

Justice for Jerome Aba

Submitted by: California-Nevada Philippine Solidarity Task Force

BACKGROUND

Jerome Succor Aba, a 25-year old peace advocate from Mindanao, Philippines, was denied entry to the US at the San Francisco International Airport(SFO) Tuesday April 18, 2018. Aba was invited by the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines - US, to speak in the Ecumenical Advocacy Days and a peace caravan in the US this April 19 to May 14. He was given a 10 -year multiple entry visa by the US Embassy in Manila and was scheduled to meet with several congressional offices and human rights organizations.

Upon arrival at SFO Aba was detained and held incommunicado by U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) for 28 hours. During which time he was subjected to physical and physiological torture.

Including:

- 1.) **Denial of Right to Counsel** – Despite repeated requests Aba was repeatedly told he had no rights and was not given access to the attorney local activists and clergy had available for him at the airport.
- 2.) **Inhumane Treatment/ Physical Threats** – Aba was forced to undress in an empty room with an electric fan blowing on him for hours. When requesting to use the restroom he was escorted by 5 CBP agents and threatened to “Be good or they would not hesitate to shoot”. Aba was offered food only after 24 hours of detainment, CBP disrespected his religion by deliberately serving him pork, which he cannot eat due to his Muslim faith.
- 3.) **Targeted for Human Rights Work and being a Muslim-** Aba was extensively interrogated about his affiliations, his political beliefs, and his cultural effects. Aba was asked about his participation in rallies, views on U.S.-Philippine relations, Martial Law in Mindanao and Duterte’s Drug War that has taken over 13,000 lives. Aba was repeatedly accused of being a “terrorist” and a “communist”. On two separate occasions he was left in a room with a gun and later a grenade, as if attempting to entrap him into using the items.
- 4.) **COERCION AND COVER- UP** - In order to be released Aba was forced to sign stacks of blank paper. Aba, attempted to write ‘UP’ to mean ‘under pressure’ but that paper was taken by CBP officers, and Aba was forced to sign another piece of paper. Before Aba was released, the agents also shredded in front of him a foot-tall stack of papers that the agents purported were their profile on him and Aba was forced to record a statement on video that he was not tortured during his 28 hours of detainment at SFO.

1 **Therefore be it Resolved** that the 2018 California-Nevada Annual Conference session of the
2 UMC expresses solidarity with Jerome Aba in denouncing the torture by Customs and Border
3 Patrol at San Francisco International Airport.
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5 **Further resolved** that the Secretary of the California-Nevada Annual Conference submit a copy
6 of this resolution to the Senators from California and Nevada and the Philippine Ambassador to
7 the US, expressing unconditional support for human rights advocates and religious leaders
8 working in the Philippines, and calling on those senators to inquire into actions taken by CBP
9 and the inhumane treatment of Jerome Aba at SFO in April 2018.
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11 **Further** we invited all churches in the California-Nevada Annual Conference to learn about
12 the conditions in the Philippines and use the Philippine Solidarity Task Force as a resource to
13 promote the education and learning of the US-Duterte Regime.
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