



Katribu Kalipunan ng Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas

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IP group to NCIP, PH gov't: 'Stop the denial. Vote for UN probe'

Having doubts about the UN report on the Philippines? Then join us in urgently inviting its investigative body to visit the Philippines.

This was the challenge of Katribu Kalipunan ng Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas (National Alliance of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines) International Officer Beverly Longid to the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Chair Allen Capuyan after saying that the report of the United Nation (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights on Indigenous Peoples (IP) are “unsubstantiated” and “failed to correctly depict” the true situation.

“If Chairman Capuyan claims that the militarization of Indigenous communities, terrorist-tagging, harassment, and killings of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines were fabricated by civil society groups, then why not support a UN investigation in the country so they can verify what is happening on the ground?” Longid replied.

The possibility, however, of holding such investigative missions is hampered by the Philippine Government itself, with pronouncements from no less than President Rodrigo Duterte that the international community must not interfere in its way of governance. Previously, President Duterte threatened to slap Special Rapporteur Agnes Callamard if she visited the country to investigate reported extrajudicial killings from Duterte’s “war on drugs” campaign.

Hiding anything?

“Instead of insinuating malice upon the UN and the UN Human Rights Council, in which the Philippines is a member, the NCIP and the Philippine Government must uphold its human rights obligations and accept the UN recommendations to be accountable and to bring remedies for all the victims of human rights violations,” Longid stated.

On June 4, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) released its 26-page report based on around 900 submissions, including Katribu’s and government inputs. The report says that the human rights situation in the Philippines is characterized by “widespread

and systemic killing” of thousands of alleged drug personalities with “near impunity.” It also underscored that the vilification of perceived critics of the government are “increasingly institutionalized and normalized in ways that will be very difficult to reverse.”

The report also included key findings on the killings of tribal leaders by military forces, targeting of land and environment defenders, manipulation of free, prior, and informed consent which allows large-scale projects in indigenous communities, and lack of basic social services to IP communities.

However, “with the government’s emphasis on national security, intelligence-gathering, and red-tagging,” humanitarian aids from civil society groups and churches which are tagged by state forces as rebel New People’s Army (NPA) affiliates have been blocked,” according to the UN report.

“The government has a permanent mission in Geneva and even went around Europe and US maligning civil society groups as fronts of armed rebel groups, and accusing us as terrorists. Instead of attacking the UN report, they should be asking themselves why their ludicrous stories were not included,” Longid added.

Address, do not avoid, the issues of land and rights

Indigenous organizations in the country have reported how their resistance to mining and hydropower dams resulted in their intensified political persecution. “The state’s terrorist-tagging scheme has been dangerously exhausted and used to cover-up the real violations against the IP which reports have linked to the presence of large-scale private and state businesses in ancestral lands,” Longid stressed.

The controversial China-loan Kaliwa Dam that will displace 11,000 Dumagat, is now under construction even though no genuine consultation was conducted. In Mindanao, ongoing conflict on ancestral territories due to illegal logging, agribusiness plantation and mining ancestral territories resulted in thousands of internally displaced Lumad.

“NCIP has been playing the role of broker of both private corporations and state instead of promoting IP rights. The NCIP and Chairman Capuyan play active roles in the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) that targets indigenous peoples and frames their communities as NPA hotbeds. Capuyan himself led the Task Force Gantangan, which sowed discord in Lumad communities by creating paramilitary groups to defend large-scale mining operations on Lumad lands. These groups are liable for the murder of Lumad leaders,” she added. For Longid, the NTF-ELCAC is the “face of terror” for IP rights defenders and communities.

A “yes vote” for justice

Today, the HRC member states will vote on the adoption of the Philippine report by UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet at the opening of its 44th Regular Session in Geneva.

“We urge the UNHRC to adopt the report as a step towards achieving justice for Filipinos who have suffered under this brutal administration. Assigning a country special rapporteur for the Philippines shall help keep track of the country’s actual responses to the recommendations,” Longid appealed.

Katribu’s call is joined by other international and local groups pushing for an independent and thorough investigation on human rights abuses in the country that it so ardently denies.

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