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**LETTER OF CONCERN ON THE INCREASING HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' LEADERS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN THE PHILIPPINES**

We, the undersigned organizations, institutions and individuals express alarm and deep concern about the deteriorating human rights situation in the Philippines. As noted by UN experts, indigenous peoples in Mindanao are massively impacted by military operations<sup>1</sup>, and the Philippines is marked by “widespread extrajudicial executions and ongoing attacks against voices who are critical of the current Government, including human rights defenders”<sup>2</sup>.

Latest, a petition filed in court by the Philippine State Prosecutor of the Department of Justice (DOJ), seek to have a number of indigenous peoples' leaders and human rights defenders declared as terrorist and outlaws pursuant to the National Security Act of 2007.

The list of alleged terrorists includes indigenous leaders and human rights defenders from the Cordillera region are:

1. Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, former Chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues;
2. Ms. Joan Carling, Co-convenor of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group on the Sustainable Development Goals, former Secretary General of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) and member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues;
3. Ms. Joanna Cariño, member of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) Advisory Council and SANDUGO co-chairperson;
4. Mr. Windel Bolinget, Chairperson of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA);
5. Atty. Jose Molintas, human rights lawyer and former member of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP);
6. Ms. Beverly Longid, global coordinator for the Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self-Determination and Liberation;

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<sup>1</sup> See statement by Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, [Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples](#) and Ms. Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, [Special Rapporteur on internally displaced people](#):  
<http://ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22567&LangID=E>

<sup>2</sup> See statement by Mr. Michel Forst, [Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#), and Ms. Catalina Devandas, [Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities](#) and Chairperson of the [Coordination Committee of the Special Procedures](#):  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22783&LangID=E>

7. Ms. Jeanette Ribaya Cawiding, Regional Coordinator of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers – Cordillera; and

All of the above-mentioned persons are known and respected nationally and internationally, for their consistent and democratic work to further human rights for the most vulnerable and discriminated.

Southern Mindanao Region, members of the PASAKA Confederation of Lumad Organizations

1. Mr. Isidro Indao, a Matigsalog village chief, Tinananon Kulamanon Lumadnong Panaghiusa (TIKULPA) spokesperson, council member of the PASAKA Lumad Confederation in Southern Mindanao, and an active member of the Parent-Teacher Community Association (PTCA) of the Lumad school run by the Mindanao Interfaith Services Foundation, Inc. (MISFI);
2. Mr. Sergio Lumunday, a Manobo village chief, and TIKULPA Secretary General;
3. Mr. Edwin Oribawan, a Matigsalog village chief, and TIKULPA Council Member;
4. Mr. Camili Asunan, Manobo village chieftain and TIKULPA Council Member;
5. Mr. Tata Lumunday, a Manobo, and TIKULPA member;
6. Mr. Kurot Sicutan, a Manobo college student, and TIKULPA member;
7. Mr. Asot Olado, a Manobo, and TIKULPA member;
8. Mr. Renante Arizo Tambog, a Matigsalog, and TIKULPA member
9. Mr. Jeffrey Jamonir, a Matigsalog, and TIKULPA member
10. Mr. Claro Gawilan Gilingan, a Matigsalog, and TIKULPA member
11. Mr. Hernan Benaton, a Matigsalog, and TIKULPA member
12. Mr. Tiryo Manlipay Jr., a Matigsalog, and TIKULPA member
13. Mr. Loceño Labadan, a Matigsalog, and TIKULPA member
14. Mr. Jenó Tambog Manlibaas, a Matigsalog, and TIKULPA member
15. Ms. Noida Manlumaray, a Matigsalog, and TIKULPA member
16. Mr. Freddie Gubal, a Manobo, TIKULPA member, and a village official
17. Ms. Nenita Labadan Maasin, a Matigsalog woman community leader, and TIKULPA member

The TIKULPA is a community based Lumad organization founded in 2002 to advance the democratic and collective rights of the Manobo and Matigsalog in North Cotabato and Bukidnon. In August 2015, the military and police illegally arrested and detained 14 members of TIKULPA, including 2 minors and a nursing mother. Since then, more than 100 Lumad families from their communities have been forcibly displaced because of intensive military operations, and atrocities of the 39<sup>th</sup> and 88<sup>th</sup> infantry battalions of the Philippine Army, Special Forces Battalion and their Bagani paramilitary group.

Caraga Region, member of the Kahugpongan sa Lumadnong Organisasyon KASALO – Caraga

1. Datu Mapadayag – a Banwaon village chief and elder, and a member of the Tagdumahan – a Lumad organization in Agusan del Sur

Northern Mindanao Region, members of the Kalumbay Regional Lumad Organization

1. Datu Mandayhon, Sitio Balaudo, Brgy. Saint Peter, Malaybalay, Bukidnon; Talaandig

- village chief and member of the Pigyayongaan
2. Mr. Mamerto Guaynon, member ng Pigyayongaan; Higaonon; Kilap-agan, Brgy. Can-ayan, Malaybalay, Bukidnon
  3. Mr. Bendeho Ampildon, Sr – Umayamnon village chieftain; Brgy. Iba, Cabanglasan, Bukidnon; member ng Pigyayongaan
  4. Mr. Loloy Addie – Umayamnon village chieftain; Brgy. Iba, Cabanglasan, Bukidnon; member ng Pigyayongaan
  5. Mr. Lonie Liconan – Umayamnon village chieftain; Brgy. Iba, Cabanglasan, Bukidnon; member ng Pigyayongaan
  6. Junjun (real name undisclosed), a Manobo teenager and survivor of a massacre in 2015.

The unfounded, malicious and irresponsible terrorist accusations pose serious threats to their lives, security, and liberty, and are obviously meant to harass and intimidate them. It thereby constitutes a targeted measure to weaken the indigenous peoples' movement in the Philippines, and an unacceptable attack on those speaking up to defend human rights. It is also an affront to the exercise of the fundamental rights and freedoms associated with democratic governance and to the human rights obligations of the Philippine government. Moreover, the accusations against the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is clearly in retaliation to her press statements and communications addressing the violations of the human rights of indigenous peoples in the country. This is an unacceptable attack against a UN mandate holder who has immunity to such actions under the Convention on Privileges and Immunities of 1946.<sup>3</sup>

We therefore call on the Philippine government to:

1. Dismiss the petition naming indigenous peoples' leaders and human rights defenders as alleged terrorists;
2. Ensure the physical safety of indigenous peoples' leaders and human rights defenders; and
3. Abide by State obligations to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including access to justice, freedom of expression and of association.

Endorsed by:

ORGANIZATION

COUNTRY

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<sup>3</sup> See statement by Mr. Michel Forst, [Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#), and Ms. Catalina Devandas, [Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities](#) and Chairperson of the [Coordination Committee of the Special Procedures](#): <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22783&LangID=E>

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