



CORDILLERA PEOPLES ALLIANCE

For the Defense of the Ancestral Domain and for Self Determination

September 30, 2010

CPA Statement on James Balao's 731st Day of Enforced Disappearance and Martial Law Commemoration on September 21 in the Philippines

September 17 marked 731 days or two years of Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) founding member James Balao's enforced disappearance. The CPA and the Balao Family sincerely thanks all organizations and individuals who helped in the search and campaign to surface James in the past 2 years, from the local to international communities. Such support and solidarity continue to be sources of strength for the Balao Family and the CPA. For this, we are indebted.

The CPA and the Balao family salute the Monday Demonstration in Stuttgart, Germany, which continues to express their active solidarity with the Cordillera peoples and support the campaign to surface James even from afar, from another country. On the basis of the need to assert human rights and indigenous peoples' right to self determination against a terrorist regime, the Monday Demonstration has unconditionally extended its support and solidarity to the Balao Family and the CPA. This was done by directly writing the president of the Philippines every month, under the Arroyo regime and the present Aquino II regime; by writing letters to the family, by attending the 2009 decentralized Cordillera Day celebration in Bakun, Benguet, and by sending material and financial support for the campaign. In like manner, the CPA shall continue to support the struggles of the Monday Demonstration and solidarity against the common enemy of the workers, oppressed and exploited peoples of the world - imperialism and local reaction.

But on September 17, not only did we count the number of days of James' enforced disappearance. We also recognize the long period of injustice and State terrorism, similar to the Martial Law period under the US-Marcos dictatorship. We count the number of days until the new government under Pres. Benigno Aquino III acts on the cases of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances of innocent civilians during the past regime of the US-backed Gloria Arroyo, including the latest cases that took place in Aquino's first weeks in office. We count the number of days until those accountable for over 1,000 cases of extrajudicial killings and over 200 cases of enforced disappearance are brought to the bar of justice. This includes Gloria Arroyo as the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces during her term. Until now, we demand justice be served for Markus Bangit, Jose Doton, Pepe Manegdeg, Albert Terredaño, Alyce Claver and other slain indigenous leaders and community members in the Cordillera under the Arroyo regime. And on the nearing commemoration of Martial Law on September 21, we count the number of days until the new president decisively shows political will to stop the killings and ensure that justice be served to the victims.

The CPA iterates its Indigenous Peoples Agenda, duly submitted to the Office of the President in Malacañang on the occasion of the International Day of the World's indigenous peoples in August, which contains the basic demands and urgent concerns of indigenous peoples in the country for the recognition of our individual and collective human rights. Among our calls is the end to militarization and ethnocide in the Cordillera and the immediate surfacing of James.

In the spirit of our continuing solidarity, we also would like share the plight of indigenous peoples under the new regime.

A Life and Death Situation for Indigenous Peoples: Heightened Human Rights Violations and Ethnocide under the US-Aquino II Regime

The Cordillera remains one of the most militarized regions in the country. Under the 5th Infantry Division, the 501st Brigade (BDE) continues to operate in Kalinga and Apayao on top of the regular operations of the 21st and 77th Infantry Battalions in Kalinga province. The 502nd BDE operates in Mt. Province and Ifugao and heads the Task Force Montañosa, while the 503rd BDE operates in Abra and parts of Benguet. A brigade is usually composed of 1,200-1,500 soldiers.

Militarization is manifested thru massive and intense military operations resulting in various rights violations; setting up of detachments inside communities including the *dap-ay*, camping inside residential houses, imposing curfews, instilling fear and terror in the communities and of recent, forests were burned in Mountain Province and Abra so as to prevent NPA's forest cover. The condemned multimedia presentation *Knowing Thy Enemy*, which unjustly brands progressive organizations as terrorists, continues to be showed in communities and schools. In fact, the Cordillera was declared a priority region for the implementation of the AFP's counter-insurgency Oplan Bantay Laya II targeting civilians, deploying military troops in areas believed to be strongholds of the revolutionary New People's Army and at the same time in areas where there is community opposition to the entry of transnational and corporate mining and other extractive industries. At the start of 2010, massive military operations were conducted in Kalinga and Abra which are areas targeted for transnational mining projects.

The CPA also condemns the AFP's plan to form IP squads as paramilitary forces under the guise of fulfilling its United Nations obligations on indigenous peoples' rights. It is simply creating a new paramilitary terrorist squad under a new name which will prolong the culture of impunity instead of seriously ending the killing of civilians and reign of terror as in the recent US-backed Arroyo regime and the US-Marcos Dictatorship. With this, we will experience anew the same situation when the Cordillera Peoples Liberation Army (CPLA) was formed and coddled, before its integration into the Armed Forces, during former president Cory Aquino's term, mother of the current president Noynoy Aquino. This move basically exonerated the CPLA from their crimes against Cordillera indigenous peoples, the extrajudicial killings of CPA leaders, terrorism in the Cordillera communities, among others. Government should heed instead the recommendations from UN Special Rapporteur Rodolfo Stavenhagen's report to demilitarize indigenous communities and dismantle paramilitary forces, UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston's recommendation calling for the scrapping of the Oplan Bantay Laya and the dismantling of the Inter-Agency Legal Action Group (IALAG), and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD) recommendations for indigenous peoples of the Philippines to fully enjoy their rights to their resources; to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and the implementation of a comprehensive law that will eliminate discrimination based on race, color, decent or ethnic origin.

We continue to condemn and oppose the plunder and exploitation of our ancestral lands by foreign and local capitalists, and by the State which continues to promote indigenous territories as resource base for imperialist plunder and capitalist exploitation. In the Cordillera alone, mining applications increased this year, such as in Mountain Province (Cordillera Exploration-Anglo American), Abra (Jabel Corporation, Discovery Mines) Kalinga (Makilala and Phelps Dodge), and Benguet (Brazilian mining giant Vale, Solfotara). Currently, 66% of the Cordillera's land area is covered by various mining applications, on top of the existing large mining operations like Lepanto, Philex and Benguet Corporation in Benguet. More lands plundered and exploited only spell disaster for the Cordillera indigenous peoples, who also face the twin evils of extractive industries and the impact of climate change.

Intensified militarization and development aggression in the Cordillera results in ethnocide—the extinction of our identity as a people, loss of our ancestral lands, resources, livelihood and indigenous culture which are the material base of our existence as indigenous peoples including our indigenous socio-political institutions and systems, among others.

Defend and Assert our Human Rights!

We strongly urge Pres. Aquino to withdraw his government's plan for the continuity of Oplan Bantay Laya, stop the policy of political killings, and any other 'counter insurgency' campaign that sacrifices civilians. We call on Pres. Aquino to implement the recommendations from the UN Special Rapporteur Stavenhagen's 2002 Philippine Mission, UN Special Rapporteur Alston's 2007 Philippine visit and from the UNCERD. As a signatory, it must also implement the Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and other international declarations and conventions.

More urgently, we call President Aquino and his government to exercise political will under his "matuwid na daan" -investigate and hold GMA accountable and all those in the military and police

responsible for the political killings, enforced disappearances, and massive human rights violations committed during the Arroyo regime. The souls of the victims, their families, colleagues and communities are crying out for justice! Until justice is denied by the president in power and political killings and state terrorism continues, the new government will also be accountable.

To have genuine peace in the Cordillera, our communities must be demilitarized and all military detachments inside communities and populated areas must be pulled-out immediately. To have genuine economic development and recognition of our collective rights to our ancestral lands, destructive projects and extractive industries must not be allowed. Communities and lands destroyed by extractive industries must be rehabilitated and returned to the rightful owners. Development aggression must be stopped. To have genuine recognition of our inherent right to self determination and respect to our identity as indigenous peoples and national minorities, our basic human rights and fundamental freedoms must be respected, historic injustice and marginalization of the Cordillera peoples must be rectified.

We intensify our struggles for the defense of our ancestral domain and self determination as we strengthen our anti-imperialist solidarity and determination to change the world. #

In Solidarity,



Windel Bolinget
Chairperson