

Mindanao (Philippines): Break the Culture of Impunity: Bring Justice to Timuay Lencio Arig

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It has been more than 40 days since Timuay Lencio Arig, 56, an indigenous Teduray leader was killed by an unknown gunman on his way home to Sitio Keninan, Brgy. Romongaob, South Upi, Maguindanao on October 2. The perpetrator still remains at large. Police investigation is presently stagnant. His family's insecurity increases day by day as justice is not served.

Timuay Arig was one among the many indigenous leaders whose lives were spent in the forefront of the struggle against aggression and threats to their identity, territory, self-governance and cultural integrity; their bases of existence. Together with other members of their indigenous political structure, he led the application for the delineation of their 201,850-hectare ancestral domain claim and the protection of their rights against land grabbing and encroachment of so-called "development projects" such as mining and agribusiness plantations in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

And because of this, his right to life was taken away. He became just a number that is added to the statistics of indigenous peoples in the Philippines who were killed in the line of defending their rights.

Presently, the police investigation has not moved forward because the witnesses, among them his wife were threatened to silence. Fear of retaliation among the members of his family and his community intensified as the perpetrator and those at the back of the crime remain at large.

In upholding human rights and peace based on justice and pursuing the right to self-determination of the indigenous peoples, the Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement believes that one indigenous person killed is too many.

We believe that the quest for justice for our fellow human rights and peace advocate, Timuay Lencio Arig is the elimination of the culture of impunity that constantly breeds fear, silence and insecurity. It fails to bring perpetrators of human rights violations to justice and denies the victims' right to justice and redress. This is a culture that thrives in a democratic Philippines where corruption is widespread and the rule of law is weak. This is a culture that we must struggle incessantly to break.

We strongly demand for the Philippine National Police (PNP) in South Upi and the Regional Human Rights Commission (RHRC) in the ARMM to continue and hasten their investigation and bring the perpetrators to the bar of justice.

We urge the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to pressure the aforementioned investigating bodies and provide necessary assistance to the members of Timuay Arig's family including but not limited to psychosocial and economic interventions.

We call on the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police to intensify efforts

in dismantling private armies that are used to curtail human rights.

We demand the Aquino administration as duty-bearers to break the culture of impunity by enforcing the rule of law, prioritize the promotion and protection of human rights and bring justice to the victims of human rights violations.

We continuously enjoin civil society organizations to remain steadfast in the peace and human rights advocacy and continue strengthening the call to stop the killings of indigenous peoples and all violence that aim to curtail the advancement of human rights.

Where one voice is silenced, ours must echo the truth. Where one is forced to be helpless, our joint actions must strengthen our quest for justice.

Justice for Timuay Lencio Arig! Justice for all the murdered Indigenous Peoples! Justice for all victims of Human Rights Violations!

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