



Cordillera Peoples Alliance

*For the Defense of Ancestral Domain and
for Self Determination*
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Urgent Appeal for Action:

Stop political vilification and harassment of human rights and indigenous peoples' rights defenders in Ifugao, Cordillera, Philippines

Dear friends,

We are appealing for your support to raise concern and denounce the heightened incidents of political vilification, surveillance and harassment against members and leaders of the Ifugao Peasant Movement (IPM), *barangay* officials, local organizations and indigenous people's rights advocates.

As peace loving citizens, we firmly believe that political vilification is an outright violation of the basic rights of individuals to freely express their political beliefs and to join organizations advancing people's and sectoral rights. Moreover, political vilification is a real threat to the lives and security of the people subjected to it.

We are alarmed and convinced that the intensity of threats and political vilification are serious warnings of actual arrest, detention and even graver forms of human rights violations. The Philippine government's counter-insurgency policy called Oplan Bayanihan deliberately associates human rights defenders, activists and civilians as members or supporters of the revolutionary armed group New Peoples Army (NPA) to condition the public that they are "enemies of the State" or "terrorists" and thus serves as a prelude or justification to illegal arrests based on trumped up charges or even extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearance. Serious concern has to be raised against this.

- Starting from the last quarter of 2014 up to the present, several political vilification materials were posted on social media groups, such as Facebook, in Ifugao province labeling the staff of IPM, barangay officials and members of local people's organizations and advocates of indigenous peoples rights as members of the NPA.

Among the IPM members and staff tagged as members of NPA are: Nestor Peralta, Claudine Panayo, Billy Karty, Ben Calingayan, and Brandon Lee. Active barangay officials and local members of people's organizations are also vilified, including Edwin Bumolyad, barangay captain of Montabiong, Lagawe, Ifugao; Nonoy Bangtiwen, a member of the barangay council of Tulludan, Tinoc; and Dick Tangid, a member of the barangay council of Tupaya, Lagawe and the current vice chair of IPM; Ricardo Mayumi and several others. Engr. James Tayaban, a human rights defender, is also included in the vilification materials.

The materials also lump almost all party lists, peoples organizations and non-government organizations working and serving the province of Ifugao as communist fronts. Among the listed organizations are: Bayan Muna, Anakpawis, Alliance of Concerned Teachers, Cordillera People's Alliance, Center for Development Programs in the Cordillera, Montanosa Research and Development Center, Amianan Salakniban, Katinnulong Dagiti Umili iti Amianan, Tebtebba, Igorota Foundation and more.

- This is not the first time that intense surveillance, harassment and political vilification happened in Ifugao targeting activists and development workers. In October 2012, the 86th IBPA based in Tinoc, Ifugao released a copy of their so-called "Target List". This document listed 28 individuals – development workers, activists and government employees. William Bugatti was then no. 21 in the list. He was extrajudicially killed on March 25, 2014.

On 26 February 2014, posters with the heading "Rupa Ken Nagan ti NPA nga Agsusuweldo" (Faces and Names of the New People's Army Receiving Salaries) were posted by State security forces and their agents in the market and waiting sheds of various municipalities/towns in Ifugao province. These posters unjustly tagged some of the staff of the Cordillera People's Alliance and party lists as enemies of the state.

The labeling and tagging of these organizations and individuals are malicious, baseless and unfounded. It is unjust that those who bring services to far-flung communities of farmers and indigenous peoples are vilified and their lives threatened. Activists, development workers, non-government organizations and people's organizations assist in providing the much needed social

services and livelihood assistance to local communities and sectors suffering from severe poverty and government neglect. It is condemnable that human rights workers are being silenced by the State whose mandate is to uphold and defend human rights.

Recommended Actions:

Please send letters of concern, emails or fax messages calling for:

1. An independent investigation of the surveillance, threats and harassment against human rights workers and activists in the Cordillera region, particularly in Ifugao province.
2. An end to political vilification of people's organizations, activists, development workers, and human rights defenders maliciously tagged as "enemies of the State" or "terrorists" in the Cordillera region and the Philippines.
3. The Aquino administration to withdraw its counter-insurgency program Oplan Bayanihan which targets innocent and unarmed civilians and activists.
4. The resumption of peace negotiations between the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front as a means to achieve just and lasting peace.
5. The Aquino administration to implement and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and various human rights treaties and instruments that the Philippine government is a party or signatory of.

Please send your communications to:

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This APPEAL FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION is prepared by the CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE.

Please send a copy of your email/mail/fax to the above-named government officials to our address below:

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ⁱ Barangay – smallest government administrative body in the Philippines