



20 October 2016

Chiang Mai, Thailand

The Outright Violation of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to Peaceful Assembly and Freedom of Expression

Statement of Solidarity of Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact

The violent dispersal of the indigenous peoples' peaceful assembly on 19 October 2016 at the US Embassy in Manila, Philippines is beyond deplorable and calls for immediate retribution. Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) condemns the overt violation of the rights of indigenous peoples and other protesters to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression.

The violent dispersal involved the training of water cannons at the protesters, lobbing of tear gas, and worst, a police van repeatedly barrelling its way to the crowd, injuring around 50 people, and manhandling and arrest of 21 demonstrators, including two (2) minor Lumad, a doctor, nurse, health volunteer and a member of media. Such brutal acts of disregard for human rights and democracy deserve nothing but immediate action in pursuit of justice. We call on President Rodrigo Duterte to hasten the investigation he ordered today (20/10/2016). We expect more than a strong condemnation of the violence of the Philippine National Police (PNP) in his official statement promised to be issued this Friday (21/10/2016).

The peaceful assembly in front of the US Embassy was part of the *Lakbayan ng Pambansang Minorya para sa Sariling Pagpapasiya at Makatarungang Kapayapaan* (Journey of National Minorities for Self-determination and Peaceful Justice) culminating with the formation of SANDUGO, an alliance of Moro and indigenous peoples. The *Lakbayan* is a historic march and gathering of around 3,000 indigenous peoples from different parts of the country to unite the common struggles of indigenous peoples and bring these issues to the national arena.

This particular gathering was a venue to express their stand on an independent Philippine foreign policy and assertion of sovereignty. SANDUGO denounced the prevailing subservient and dependent relation of the Philippines with the US. The indigenous peoples have long suffered from US foreign policy that promotes militarism and development aggression in violation of the collective rights of indigenous peoples to lands, territories and resources,

The PNP's violent dispersal of the peaceful assembly belies the President's declaration. His impending action on this vicious incident will be a significant indicator of the sincerity of his claims of respect to the Moro and indigenous peoples' history of struggle and his conviction on ending Philippine government's dependency on the US.

AIPP stands in solidarity with the indigenous peoples, other minorities and activists and vehemently condemns the brutality of the PNP in the 19/10 incident. We demand immediate action from the Police Authority and the President to punish with the full force of law those involved in these unjust, discriminatory and callous actions of those whose duty is to protect and serve the people. Specific measures to prevent such actions in the future shall be guaranteed to protect the rights of citizens to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression.

Joan Carling
Secretary General