

November 10, 2017

## **Statement on the Attacks on Women and IP Activists in the Cordillera**

The Ubbon di Binabai ad Ifugao (UBI), Ifugao Peasant Movement (IPM) and Pun-oohaan di Nungkanomnoman ad Ifugao (PNI), strongly condemns the recent attacks on six women activists in the Cordillera region by the 7th Infantry Division of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Northern Luzon Command and to all human rights defenders across the country.

The six women human rights defenders, Sarah Abellon-Alikes, Sherry Mae Soledad, Joanne Villanueva, Rachel Mariano, Asia Isabella Gepte and Shirley Ann Angiwot have experienced political persecution and trumped up charges along with 18 other individuals for frustrated murder and multiple attempted murders in relations to a supposed gun firing incident in Sigay, Ilocos Sur this past August 4, 2017.

A certain Cpl. Melvin Sevilla Saura alleges that the 5 women activists are of a group of New People's Army pinpointed by the AFP. There were also social media maligning Shirley Ann Angiwot and Roman Catholic Bishop Sergio Utleg and other church workers as "enemies of the State" connected with the NPA.

All 6 women activists are from legitimate legal organizations. Sarah and Sherry Mae who are both with the Katinnulong dagiti Umili ti Amianan-Regional Development Center (KADUAMI-RDC Northern Luzon). Sarah is also one of the pioneers of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) and Ifugao Resource and Development Center (IRDC) while Rachel is with the Cordillera Health, Education, Services and Training in the Cordillera (CHESTCORE).

Villanueva works with the Cordillera Women's Education, Action, Research Center (CWEARC) and Asia is a convenor of Binnadang, a network of advocates supporting the Cordillera indigenous peoples' issues and campaigns. Shirley Ann is a member of the Innabuyog-Gabriela.

Their organizations are in the forefront, actively engaging in the Cordillera people's movement for the defense of ancestral land, right to self-determination, genuine peace and democracy.

Here in Ifugao, there were over a dozen political prisoners since 2009 with trumped up charges of murder, frustrated murders and illegal possession of firearms and ammunitions making the province a favorite target of the AFP to silence dissent. The state security forces continue to conduct massive vilification and red-tagging against our organizations and members.

Recently, a petition circulated to eject the people living in an IPM staff house owned by the Tanguid Family in Poblacion East, Lagawe. When confronted by the IPM, the Barangay council exposed that the petition was led by a certain AFP agent but they forgot his name and that the council had no hand in that petition. Harassment by suspected state security forces is also continuing where recently Mr. Fernando Alikes Jr., an organic farmer and church leader has been receiving calls from suspected state

security agents pretending to be NPA commanders of Ifugao and Nueva Viscaya with threatening messages.

Suspected state security agents posing as NPAs demanding ransom and “assistance” with threats had also made their rounds with mayors, elected leaders, and priests in Ifugao. These harassments and political persecutions against progressive organizations are happening while we are conducting campaigns to uphold Indigenous Peoples Rights and to correct the historical injustice against the Ifugao People.

The Ancestral Domains of the Ifugaos are at threat with the entry of multi national companies and big businesses of renewable energy who want to do business using the IP’s resources. Our organizations together with the local people's organizations on the ground want to ensure that every proposed project inside our ancestral domains should include genuine development for the IPs.

Now, empowered Indigenous Peoples Organizations are demanding royalty share from the Magat Hydro Electric Plant but, the SN Aboitiz is only sharing part of their profits on their mandated obligations to the government through taxes and Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSRs) but not to the IPs.

The demand of the IPs to have a negotiated royalty share in the profit produced by the Magat Dam which has been operating for more than 30 years is an example of the Ifugao IPs quest to correct historical injustice.

These recent and continuing attacks is in full contradiction to the culture of Indigenous Peoples (IP's) here in the Cordillera specially here in Ifugao, where it is very dishonorable to attack defenseless and innocent civilians especially women. Even in the olden times where there is the existence of tribal and clan wars, it is a grave sin for warriors during conflict to target and hurt women and children. What honor do you get in preying on civilian activists where their only weapon is their voice to tell the truth and empower the downtrodden?

The defense of land and resources, life and honor is imperative to Cordillerans and people who understand the struggles of the Cordillerans. No amount of harassments and trumped-up charges will stop the Indigenous Peoples of the Cordillera to struggle for their IP rights and rights to self-determination. These fascist attacks are meaningless that it has to stop. The state should help solve the root causes of people’s sufferings creating peaceful communities based on justice instead of adding more problem.

**STOP THE FASCIST ATTACKS AGAINST THE PEOPLE!**

**UPHOLD INDIGENOUS PEOPLES RIGHTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS!**