



CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

For the Defense of the Ancestral Domain and for Self Determination

October 24, 2012

A Challenge to Baguio Officials: Listen to Sting

"If you really want to define civilization it should be a culture that doesn't destroy its environment. If you burn down the kitchen one day and expect to eat the next, it is not even intelligent, let alone civilized."

- STING

The Cordillera Peoples Alliance would like to thank international rock icon STING for hearing out the people of Baguio to save the remaining heritage pine trees and deciding to cancel his concert venue this December at the SM Mall of Asia in Manila. Such an act of support and solidarity is deeply appreciated and valued. His music will surely have more supporters in Baguio and the world.

While we are thankful and elated at how a person, far and away, an Englishman in New York if we may put it, can categorically make a statement and action supporting the plea of the people of Baguio, we remain highly critical of the Baguio City officials who have not done a single act of decisiveness to save the pine trees from SM Baguio's planned mega-expansion, and save Baguio's remaining urban ecosystem and open spaces. In the first place, they are responsible and accountable for the havoc wrought by SM, which also has a track record of violating the economic rights of its workers. At the end of the day, Baguio's seat of government proved that SM is a favoured business in Baguio.

Let us remember that SM is owned by Henry Sy, currently the Philippines' richest man, and reports from laborcenterKilusang Mayo Uno (KMU or May First Movement) reveal Sy's businesses employ and exploit contractual workers made to work hard and yet receive meager wages and benefits, and have no union rights to speak of. Note that under PNoy, the net wealth of US\$ 37B of the richest families in the country (including Sy, DandingCojuangco, Enrique Razon, Lucio Tan, Robert Ongpin and Andrew Tan) is already 25% of the country's gross national income, in 2011 alone!

There is an ongoing court battle versus SM and the people of Baguio regarding the trees. By the looks of it SM could win, because what is legal may not always be just and right. But we take pride in the fact that the people of Baguio have won because they stood for what is right and just, and we pride ourselves for our history of asserting people's rights and welfare, as in our unity and opposition to the Bulk Water Supply Project, the privatization of John Hay, the desecration of culture in the grand cañao, among others.

The City Council must know we are continuing to watch them, every move they make, if we may say. We challenge them listen to their constituents, the people of Baguio, before another concerned and famous citizen from halfway around the globe responds.

CPA iterates its thanks to Sting, and know that in Baguio City among the melting pot of activists, poets, writers and ordinary folk, your music is well-loved. We hope to reach out to you more on the equally pressing issues of the Cordillera region's indigenous peoples, like destructive large mining, which devastates our ancestral lands and environment. ***

Reference:

Abie Anongos, Secretary General