



IWGIA, AIPP and LAHURNIP condemn the arbitrary designation of legitimate Indigenous Peoples human rights defenders as terrorists by Philippine authorities

15 September 2023 | The Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC) of the Philippines has arbitrarily designated Indigenous Peoples' human rights defenders Windel Bolinget, Jennifer Awingan, Sarah Abellon-Alikes and Steve Tauli – all leaders of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) – as “terrorist individuals” in Resolution Number 41 (2023) issued by the ATC, as part of the powers granted by the Anti-Terrorism Law of 2020.

Resolution 41 was adopted based on mere allegations and unknown pieces of information, and without the implementation of a legal hearing or mechanism for due process.

What this designation now means is that the four CPA leaders will be subject to possible warrantless arrests, arbitrary detention without charges in which they can be held for up to 24 days without any communication or information about their whereabouts, and worse, extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances.

All previous and numerous false accusations and cases against the CPA and its leaders have eventually been dismissed, as they have been founded on baseless accusations. However, these accusations and cases have had colossal consequences for the individuals, their families, and for the CPA, all of whom have to live on constant alert and have to divert all their resources to fight these baseless cases rather than carry out their important human rights work.

Their designation as terrorists by the ATC is just the latest government effort to intimidate, harass and threaten the organisation and its dedicated team into silence and inactivity. It allows the government to freeze the organisation's accounts, assets and properties, including the personal funds of staff and their families. It also sets them up for public humiliation, discrimination and targets of physical attacks.

When will this end? When will authorities in the Philippines finally step up to their responsibilities, hold those filing these false and baseless cases to account, and give the CPA peace to do their legitimate work?

For 39 years the CPA has been committed and diligent in its consistent advocacy, campaigns and direct actions for the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights, social justice, peace and democracy. They have supported and assisted Indigenous communities relentlessly in their struggle to uphold their rights – particularly to their ancestral lands against development aggression and extraction of resources without the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples.

CPA is an inspiration and role model to Indigenous communities and organisations globally, and IWGIA, AIPP and LAHURNIP are proud to stand in solidarity and partnership with them. It is horrendous to see how a legitimate human rights organisation like the CPA is having to face countless attacks under the programmes of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC).

The CPA is an independent federation of progressive peoples' organisations among Indigenous communities in the Cordillera region of the Philippines. They are duly registered with the



Philippine securities and exchange commission and have, since its formation in 1984, carried out legitimate development and human rights work for the people of the Cordillera.

On 19 June 2023, the CPA filed an appeal to the Supreme Court of the Philippines for the issuance of a Writ of Amparo to protect them from the continuing threats to their life, liberty and security perpetrated by the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippines National Police and the NTF-ELCAC.

We hope the Supreme Court will grant the Writ of Amparo to offer some well-deserved respite and safety to CPA and its leaders.

IWGIA, AIPP and LAHURNIP stand in solidarity with the CPA and denounces this unjust and oppressive designation. We #StandWithCPA.

#StandWithCPA
#JunkTerrorLaws
#RevokeTheTerrorDesignation
#UnfreezeTheAccounts