

**STATEMENT on International Human Rights Day
10 December 2012
Baguio City**

We commemorate the 64th International Human Rights Day today, December 10, 2012 against a backdrop of worsening poverty, hunger, landlessness, institutional discrimination and oppression of indigenous peoples, violence against women and children, State abandonment of its duty to provide social services such as health and education to its people – **a continuing state of repression.**

The year 2012 is marked with increasing impunity and continuing human rights violations against the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera Region. President Benigno Aquino III's "tuwid na daan" is drenched in blood because of the rampage of his Operation Plan Bayanihan (Operation Plan Solidarity).

Under Oplan Bayanihan, the then Re-engineered Special Operations Team (RSOT) under Arroyo's Oplan Bantay Laya I and II are now called "Peace and Development Teams" (PDTs). The PDTs virtually encamp within indigenous communities implementing social services that are supposed to be provided by civilian agencies of the government. In their encampment of communities, indigenous peoples refer to the "P" in PDT as "panagtakaw, panagbabbai, panag-inom, ken daduma pay" (stealing, womanizing, liquor drinking, etc.) and D stands for "didigra" (destruction of property, livelihood, etc).

Under this Aquino regime, solidarity, peace and development are being redefined. The essence of these values is being robbed from the people, in similar manner that human rights are brazenly and unjustly taken from us.

Development in PDTs has stood for the plunder of resources, the disrespect of the rights of indigenous peoples to self-determination and ancestral land. Mining, logging, energy and other extractive industries have been the government's priorities in furtherance of the interests of foreign multi-national companies and their Filipino cohorts.

Development has stood against the people bearing the burden of higher costs of food, housing, education and social services. Public hospitals, which are supposed to provide accessible health services to the people, are being privatized in the further abandonment of State responsibility to provide services to the people.

Peace has stood for the militarization of communities, violence against women and children, political persecution of people's organizations critical of government policies and human rights violations.

In Kalinga, the AFP have encamped in the communities of Poswoy and Daongan of Balbalan and Balayangon in Pinukpuk. This is also the case in communities in Abra, Mountain Province especially in Natonin and Paracelis, and in Tinoc, Ifugao.

Embedding in civilian homes and residential areas is a conscious tactic of the AFP of using civilians as human shields. Apart from endangering civilians, the AFP elements engage in anti-social activities enticing the youth and children, for instance drinking, smoking marijuana, gambling, video showing of pornographic films among others.

For year 2012, most documented violations happened in Tinoc, Ifugao among which are torture of a government employee, destruction and divestment of properties and agricultural crops, illegal search, cases of violation of domicile, harassment and persistent political vilification.

Community livelihood projects jointly implemented by NGOs and people's organizations in Brgy. Namal, Asipulo and Brgy. Binablayan, Tinoc in Ifugao were derailed. Farm tools were confiscated, and crops were uprooted/destroyed because "these are projects of the NPA."

A resident of Tinoc was subjected to psychological and physical torture by the AFP for more than 12 hours within his residence at the Ifugao Provincial Nursery in Binablayan, Ifugao. He was poked with rifle. A gun was pointed direct at his head. He was dragged and interrogated under the rain



2/F 55 Ferguson Road, Baguio City • Email: chra.karapatan@gmail.com • Hotline: +63 918 91 99 007

for hours. He was threatened to be buried alive in the “ambush site.” He was being forced to accept that he is an NPA and that he was among a unit of the NPA that ambushed AFP troops. The victim was an employee of the local government of Tinoc. The military also ransacked his house as if torturing him was not enough. They even had the temerity to file a case of illegal possession of firearms and explosives against the victim.

A “Target List” was later given to the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance by a concerned element from the 86th IB bearing the name of the victim and 27 other civilians including the Secretary General of the CHRA who was politically vilified as “utak ng NPA” or brains of the NPA. This is a serious matter as the tagging doesn’t stop with name calling. The list itself is a guide to the military combat operations to neutralize whom they identify as enemies of the State. The lives and security of these human rights defenders are at risk.

In February, Captain Danilo Lalin of the 86th Infantry Battalion based in Lagawe, Ifugao committed rape and other grave sexual violations against two minors from Mankayan, Benguet. One of the victims, Isabel, is currently undergoing rehabilitation from the trauma of the said incident.

Also, a unit of the 5th ID Civil Military Operations Battalion conducted a lecture on counter-insurgency among high schools students in 21 public secondary highschools and among grade VI pupils in 43 public elementary schools in Baguio City in collaboration with the Baguio City Division of the Department of Education. The lecture series involved presentation of the AFP powerpoint “Know the Enemy” where numerous legal organizations are portrayed as “enemies.”

These acts by the AFP and the DepEd are in violation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and R.A. 7610.

There can be no peace as violations continue with impunity and justice is not served to victims such as in the case of James Balao, founding member of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance, who remains missing up to now.

Genuine peace and development for the people

The current state of human rights in the Philippines, in the rising statistics of violations and pervasive culture of impunity that indicate the failure of the government to uphold its obligations, can not be addressed by an aggressive spin to change the people’s perception against the State and its forces that trample on the people’s dignity. It is not through redefining peace, development and solidarity that human rights are addressed. The policy Oplan Bayanihan and the framework and interests upon which it is anchored needs to be challenged and addressed for the State and its forces to cease training their guns on the people. There can be no genuine peace and development if human rights are not fully respected.

We, the people, *datayo nga umili*, call on the government to fulfill its obligations to fully respect our rights as individuals and as collective peoples.

We demand for the pull-out of the military and paramilitary from our communities.

We demand for the accountability of the 5th Infantry Division headed by General Rommel Gomez and the whole of the Armed Forces of the Philippines for their human rights violations.

We demand justice for victims of human rights violations and for the perpetrators of violations to be punished.

OPLAN BAYANIHAN has to be scrapped.

We call on the resumption of the peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. The peace negotiations which is to elaborate on a Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Rights will provide more space for a deeper understanding of the genuine peace and development needed in the Cordillera and the whole of the Philippines.#

Reference: **Jude Baggo-Secretary General-CHRA**
CP #: 09189199007