



CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

For the Defense of the Ancestral Domain and for Self Determination

22 July 2013

Statement of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance on the Occasion of the Fourth State of the Nation Address of President Aquino III

Today, on his fourth state of the nation address, we challenge President Aquino to speak on the true State of the Nation and not hide behind lies of peace and development for the people. We say this in expectation of the tall tales and fabricated statistics he is bound to declare.

Any claim of increased GDP does not equate to an improved life for the Filipino people. In the Philippine neocolonial setting, any 'development' only benefits the ruling classes and big foreign capitalists that relentlessly exploit the toiling masses, including indigenous peoples and our resources.

The crises of unemployment, widespread poverty and hunger remain.

Data from IBON Foundation states that the number of unemployed and underemployed Filipinos increased by over one million from 10.9 million in April 2010 to 11.9 million in April 2013 – consisting of 4.6 million unemployed (an increase of 52,000, according to IBON estimates on NSO data) and 7.3 million underemployed (an increase of 955,000). This is the most number of unemployed and underemployed Filipinos in the country's history. While 1.4 million jobs were reported created in April 2011 this fell to 1.0 million in April 2012. These occurred while the corresponding first quarter GDP growth rates were becoming more rapid at 4.6% (2011), 6.5% (2012), and 7.8% (2013). The daily minimum wage in the National Capital Region of P419-P456 is a far cry from the minimum budget of P1034 needed for a daily decent survival of a family of 6. In the Cordillera, family living wage is pegged at P945, but minimum daily wage is way below at P280. The crisis of unemployment is also manifested by at least 4,400 Filipinos who leave the country daily to become OFWs. The country's unemployment rate at 6.8% is actually a big figure compared to that of other southeast Asian countries like Thailand (0.5%), Singapore (1.8%), Malaysia (3.1%), South Korea (2.8%) and Taiwan (4.3%).

Data from the NSCB reported official poverty incidence as statistically unchanged at 27.9% in the first semester of 2012 compared to 28.8% and 28.6% in the same periods in 2006 and 2009, respectively. According to IBON, this translates to around 26.8 million poor Filipinos or an increase of some 3-4 million from 2009. These realities on the ground show that government's Conditional Cash Transfer or CCT scheme is a false solution and a failure.

The gap between the rich and the poor has widened even more.

The accumulated wealth of the 40 richest persons led by Henry Sy, Lucio Tan, Enrique Razon Jr., Gokongwei, Consunji, Tan, Zobel de Ayala Ty, Ongpin, Conjuangco, etc in the country continues to bloat: from US\$ 22.8B in 2009 to US\$34B in 2010 and US\$47.43B in 2011. These local and foreign capitalists are the real beneficiaries of Aquino's Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) which enabled them to expand their big businesses and giant projects like privatization of public hospitals, mining, real estate, water, transport, finance, trade, banking, among others. The net income of the country's top 1000 corporations has been increasing in the last three years. Their cumulative net income has gone up from Php756.0 billion in 2009, to Php804.1 billion in 2010 and to Php868.1 billion in 2011.

The rampant and shameless embezzlement of the people's hard-earned money squeezed from them through taxes by Aquino's minions in the Senate and lower house by appropriating and channelling these

to their dubious NGOs is a brazen proof of their corruption. This, while the nation reels from poverty and neglect.

The human rights situation is unchanged.

In the Cordillera, the State grossly violates indigenous peoples' right to ancestral land, natural resources and self-determined development. Our homeland remains a resource base for plunder, profit and exploitation not only by large mines, but large energy projects that include dams, renewable energy and geothermal projects. At least 60% of the Cordillera is blanketed by various and overlapping mining applications, on top of the existing operations of Lepanto and Philex in Benguet. August 1 marks the first year anniversary of Philex's TP3 failure, yet DENR-MGB gave the thumbs up for it to resume operations. Global energy giant Chevron, with a track record of human rights violations in countries where it operated such as Burma, Nigeria, Ecuador and Indonesia, is exploring setting up a geothermal facility in the provinces of Benguet (Buguias, Kabayan), Ifugao (Tinoc) and Kalinga (Tinglayan, Pasil) covering at least 40,000 hectares. The aggressive entry of these corporations, with the government's open arms, results to further violation of indigenous peoples' ancestral land rights and collective rights.

Children are not spared from the human rights atrocities committed by the State military. In 2012, 7 indigenous children below 15 years of age were killed, and two minor girls were raped by an AFP official. Military encampment in schools, day care centers and public facilities violates children's rights and affects their psycho-social development. The lives and security of indigenous leaders and activists are also at risk through political vilification when they are maliciously tagged as members or supporters of the armed revolutionary New Peoples Army. A resident of Tinoc was subjected to psychological and physical torture in July 2012 by members of the AFP. In October 2012, the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance received a Target List with logos of Charlie Company of the 86th Battalion of the 5th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army, bearing 28 names of civilians, including CHRA Secretary General Mr. Jude Baggo.

Nationwide, there are 33 documented cases of extrajudicial killings of indigenous peoples and one case of enforced disappearance from July 2010 to present. These include the gruesome massacre of Judy Capion and her two children in South Cotabato. From July 2010 to present, at least 600 individuals have been forced to evacuate their villages to save their lives from the massive aerial and ground military operations of the AFP, including the indiscriminate bombing of the 503rd Brigade in Malibcong, Abra last May, almost killing two minors.

The human rights situation is aggravated by the fact that the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) under Aquino has closed its doors to the formal peace talks with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). If only the peace talks could resume, the NDFP and the GRP can forge a comprehensive agreement on social and economic reforms which has been long overdue to address the unbearable economic poverty, landlessness, unemployment, lack of basic social services, and violation of our collective rights as indigenous peoples to our ancestral domains and resources, among others. The Hague Joint Declaration, signed by both parties in 1992, has clearly defined the framework, substantive agenda and sequence of the peace negotiations towards a just and lasting peace.

But the truth remains that the GRP is not interested in resuming the peace negotiations even when the NDFP has repeatedly declared it is ever ready. It has been aggressively implementing counter insurgency programs, like Oplan Bantay Laya I and II of the former Arroyo regime and currently, Oplan Bayanihan of the Aquino government, resulting to countless uninvestigated and unresolved cases of extrajudicial killings, political vilification, enforced disappearance of civilians, human rights defenders and advocates. This anti-people program has caused forced displacement, rape, harassment, militarization, forced evacuation and other forms of human rights violations against indigenous peoples and continues with

impunity. Three years into his 'daang matuwid', Arroyo quino and many others highly accountable for gross violations of human rights remain unconvicted and scot-free, including Jovito Palparan.

The much publicized Tadian incident on June 28 is a classic example of the armed conflict that it is already right inside our communities. The civil war rages on because of the extreme and intensified exploitation and oppression of our people and violation of our right of self determination as indigenous peoples. Hence, the peacetalks must urgently resume. Much has been circulated in the media and public talks recently. Should we not ask instead why therewasa PNP training camp in the heart of a civilian community in the first place? Did this have the community folk's Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), processed through consensus building and collective decision making? While Government, the PNP, and even the Commission on Human Rights were quick to condemn the incident, with decisive actions to investigate, we did not see this same outrage and decisiveness over the extrajudicial killings of human rights defenders, indigenous leaders and advocates Markus Bangit, Jose Doton, Albert Terredano or Pepe Manegdeg. We did not see this same outrage when Dr. Chandu Claver and family were ambushed in broad daylight, instantly killing his wife Alyce. We did not see the outrage and condemnation when James Balao was abducted and remains unsurfaced even up to this date. ***Ito ang mga dapat kinokondena!*** Furthermore, the casualties were not simply 'trainees' as has been hyped but combatants who were undergoing higher level of military training in that specific community.

There can simply be no peace and development when human rights and indigenous peoples' collective rights continue to be violated. The chronic social, economic, and political crises; the tyranny, exploitation and oppression of the ruling classes through various State instrumentalities have pushed to the wall the vast majority of our people and historically marginalised indigenous peoples to defend and assert human rights. Armed resistance has been one decisive recourse to defend life. A civil war rages in the Philippines and this is a national reality. This is the true state of the nation.

Three years into his daang matuwid, we see a government whose policy is impunity and promotes human rights violations and further marginalisation of the Filipino people. Thus, we must persist in our challenges to the Aquino II regime. We demand for the resumption of the formal peace talks between the GRP and NDFP, for serious implementation of the CARHRIHL and an end to impunity. We will continue to demand for justice for victims of rights violations, for economic relief from the ever-worsening national economic crisis, and for therespect and recognition of indigenous peoples' ancestral lands and right to self determination. ***

Reference:
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Secretary General