



Indigenous Information Service

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Celebrating the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous peoples call for end to killings, respect for rights

Quezon City, Philippines, 08 August 2016 -- "We are victims of war and victims of peace," claims a lumad leader from Mindanao, southern Philippines as indigenous peoples gather to celebrate the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples.



Press conference for the Philippine celebration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. From left: Alicia Agabas of IFAGPI, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Chito Gascon, Chairperson of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights, Timuay Alim Bandara of TJG.

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“While we have a law – the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act – that recognizes our right as indigenous peoples to manage our resources according to our systems, our rights are being violated as a result of projects such as mining and the government’s counterinsurgency campaigns,” asserted lumad leader Timuay Alim Bandara of the Timuay Justice and Governance.

Bandara is part of a group of an estimated 60 indigenous leaders and women from all over the Philippines who will gather in Quezon City, Metro Manila to celebrate the International day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples on 9 August.

This is echoed by Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In a statement released today, the Special Rapporteur called “for a full review of mining projects and agribusiness expansion in indigenous peoples’ territories to be done by impartial and independent actors to assess how such operations have violated the rights of indigenous peoples which are enshrined in the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act (IPRA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.”

Bandara also points out that indigenous peoples are caught in the middle in the clashes between government and paramilitary forces on one hand, and rebel groups on the other.

The non-recognition and respect of traditional conflict resolution processes by both the military and rebel forces aggravate the situation and often results to killings, he added.

Bandara reiterated that indigenous peoples’ rights are indispensable and should be recognized in the ongoing peace process in Mindanao.

“This way, indigenous peoples are in peace again,” Bandara concluded.

According to Tauli-Corpuz, “the extrajudicial killings of the lumad (indigenous peoples) in Mindanao which took place under the previous governments are still happening now according to the latest two allegations I received.”

She further expressed that the extra judicial killings of lumad and other indigenous peoples have not been resolved yet as no one has been brought to justice.

“If the government wants to address the long history of injustice committed to indigenous peoples, it has to be more decisive in pinning down perpetrators regardless of who they are,” Tauli-Corpuz added in a recent interview, referring to President Duterte’s inauguration pronouncement.

The most recent case happened in July 12, 2016 in Sumilao, Bukidnon where security guards of cattle ranch RAMCAR Inc. killed Remar Mayantao, Senon Nacaytuna, Rogen Suminao and wounded a 15-year old female. Likewise,

the murder of Emerito Samarca, a pioneer of indigenous alternative education system in Lianga, Surigao del Sur, and two other indigenous leaders is still not resolved.

The Special Repporteur also notes that indigenous peoples need their land to be productive and are secured from illegal logging, mining, plantations and other forms of land grabbing for a true social and economic development to happen.

Alicia Agabas could not agree more.

“We are mapping our ancestral land to protect it from proposed mining claims. Through community mapping, we saw that if the mining pushes through, it will destroy our ricefields, our forestlands, our livelihoods and ultimately, us.”

Agabas is a member of the Guinaang people of Pasil, Kalinga northern Philippines who started mapping their territory in September 2015 and has since re-affirmed their territorial boundary with neighboring indigenous groups.

The Makilala Mining Company has filed an application for exploration permit in 2010 but has been opposed by the Indigenous Farmers Association of Guina-ang, Pasil (IFAGPI).

Agabas added that large-scale mining will not only ravage their flora and fauna, but will also destroy the culture, the people and the mere survival of the “tribo.”

As such, she is asking the government to help them stop large-scale mining in her community and for agricultural assistance for them to further help themselves.

“Through mapping, we were able to validate that our territory is very rich in natural resources. While a certificate or title is good, what we need now is irrigation for our fields and protection from the mining company,” said Agabas.

In the celebration of the world’s indigenous peoples’ day, the clamor of indigenous peoples is for true inclusive development for indigenous peoples to happen.

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NOTE: The Philippine celebration of the "International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples: Ensuring that indigenous peoples’ rights are fulfilled in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change,” 9-11 August at the University Hotel, UP Diliman, Quezon City is organized by Tebtebba and Ugnayang Pambansa para sa Katutubong Kaalaman at Talino (UPAKAT).