

Press Release: April 27, 2010  
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*On the 3<sup>rd</sup> year commemoration of Jonas' abduction and disappearance*

## **Mrs. Edith Burgos: What can the Presidentiables do for Jonas Burgos and the human rights situation in the Philippines?**

“Today, April 28, 2010, I dare all presidential candidates to make a stand on enforced disappearances, torture, extra judicial killings and other violations of human rights. I challenge all of them to bare their human rights agenda instead of wasting their time mud-slinging. I ask all those seeking the highest post in the land what they can do for Jonas and the human rights situation in the country because this present government of Mrs. Gloria Arroyo has done nothing to find my son and give justice to what happened,” said Mrs. Edita Burgos in commemoration of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the abduction and disappearance of Jonas Burgos, activist, agriculturist and son of media icon Joe Burgos.

Three years ago today, Jonas was forcibly taken by armed men, believed to be members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, from a mall in Quezon City while eating inside a fast food restaurant. Since then, the Burgos family and friends have searched for him, yet he remains missing.

“We have brought his case to the Court of Appeals, the Commission on Human Rights and even the United Nations.” says Mrs. Edith Burgos, “ Unfortunately, the CA refused to grant me the Writ of habeas corpus and the writ of amparo, the Supreme Court has remained silent on my appeal for the reversal of the CA’s decision, This petition was filed in August 1, 2008, more than 1 year and 8 months ago, meanwhile the officers whom we have charged in court have been promoted. So now we ask – where is justice?”

Like other families who have lost their loved ones through enforced disappearances, extra-judicial killings and other human rights violations, Mrs. Burgos has not stopped and will not stop searching for her son, Jonas. She will continue to seek for justice for him and for the thousands of victims of human rights violations under the present government.

According to the human rights group Desaparecidos, the human rights situation in the Philippines within this decade and under the leadership of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has been at its worst since the time of the Marcos dictatorship. A total of 1,118 victims of extrajudicial killings and 204 victims of enforced disappearance has been documented by the human rights group Karapatan. The figures are only for the period of 2001 – 2009, add other cases that have been documented from January to April of this year, have yet to be added.

Aside from the enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killings, other human rights violations continue to be committed by the Arroyo administration. “If this is the case, then we cannot hope for any justice from the current government.” Mrs. Burgos stated, adding that with just 12 days to go, they have not heard any Presidential candidate offer their human rights agenda to the Filipino people. “What can Noynoy Aquino, Manny Villar, Erap Estrada, Gibo Teodoro, Dick Gordon, Eddie Villanueva, Nick Perlas, Jamby Madrigal and Jaycee delos Reyes do to improve the human rights situation in the country?” Mrs. Burgos asked.

Desaparecidos Deputy Secretary General Lorena “Aya” Santos could only agree. “In case these Presidential bets have forgotten, may we remind them that human rights issues – economic, social, civil, political and cultural rights – are the issues we as a nation must confront. Thus, we challenge those running for positions in government to present their

human rights agenda to the nation and show us how they will protect the rights of the Filipino people. ###