

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Q. Pimentel, Jr. (PDP-Laban) today condemned the slaying of farmer-leader Rene Penas, who was at the forefront of the campaign to persuade Congress to extend the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

Senator Pimentel said Mr. Penas was a selfless-and-courageous leader who dedicated his life to the emancipation of farmers from the bondage of tenancy to improve their lives through economic opportunities that will open up to them by acquiring ownership of the lands they are tilling.

“In providing leadership to exploited and marginalized farmers in their quest for social justice and economic upliftment, Rene Penas made a lot of sacrifices and did not waver in fighting for his cause despite the threats to his life. It is unfortunate that his struggle should lead to his death at the hands of assassins, obviously hired by vested interests that were determined to frustrate the noble cause he was fighting for,” he said.

Mr. Pimentel blames the Arroyo government for the death of Rene Penas, as he criticized its halfhearted efforts in solving and stopping extrajudicial killings of political activists.

Mr. Penas, 51, led the 1,700-kilometer march of scores of landless farmers from Sumilao, Bukidnon, in 2007 to dramatize their plight and to force the management of the Quisumbing Estate to give up ownership of disputed agricultural lands in favor of the tenants.

Senator Pimentel said Rene Penas perished at a time when Congress, in response to the appeal of protesting farmers, has approved the five-year extension of CARP to allow the distribution of 1.3-million more hectares of farmlands to qualified agrarian-reform beneficiaries.

For this breakthrough alone, he said Rene Penas did not die in vain.

He called on law-enforcement authorities to leave no stone unturned in unmasking and hunting down the perpetrators of the Penas murder so that they can be brought to the bar of justice.

Senator Pimentel Condemns Slaying of Farmer-leader, a Victim of the Arroyo Dispensation's Extrajudicial

Written by Senator Pimentel's Press Office

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Senator Pimentel said the death of Rene Penas can be partly blamed on the Arroyo government, as he criticized its halfhearted efforts in solving and stopping extrajudicial killings of political activists. He said the failure to prosecute the culprits in these summary executions, especially men in uniform, has only emboldened malevolent forces in continuing the orgy of killings and terrorizing freedom-loving citizens who are resisting tyranny and suppression of democratic rights. # # #

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