



Call to Action: Justice for Jerome Succor Aba April 21, 2018

Earlier this week, human rights defender, 25-year old Jerome Succor Aba, was detained at SFO International Airport for 28 hours while interrogated by the US Customs and Border Protection agency (CBP).

Jerome was invited by church groups and people's organizations in the US to speak at the Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington D.C., at a Luncheon Forum organized by the Office of International Justice and Peace of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, and at US Congressional offices about the human rights situation in the Philippines, particularly his native Mindanao. He also was to join other human rights defenders from the Philippines for the ***People's Caravan for Peace & Justice in the Philippines*** organized by the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines (ICHRP).

When he arrived to the US on April 18, Jerome had a valid 10-year multiple entry visa. Despite this, the CBP told Jerome that he had "no business on US soil."

Jerome is a human rights worker that is accustomed to documenting gross violations of civil and political rights of individuals and communities throughout Mindanao. However, this is the first time, he said, that he was the direct victim of human rights violations.

"Like everyone else entering the United States," Jerome shared, "I fell in line at [Immigration]. When it was my turn, they took my passport, and they looked at my visa that says 10 years, multiple entry to the US. Unlike the other people, an officer of CBP approached me. They called me and took me to a room by myself where there were 3 officers of Homeland Security. I said, 'Is there something wrong? Am I in trouble here? Why am I by myself? And what is the problem?'"

"I was handcuffed. It was very tight and I asked why I was handcuffed. They said I'm not entitled to my human rights. They started asking questions. They asked me, 'Are you a terrorist? Or are you a communist?' That was the line of questioning-- asking questions about rallies, ISIS, my views on the politics of the US, my views on Duterte's killing of 13,000 people in his war on drugs, what were my thoughts on the relationship between the US and the Philippines.

"In another room, an empty stainless room, they took off my handcuffs while they were questioning me. I was relieved because I was in pain from the handcuffs. But, it turns out they were making me take off my clothes. [The] officers there commanded me to undress. I asserted that this is illegal, cruel, inhumane, this is a violation of human rights. I am entitled to human rights. Over and over they repeated, 'You are not entitled to any rights.' It was cold, and they made it colder. They brought in a very big electric fan and turned it on, pointed it at me. It was so cold and I was naked. They left me there with the fan..."

After many hours of being moved from room to room and subjected to physical and psychological torture, CBP agent Lopez brought Jerome a blank piece of paper. "He said, 'In order to be released, sign this,'" Jerome shared. "Because I was so exhausted, I signed it. I wrote 'UP' to mean 'under pressure,' but he took the paper and made me sign another piece of paper. So I did."

A few hours later, Jerome was back on an airplane to the Philippines. While relieved to be out of the "belly of the beast," he was unable to rest on the plane,



seeing only images of his tormentors when he closed his eyes. “When I was being interrogated, I stopped myself from crying and being emotional. I thought, I’m not going to give them that. But when I was in the plane, I couldn’t stop myself from crying.”

Jerome was greeted at the airport in Manila by lawyers, progressive congressional representatives, and fellow human rights activists. “When I saw [them], I felt relieved. They hugged me and the only thing I was able to say was, ‘They tortured me.’”

CALL TO ACTION

Join us in seeking justice for Jerome and all other victims and survivors of abuse at the hands of US Customs and Border Protection by taking part in the Circle of Concern and Response. We invite you to act through STUDY, PRAYER, ADVOCACY, ENGAGEMENT, WITNESS, and GIVING. Please help us spread this effort far and wide!

ENGAGE

The People’s Caravan for Peace & Justice in the Philippines, is taking place in cities throughout the US from April 20 – May 11, 2018. The International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines-US (ICHRP) is organizing this tour to call for an end to the killings and US military support of human rights violations in the Philippines. Find a tour activity near you by visiting the ICHRP US Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ICHRPUnitedStates/>).

PRAY

Our prayers and/or commitments to prayer will be compiled and included in a packet that the Caravan delegates will take with them to visits with Congressional offices and Bishops, to show the impact of Jerome’s unjust detainment. We are encouraging you to pray AND to invite (via social media, in person, or over email) 22 other individuals to engage in prayer—one for each hour that Jerome was held incommunicado:

- Gather a small group to pray in front of Federal Buildings, Customs and Border Protection, Philippine Consulates (US Embassies if not in US) and document the witness with photos or videos. If prayers are available in written form, tape them onto the doors or windows of the building(s).
- Organize a prayer group to take a moment of prayer for Justice for Jerome, mindful of the need for solidarity, resistance, and the impact this experience may have had for him and his loved ones. You may also pray for understanding, Beloved Community, safety for Jerome and those he works with, and the peace that is the result of justice.
- Individuals can offer up their prayers in many ways! Prayer speaks many languages and takes many forms. It can be offered up in the form of poetry, music, art, video, written, etc.
- Send us your prayers (Transcripts, Screenshots, links to your Videos, or a list of names committing to prayer). Send them to Rev. Jeanelle Nicolas Ablola via email to jna.design@gmail.com. In addition, when posting on social media, please use the hashtag #Justice4Jerome.

WITNESS

The International Coalition for Human Rights and Peace in the Philippines (ICHRP-US) will be hosting International Solidarity Missions to the Philippines this summer 2018.

The proposed dates are July 22 to August 11. Please contact Joyous Prim (pfeifferswimmer09@gmail.com or +1 336 408 0547) if you are interested in participating and she will let you know when there is more information available for delegates.



ADVOCATE

Join the International Coalition for Human Rights and Peace in the Philippines (ICHRP-US) in this week's Lobby Days - April 23 and 24. You can also sign onto the call for a hearing to investigate human rights in the Philippines and the impact of US aid and/or write a letter to your congressional representatives urging them to support the restriction of military aid to the Philippines. If you are interested in becoming more involved in legislative advocacy with ICHRP US, contact Katie Joaquin (katie.ichrp@gmail.com).

Send letters, emails or fax messages to the US and Philippine governments calling for:

1. The accountability of the US government on the torture, illegal arrest and detention, and other violations of Jerome Succor Aba's civil, political, and socio-cultural rights;
2. The US government to scrap its national security and immigration policies that violate basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, including its arbitrary Muslim ban;
3. The Philippine government to investigate on these rights violations against Aba as both the Philippine and US governments are signatories to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that they are also parties to all the major Human Rights instruments, as they are bound to observe, promote and protect all of these instruments' provisions;
4. The Philippine government to lodge a diplomatic protest for the violation of rights of a Filipino citizen and pursue all means to attain justice and accountability, in defense of the country's sovereignty as mandated by the Philippine Constitution; and
5. The Philippine and US government to stop its common policy of using immigration laws to restrict the freedom of expression, of association, and peaceable assembly, and other civil liberties.

You may send your communications to:

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GIVE

Our national fundraising goal is \$25,000 to cover the cost of holding the tour and caravan. To make a donation, participate in our online GoFundMe campaign at <https://www.gofundme.com/stop-the-killings-caravan>. Make a donation, then tag or email 10 friends and encourage them to do the same within a day.

STUDY

ICHRP is a global network of organizations outside the Philippines, concerned about the human rights situation in the Philippines and committed to campaign for just and lasting peace in the country. If you are interested in having more educational discussions in your area about the human rights situation in the Philippines, please visit the [Facebook page here](#) and send a message. You will be connected with a regional coordinator.

SOCIAL MEDIA HASHTAGS:

#Justice4Jerome
#Resistance is Our Right!
#Solidarity is Our Duty!

