

**A MESSAGE OF SOLIDARITY**  
**To the workers of Lepanto Consolidated Mining Company**  
**in Benguet Province, Northern Philippines**

May 21, 2011

*Nabara nga kabaaw.* Warm greetings.

The *Binnadang*\* Organizing Committee is a group of indigenous people from the different provinces of the Cordillera in northern Philippines, now here in Canada as immigrants and live-in caregivers, who have banded together to spearhead Cordillera Day 2011 in Toronto. The group includes advocates for indigenous rights, the welfare of Filipinos at home and abroad, and for genuine change in our beloved country. We issue this message of solidarity to our compatriots and fellow workers at the Lepanto Consolidated Mining Company (LCMC) in Benguet province in the Cordillera Region. Ivanhoe Mines Ltd. of Canada is a major investor of the Lepanto Consolidated Mining Company.

We share the rage of our 452 working brothers at being unjustly terminated by the LCMC management right after the May 1 Labour Day celebration in the Philippines. We stand in solidarity with the continuing struggles of these workers and their families against oppressive labour laws and unjust labour practices being implemented by the LCMC.

Retrenchment was implemented at the Lepanto Consolidated Mining Company “in the midst of a negotiation for a new Collective Bargaining Agreement” even as it continued to expand its mining operations. This move clearly shows how the LCMC makes a mockery of its “corporate social responsibility.” While it is often heard that mining would provide jobs, only 0.5 % of the country’s labour force has been absorbed in the industry. With its real motive of gaining superprofits, the LCMC management pushes its scheme of contractualization, depriving workers of the regular resident benefits that are due them.

What is more revolting is that the unhampered implementation of the Philippine State’s mining liberalization program worsens the plight of our people and increases forced migration. Ivanhoe Mines Ltd. of Canada is a major investor of the Lepanto Consolidated Mining Company, the Philippines’ largest gold producer which has operated in Mankayan, Benguet since 1936. Lepanto has gained notoriety with its unsafe mining practice of dumping its mine tailings along the Abra River, and its record of committing unjust labor practices and violating workers’ rights.

Indigenous peoples face displacement from their land and communities affected by operations of foreign mining corporations. Workers in these firms are laid off from work as the global economic crisis takes its toll on the local economy. This deprives them of job opportunities at home and causes their families more misery and impoverishment. Such condition, aided by the current and preceding governments’ aggressive policy of labour export, pushes them to migrate overseas, making them even more vulnerable to different forms of exploitation.

As we come to terms with the oppression and injustice heaped on our people by a government colluding with foreign capitalist interests, we realize that only our unified action -- “our mass movement -- is our shield and weapon.” We will continue to educate, organize and mobilize our *kakailian* (compatriots) in Toronto and other places in Canada to build solidarity, through moral and material support, with our sisters and brothers in our homeland.

We seek your help in spreading our message to friends and allies: First Nations communities, labour groups, immigrant and migrant workers, and other social justice organizations. We make special appeal to our sisters and brothers among First Nations and migrant indigenous peoples from other countries. Indeed history has shown that united we stand, divided we easily fall. *Binnadang* (Solidarity!) is our call!

*AGBIAG DAGITI MANGMANGGED!* Long live the working people!

*AGBIAG DAGITI MANGMANGGED NGA MIGRANTE!* Long live the migrant workers!

*AGBIAG TI UMILI NGA PILIPINO!* Long live the Filipino people!

In solidarity,

**BINNADANG ORGANIZING COMMITTEE**

\* Binnadang is the Igorot word for solidarity. The Igorot are the indigenous people of the Cordillera region in northern Philippines.

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Binnadang Group

KaBenguetan Organization of GTA

Bayan Canada

Philippine Solidarity Network

Asian-Canadian Labour Alliance (ACLA)

Filipino Migrant Workers' Movement (FMWM)

Mining Injustice Solidarity Network-Toronto (MISN)

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Pilipinong Migrante sa Barrie

Pilipinong Migrante Sa Canada (PMSC) - Ottawa

PINAY- Montreal

Filipino Workers Support Group (FWSG) - Montreal

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Domestic Workers Association of Quebec

Aklan Association of Quebec

Filipino Migrants Organizing Committee – New Brunswick

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