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## Calling for an End to Impunity and Justice for the Killed Tumandok Leaders

(Cologne, February 22, 2023) The **philippinenbüro** expresses concern about the possible promotion of a Police Colonel involved in the massacre of nine Tumandoks in 2020.

More than two years ago, on December 30, 2020, Philippine security forces entered the houses of indigenous Tumandok leaders from six Barangays in the upland areas of Calinog and Tapaz on Panay Island and [brutally killed nine of them in the presence of their families; 16 others were arrested](#). This joint police and military operation was called Oplan Paglalansag Omega.

The dead were identified as Roy Giganto, Reynaldo Katipunan, Garson Catamin, Eliseo Gayas Jr., Maurito Diaz, Artilito Katipunan, Mario Aguirre, Jomar Vidal, and Rolando Diaz.

The Tumandok leaders were falsely accused as members of the New People's Army (NPA). The police justified the killings by stating that the victims had resisted search and arrest warrants. However, testimonials of the families refuted this claim. [The victims were known leaders of their communities who had peacefully fought against the construction of the Jalaur Mega-Dam and for the protection of their ancestral domain and their people.](#)

[According to relatives of the victims, firearms had been planted during the joint military and police operation, a common practice by state security forces to criminalize activists.](#) The arrested Tumandok were then charged with illegal possession of firearms and rebellion.

"Two years after the massacre, justice for the victims of Oplan Paglalansag Omega remains elusive", says Bernhard Hoepfer, board member of the **philippinenbüro**. None of the perpetrators has been held accountable. Instead, Police Colonel Gervacio Balmaceda who spearheaded the operation was shortlisted as nominee for the appointment as Director of the Iloilo Provincial Police Office. "This is a blatant blow in the face of the Tumandok and everyone fighting impunity. The possible promotion is a chilling encouragement for security forces to commit further human rights violations without having to fear any consequences but to expect honors instead", Angela Dencker of the **philippinenbüro** states.

The **philippinenbüro** calls for an end to impunity! The Philippine government must rigorously condemn human rights violations committed by state security forces and ensure that the perpetrators are held accountable not promoted!

*The **philippinenbüro** e.V. was founded in 1987 in Cologne and advocates for social justice, human rights and solidarity in its educational work, public relations, and lobby work on the Philippines.*