

**POSITION PAPER ON
ANCESTRAL DOMAIN - LUMAD MINDANAO**

For us Lumad of Mindanao, Land is the most sacred gift from Magbabaya (God) and the sources of our life. We believe that land should not be owned by certain individuals, rather it should be shared for everybody to exploit and till that they may have life abundantly.

The historical trend of the Lumads in Mindanao from the colonial past of exploitation, oppression and deprivation to the present regime, does not in any way lead us towards a brighter future for our Lumad generation.

Our situation characterized by helplessness, insecurity and death is in effect the consequence through the so-called "Development Projects" such as: logging concessions, mining industries, plantations, agri-business, etc.; does extremely cause the loss of our ancestral domain and making us as "squatters in our own land." Instrumental in serving and protecting the interests of these big businesses is the military strategy of organizing the feared Civilian Home Defense Forces (CHDF) and supporting the fanatic groups coupled with the new strategy of organizing the Alsa Masa in the guise of counter-insurgency, resulting in the arrest, hamletting, torture, theft, rape, burning and bombing of houses and the forced-surrender of the so-called "rebel" sympathizers.

On the other hand, our cultural heritage is disregarded, our sacred places are desecrated, mockery to our rituals and our antiques were taken away from us.

But being united, we feel it is our duty and responsibility to regain these beautiful and sacred life which Magbabaya gave us as His gift. We defend this gift in order to preserve it for our future generation, in the same manner that we wage a united struggle for self-determination.

This history of the Lumads is not only a history of exploitation but also a history of unrelenting struggle. Our heroes bear witness to this noble legacy. The blood shed by our heroes in the lists of martyrs in Mindanao are our inspirations and has strengthened us to continue the struggle for self-determination.

Therefore, with a united voice, we stand firm on the following:

1. The land of the Lumads and its natural resources within are gifts from Magbabaya for livelihood of our people and our prosperity;
2. It is our right and privilege as Lumads to live, to till, to manage, to develop or to dispose our ancestral land and other natural resources in accordance with our customary laws;
3. It is our right and responsibility to defend it from the intruders who want to appropriate for their own selfish interests, as manifested in the depredations by foreign businesses and their local cohorts, Lumads and non-Lumads.

Therefore, to uplift the economic and political life of the Lumads, we want to uphold the honored traditions in managing our communities by the following:

- a. respect for the boundary of our ancestral domain, such as creeks, forests, durable trees and plants, mountains, graves, and other tribal markers; and
- b. uphold the communal system of tilling the land. This means the togetherness in working in certain piece of land, sharing the fruits including the animals caught in hunting. The tiller is the owner of the land and those who have no land to till shall be given a piece of land in order to live.
- c. The government should not recognize the representatives of the fake leaders who presented themselves as Lumad and Lumad leaders. This is to avoid the misinterpretation in behalf of the Lumad people and to foster the genuine leadership of the people in-line with their traditional concept of leadership.

Original signed
LUMAD - Mindanao Council
of Leaders
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PHILIPPINES

LUMAD MINDANAW UPDATE

The ascendancy of Mrs. Corazon C. Aquino into the Presidency as installed by the February People Power never alleviated the situation of the tribal particularly in Mindanao. Militarization and landgrabbing of the tribal ancestral lands worsened compare to what they experienced during the Marcos regime. The militarist strategy of the government to solve the present political, economic, and socio-cultural problem is insistently employed. The unleashing of various fanatical groups and armed-men such as NAKASAKA and ALSA MASA sow terror in the outskirts areas particularly in the suspected hotbeds of communist dissidents. In remaining months of 1986 including January 1987 features the bitter experiences of militarization; left bloody marks in the history of the Lumad people.

The purpose, then of this paper, is to briefly present the experiences of the tribal communities in Mindanao from the month of August of 1986 to January 1987.

MILITARY CAMPAIGN: Aerial and Artillery Bombardments, Deployment of Various Fanatical Groups and Private Armies

In the 17th of August 1986, 11 truck-load of combat-gear soldiers and two military jeeps belonging to the 53rd IB PA from Bukidnon, supported with two Armored Personnel Carrier (APC), two war tanks and a pair of helicopters, conducted a military operation. Another group of soldiers belonging to the 30IB PA from Agusan del Norte served as the blocking force. They conducted the all out operation in the suspected New Peoples Army encampment along the Bukidnon-Misamis Oriental-Agusan del Norte border. It resulted to mass evacuation, destruction of properties, hunger and diseases among the tribal communities affected.

The affected areas are mainly populated by the Lumad people belonging to the Higaonon tribe. In the past, the Higaonons lived along the coastal areas of Misamis Oriental and Agusan del Norte. As time went on with the advance of "civilization" their lands fell into the hands of Christian settlers, transnational corporations and other big business venturers. They moved many times already to give way to these land acquisitionists until they realized that they have nowhere to go. The areas where they now live are the last grounds for survival as a tribe. Their lives depends much on their present settlement.

In South Cotabato(Southern Mindanao), in the towns of Malapatan, Alabel, Malungon and the surrounding sitios populated by the Lumads of the B'laan tribe experienced the harassments and intimidations. The modus operandi perpetrated by the police and the fanatical groups known as Tadtad and surit-surit terrorists is to coerce the communities to surrender as NPA and NPA supporters or masa. Along with this intimidations is the rampant cattle rustlings, robbery and looting of properties.

In Davao del Norte, in the towns of Sto. Tomas, Kapalong, Pantukan, San Vicente including Paquibato of the Davao City District is the persistent problem of PANGAYAW (tribal war) or the "vendetta killing" as the press dubbed it. An Ata-Manobo, Jose Libayaw by name posed as the godfather of the terroristic activities of the tribe band together. It was reported by the tribal communities belonging to Mansaka and Dibabawon that Libayaw and his men were being given arms by the Provincial Commander, Colonel Nelson Estaris to wipe out the suspected NPA supporters and symphatizers. Many cases of killings, intimidations were inflicted to the tribal communities.

Last October 29, a pair of tora-tora (WW II vintage war planes) bombed and strafed a Dibabawon communities in the mountain of Ampawid and Mabuhay in Laac, San Vicente, Davao del Norte. It was reported that the shacks belonging to Dibabawon rattan gatherers were blown to the air by bombs. They (planes) strafed the forested surrounding with a machinegun. No casualty was reported as the tribal heard the buzzing sound they hid in the mountain slopes for safety.

November 21 to December 8, the military belonging to the 23rd IB PA, 30th IB PA, 36th IB PA and ICHDFs conducted massive military operation in the far flung villages of the Lumad people belonging to the Higaonon tribe in Buena-vista and Tungao all towns of Agusan del Norte along the Misamis Oriental and Bukidnon border. There were ten (10) tribal villages affected according to the Fact Finding Mission conducted by the Agusan del Norte Peace Movement last 20-22 December 1986. The fact finders witnessed the destruction made by the military bombings, strafings, destruction of properties and arsons. The victims reported to them some members of the community are missing, some succumb to the military brutality by way of physical torture. The Higaonon villagers recounted that in the same military offensive they have seen the helicopters fired bombs; its tails is smoking similar to that of the jet and exploded with a deafening sound when reach to its target. The bomb bored hole about two feet in diameter and one foot in deep even in solid rock. The fact finders suspected that it is not an ordinary bombs but rocket launched from the helicopter gunship. "After the bombing rounds, same helicopters strafed the place with machineguns", the villagers added.

However, the same campaign of the military, not a single NPA was killed nor captured. There never occurred an encounter between the NPA guerillas and the government troopers. What only happened was a skirmish between the military field units and the "ALIMAONG", a self defense of the tribe armed with home-made guns and indigenous weapons. To complement their outmodeled weaponry the alimaong set traps on trails whenever they see intruders. Government troopers are considered intruders due to their past experiences.

Since the military campaign intrusion in 1984, the Higaonon tribe hid in the dense forest of Agusan del Norte along the mentioned provincial boundaries. Life in the jungle without shelter is not easy. Worst is the continues raining for many days and nights. They could not look nor cook what they brought for fear of being detected by the roving government forces and hovering helicopters with their deadly weapons. Many got fever and dehydration and lost of blood due to the leech infestation of the rain forest.

The tribe faced again with problem of rebuilding their homes. They believed that government forces may one day comeback and destroy what they rebuild. This cause much worries but they have no other choice if they have to survive as people.

LAND PROBLEMS: Landgrabbing and TNC Expansion

In December 1984 during the height of the political turmoil, 100 families members to the religious sect of Iglesia ni Kristo (INK) evacuated from Kilikili. Kilikili is a place situated in the boundaries of Lanao del Norte, Cotabato, and Bukidnon. Jose Zubiri, assemblyman from the Province of Bukidnon fetched the evacuees to Lumpatag Plateau in Misamis Oriental. Since then, the INKs occupied the area. The Lumad people belonging to the Higaonon tribe are the original inhabitants of the place. The tribals witnessed helicopters landed to the INK settlement reportedly carrying supplies. However, the tribals seen them (INKs) carrying high-powered fire arms. The tribals also reported that the place are heavily guarded by private armies and not even the people from Bureau of Forest Development (BFD) could not visit the area.

The tribal communities is threaten with the abuses of the settlers much more they possessed fire arms and private guards. They (tribals) are concern with the preservation of the place because Lumpatag is a sacred place for the tribals in Agusan, Misamis Oriental and Bukidnon. Most of their important sacred rituals were being made in this place. The Lumpatag areas is the watershed of the major rivers in Mindanao: Pulangi, Pusilaw and Agusan rivers. It serve as the communal forest as well as hunting grounds of the tribals in the surrounding places which provides them with meat round the year. If the INK's continue to occupy and cut down the trees; the rivers will get dry and the wildlife will vanish.

Because of this, the tribal leaders of the three tribes; Higaonon, Manobo Bukidnon and Manobo Agusan sent petition to President Corazon Aquino to help them solve the problem of the INK intrusion into their ancestral land. They also ask the government to declare the area covering more than 5,000 hectares as Lumad Forest Reserve and that they (tribals) has the exclusive rights for the disposition of the said reservation.

However, in August of 1986, the BFD reported that an additional of 2,000 families of the religious sect continue pouring to the plateau and plains of Lumpatag. This add to the speculation of the tribals that the INKs will eventually take over their sacred place, destroy their forest reserves and virtually drive the indigenous people.

Meanwhile in Agusan del Sur, the Manobo Agusan and the Visayan settlers are threatened with proposed 4,000 hectares expansion of the National Development Corporation - Guthrie (NDC-Guthrie) palm plantation. The corporation's hired guards: the Lost Command (LC's) sow harassment and intimidation to the surrounding communities as a prelude to the eviction.

The same experiences of evictions have been experienced by the Lumad people belonging to the T'boli and B'laan tribes in the foothills of Mt. Matutum, South Cotabato. The DOLE (Philippines) is undertaking its expansion for its pineapple plantation. Bribing and intimidating has been the standard modus operandi of the company.

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- ref. 1. Fact Sheet of the Peace Movement Agusan del Norte/December 1986
2. KKK & ATF Cagayan de Oro City

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D-4 SALA BUILDING 2nd FLOOR
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No. 4 Sumulong St.,
Baguio City 0201
Tel. No. 442 4175
Philippines

