



CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

*For the Defense of the Ancestral Domain
and for Self Determination*

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Looming disaster with Benguet Corporation in Kalinga

We only expect looming disaster and violation of indigenous peoples collective rights if Benguet Corporation (BC) will pursue its operations, particularly to reopen the Batong Buhay Gold Mines in Pasil, Kalinga. We strongly urge the people of Kalinga, who have always fought for and asserted the right to ancestral land and resources, to unite once more and not allow large mining in the province.

The Itogon experience, most recent of which is the Beda landslide, is a concrete example of how large mines such as Benguet Corporation blatantly violated the collective rights of the Ibaloi and Kankanaey indigenous communities by violating their right to ancestral domain, resources and self determination. BC's operations in Itogon, reaching 100 years of bulk, open pit mining has resulted in the displacement of indigenous communities, severe environmental and agricultural destruction, and economic dislocation. BC has not even started to rehabilitate the abandoned mined out areas and underground tunnels in Itogon, such as Antamok and Balatoc, to name a few. In fact, Itogon and Lepanto, where large mines have long operated, are living testaments that corporate mines have not really brought development.



BC's mining plunder has virtually left all rivers in the municipality virtually dead. Ricefields were destroyed due to mine tailings emitted from the operations. The indigenous communities' main livelihood is agriculture. But the irreparable damages due to BC's mining plunder has forced many to find livelihood alternatives because water sources and tables have been used up by the company, leaving nothing for irrigation. If BC is not prevented, Kalinga could be another Itogon. To date, aside from the absence of rehabilitation and just compensation to the mined out communities, BC continues to exploit the remaining resources of Itogon for profit.

The people of Itogon fought the BC during in the struggle against the open pit mines in the late 1980's, and they triumphed against the expansion of the Grand Antamok Project. The people of Kalinga meanwhile have a history of resistance to preserve and protect the ancestral domain and freely assert their collective rights with the Chico and BatongBuhay struggles. May the lessons and gains from these successful and historic events to defend land and life be relived to save the Cordillera homeland from mining plunder. #

Reference:
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