

AMIANAN SALAKNIBAN

**“Defend and preserve our national patrimony against foreign big business plunder!
Assert our rights to life, land, culture, food security and development! ”**

EO 79 worsens mining plunder and human rights violations

The much hyped Executive Order 79 is simply a continuation of the mining policies under the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 or RA 7942. It does not address the urgent clamor of our people for the protection of the environment, food sources and our national patrimony. Worse, it does not address the wanton disregard for the rights of the people in the mining application areas. It is useless in treating with respect the rights of the indigenous peoples whose ancestral lands and resources are sacrificed in the search for minerals not for national industrialization by foreign mining companies but for foreign shores and pockets.

PNoy's EO on mining is a desperate attempt by the government to cover up and soften the bad image of the mining industry and the condition of disaster and pillage on the environment and human rights violations they have committed. It is a cover up of the present situation of isolation of the government due to its washing of hands on the extreme impact of mining on the environment and food security of the people, and the human rights violations accompanying mining operations and applications. The EO greenwashes the ills of the mining industry with creating another useless Task Force to monitor mining activities and operations.

Northern Luzon has 65 newly approved permits for mining covering 294,400 hectares of agricultural, marine and forest lands that will be sacrificed for large scale and open pit mining.

In Northern Luzon, the recent spate of arrests, vilification and human rights violations such as the filing of fabricated cases against Agnes Mesina, Isabelo Adviento and the harrasment on Donna Rabang Peta who are pro-environment and pro-people activists are directly connected to the opening up of nearly every nook and cranny of the North to mineral wealth. Threats against leaders and members of peoples organizations, activists and environmental defenders in Northern Luzon are increasing. The alarming disregard for human rights in NL is due to mining and development aggression. The militarization of communities especially in mining-threatened communities and where peoples' opposition to mining projects is strong and vehement is very much evident.

While the EO on Mining purportedly stops new mining applications, NL is blanketed with numerous overlapping mining projects for every known mineral there is on earth and there is no stopping the operations. In the EO on Mining, minerals are treated as sources of profit thereby favoring and encouraging large transnational corporation who have the capital to bid for mining investments in the country.

We support the efforts of local government units and concerned groups in questioning the legality of EO 79. We support local government units for their resolutions banning mining in their territories. We support local environmental groups who have provided a strong outcry to the opposition on development aggression especially mining and the protection of human rights when local authorities have kept silent or are willing pawns to foreign interests. PNoy and the EO on Mining serve the interests of mining TNCs to the extent of violating the autonomous powers of local government units as provided by the Local Government Code.

The EO on Mining in fact strengthens the Mining Act of 1995. There can only be genuine reform in the mining industry if the Mining Act of 1995 is repealed, and the Peoples' Mining Bill which embodies environmental protection and respect of indigenous peoples' rights is passed. The Peoples' Mining Bill seeks to re-orient the current mining industry characterized as environmentally-destructive and export-oriented, hence monopolized by TNCs.

The EO does not expand the list of critical areas that should be closed forever to mining like rich biodiversity areas, fragile island provinces, disaster prone areas and mined out areas that have not been rehabilitated or areas where the indigenous people have repeatedly said NO to mining. The EO and Pnoy are silent on the killings, arrests and harrasment of environmental activists and the protection from henceforth of those who

are pro-environment.

The EO does not change but covers up the mining industry's liberalization resulting in the plunder of our mineral wealth, disasters and displacements of communities, labor problems and poisoning of the earth. In Benguet after a century of mining for gold, silver and copper, the province is not even on the top ten high income earning provinces. Benguet continues to suffer the effects of acid drainage, mountain slides and sinking grounds, poisoned rivers and fields, deadly destruction to lives and livelihood with no solution in sight to rehabilitate these areas. The whole coastline from Pangasinan to Cagayan are blanketed with magnetite mining permits threatening food sources, coral reefs, shore defenses and beautiful beaches. The EO 79 on Mining will not be able to protect the rich resources of the provinces and people of Northern Luzon as well as the Philippine Mining Act of 1995.

We urge to scrap the Philippine Mining Act of 1995. We urge for the withdrawal and rethinking of the EO on mining to favor the affected communities and people and to make mining companies pay for the damages they have created on their areas of operation and on the people they displaced. We urge for the protection of the rights of our kakaillian. We appeal for the preservation of the environment, livelihood and food sources of the people.#

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