



CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

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

ACTION ALERT UPDATE

June 4, 2008

Militarization and Human Rights Violations Intensify in Baay Licuan Indigenous Communities as they Reject Olympus Pacific Mining and Large Mining in FPIC Process

The Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) and Baay-Licuan communities through BALITOK are very grateful to all individuals, organizations, solidarity friends and partners who have responded to the first wave of Action Alert we released in support to the opposition of the Binongan indigenous peoples in Baay-Licuan, Abra province against Canadian mining company Olympus Pacific Minerals. This Action Alert Update is being issued to urgently appeal for further support given the emergency situation the Baay-Licuan communities are in, with the heightened militarization and looming human rights violations at the height of the "Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) consultations" being carried out with them. The 41st Infantry Battalion pulled out from Baay-Licuan last April, and was replaced by the 503rd IB Reconnaissance Company and 502nd Composite Company, which are more aggressive in suppressing the communities' legitimate and democratic rights.

Background

Earlier, the Binongan indigenous communities set out a tide of petitions against Olympus as early as March 2007 due to violation of their right over their ancestral domain at Mt. Capcapo. Olympus and local conduits AMIC and Jabel explored and drilled, which is part of any large mining operation, in a 4,300 hectare mining claim at Mt. Capcapo in February 2007 without securing the communities' FPIC which was also the case on the approval of the Mineral Production Sharing Agreements (MPSAs) issued to the local companies without the communities' consent. Sustained opposition temporarily suspended the exploration and drilling, and prompted the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) regional and provincial offices to call the attention of Olympus to comply with the legal requisite of acquiring the FPIC.

Mt. Capcapo, Baay-Licuan, Abra



Communities' collective decision reiterated in consultations

In the series of community consultations that started on April 15 at Brgy. Bolbolla, the Binongan reiterated their collective opposition against Olympus. In all consultative assemblies in barangays Bolbolalla (April 15), Mapisla (April 16), Tumulip (April 17), Nalbuan (April 18), Subagan (April 19), Caoayan (May 3), Mogao (May 5), Domenglay (May 6), Poblacion (May 7), Lenneng (May 8), and Bunglo (May 10), the prevailing and collective stand of the communities was not overcome. In the May 7 meeting at Poblacion, representatives of Lenneng, Domenglay, Mogao and Caoayan again came to restate their position.

Brgy. Poblacion had just successfully hosted Cordillera Day 2008 or the 24th Cordillera Day celebration last April 22-24, where large-scale mining, militarization and state terrorism were the key issues tackled. As the communities step up their fight versus large scale mining in their ancestral domain, militarization has intensified within. From Cordillera Day 2008, concrete support was drawn to back the Binongan communities' fight, with the 3,000-strong delegation signing the resolution supporting the local communities' earlier petitions against



Olympus and militarization of the communities. In addition, the Binongan elders made a strong statement in coming up with a *Unity Pact against Olympus Large and Destructive Mines* also during Cordillera Day 2008.

Last May 24, community leaders such as those belonging to BALITOK, elders, women, and youth have reiterated that they maintain their stand against Olympus and other large mines in their ancestral domain. In simultaneous caucuses on issues that affect them, the elders, women and youth came up with another set of resolutions strongly backing the tide of official petitions received by regional and provincial offices of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP).

In the community meetings with Olympus and the NCIP, community leaders called on them to stop the process as this is no longer necessary since they have already made clear their official and collective decision from the start as manifested by their petitions since March 2007, that they are not allowing Olympus mining and any large-scale mining in their ancestral domain citing the violation of their collective rights over their ancestral lands, destruction of their livelihood resources, environmental disasters, among others. Such reiteration clearly mirrors their uncompromising stand and collective decision versus Olympus and destructive mining.

The community position is clearly an overwhelming NO to Olympus Pacific Mining and destructive mining. The communities even complained that this questionable process being initiated by Olympus and NCIP has been disturbing their economic livelihood activities, and a waste of time and effort and because they will not change their position. At this point, this so-called "FPIC process" has become an imposition and is undemocratic because it is still being pursued even as the communities have repeatedly stated its rejection to Olympus' operations. It has reached a point where it is already being forced on them despite their rejection. It runs counter to the basic principle, procedure and intent of FPIC since it is not upholding or respecting the communities' collective decision. Communities have the right to accept and reject such process. It is high time the NCIP and Olympus respects the communities' decision and stop this unacceptable process immediately.

Olympus is using the FPIC as a trap to later claim that indeed, it secured the communities' FPIC when in fact violated it much earlier when it explored and drilled in Capcapo. Pursuing this would be no different from imposition and manipulation of FPIC to serve the selfish interest of Olympus in its intent to resume mining exploration towards operation at the expense of the affected communities.

Pursuing the imposed process is Olympus' interest, to note that it is conducting it under a climate of fear and militarization.

Militarization and human rights violations

Like the 41st IB, elements of the 503rd IB Reconnaissance Company have camped under three houses in Brgy. Poblacion as of presstime. Where BALITOK, CPA and its Abra chapter KASTAN are during the FPIC process, the military is also present. On May 29 during the Poblacion assembly, the military took a video of the people in the meeting. On May 30, the following day, the soldiers started conducting census and shooting videos in Brgy. Poblacion without any clear purpose, and specifically asking the organizations to which the family members belonged. This angered the residents and they disallowed further





questioning and demanded the purpose of it all, especially it is not the job of the military to be conducting census and this is just being done as a guise for surveillance and harassment. Census was also conducted in barangays Lenneng and Caoayan where the military is. The soldiers also used the kitchen of one of the houses they encamped without the owners' consent. Recently, the owner had the house padlocked.

The residence that accommodates CPA and KASTAN staff, who continue to give mining education and training activities as a postlude to

Cordillera Day 2008, was forcibly entered by the military, who took videos of the staff who were there. The military also gathered the names of leaders and elders who are members of BALITOK.

Like the 41st IB, the 503rd IB Reconnaissance Company is maliciously tagging members of BALITOK, CPA and KASTAN as fronts of the CPP-NPA-NDF. In Brgy. Poblacion on June 1, they started posting flyers in the rice granaries with a listing of all alleged "terrorist fronts", the CPA included. All these have sown fear and terror to the community. Branding these organizations and community leaders as such makes them open targets and enemies of the state thereby giving the military a license to attack and violate the rights of civilians and communities whose activities and opposition to defend their ancestral land, life and resources are just and legitimate. Before any graver violation of human rights happen, we must call for the immediate pullout of the 503rd IB Reconnaissance Company and the 502nd Composite Company.

In yet another desperate attempt to swing the communities' prevailing and official stance to the issues at hand, Olympus has even deployed its own "community organizers" to the communities. It continues to make promises of creating roads to the remotest of the villages, such as to Bunglo.

Immediate Support Needed

Your support to the first wave of Action Alert and Letter of Concern sent out by the CPA has created significant impact favorable to the community, who feel that support and solidarity to their struggle is also being fought for in places outside Baay Licuan, the Cordillera, and the Philippines even after Cordillera Day 2008. On one hand, it has kept the management of Olympus keen on the support activities of organizations here and abroad, such as on published articles supporting the Binongan of Baay Licuan.

We reiterate that the Philippine government must uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN DRIP) of which it is a signatory, which states that by virtue of indigenous peoples' right to self determination (Art. 3), they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. It further states that indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making matters that affect them and reject what is against their will and collective interest. Olympus, AMIC and Jabel are equally obliged to uphold these.

We urgently appeal for the following forms of support from you/your organization to further support the Binongan indigenous peoples:

- Continuing education and information campaign on the issue through articles, statements, educational fora, interviews and other awareness-raising initiatives for the wider public
- Responding to and wider circulation of this Action Alert, filling in the Letter of Concern and sending it to the offices/agencies/institutions indicated in this Alert (*please CC all responses to pic@cpaphils.org and cpa@cpaphils.org*)
- Material and financial support is also solicited to help sustain community activities to further strengthen their organizations and community actions thru trainings and public information campaign

- Community exposure and visits to Baay-Licuan, Abra may also be organized as a show of support and solidarity

Our Demands

1. Stop militarization and human rights violations and pull out military elements in the communities!
2. Respect and uphold the collective decision of the Baay Licuan communities against Olympus! Enough already of the community disruption from the “FPIC process”!
3. Revoke the MPSAs of Jabel, AMIC and cancel their MOA with Olympus
4. Respect the Genuine Free, Prior, and Informed Consent of Baay-Licuan Communities and their collective rights and decision over their ancestral domain
5. Urge the Philippine government to implement and respect the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Your continued support and solidarity is highly valued and greatly appreciated! Their victory would be historical and integral in the overall struggle not only of Cordillera indigenous peoples, but of other indigenous peoples worldwide who are struggling for right to self determination! Thank You! #

CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

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