

UN PERMANENT FORUM on INDIGENOUS ISSUES
Sixth Session, May 14-25, 2007
Agenda Item: HUMAN RIGHTS
Statement by: Joan Carling, Cordillera Peoples Alliance

Madam Chair, Members of the Permanent Forum and the Special Rapporteur, Rodolfo Stavenhagen:

In behalf of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance, let me express our deepest appreciation on your statements of concern on the killing of my colleague, Mr. Rafael Marcus Bangit last June 8, 2006 and on the ambush of the family of Dr. Constancio Claver, where his wife Alice Claver died from several gun shot wounds in August also last year. These two cases of outright violation of the fundamental right to life committed against Cordillera indigenous activists demonstrate the worsening political repression in the Philippines. Your letters to Philippine officials regarding these cases have added more pressure for the government to act on the worsening incidents of political killings of activists and journalists which, unfortunately, continue to take place even as I speak here in the halls of the United Nations.

As of March 2007, the Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Watch has documented 120 extra-judicial killings committed against indigenous peoples. Eighty-three (83) of these occurred starting January 2003 to the present, or after the Special Rapporteur's visit to the Philippines in December 2002, with the highest incidence in 2006 with 43 individuals killed. The data of killings against indigenous peoples comprise a substantial number of about 820 extrajudicial killings collated nationwide from January 2001 to January 24, 2007 by KARAPATAN, a non-government national human rights alliance in the Philippines.

Most of the cases of political killings of indigenous peoples took place in Mindanao, southern Philippines, with 64 incidents while there were 36 incidents in the Cordillera Region where I come from. Of the 120 cases, four (4) were traditional leaders, eight (8) were prominent leaders of progressive indigenous organizations, five (5) were holding local government positions while three (3) were actively involved in local church programmes for their fellow indigenous peoples. Further, there were 12 cases of women brutally killed, four (4) of whom were pregnant at the time of their death. There were also a total of 16 minors killed during militarization of indigenous communities, nine (9) of whom were victims of massacres. A total of 27 persons died from eight incidents of massacres. Disregarding the economic livelihood and cultural practices of indigenous peoples, military forces summarily fired upon seven (7) farmers/hunters, who were then carrying with them hunting guns, on suspicion that they were members of the rebel group, the New Peoples Army (NPA). A full report of these cases will be submitted to the Forum and other concerned agencies.

Madame Chair, it is with grave concern and urgency that I appeal to representatives of States, UN agencies and other concerned institutions to call upon the Philippine

government to put a stop to the political killings of activists and journalists, and to decisively work for the immediate resolution of the more than 800 cases of extra judicial killings in the Philippines.

CPA believes that unless the Philippine government makes itself accountable to these cases where the Philippine military has been proven to be involved, political killings will continue to take place with impunity.

We fully support the recommendations made by the UN Special Rapporteurs, Rodolfo Stavenhagen and Philip Alston, which they presented during the meeting of the Human Rights Council in March this year on the political killings and the human rights situation of indigenous peoples in the Philippines. In addition to this, CPA puts forward the following recommendation to the Permanent Forum as further steps to be taken for the protection of human rights of indigenous peoples:

1. For the Permanent Forum to make a strong appeal to the Human Rights Council for the retention of the Special Rapporteur on the Fundamental Rights and Freedoms of Indigenous People and to ensure a continuing indigenous peoples mechanism within the Human Rights Council that shall include participation of indigenous experts and with a broader mandate to act on cases of human rights violations of indigenous peoples.
2. For the Permanent Forum to continuously remind States of their obligations and accountability on the human rights of its citizens, including indigenous peoples, and that concrete actions should be taken to address the worsening situation of indigenous peoples in relation to the protection of their human rights.

Finally, let me appeal to all those participating in this 6th Session to raise their voices of concern and denunciations on the political killings in the Philippines that should immediately be stopped, and demand that justice be provided to the families of the victims. We shall continue to work together in protecting human rights in every corner of the world.

Thank you.