

**PRESS RELEASE****Statement on the brutal slay of Grade 9 student in Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu**

*PASIG CITY, March 12, 2019* - The Department of Education (DepEd) strongly condemns the barbaric murder of a Grade 9 learner found on a vacant lot in Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu on March 11, and urges the proper authorities to hasten the arrest of the perpetrators.

The victim, identified to be a 16-year-old student of Maribago High School, was reported missing by her mother Sunday when she failed to return home from serving as a tithe collector in church. Her lifeless body, reportedly raped and skinned to the skull, was discovered the following morning by passers-by.

DepEd Schools Division Office of Lapu-Lapu City already issued a memorandum reminding all public and private elementary and secondary schools to strengthen their existing rules and policies on school safety. It further enumerated security measures such as: restricting practices for school presentations and other school-related activities until 5 p.m. only; instructing school heads to advise learners to bring packed lunch or snacks instead of buying food outside school premises; ensuring that fully functional CCTV cameras are installed in strategic areas; requesting additional presence of police or *barangay tanod* in the area; and advising students to always go in groups when out on the streets, especially when it is already dark.

As the Department calls on the local government unit and the police to swiftly bring to justice the cold-blooded criminals, it likewise enjoins the public in the shared responsibility of protecting children from all forms of abuse, violence, exploitation, and threat.

The Department extends its deepest condolences to the grieving family and requests the DepEd community for voluntary contribution to provide the bereaved with adequate financial assistance.

**END**

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