



DIOCESE OF NEGROS OCCIDENTAL  
*Iglesia Filipina Independiente*  
Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist  
BONIFACIO, Gonzaga streets, Bago City  
Negros Occidental, Philippines

### CONDEMNATION AGAINST THE KILLING OF BENJIE BAYLES

*There is only cursing, lying and **murder**, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds,  
and bloodshed follows bloodshed. ---- Hosea 4:1-3*

*Bloodthirsty men hate a man of integrity and seek to **kill** the upright. ----- Proverbs 29:9-11*

As the funeral wake for Benjie Bayles continues, the Diocese of Negros Occidental **shall continue** fighting for the truth to bring the perpetrators to the bar of justice.

Benjamin E. Bayles, a.k.a Benjie to his friends and families, 44 years old was a parish worker and at the same time a lay minister of San Ramon Nonato Parish in Brgy. Suay, Himamaylan City. He started as a sacristan of Rev. Fr. Romeo Tagud way back year 2000. His involvement to the ministry of the Church accounts his reverence to God and his love to His people especially the poor, deprived, oppressed and exploited. These same convictions propelled him to immerse himself to the intense struggle of the farmers for land and justice. His affiliations include September 21 Movement, a local human rights group in the Southern Negros; member of National Federation of Sugar Workers, and of Bayan Muna Partylist.

His life as a Christian was a reflection of his Aglipayan faith and spirituality: Pro Deo et Patria (For God and Country). He was a District Chairman and Coordinator of Aglipayan Forum, a movement in the diocese that promotes nationalism and liberating education that gives flesh to the revolutionary spirit of the IFI.

For his friends and families, Benjie is a loving, thoughtful, cheerful, kind, and gentle fellow. However, because of his undying support with the cause of the PDOEs, this creates animosity with the state agents who labeled him as member of the NPA. His former parish priest Rev. Fr. Benjamin Duran, who had seen Benjie's spiritual and social growth, can testify that his involvement to the farmers struggle was in accordance to the IFI programs to support the farmers' and workers' struggles for abundant life. Numerous threats to his life, did not falter his commitments to continue serving the *anawims* of the society.

June 14, 2010 was a fateful day to Benjie. He was waiting for a ride at Purok Antolo, Brgy. Suay, Himamaylan City at around 4:30 in the afternoon when two men wearing helmets on board a black Honda TMX 155 with no license plate stopped nearby. The back rider disembarked and walked towards Benjamin. At about 3 meters away from him, the gunman shot him at different parts of his body. When the victim fell down, the driver of the motorcycle also came near the victim and shot him to ensure his death. Then the perpetrators left the area on board the motorcycle. Among the bystanders who witnessed the incident was a government employee who immediately called someone he knows from the Himamaylan City Philippine National Police (PNP) to report the incident. The Himamaylan City PNP alerted the nearby Kabankalan City PNP who set up a check point and apprehended Roger M. Bajon and Ronnie L. Caurino. Two .45 caliber pistols were confiscated from the suspects. The Kabankalan police, in their statement to DYEZ "Aksyon Radyo" Bacolod said that the suspects confessed to be "organic" members of the Philippine Army.

We condemn in the highest form this horrible death of Benjie Bayles. In the autopsy report, there are 25 wounds in his body and 21 bullets were found. What crime Benjie did that he must die this way? Is this the price a church worker has to pay for his undying commitment to the cause of the poor, deprived, oppressed and exploited of his community?

What disheartened us the most is the fact that he died in the hand of military gunmen. The Armed Forces of the Philippines have the sacred vow to defend and protect the citizens of this country, but in the stark contrast to the sacred vow are their countless killings and murders, summary executions, abductions and various forms of human rights violations committed. As of now more than 1100 were murdered and more than 280 were abducted and still missing and these are all attributed to the military, yet not a single one was convicted. It only shows the undeclared policy of the state to kill and murder those who are standing for truth, justice, and peace. The culture of impunity blessed by the highest office of the land is the worst legacy of GMA administration.

The struggle of Benjie and the rest of the farmers he committed to serve is the struggle of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente. The fight for truth and justice are not only political issues. The fight for truth and justice are primarily moral and spiritual issues the church has to continually struggle for.

In this present crime against humanity perpetuated in the name of state security we remember the horrible deaths of many church workers especially the brutal assassinations of Rev. Frs. Narciso Pico, William Tadena, and Bishop Alberto Ramento.

We strongly denounce the military and other state agents of labeling our church, Iglesia Filipina Independiente, to be the front of communist organizations as appeared many times in the campaign against insurgency conducted by state armies. This accusation made our church people vulnerable to the continuous attacks and abuses of the state terrorism. This is a blatant affront to our community of faith.

Our faith to the One Living God of Liberation and Salvation propels us more to struggle for the liberation of His people from all forms of dehumanization, and to this creedal affirmation we will stand strong in condemning the atrocities of the state in butchering the peace advocates and human rights defenders such as church people, journalists, lawyers, judges, health givers, and members of militant organizations.

We believe that the effective and peaceful way to put an end to the insurgency is not the killings of the civilians. We are appealing to the incoming President Aquino to return to the negotiating table and resume the peace process with the NDFP based on the Hague Declarations.

In this moment of grieve and rage, as your bishop, I am calling all the ordained and the faithful to be prayerful and vigilant that the death of Benjie Bayles will be given justice and the killers and their handlers will be convicted. We have already offered many lives in the altar of liberation, let this be our inspiration to immerse ourselves deeper to struggle for genuine freedom and peace based on justice. As One Body of Christ, let us intimately renew our commitment with the struggling masses. Break the culture of silence and let our cries be heard. *"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute"* (Proverbs 31.8).

**Pro Deo et Patria**

**(Sgd) THE RT. REV. FELOMINO N. ANG**  
**Interim Bishop**