

**AWARENESS AND PRACTICES OF THE MILITARY IN UPHOLDING THE
HUMAN RIGHTS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS**

**A Research Project
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ABSTRACT

This research study is on the awareness and practices of the military in upholding the human rights of political prisoners. The main objective of the study is to determine the military's and political prisoners' awareness of the concept of human rights and how are these rights upheld and reflected in the practices of the military in dealing with political prisoners. The purpose of this study is to correct the common notion of the Filipinos on the violent and abusive culture of the military carried over by the Martial Law era to the present dimension.

Descriptive research design was the method used in the analysis of the results. Thirty (30) military men from the 47th Infantry Battalion were selected using the lottery sampling. The second set of respondents, the political prisoners were determined through purposive sampling, all of them detained in jails within the Region Six were individually visited by the proponents of this study. A set of 48-item questionnaire was distributed among the two groups of respondents. As for the political prisoners, an interview was conducted prior to the introduction of questionnaires to extract their own concept of human rights. The group interview with the military was done across ranks. One group was composed of three highest ranking officials assigned in the battalion and the other three were military men with three lowest ranks in the hierarchy. The results revealed that the military possessed a higher awareness on the concept of human rights compared to the political prisoners. The military's high awareness was brought about by the rigid human rights training programs facilitated by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and other human rights advocate groups, and their significant educational background (a least two years of college education).

The political prisoners on the other hand acquired their awareness from the popular education ("*Pagtu-on*") they have received before joining the anti-government movement, and also from the human rights advocate groups they have met during their detention. Their limited or low awareness was explained by their lack of formal education (most of them were not able to finish elementary education). The military's high awareness was reflected on the manner they deal with insurgents especially during their counter-insurgency operations. Most of the Human Rights violations experienced by the political prisoners happened during the detention phase of their imprisonment (i.e. unsanitary and overcrowded detention cells, inadequate food, and no free medical assistance) are upshots of insufficient budget from the government since the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology is not on the top priority of the administration. The Philippine Society is confronted with more vital problems that need more attention by the government, problems that are more critical than contemplating on the welfare of what the public would call the outlaws. The researchers recommend that the military officers should instill to their subordinates the importance of the concept of human rights and the LGU should allocate sufficient funds for the maintenance of the detention centers to safeguard the welfare of the political prisoners.