointed out as he joined SAGIP GURO, a national multi-sectoral coalition, in calling for the immediate release of teachers abducted in Zamboanga City on January 23 and in Zamboanga Sibugay last March 13.

“What happened to our teachers in Zamboanga must not happen again, anywhere!” Lapus stressed.

The missing teachers are Quizon Frieres (29 yrs. old), Janette Delos Reyes (27 yrs. old), Rafael Mayonado (24 yrs. old), Jocelyn Inion (39 yrs. old), Noemi Mandi (38 yrs. old) and Jocelyn Enriquez (43 yrs. old).

Lapus said that all of kidnapped victims come from poor families who by dint of hardwork and determination had made it to the teaching profession. He relayed that the hapless teachers depend solely on their salary to provide for their family’s needs. He cited that Frieres and Delos Reyes are children of ambulant vendor and *labandera* and are the only ones in their families who finished college.

DepEd and the City Government of Zamboanga have been working together to make education accessible even to the island and far-flung barangays.

Lapus said, “These teachers are bringing education to where it is most needed in the island barangays, whose population is predominantly our Muslim brothers and sisters.”

In calling for the unconditional release of the abducted teachers, Lapus was joined by City Crisis Management Committee (CCMC) Chair and Zamboanga City Mayor Cleo Lobregat; Zamboanga Peninsula Regional Director-OIC Dr. Walter Albos, and TOPPS National Vice President Gloria Carpio.

He met with the families of the six kidnapped teachers and assured them of the prayers and support of the more than 500,000-strong DepEd organization.

The government maintains a no-ransom policy in dealing with the kidnappers.

In dealing with the crisis situation Lapus told the SAGIP GURO coalition: “We are here today not only to conquer fear, console those in pain but also to raise hope that the missing six will soon be released by their abductors through our resolve to act collectively through SAGIP GURO.”

PRESS RELEASE

SAGIP GURO was organized by the Teachers Organization of the Philippine Public Sector (TOPPS). It also hopes to increase teachers' awareness on their protection as public servants.

From Batanes to Tawi-Tawi, various chapters of the SAGIP GURO coalition are being organized to show solidarity with the Zamboanga initiative.

END

Attached photo:

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus with a relative of a kidnapped teacher and Dr. Amelia Torralba, Chief Elementary Division, Region IX (center).

PRESS RELEASE