

SLAPPED, PUNCHED AND BEATEN WITH A METAL BAR



© Private

ALFREDA DISBARRO

Philippines

On 3 October 2013, Alfreda Disbarro was at an internet cafe near her house in Parañaque, Manila, when police officers approached her and accused her of being a drug dealer. She denied the allegation and to prove she was not carrying drugs, emptied her pockets, which contained a mobile phone and a five-peso coin. Without warning the officers pointed a gun at her and punched her in the chest.

Alfreda, a 32-year-old mother of two, was taken to the police headquarters where she says police officers pinned her against a wall, repeatedly punched her in the face and stomach, hit her with a club, poked their fingers in her eyes, slapped her, forced a mop into her mouth, and banged her head against a wall. Then they beat her with a wooden stick and a metal bar.

Over the following days Alfreda was in such pain that she couldn't eat, had difficulty breathing and kept vomiting. During this period she was photographed with three \$100 bills and a sachet of drugs, and told to sign a blank sheet of paper.

After making a complaint to the Philippine Commission on Human Rights, Alfreda underwent a medical examination on 10 October 2013. The doctor found numerous bruises and marks on her body and concluded that they were caused by a hard, blunt object.



COUNTRY BACKGROUND

Amnesty International has serious concerns about the widespread use of torture and ill-treatment in the Philippines. State security forces, including police officers, continue to torture suspects and prisoners.

Justice is out of reach for the vast majority of torture victims, most of whom are from disadvantaged backgrounds and live in poor urban areas. Perpetrators are hardly ever held to account.

The Philippines has an extensive legislative framework to stop torture, and the government has pledged to increase its efforts to ensure these laws are implemented. The country is also party to key international anti-torture laws and mechanisms. However, a culture of impunity persists.

TAKE ACTION

Amnesty International is calling on the Internal Affairs Service of the Philippine police to respond to international pressure to investigate the torture and other ill-treatment suffered by Alfreda Disbarro.

Please write to:

Inspector General
Internal Affairs Service
Philippine National Police Compound
Camp General Crame
Quezon City
Metro Manila
PHILIPPINES 1100

SAMPLE LETTER

This is an example of what you could write. Please include the three bullet points below in your own letter.

Dear Inspector General,

Alfreda Disbarro, a 32-year-old mother of two, has been imprisoned since October 2013 on the basis of a 'confession' obtained by police through torture. I call on you to open an investigation into her allegations of torture and other ill-treatment while in custody at the Parañaque Police Headquarters, and ensure that this investigation is prompt, impartial, effective and efficient.

If the investigation confirms the torture allegations, I urge you to:

- Refer the case for public prosecution and cooperate with further investigations as needed by the court.
- Take immediate administrative measures against any police officers who are found to have been involved or complicit in the torture of Alfreda Disbarro.
- Provide a safe space for whistle-blowers within the Philippine National Police who wish to report their personal knowledge of torture by their colleagues, including in the case of Alfreda Disbarro.

SOLIDARITY WITH ALFREDA

Writing a message of solidarity only takes a few minutes, yet can make all the difference to Alfreda and her family. Please let Alfreda know that you are thinking of her and support her demand for justice. Send your message to Alfreda care of our office and we will make sure it is passed on to her.

Address: Alfreda Disbarro
C/o IAR Programme
Amnesty International UK
17-25 New Inn Yard
London
EC2A 3EA

Preferred language: English or Filipino

Suggested message:

I have heard about the difficult experience you have had at the hands of police officers. I will be campaigning for you and others who have experienced torture.

You have been so brave to report your experience. Be strong and continue fighting for justice.

Can you send a religious card? Yes

Alfreda's religious belief: Christian

Can you mention Amnesty? Yes

Can you include a return address? Yes

Amnesty International has campaigned against torture for over half a century. Thirty years ago we helped to secure an historic global ban.

But the governments that signed up to it have failed to live up to their promises. They still use torture to obtain 'confessions', to silence opposition – or simply to punish.

Everybody in the world has the right to live free from torture.

To find out more about this case:

www.amnesty.org.uk/stoptorture