



Center for
Social Concern and Action

PALASO

OCTOBER 2015, Vol. 1 Issue 1

A BRIEFING PAPER ON LUMAD ISSUES

Photo courtesy of www.mindanews.com

THIS BRIEFING PAPER PRESENTS VARIOUS PERSPECTIVES ON THE EMERGING ISSUES ABOUT THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN MINDANAO. AMIDST CONFLICTING ACCOUNTS FROM VARIOUS INTEREST GROUPS, THE INFORMATION PRESENTED MAY BE USED BY THE LASALLIAN COMMUNITY IN CLASSROOM AND INFORMAL GROUP DISCUSSION-REFLECTION.



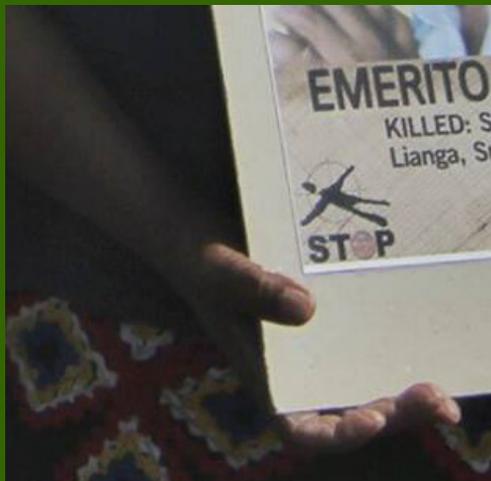
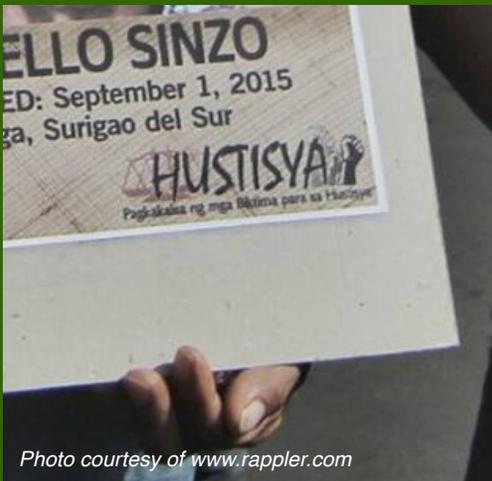
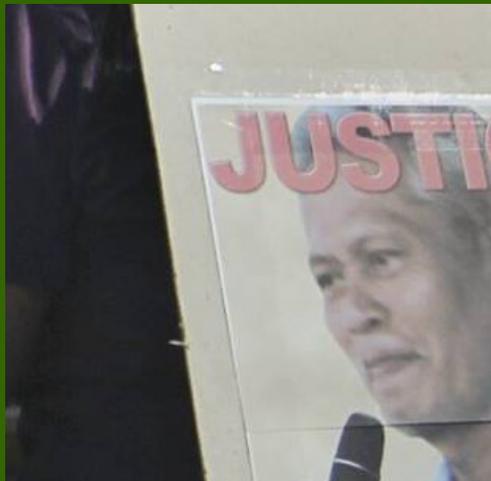
Is peace really elusive in Mindanao? A series of violence against Lumad communities in Davao del Norte, Surigao del Sur, and other parts of Mindanao have been claiming innocent lives.

The Lumads in Mindanao are once again caught not only in the armed conflict but also in the conflict of various interests between the extreme left Communist Party of the Philippines - New Peoples' Army (CPP-NPA), the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and with the special participation of para-military group "Magahat-Bagani." Unfortunately, innocent civilians, especially lumad women and children are left suffering and defenseless.

The spate of violence affecting various Lumad areas, areas not only in Surigao Del Sur but in nearby provinces as well, was caused by conflict on who should take control of their resource-rich ancestral domains. According to the Philippine military, this fight for control by rival tribal groups became a full-blown armed conflict when the communist New People's Army (NPA) joined the fray by

harassing and attacking Lumad tribes resisting their presence.

The 4th Infantry Division based in Cagayan De Oro also said that “The crux of the problem is the conflicting interests of parties to control the resources that are found in the IPs ancestral domain, particularly gold and other minerals. The communist NPA wants to control our IP communities because to them, they are a rich source of recruits. To them, the ancestral domain of our Lumads does not just give them men to fight for them but also the funds and other logistics to ensure their existence.”



ABOUT THE "LUMADS"

The term "Lumad" refers to indigenous and various ethno-linguistic groups in Mindanao. Among those usually included as Lumads are the Subanen, B'laan, Mandaya, Higaonon, Banwaon, Talaandig, Ubo, Manobo, T'boli, Tiruray, Bagobo, Tagakaolo, Dibabawon, Manguangan, and Mansaka. The "Lumads" are also considered among the most peaceful and gentle, and the most vulnerable group. The Lumad's territories are rich in natural resources, especially minerals. This is the primary reason why their ancestral domains are encroached upon by outsiders and have been subjected to development aggression (La Viña, 2015).

Lumads live in the mountainous areas of Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Bukidnon, Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao, Zamboanga, Misamis Oriental, Misamis Occidental, Cagayan de Oro, North Cotabato, South Cotabato and Sarangani Province (K. Cariño, 2012 & ACCORD, 2015).



Photo courtesy of www.rappler.com

THE LUMAD ISSUES

UCCP-HARAN EVACUATION CENTER, DAVAO CITY

Around 700 to 1, 280 members of Banawaon, Matigsalug, and Manobo communities have been staying in the United Church of Christ of the Philippines (UCCP) Haran Compound located in Father Selga St., Davao City, since March 2015 to present (OPAPP, Sept 2015).

According to UCCP and Bayan Muna activists, the Lumad evacuees, mostly women and children, sought refuge in the Protestant church allegedly because of the presence of military in their communities (Rappler, July 2015).

On the contrary, tribal leaders from the communities of Matigsalug, Banawaon, and Talaingod claim that there is no militarization in their area. The Lumads in the UCCP-Haran Evacuation Center were allegedly deceived to believe that they were meeting important personalities, and they were promised of goods that they can bring home if they join the Davao-bound group. The Datus claim that their people are being held under threat. It has also been reported that an identified man in the Haran evacuation center has committed suicide due to depression. The man was allegedly not allowed to go home. A few weeks after his burial, his wife also committed suicide. They left behind four (4) young children.

In the assessment of the DSWD Regional focal person for indigenous peoples, many evacuees are getting sick and the water supply was cut off. The evacuees are staying in deplorable living quarters and their mobility and daily lives have been extremely disrupted and need to be addressed immediately.

A tension was triggered in the UCCP-Haran last June 23, 2015 when police and the military attempted to force their way into the compound where Lumad evacuees have been staying for about 3 months already. According to North Cotabato Representative Nancy Catamco, Chair of the House Committee on Indigenous Peoples, she wanted “to rescue, kids, women, and the elderly because they are being held hostage by militants.”

ALLEGED RAPE OF A 14-YEAR OLD MANOBO IN TALAINGOD, DAVAO DEL NORTE

According to a report, the 14-year old Manobo girl who escaped from the UCCP-Haran Evacuation Center last July 23, 2015 was found to have been a victim of rape prior to her stay in the UCCP-Haran compound. Cases have been filed against the suspected three soldiers and court martial proceedings have been reportedly recommended.

KILLING AT THE ALTERNATIVE LEARNING CENTER FOR AGRICULTURAL AND LIVELIHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ALCADEV), LIANGA, SURIGAO DEL SUR

Emerico Samarca, Executive Director of ALCADEV, was found hogtied, with a stab wound, his throat slit open, and his body was found inside a classroom. After killing Samarca, the armed men also killed Dionel Campos and his cousin Datu Bello Sinzo. Campos was a community leader and the chairperson of the indigenous people group Maluhutayong Pakigbisog Alansa sa Sumusunod (Mapasu), which is known for its firm position on the protection of ancestral lands and its campaign against human rights violations targeting indigenous people. Samarca, Campos and Sinzo were brutally killed in the presence of the community last September 1, 2015 (K. Manlupig & Rappler, 2015).

Governor Pimentel said the suspects are members of “Magahat-Bagani Force” which is allegedly a paramilitary unit created and handled by the AFP (PDI, 18 Sept. 2015).

After the killing of Samarca, Sinzo, and Campos, more than 3,200 people from Lianga were

evacuated to the sports complex of Tandag City, Surigao del Sur due to fear of getting caught in the cross fire. According to a report, the possibility of creating a “UCCP-Haran” type of situation is being duplicated in Tandag.

The report also confirmed that the extreme left groups are already part of the management of the evacuation center.

The Diocese of Tandag strongly condemned the killings of “lumad” or indigenous peoples in Surigao del Sur. In a statement, the diocese said the target of the “extensively planned” killings were those who opposed mining activities in the area. The Diocese of Tandag also stressed that “One can see and understand that only those lumads who firmly stand to protect the forest and reject mining activities and anything that destroys nature were obviously the ones being hounded and intimidated supposedly by the aforementioned notorious group” (Gonzales, INQUIRER.net, September 2015).

THE DECLARATION OF WAR AND RESISTANCE AGAINST THE NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY (NPA) BY THE DATOS IN AGUSAN DEL SUR AND BUKIDNON

A three-day "Help! Kitao-Kitao Bukidnon Humanitarian and Peace Mission" was initiated last September by various extreme left-leaning organizations such as the Promotion of Church People's Response (PCPR) in Southern Mindanao, Solidarity Action Group for Indigeneous Peoples and Peasants (SAGIP), and Pasaka. The "mercy mission" aims to give assistance to alleged victims of militarization and to validate the alleged human rights violations reported in the area.

On the contrary, in Loreto, Agusan del Sur, 60 tribal leaders condemned the NPA and declared that they don't want the NPAs and their front organizations such as KARAPATAN, ALCADDEV, BAYAN MUNA, ANAK-PAWIS, GABRIELA, KMP, and other extreme left groups in their ancestral domain.

Also, in Kitaotao, Bukidnon, the Matigsalog tribal and barangay leaders declared resistance against the presence and abuses of NPAs and other hard-left groups in their domain. As a result, 132 individuals from 29 families who are considered sympathizers of NPA have evacuated and sought refuge to the Parish of Arakan, North Cotabato. If these incidents are not managed well, the situation might become a "flashpoint" in both political and security levels.

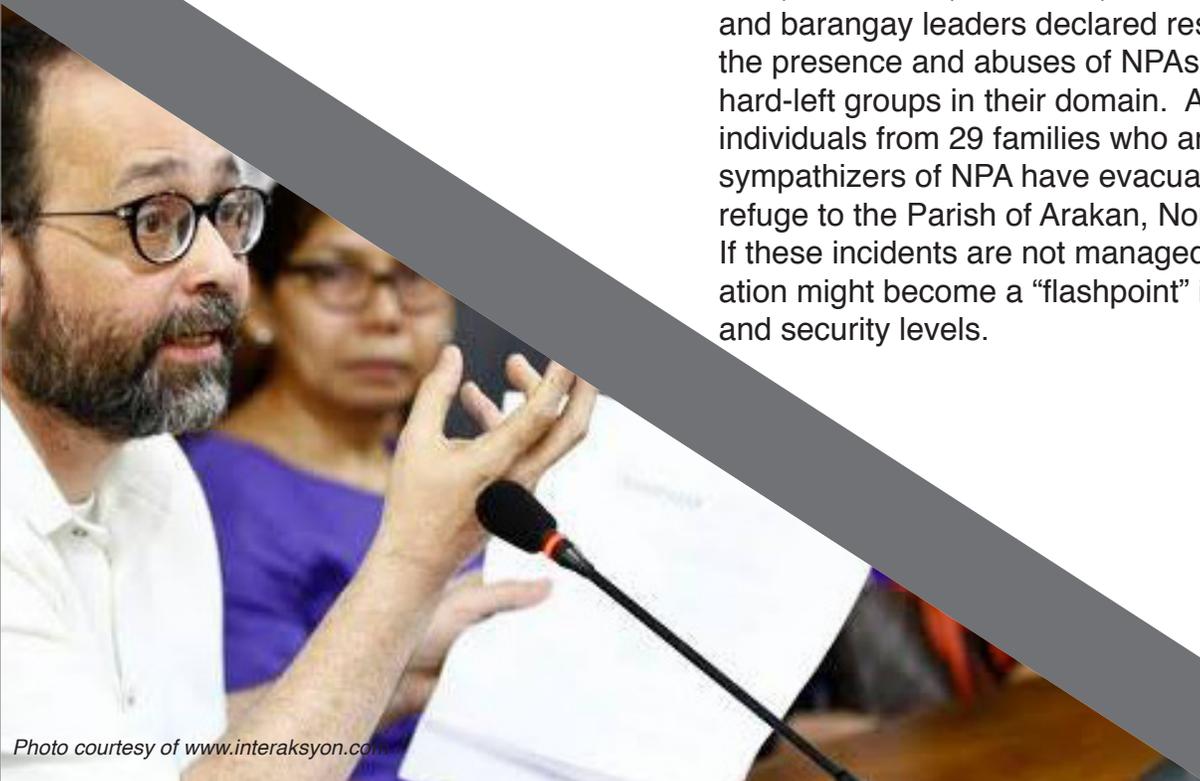


Photo courtesy of www.interaksyon.com

RESPONSE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

In response to Lumads' crises in Surigao del Sur, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) Commission on Health Care is providing humanitarian assistance such as medical and psychological support to the victims. These include providing basic medical needs, as well as mental health and psychological interventions for refugees, especially the children. A group of doctors and experts are already being organized in Mindanao, and some will be coming from Luzon, to help in the mission (R. Lagarde, CBCPNews, Sept. 2015).

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), a non-Catholic religious group, have also urged the government to resolve the killings and put an end to the "militarization" of the areas where indigenous people live.

The group said it was "deeply alarmed" that the reason behind heavy militarization of lumad communities in Mindanao is allegedly to protect the interests of mining companies and other corporate entities in plundering the mineral resources in the ancestral homes of the indigenous people.

PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM FOR LUMADS IN MINDANAO

TASK FORCE "WHOLE-OF-NATION INITIATIVE"

The Philippine government created the Task Force Whole-of-Nation Initiative (WNI) to consolidate all government services in a two-day caravan. The Task Force WNI is headed by Undersecretary Manny Bautista, Executive Director of the Cabinet Cluster on Security, Justice and Peace. The initiative covers the entire country, but currently prioritizes Eastern Mindanao due to their peace and development condition.

Recently, a two-day service caravan was conducted in Talaingod, Davao del Norte, one of the poorest towns in Mindanao. Through the effort of national line agencies and regional offices, the service caravan provided an array of social services, distribution of farm goods, awarding of livelihood projects and trainings, and legal counselling, among others, to around 5,000 residents of this town.

Most of its residents belong to the Atta Manobo tribe with a poverty incidence of 78.56%, and has been long affected by the decades-long conflict between the government and the communist rebels. In addition 3,000 community residents in Loreto Agusan del Sur also benefitted from the caravan.

Primarily, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has declared to cover the province of Davao del Norte for further development. The AFP has also declared that three cities, eight municipalities, 222 barangays, and around 150 sitios are now free from the influence of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front.

THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER ON THE PEACE PROCESS ON LUMAD KILLINGS



THE PAMANA PROGRAM

The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) is the lead agency in supervising PAMANA or the Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (Peaceful and Resilient Communities) program that was established after the signing of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). PAMANA is the Aquino administration's program and framework for peace and development in conflict-affected areas as well as those covered by existing peace agreements. It aims to reduce poverty, improve governance and empower communities through projects that enhance peace and socioeconomic conditions.

PAMANA is being implemented in MNLF Peace and Development Communities (PDCs) in 133 barangays located in 14 provinces and three chartered cities. The provinces that already formalized partnership with the government include Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan, Sulu, North Cotabato, Sarangani,

South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Norte, Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga Sibugay and Palawan.

One of the successful PAMANA livelihood projects is found in Barangay Aliwagwag Cateel, Davao Oriental and its beneficiary is the Aliwagwag Farmers Multipurpose Association (AFMA). Since the residents of the said barangay depends on upland rice as their source of income, the PAMANA project under the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), together with the Department of Agriculture and Provincial Government of Davao Oriental, granted the association with upland rice production and post-harvest facilities (single pass rice mill) in 2013.

LASALLIAN REFLECTION

“IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP THE RURAL POOR, ESPECIALLY THE LUMAD PEOPLES WHO ARE FIGHTING FOR THEIR LIVES AND EXISTENCE.”

2. What should have been done by all stakeholders (CPP-NPA, AFP, Paramilitary, Lumads, Gov't, Civil Society) to prevent the dehumanizing conditions of Lumads in Davao and Surigao?

1. In what ways have my own thoughts, words and (in) actions contributed to the misunderstanding and suffering experienced by Filipino indigenous people?”

3. How can I support the humanitarian mission and call for justice for Lumads in Mindanao?”

WE INVITE YOU ALSO TO JOIN THE “LUMAD MINDANAW - SEARCHING FOR TRUTH AND JUSTICE” FORUM ON OCTOBER 30, 2015 AT THE WALDO PERFECTO SEMINAR ROOM. RESOURCE PERSONS FROM THE CIVIL SOCIETY GROUP, LUMAD MINDANAW WILL SHARE THE RESULTS OF THEIR FACT-FINDING MISSION IN LUMAD COMMUNITIES



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WHAT'S YOUR TAKE ON THIS ISSUE?

SEND YOUR COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, AND
SUGGESTIONS TO:



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