

Statement (Mindanao, Philippines): 2020 International Day of World's Indigenous Peoples

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In celebration of the “2020 International Day of World’s Indigenous Peoples” with the theme: Covid-19 and Indigenous Peoples Resilience, we in the Kesefananguwit Timuay (Timuay Justice and Governance), an Indigenous Political Structure (IPS) of the Teduray and Lambangian join the different IP communities in this memorable celebration.

IP resiliency in the covid-19 pandemic is determined by the status of their inged (ancestral domains) especially the condition of the natural resources and environment and the level of modern development in their areas. Another factor is their Cultural practices vis a vis the current civilization and the most challenging situation now amongst the IPs is the new normal such as hygiene protocols, restricted movements and social distancing among others.

In July of 2020, the number of IDPs increased to 3,300 in 11 conflict sites within the Teduray and Lambangian ancestral domain areas in portions of Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat provinces. These cases of evacuees happened amidst the Covid-19 pandemic where basic hygiene protocols are mostly violated such as the use of face masks, social distancing, disinfections including lockdowns.

Sadly, all of these things happened while we are on the state of celebration and excitement with the new political entity, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in its transition period. We the Non-Moro IPs (NMIP) gave our full support to the adoption of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) and in the operation of the BARMM in the transition period by way of full participation in the drafting of the enabling laws for the NMIP since the establishment of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) to the present. We also gave our full support to our representatives in the Parliament no less than the Hon. Minister Melanio Ulama and Hon. Romeo Saliga.

However, the above stated miseries of the NMIPs specifically the Teduray, Lambangian and Dulangan Manobo in the second district of Maguindanao and portions of Sultan Kudarat province greatly affect our expectations and aspirations within the Bangsamoro region. Armed and land conflicts can still be understood as post BOL birth-pains but the “September 25, 2019 BTA Resolution No. 38 urging the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to cease and desist the delineation process and the proceeding for the issuance of CADT in Maguindanao” is not only contrary to the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) as it recognizes the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) but is also destroying the concept of inclusivity.

For this reason, the Baglalan (tribal title holders) in a meeting on June 23, 2020 saw the situation as that “the fusaka inged (ancestral domains) is currently in a state of guboten (under siege)” because of the cases of forced land occupation by non-IPs; attack and killings perpetrated by armed groups and hostage taking at sitio Dara, Kuya, South Upi; destruction of properties, robberies, harassments

and movements of armed groups in different parts of the Ancestral Domain.

Interventions related to Covid-19 pandemic took place in several communities by the LGUs (province down to barangay), MIPA, MP Romeo Saliga, IPMR Lito Mosela, TJG and support groups, OTLAC in partnership with IAG and other assistance for food, hygiene kits, medicine and other non-food items. However, these are temporary interventions. In one community relief distribution, the community leaders said that they don't really need food but "resolution to the conflict" in their areas.

The peace mechanisms in the BARMM and local initiative are looking for comprehensive data. During peace forums, the issues are being raised but no concrete response is heard. The LGU of South Upi in coordination to the provincial government and security sector is in progress at the moment.

Our call:

1. Fast track the deliberation of the IP code in the Parliament.
2. Urging the NCIP to act on the TLADC survey returns and the BTA Resolution No. 38;
3. Establish mechanisms on the working relations of NCIP and MIPA through the InterGovernmental Relations Body (IGRB);
4. Humanitarian interventions on conflict affected IP communities and the covid-19 pandemic;
5. Establishment of AFP detachments in conflict affected IP communities;
6. Implementation of peace mechanisms in the conflict affected IP communities.

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Timuay Justice and Governance
