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Press Release

January 13, 2013

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The situation has been tense since last Wednesday when construction crew attempted to build a wall to enclose the development site. In the confrontation, community leader Virginia Panahon was physically threatened using a bolo and also warned with arrest by the barangay captain. Since then residents and vendors have maintained a vigil to defend their community and livelihood. Last Friday police mobile cars were seen patrolling the community.

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Last December 18, some 100 residents and vendors marched from the Market Site to the municipal hall to demand a relocation site. Members of Samahan ng Naninirahan sa Market Site were joined by supporters from the Partido ng Manggagawa Coalition (PM Coalition) and Alyansa ng Maralitang Pilipino in the protest. The dialogue with an official of the office of Mayor Leonisa "Ona" Virata yielded no result.

"The people want social progress with social justice. We appeal to be treated as human beings not rags that can be thrown when not needed. If our community is to be demolished then we demand decent relocation and financial assistance,' declared Ramil Cangayao of the Cavite chapter of PM Coalition.

Since July this year, the community residents have been holding protests and negotiations with the National Housing Authority, which owns the open space sold to Lotus Mall, and the administration of Mayor Virata. But residents complain

that they are being given the runaround. On November 19, the Sangguniang Bayan passed Resolution No. 0735-2012 approving the application of Lotus Mall to develop a commercial building at Market Site.

Cangayao added that “If there is any shred of good governance in the administration of Mayor Virata, then residents deserve transparency as to the local government’s plans about relocation. They keep on promising there is a relocation site but there are no details. We also want the implementation of the Office of the Court Administrators Circular No. 72-2003 mandating a financial assistance to relocatees amounting to 60 days times the minimum wage or a total of P19,628 per family.”

Cangayao challenged the candidates in the coming elections to stand on the side of the urban poor residents. “Go beyond motherhood statements. In the real life struggle for a decent life and affordable housing, are the candidates on the side of the ordinary people or of rich developers?” he said. ###

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