



CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

For the Defense of the Ancestral Domain and for Self Determination

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PNOY's Third SONA: Far Cry From Reality

"Where a citizen is oppressed, he will find me as an ally; where there is an oppressor, I will be there to fight; where I find something wrong in the system, I will consider it my duty to right it.

... If offenders go unpunished, society's future suffering is guaranteed."

- Excerpt from Pres. Benigno Aquino III's third State of the Nation Address (SONA)

But yesterday, protests marked PNOy's third State of the Nation Address with the people's own SONA, that was met with brute police force and dispersals in some areas like Metro Manila. A day after PNOy's third SONA, we find yet another stark conflict between his pronouncements and the real situation: At around 5 AM today, 2 busloads of Lepanto company security, around 22 military and unidentified police from Camp Molintas tried to demolish the barricade in Madaymen, Tabbak, Mankayan, that residents have been manning for 7 months now to prevent South African mining company from drilling and pursuing its mining activities. About a hundred residents quickly gathered, negotiated, and succeeded in foiling the attempted demolition.

The military and police left at around 8AM, but Lepanto's security force remain in the vicinity of the barricade. Dispersal can ensue anytime, if the demolition is pursued, which will surely result to more human rights violations.

In Mankayan, there are citizens oppressed: for seven months they have been keeping watch, maintaining a barricade to defend land and life from mining plunder and environmental destruction. And we have yet to hear news of the punishment of AFP's Cap. Danilo Lalin for the rape and sexual abuse of two minors from Barangay Cabiten. Lalin was formerly with the 50th Infantry Battalion (IB), and now of the 86th IB.

In Mankayan, there is an oppressor: Even with communities' rejection of Goldfields and call for a stop to Lepanto mining, local government, both at the municipal and provincial level, are not categorically supporting the people. Government agencies mandated to uphold indigenous peoples rights and protection of the environment, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples in particular, is remiss of its mandate. The very event that took place this morning, of the AFP, PNP and Lepanto security sweeping into the barricade and attempting to demolish the barricade and disperse the peaceful protestors, is yet another act of oppression.

PNOy's third SONA spoke nothing of indigenous peoples' rights, even after we submitted the Indigenous Peoples Agenda two years earlier. Instead, PNOy issued EO 79 that practically supports and continues current mining system that is extractive and destructive. There was no mention at all of the country's state of human rights, on holding GMA accountable for the rights violations during her term, or what PNOy intends to do with the 95 extrajudicial killings and 10 enforced disappearances in just two years of his administration. National patrimony and sovereignty are also under threat with PNOy giving the thumbs up to the US to re-create the Philippines as a military base, and in the offing is Philippines-Australia Status of Visiting Forces Agreement.

The third SONA is a far cry from reality. Midway through his administration as depicted in the third SONA, there is no *daang matuwid*, only warnings of a crooked road that leads to a dead end. ***