



KATUNGOD LUMAD ALERT

Militarization shuts down schools, displaces families in Agusan Sur Evacuees complain of food blockade



Intensified militarization in the hinterland villages of Agusan del Sur forced alternative learning centers of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP) to shut down ahead of regular closing schedules and compelled 21 Banwaon families from the villages of San Pedro, Binicalan and Mahagsay in San Luis town to flee.

The evacuees, composed of 139 individuals who took refuge at the compounds of the San Luis municipal town hall around 3pm of Dec 4, 2017, complained of food blockade as the military men from the 26th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army (IBPA) denied entry of supplies facilitated by RMP personnel and by volunteers of a number of people's organizations.

The closure of schools hampers the education of 58 children.

The evacuees reported that since the second week of November this year, they experienced series of threats and harassment from the elements of the 26th IBPA. They said a number of their leaders were slapped with trumped-up charges. One of the traditional leaders, Boy 'Datu Mansuladlad' Amado was convinced by the military to 'surrender'. The Datu, a council member of the community-based organization Tagdumahan, refrained to do it and stood firm that he is not a member of the New People's Army (NPA). He fears that the military might use his 'surrender' act to further other agenda.

"They are targeting the civilians, not the NPAs. Why drop bombs near the community. Why strafe our houses?" said Mauro 'Datu Makapukaw' Manseliohan. His community complained of aerial bombing and strafing that intensified when Pres. Rodrigo Duterte issued PP 360 (Declaring the Termination of Peace Negotiations with the National Democratic Front – Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army) and declared that groups serving as 'NPA fronts' are deemed as enemy of the states. Datu Makapukaw also protested the military's denial of their access to ancestral domains by prohibiting them to go their farms and the forest to look for food and medicines.

Leaders of Tagdumahan believes that these harassments and threats from the military is linked to the organization's strong opposition to the mining companies that want to enter their ancestral lands. The organization also opposed the implementation of the National Greening Program of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) which they believe is just a pretext to force them out of their land, imposing tree planting on land that the indigenous communities farm.

EXPRESS YOUR CONCERN to the Philippine Government by writing to:

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Katungod Lumad Alert is published by the 'Higala sa Lumad' [Friends of the Lumad] Network.



'Higala sa Lumad' Network is a support group composed of a broad range of interfaith personalities/representative of organizations synergizing relevant capacities and resources for Lumad communities under attack. 'Higala' also serves as an informal monitoring network for Lumad human rights. 'Higala' has been established as a component of the 'Healing the Hurt' Project.

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