



December 7, 2017

Victoria Tauli Corpuz
United Nations Special Rapporteur on the
Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Dear Ms. Tauli-Corpuz,

Greetings of peace!

We are bringing to your urgent attention the recent spate of attacks against indigenous leaders and communities in the Philippines, as a result of the continuing counter-insurgency operations of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Pres. Duterte's martial law declaration.

On December 3, 2017, at around 1pm, eight T'boli and Dulangan Manobo farmers were killed by elements of the 27th and 33rd Infantry Battalions of the Philippine Army, while they were about to harvest their produce in their farms in Sitio Datalbong, Barangay Ned, Lake Sebu, South Cotabato. Contrary to reports of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), those killed were civilians namely, Victor Danyan, Victor Danyan Jr., Artemio Danyan, Pato Celardo, Samuel Angkoy, To Diamante, Bobot Lagase, and Matend Bantal. Two individuals, Luben laod and Tetend Laod, were wounded.

The indigenous peoples were occupying the area landgrabbed by the Consunjis, used by their DMCI corporation as a coffee plantation. The said land area though is part of the Dulangan Manobo and T'boli ancestral domain. The Consunjis have long been operations in the ancestral domain of different indigenous communities in the region.

Blaan indigenous peoples from the villages of Lilab, Basyawan, Balataan, Banlas, Nabol and Makol, all situated in the boundary of Alabel and Malapatan in Sarangani province, have started evacuating last December 1, 2017 as result of incessant attacks of elements of the 73rd Infantry Battalion against Lumad communities. Around 210 households are reportedly affected by these military attacks.

On November 26, 2017, around 1pm, residents – 1,173 individuals or at least 244 families - from at least nine Lumad communities in Brgy. Diatagon, Lianga and Brgy. Buhisan, San Agustin in Surigao del Sur forcibly evacuated due to military combat

operations of the 75th Infantry Battalion-Philippine Army. The number includes 406 Lumad students and 59 teachers of nine Lumad schools. Prior to the evacuation, on November 23, 2017, three trucks filled with military troops arrived in Km. 6 Neptune, where a military checkpoint was also set up, restricting the movements of residents in the communities. On November 25, military troops were also seen going towards Lumad communities in Km. 16 and Han-ayan. A military drone was also seen hovering the said communities.

On November 28, an NGO and religious leaders were barred from going to the evacuation area where the displaced residents were, despite coordination with the local government unit. On November 29, the same group was again disallowed to provide relief and humanitarian support for the evacuees, while the LGU was only allowed to bring in five sacks of rice. On December 1, along with seventy individuals, they once again attempted to negotiate to be allowed access to the evacuees, but were once again barred by the soldiers. Repeated attempts of humanitarian organizations to deliver food and other supplies were also blocked by military, while displaced residents who wanted to go out from the said evacuation area were not allowed to leave.

The said communities are located within the Andap Valley complex targeted for coal mining and are resisting the entry of corporations in their ancestral land. Recently, coal operating contracts have been awarded to Benguet Mining Corporation, Great Wall Mining and Power Corp., Consolidated Ores Phils. Inc., Abacus Coal explorations and Development Corp., Philippine National Oil Corporation (PNOC), and ASK Mining and Exploration Corp.

In the Northern Mindanao region, at least twenty-one Banwaon families, composed of 139 individuals, from the villages of San Pedro, Binicalan and Mahagsay in San Luis town, Agusan del Sur forcibly evacuated from their communities on December 4, 2017 due to military operations of the 26th Infantry Battalion-Philippine Army. At around 4pm on that day, while the evacuees were seeking refuge at the compound of the San Luis Municipal hall, elements of the 26th IBPA blocked the entry of personnel of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines and volunteers who intended to bring food and supplies for the evacuees.

Since the second week of November, the residents of said communities have experienced threats and harassment from soldiers. Leaders of local community organization Tagdumahan believe these threats are linked to their organization's strong opposition to the entry of large-scale mining corporations in their ancestral land.

These recent incidents and previous cases of extrajudicial killings, illegal arrests, harassment and forcible evacuation of indigenous communities in Mindanao are illustrative of the worsening human rights situation in the country, as exacerbated by the counter-insurgency program and drug war. With the martial law declaration still in place, and with recent pronouncements of the military endorsing the extension of said declaration to allegedly quell terrorist threats, the situation is bound to impact on civilians, especially indigenous communities in Mindanao, who have experienced grave threats on their lives and security in the past years.

Along with the Duterte administration's termination of the peace talks with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines and terrorist-tagging of the Communist Party of the Philippines and New People's Army, threats to crack down on legal organizations deemed "enemies of the state," and the President's shoot-to-kill order on suspected NPA rebels, we are alarmed at the impact of such repressive and draconian policies on the rights of indigenous peoples.

We urge you and your office, Ma'am, to conduct an independent investigation on the recent massacre of eight Lumad in South Cotabato towards the swift prosecution of the perpetrators of the said crime, to help stop the food blockades on displaced indigenous peoples in Surigao del Sur and Agusan del Sur, and to urge the Philippine government to stop its military operations in civilian communities, including that of indigenous peoples in Mindanao.

We are hoping for your kind consideration of these urgent concerns. Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,


Cristina Palabay
Secretary General
Karapatan