

HUNGLOS

Report of the Solidarity Mission to the BTL Farmers

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AMIHAN Northern Mindanao
Rm 2, MINBISCON Bldg.,
IFI Compuond, Bulua
Cagayan de Oro City 9000, Philippines
Tel. Nos + 63 (88) 850 5854
E-mail: amihan.nmr@gmail.com

A black and white photograph of a bird's nest. The nest is a cup-shaped structure made of dry, tangled grass and twigs, situated in the middle of a field of tall, thin grass. The lighting is soft, creating a gentle glow on the nest. The background is a dense field of similar grass, slightly out of focus.

**"Land is life... We do not just defend it,
We fight for it so that we can live with dignity."**
- BTL farmers

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AMIHAN Northern Mindanao

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Members of the BTL Women's Association take turns in guarding their camp despite the grave threats and physical violence the protesters have been subjected to since the Kampuhan was set up on May 23.

Introduction

The Philippine peasants' struggle for land tenurial rights continues even with the enactment of several agrarian reform laws in the country. The laws, instead of helping, have in fact worsened land conflicts, as these led the farmers to believe that they stand a chance of acquiring at last the lands they till only to be crushed by the same policies and institutions they thought were designed to help them. As small parcels of land handed out by the Philippine government to a few groups of farmers are bannered to be crowning successes of the country's land reform program, the glaring truth remains that these handful successes were fought for courageously, even bloodily, by the farmers. These were not handed to them in silver platter. This, the government refuses to acknowledge.

This book is intended to show the real picture of Philippine agriculture on the ground. More importantly, it focuses on one case where injustice is distinctly perpetrated by a government-funded educational institution, the Central Mindanao University on one hand, and the same injustice being resisted for decades by the Bukidnon Free Farmers and Agricultural Laborers Association (BUFFALO) - Triad Agricultural Manpower of Rural Active Workers (TAMARAW) - Landless Tillers Inhabitants of Musuan (LIMUS) in Maramag, Bukidnon, on the other hand. They are now collectively known as BTL.

This publication is published by AMIHAN Northern Mindanao, a network of 43 women peasant organizations in the region. It aims to empower women so they can participate actively in the over-all effort of the agricultural sector to achieve genuine agrarian reform. AMIHAN hopes to provide support to women and children affected by agrarian conflicts, bringing to the fore these issues as the government strives to downplay and even conceal from public scrutiny the continuing land problems in the

rural areas.

Among AMIHAN's members is BTL Women's Association. The association was formed after women found it necessary to have an organization that would focus on specific concerns of women farmers. Foremost of the women's concerns is to find additional income that would put food on their table in the numerous times when they were prevented from accessing their farms by the CMU guards. Pushed by economic circumstances to liberate themselves from the traditional role of Filipino women being hitched to an ordinary household, the BTL peasant women planned, organized and launched activities one in purpose with the BTL peasant men.

AMIHAN commends the initiatives of BTL women, and to be one with them, AMIHAN initiated an activity dubbed as 'Hunglos: Solidarity Mission to the BTL Farmers'. Gathering some 200 participants from different organizations, the mission provided medical and relief services, simultaneously gathering narratives from the farmers thereby going deeper into their case and establish the entire picture of the BTL struggle.



CMU guards harass
BTL farmers working
on their farms.

Hunglos:

**Solidarity Mission
to the Struggle
of Peasants
in Bukidnon**

Hunglos:

Solidarity Mission to the Struggle of the Peasants in Bukidnon

Hunglos refers to collective farming – a community of farmers working together in tilling a piece of land. The product of their collective efforts is then gathered together by the group and shared among them.

The spirit of *hunglos* is evoked in the solidarity mission, the organizations lending support to the farmers' aspiration to till their land free from threats and violence.

On June 14, 2011, as the mission's preparations were underway, three (3) BTL farmers were rushed to nearby hospitals for urgent treatment; two (2) of them for extraction of bullets from their legs. The bloodbath was the outcome after CMU's Chevron Security guards numbering to about 40 attacked and dispersed violently BTL's *Kampuhan* (protest camp) by CMU's gate. The farmers reported the shooting to the police authorities. Four of the suspects were summoned for questioning only to be released later. Undeterred, the farmers set up and were back to their protest camp in front of the CMU main gate immediately the day after, on June 15. Recently, cases against the security guards, together with CMU officers, for the violent dispersal of picket line have been filed before the Office of the Ombudsman –Mindanao,.

The CMU Board of Regents held a meeting on June 17, 2011 and issued a letter to the BTL farmers allowing them to till for six more months, or until December 31, 2011. They said they will form a Task Force to be headed by the Department of Education to decide on the BTL case. Yet, CMU refused to undertake its responsibility to look for a suitable relocation site for BTL farmers should the time come. Instead, it conveniently passed on to third parties, Local Government Units and Non-Government Organizations, this responsibility. With no relocation site to trans-

fer to, the BTL farmers negotiated that they be allowed to continue leasing the land at the minimum, and for land distribution through agrarian reform at the maximum.

In view of these, the solidarity mission set three specific objectives:

1. Extend relief and medical services to the farmers of BTL and their families
2. Document the reported human rights violations against the farmers of BTL and to extend appropriate legal assistance as deemed necessary
3. Gather various individuals and organizations of church people, academe, health workers, human rights groups, and other concerned organizations from the local, national and international community in solidarity with the farmers in CMU and seek concrete actions for the immediate and long-term resolution of the issue of land conflict.



Students show their support for the plight of the farmers, demanding CMU to stop pitting education against land rights. They maintain that the government's neglect of the academic sector should be addressed to stop the commercialization of State Colleges and Universities.



Mission Findings

Medical Team Report

Service Components of the Medical Team

The medical team was divided into seven service components namely, Registration and Vital Signs, Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI), Medical Consultation, Basic Laboratory, Acupuncture, Dental Extraction, and Pharmacy.

Patients for consultation were divided into two groups. Children under five years were managed under IMCI while the aged five and above were referred to medical consultation. Cases received that required further management were referred to the German Doctors Hospitals in Valencia City and Buda. Laboratory services offered were dipstick urinalysis, hemoglobin count, and blood typing. As alternative management for acute and chronic conditions, acupuncture treatment was given. Medicines of this mission came from various donors, one of which is the Committee of German Doctors.

One (1) doctor, eighteen (18) nurses, five (5) nursing students, one (1) pharmacist, and fifteen (15) trained health workers comprised the team.

Boxed story no 1:

No medical help from the government

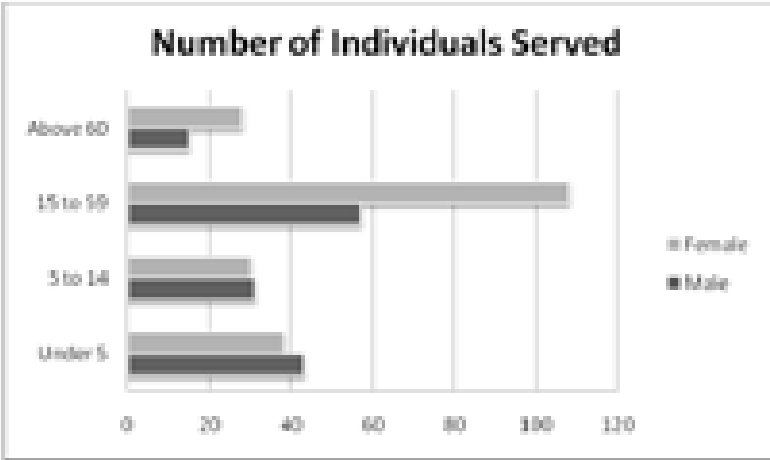
For the immediate victims of the June 14 incident, no assistance was extended by the local government despite their financial incapacity.

Larry de Vera who was shot on his right shoulder and on the left of his torso tried to look for his motorcycle to go to the nearest hospital. Joven Hugos, upon seeing him bleeding, assisted him to the Valencia Sanitarium Hospital Foundation. But the attendant at the information counter advised them that if they intended to file a complaint, they should go to the Bukidnon Provincial Medical Center in Malaybalay City instead. They proceeded to the said hospital and there, he was given an anti-tetanus vaccine and a prescription. At 7:00 in the evening, he went home. Since there was no wound dressing done, he personally took out the slugs from his wounds.

Patients Served by the Medical Mission

This medical mission has served a total of 350 individuals. Majority of the patients were 15 to 59 years old and were female.

During the duration of the camp out protest, the peasant women, particularly the mothers were strained in their multiple duties in their respective households, farms, and immediate community. They were made more vulnerable to health risks due to poor nutrition, physical, emotional and psychological stress and cramped temporary shelter.

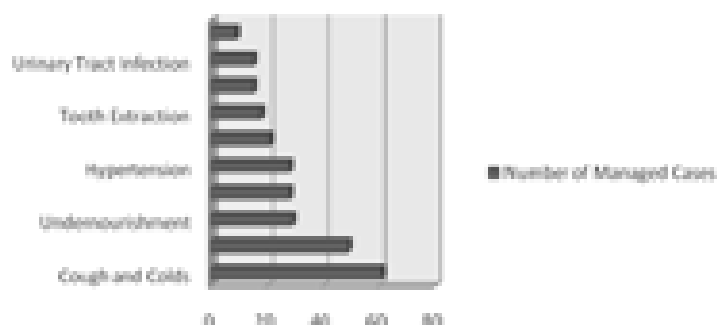


Cases Managed by the Medical Mission

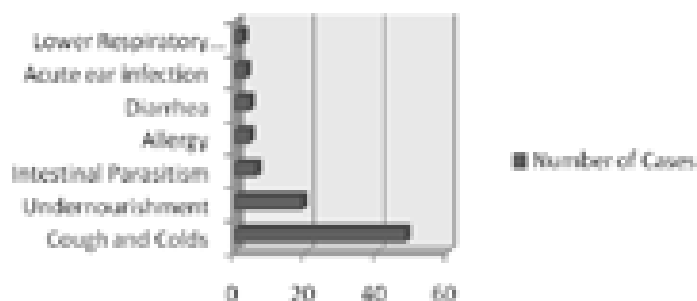
The top six cases managed in this mission were cough and/or colds, muscle and joint pains, undernourishment, hyperacidity, hypertension, and anemia. Poor nutrition, poor sanitation and crowding in the protest camp site, psychological and emotional stress, and lack of primary healthcare services were seen as major causative factors.

Many children were screened to be below normal weight limits and were anemic. Majority of these cases were children who reside in the protest camp with their families.

Number of Managed Cases



Number of Under Five Cases



Boxed story no. 2


Problem of Malnutrition

Linda had desired to only breastfeed her baby. This had long been the practice of women in her farming community. However, in order for her family to survive, Linda had to work in the CMU fields from dawn to dusk. With the long hours of separation from her baby, she had little choice but to give her baby other foods.

As both a landless peasant and a woman, Linda was doubly disadvantaged. For long hours of exhausting work, she earned too little to adequately feed her family. Since the age of seven, her older son has been helping make ends meet by joining her in the farms, even in the dangerous *Operation Tikad* (collective tilling) of the BTL.

While working in the distant fields, Linda would leave her baby in their shanty in the care of her five-year-old daughter, Lingling. Each morning before dawn, she would pound and cook a kilo of rice for the family to eat. Although there was often not enough rice to fill all their stomachs, Linda would always leave a little on the plate, instructing Lingling to feed it to the baby while she was at work.

Even with the older children also working, the family's earnings could scarcely buy enough food. The baby, like the rest of the family, often went hungry. Worsening malnutrition and repeated bouts of cough and colds soon became a vicious cycle. Linda took the sick baby to their traditional healer, who gave her herbal liniments and teas. The baby would usually get better for a few days, but through time Linda's baby grows thinner, a problem that is common in the households of the BTL farmers. Ironically, they who work to produce food could scarcely get enough on their table.



A BTL woman avails
of the medical services
of the Solidarity Mission.
Even well into the years,
she fights alongside
her sons, hoping
that the future generations
would be free
of the harassments
they are subjected to.

Fact Finding Team Report

June 14 violent dispersal of the farmers' Kampuhan

At around 10 o'clock in the morning of June 14, 2011, security guards belonging to CMU'S Chevron Security Agency open fired at the protest camp set outside the gate of CMU by Bukidnon Free Farmers Labor Organization (BUFFALO), Triad Agricultural Manpower Rural Active Workers (TAMARAW) and Landless Inhabitants of Musuan (LIMUS), or the BTL, injuring six of the protesters, and causing untold fear and panic to other women, men and children then manning the protest camp. In addition to their shooting of the protesters, the security guards demolished the entire camp then carted away the protesting farmers' tents, streamers, cooking utensils and megaphones .

The dispersal team, around forty security forces from Chevron Security Agency, was headed by George Caesar Gevan, CMU's Security Services Director, and Nestor Jonasan, Jr., security head. They were all

"On June 14 this year, farmers protesting in front of the CMU were fired at by security guards hired by the university. The violent confrontation was funded by us, by taxpayer's money - state-perpetrated and, moreover, by a government educational institution."

**- Beverly Selim-Musni,
Human Rights Lawyer
and Legal Consultant,
Amihan Northern Mindanao**

armed with caliber .45, M14 and 9mm. The farmers were able to identify the university guards Antonio Pamisa, John Rey Yasar, Henry Faciol and Juvy Pacquiao.

The protesters who sustained multiple gunshot wounds were Abelardo Jarden, Larry de Vera, Gregorio Santillan and Winnie Loable. Jarden and Santillan were both hit on their legs, while de Vera was hit on his right shoulder and left part of his torso. Loable's right eye was severely injured; Jose Benemerito, Jr. sustained multiple abrasions on his left leg, and Marilou Fortin on the upper left part of her chest.

Other protesters, around 40 of them including women and children, were grazed by shrapnel and stone flints.

Of the physical camp, 377 meters of tent materials, large cooking pots, sleeping mats, folding beds, electric wires, sockets and light bulbs, umbrellas, blankets, raincoats, hammocks, flags, streamers, loudspeakers and placards were divested and taken away by CMU's dispersal team. The security guards even took away two sacks and four kilos of rice gathered by the BTL farmers for their modest meals.

Personal testimony of
Gregorio Santillan, Jr.

"At around 7 o'clock in the morning of June 14, 2011, after bringing two of my children to school in Dologon, I dropped by the Kampuhan to check on things. My brother, Herman, told me he received a text message warning us, the BTL, that the CMU guards would demolish our camp that day. I decided to stay on.

At around 10 o'clock in the morning, I saw the guards on board their gray pick-up and yellow multicab speeding along the highway coming towards us. Just about 20 meters away from our camp, some 20 security guards armed with shotguns and .45 quickly alighted from the vehicles and rushed to us, with Nestor Jonasan shouting "*Panggub-a ninyo!*" (Destroy it!).

Five of the guards immediately tore down the tarpaulin tents near me while I tried to wrench it from them. I saw security guards

Pacquiao, Mansia and Pamisa among those who fired their guns at us.

I then felt my right leg go numb. And when I looked at it, I saw blood streaming down my leg. My left leg was also riddled with deep abrasions caused by stone flints flying off the ground when hit by the firing of the security guards. Because of the instant pain that I felt, I walked away slowly from the commotion. Dulfo Albarin and others brought me to Valencia Sanitarium Hospital for treatment. There, I learned that I had three (3) bullets embedded on my leg. I was transferred to Bukidnon Provincial Medical Center in Malayblay City, and I was able to go home three (3) days later.

However, until now, my leg still bears the bullets since I was told by the doctors that the bullets are so deeply embedded that I have to wait until these would surface before any surgery could be undertaken.

We were treated like animals! And to think, the police authorities were then present nearby but they did not do anything to help us.”

The violent June 14 incident is not an isolated case. In more than two (2) decades of struggle, the BTL farmers have experienced sustained harassments by CMU, and have in fact lost three (3) of their members with many others seriously injured in previous shooting incidents.

Over two decades of struggle

Tracing the landholdings of Central Mindanao University, its title for the 3,080 hectares of campus site has been continuously disputed since the university's institution in 1958. Indigenous peoples' communities around the university insist that CMU had claimed part of their ancestral lands and that they were driven out by default due to the land titling processes instituted by the Philippine

government which they hadn't the benefit to understand before.

In 1985, after the lease CMU granted to the Philippine Packing Corporation expired, part of the lands was then leased and rented out for cultivation to some university employees through the Kilusang Sariling Sikap Program. Many of the lessees were previously employed by CMU to manage its rice production project that had then gone bankrupt.

In 1986, even before the farmers could harvest the rice, CMU changed its decision and refused to allow the farmers to continue tilling the land.

In 1988, however, the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) under then President Corazon Aquino came into law.

The farmers organized themselves through BUFFALO (Bukidnon Free Farmers and Agricultural Laborers Organization) and petitioned the government through its Department for Agrarian Reform (DAR) for inclusion of 1,200 hectares of land they were tilling into the program. Poor farmers nearby also decided to come together and apply for lands – an

"There were over a hundred farmers who went to the motor pool along the highway that day to get seeds for their rice fields. The CMU guards - many of them from the PAD-PAO [Philippine Association of Detective and Protective Agency Operators] - barred them from going back to their communities. In the resulting commotion, the guards fired at the farmers, badly injuring many of them and killing my father on the spot. Until now, we have not seen justice for even that just one incident."

– Winnie Loable, BTL Chair and son of slain farmer, Leonardo Loable who died in July 1989



A farmer shows the Certificate of Land Ownership Award released to BTL farmers, canceled barely a year since they received it.

other 1,200 hectares – thus, the TAMARAW (Triad Agricultural Manpower of Rural Active Workers) and LIMUS (Landless Tillers Inhabitants of Musuan) were born. In 1989, the petitions of the three (3) farmers groups – collectively called BTL – were partly approved, and DAR Adjudication Board ordered the distribution of 400 hectares, from the original 2,400 hectares applied for to 252 farmers-petitioners.

However, CMU insisted that it needed the land for experimental farms and other educational purposes and brought the case to the Supreme Court. In 1992, barely a year after the Certificates of Land Ownership Award (CLOAs) were distributed to BTL farmers, these were ORDERED canceled by the Supreme Court in favor of CMU. In the same year, then BTL President, Florentino Macote, Jr. survived an assassination attempt. He was inside his home preparing a meal when an unidentified assailant shot him. A bullet lodged in his face for some time, causing his eye to bleed when he got tired from manual work. Aside from that slay attempt which BTL suspected was executed upon order of CMU, the university's security guards also torched and burned down some 100 homes of the farmers.

When BTL farmers were finally served a writ of demolition in 1999, they bargained for an extension of their land lease for another ten years. The final agreement stipulated an extension of five (5) years only and, more importantly, that the farmers would be evicted only “if the relocation site is ready for occupancy upon review and recommendation of the Task Force” (referring to the Task Force being composed of the presidents of BTL, Maramag Municipal Mayor, then Cong. Juan Miguel Zubiri, Provincial Agrarian Reform Officer of Bukidnon and the CMU president). Until now, no decent relocation site has been offered by CMU, in keeping with the agreement.

The issue of sustainable relocation site has been crucial in the many negotiations between BTL and CMU over



CMU guards block farmers who are heading towards their fields.

the years. BTL maintain that reliance on a third party for their members' relocation site shifts the burden to the farmers. Furthermore, BTL argues that if they will be considered as informal settlers – as the CMU is insisting on – then they demand application of similar provision applied to eviction of informal settlers in urban centers: the provision of adequate resettlement sites and financial assistance.

The first relocation sites offered in 2007 (after another shooting incident in 2007 under then CMU President Mardonio Lao) were situated in the municipality of San Fernando and in Barangay Cabanglasan, Malaybalay City. The areas shown to the farmers were on steep mountain slopes and not suitable for agriculture – the places definitely 'needing additional support to the farmers who may transfer'. Another relocation site offered was in the municipality of Talakag, Bukidnon which was found to be a better area for agricultural production. However, it was only 128 hectares in size, thus, not enough to accommodate the BTL communities. Additionally, other farmers have already laid claim over the area. Given these situation, the BTL members declined the offer because: 1. They did not want to fight among themselves for the 128 hectares and 2. They would not fight with other farmers like them for small land resources while the larger lands are leased by the government to multi-national corporations or monopolized by institutions.

The relocation site issue not settled, the BTL farmers persevered for their right over the farm lands they had already developed through the years. Negotiations have been going on and off between the BTL farmers and cmu administration over the years. The farmers have been occupying the lands inside CMU coping with uncertainty and under constant threat of eviction.

At the start of 2011, with the entry of the new CMU president, Maria Luisa Soliven, BTL farmers were totally banned from cultivating their lands. Due to hunger, the farmers launched *Operation Tikad*, a collective farming un-

dertaken by hundreds of farmers . This was designed to protect them from harassments of CMU security guards. However, despite their number, the BTL farmers were subjected to attacks of CMU's security guards even becoming more violent and daring, clearly emboldened by orders, consent and acquiescence of CMU officials.

Boxed story no. 3:

Aileen Gregorios Palaña

“We were heading to farm in Field 2, in one of our attempts under Operation Tikad. There were around 300 of us including my husband, two of my brothers, and my parents. We met around 20 guards of the Central Mindanao University. Upon reaching the farm, six hand tractors were operated, while part of our group worked on the fields, I was assigned to the group that formed a defense line so the CMU guards would not be able to go near the tilling farmers.

Approximately 30 minutes after work started, Director George Gewan, together with more than 15 other security guards arrived. Among them was also Nestor Jonasan and he pointed at the waist of my husband and accused him of carrying a gun. Edwin raised his shirt and said it wasn't a gun but just a knife he would use to cut the grass.

Despite this, Jonasan and the others started firing at them. BUF-FALO president, Winnie Loable, tried to intervene and asked if they could just talk it out instead of the guards using guns against us, defenseless farmers. But Jonasan didn't listen to him and instead ordered his companions to approach the hand tractors – which they did while continuing to fire at us.

I was bathed in mud from the spray caused by the bullets hitting the field. I was very scared that I was shaking. I fainted and when I regained consciousness I was lying on the cart beside the field we were working on.”

In April 2011, CMU made a Final Proposal to the farmers of BTL stating that with or without a proper relocation site, the farmers shall be removed from their lands in three years. The farmers refused to agree to the proposal, demanding for land distribution, or at least, be allowed to continue leasing the lands. On May 23, 2011, they decided to set up the Kampuhan, a camp-out protest in front of the main gates of the university.

Boxed story no. 4:

Gregorio Santillan

“In April this year, around ten in the morning, my brothers, my father, and I were working on our farm in Purok 3 in Barangay Dologon. Suddenly, ten security guards including Jonasan, Paquiao, Kikay, Geoffer Cagadas, George Gewan, Antonio Pamisa and Henry Faciol arrived. Some were in uniform while some were not, but all of them were armed with a .45 caliber pistol. They looked drunk when they got to us. Jonasan fired his gun once seemingly signaling to the other members to seize the hand tractors my brothers Roque and Herman were using. When the two resisted, they shoved my brothers and loaded the tractors onto their gray pick-up truck.

We filed a blotter at the police station in Maramag the following day but it took two weeks before we were able to get the tractors from the office of the security guards in CMU. This was not only done to us, but to the other members of the BTL as well. So we decided to work by *hunglos* to lessen the risk of being subjected to threats and having our tractors confiscated. We scheduled the farms and synchronized the use of the tractors.

But despite this, still, every time we go to our farms, we are met with similar threats – and even violence – from the guards. Sometimes there would be fifty of them and they would fire at us, the bullets hitting the ground barely a meter from where we would be standing. I am not going to fake bravery and say that it did not scare us. The bullets came so near that one of our companions, one time, fainted.

But we can only take so much. Despite our fears, in fact, to overcome the fear we constantly suffer from these harassments, we decided to set up a *kampuhan* in front of the main gate of CMU.”

Continued Harassment

Even after June 14, 2011, the harassments continued, the guards emboldened by CMU administration's overt support. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon of June 14, 2011, Antonio Pamisa, one of CMU's guards, hit with his motorcycle the road sign where BTL member, Joel Caro, was sitting. Pamisa then accelerated the motorcycle and shouted at Caro, "*Pahawa diha!*" (Get out of the way!). Another BTL member, Lewelin Santillan, witnessing the incident, approached the two. Pamisa ordered them to move their tents 50 meters from the gate, which would then be already on the national highway.

Pamisa got off his motorcycle and lifted his shirt, showing the gun tucked he was carrying and told Santillan, "*Unahon ta ka. Iapil ta ka sa akong mga kaso.*" (I'll take you first. I will include you in my cases). Another CMU guard came and guided Pamisa away. Barely two minutes later, Pamisa came out again on his motorcycle, and circled the Kampuhan, taunting the farmers, before going away.

Bleeding Lands

The lands the Central Mindanao University lays claim to have been questioned since the institution was relocated to the area in 1958. Then called the Mindanao Agricultural College, it was granted by President Carlos Garcia 3,401 hectares.¹ Apparently, this was disputed and in 1974, 321.9 hectares were given to legitimate claimants.² During these years, indigenous peoples had no law to back their claims to their ancestral domains and their existence in the territory that had been handed over to CMU was not recognized.

1. www.cmu.edu.ph

2. Ibid



Kilusang Magb
Pilipinas

BUKIDNON
FARMERS ARE
THE VICTIMS

GR
B

Gregorio Santillan shows
his leg wound acquired
during the June 14, 2011
dispersal of the Kampuhan.

In 1992, a cadastral survey showed the university to have occupied more than the 3,080 hectares in its title. The excess was declared to be ‘tribal reservation’, Kibalagon, the area, a part of a watershed. However, the university ‘swapped’ it for a lowland area because it was getting irrigation from the watershed despite the law on ancestral domains CMU then claimed that the swapped lowland area was sold by the Lumads (indigenous peoples) mostly to CMU personnel. Despite the protests of the Lumads – they maintain that there were no legal sales done – and again, the law which prohibits the sale of ancestral domains, CMU, headed by then vice-president Mardonio Lao, carried out demolitions. The Lumad group headed by Bae Estrella Llacuna was claiming 916 hectares.³

The fight of the Lumads continued, with many of their communities gaining knowledge of their rights to their ancestral lands. In 2003, with the Presidential Proclamation 310 of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, the Talaandig community headed by Bae Alma Binayao was granted 670 hectares. Again, this was opposed by the university and the Supreme Court declared the Proclamation null and void.

While CMU was pushing the Lumads out of their lands, at this time, they were leasing large parts of the university to private businesses. One of the lessees was the Sto. Rosario Farms which was leased 250 hectares.⁴ A land lease of 400 hectares to the RGR Agry-Ventures and another 600 hectares to the Bukidnon Resources Company, Inc. were also approved in principle by the CMU Board of Regents in 1997.⁵

3. Lozano, Joey R. B. “School Syndicate forcing our ‘lumads’ from Mindanao lands.” *Philippine Daily Inquirer* 1 March 2005

4. Lozano, Joey R. B. “School Syndicate forcing our ‘lumads’ from Mindanao lands.” *Philippine Daily Inquirer* 1 March 2005

5. Quijano, Ilang ilang. “Braving Bullets; Central Mindanao farmers struggle for genuine land reform” *Speak Out* July 2007

Other lessees in the university's campus are the Bukidnon Sugar Company, 90 hectares, and a Taiwanese company renting 200 hectares of irrigated farmland.⁶

6. Pinsoy, Rolando "State U in Bukidnon Continues Crackdown vs Student Activists" Bulatlat 3-9 August 2003 <<http://www.bulatlat.com>>

Accountability

The fact finding team of the Hunglos Solidarity Mission gathered sworn statements of direct witnesses and victims which revealed that the cases of human rights violations against the BTL farmers are CMU-sponsored attacks on the farmers' democratic right to land and life.

The witnesses who recalled four major incidents because of the severity of the human rights violations that occurred May 23, June 3, June 14 and June 15, 2010, repeatedly involved security guards of Chevron Security and Investigation Agency, among them, Nestor Jonasan Jr., George Gewan, Juvy Pacquiao, Rey "Kikay" Pevida, Geof-fer Cagadas, Henry Faciol, Antonio Pamisa, Evan Andoy, Casimiro Pojas, John Rey Yasar, Teban Abanilla, Roldan Rolida, and a certain Patino and Mancia. They perpetrated cases of threats, harassments and intimidations, strafings and frustrated killings, and divestment and destruction of properties of the BTL farmers.

The number of human rights violations documented are alarming. Hunglos maintains these have been committed by CMU'S Chevron security guards with impunity, without fear of sanction as they acted with complicity or orders

"If they can do this to you in full view of the public, how much more if when they are in the field?"

**- Beverly Selim-Musni,
Human Rights Lawyer
and Legal Consultant,
Amihan Northern Mindanao**

of their immediate superiors, the officers of Central Mindanao University namely DR. MARIA LUISA R. SOLIVEN, President, DR. ANTHONY M. PENASO, DR. RICARDO G. VILLAR ug DR.LUZVIMINDA SIMBORIO, Vice-Presidents, PROF. REYNALDO G. JUAN, SAP-BMRDO, and Directors

PROF. PEDRO TAGANAHAN, DR. MARIA ESTELA B. DETALLA, DR. EMMANUEL T. BALTAZAR, DR. PERFECTO BOJO, DR. DENIS A. TAN, MR. GEORGE CAESAR B. GEWAN, DR. ANGELA GRACE T. BRUNO, DR. JUDITH T. INTONG, DR. TERESITA D. TAGANAHAN, DR. JOY M. JAMAGO, ENGR. ROY V. AGAYANI, DR. JOSE A. ESCARLOS and MR. BOBBY D. VISAYAN, University Board Secretary.

The systematic attacks committed by the Chevron Security guards were done in the course of their implementing the order of CMU administration of preventing the BTL farmers from entering and tilling their farms. They were on collective tilling dubbed as Operation Tikad, working in large groups, thinking they would be safer in doing so. The violent incidents afterwards proved the brutality of CMU, determined to drive the farmers away at all cost.

Complaints have been filed before the police authorities of Maramag, Bukidnon by the victims. However, the latter fell short in conducting investigations, arrest and prosecution of identified perpetrators. The local and national government units remain blind and deaf to the problems raised by the farmers.

The recent incidents are nothing new to the farmers who have been witnesses to history of violence of CMU for already more than a decade. Sixteen (16) farmers were severely wounded while one, Leonardo Loable, died on the spot in a shooting incident by CMU guards, then under PADPAO security agency, last July 5, 1989. The CMU administration did not stop there. It has defended the acts of the security guards and justified the continuous attacks against BTL's human rights by calling the farmers squatters and trespassers.

Of the incidents that occurred before, not a single perpetrator was prosecuted. For the violent attacks in 2011, the BTL farmers have courageously brought their grievances before the Office of the Ombudsman to seek justice, and for relief.

Worse, CMU demonizes the struggle of the farmers as detrimental to the education of the students. While CMU claims that the lands occupied by the BTL farmers are to be used for educational purposes, CMU has been leasing hectares of lands to other local and foreign corporations for agribusiness purposes.

More importantly, Dr. Anthony M. Penaso, CMU Vice President for Academic Affairs, admitted during the dialogue with the Hunglos convenors on June 23, 2011 that there are pending formal intents to lease from agricultural corporations such as DAVCO and Del Monte Philippines, among others.

Accommodating current leases and entertaining such intents to lease run counter to its charter, that CMU's lands provided for by the state are intended for school sites and related educational purposes.

Significantly, CMU is misleading the public all these years by using the Supreme Court Decision in 1992 as a platform in legitimizing its claim over the contested lands. But, that Supreme Court decision clearly stipulates that the 400 hectares of lands are:

“xxx exempt from coverage under Section 10 of R.A. 6657 (CARP) because the lands are actually, directly and exclusively used and found to be necessary for school site and campus, including experimental farm stations for educational purposes, and for establishing seed and seedling research and pilot production centers.”⁷

For such open breach by CMU of its Charter, these 400 hectares of lands should be reverted back to state ownership then distributed to the BTL farmers through agrarian reform.

The chances of the national and local governments grant-

7. Supreme Court Reports Annotated, 'Central Mindanao University vs. Department of Agrarian Reform Adjudication Board,' p99, Vol. 215, October 22, 1992

ing the farmers the appropriate relocation remain ambiguous.

There has been no genuine and sincere agrarian reform program of the state that will genuinely address the land problem among many of the farmers, particularly the BTL farmers. CARP has only aggravated the problem of land dispute in CMU by giving out CLOAs only to be revoked by the Supreme Court in 1992.



“The women united will never be defeated!” Members of the BTL Women’s Association augment each other’s fighting spirit, moving onwards despite the continuing violence against them and their families.



Mission Statement

HUNGLOS: Solidarity Mission to the Struggle of Bukidnon Peasants

*“Land is life... We do not just defend it,
We fight for it so that we can live with dignity.”
–BTL farmers*

We are the members of HUNGLOS: Solidarity Mission to the Struggle of Peasants in Bukidnon. We are students, health workers, lawyers, church people, and peasants representing national, international and local people's organizations. We visited the farmers belonging to BTL who are camping out at the gate of Central Mindanao University and their communities to listen to their stories of struggle and hope, conduct medical mission and relief operation.

We collectively raise our voice and add to the resounding call of the peasants for land that is being taken away from them. We affirm their legitimate and moral claim for land that they have long been tilling and from its fruit they are able to live even in the modest way. We are one in their dreams to live with pride and dignity, to enjoy a just economic order of society, to avail and have access to basic and social services and a life free from the threat of bullets and armed might.

We believe that the heart of any educational institution must live-out the principles and practice of social justice. We are alarmed that CMU as a center for education and formation of values of the youth is promoting a teaching that contradicts to the intention of social justice. By denying the farmers of the land that is very much attached to their lives, the CMU becomes a despotic landlord rather than an educational institution.

Out of the more than 3,000 hectares, the farmers are just asking for 400 hectares to be shared among the 800 families.

We are concerned that CMU is using the need for educational purpose as a justification of its act. The poor farmers' claim for land and livelihood must not be sacrificed for this end purpose of the university. It must be realized that poor farmers themselves have been neglected for the longest time and their children are not even able to finish schooling. The national government must allocate bigger budget for education especially to state universities like CMU. Making the peasants landless for the purpose of education undermines the teaching of social justice. The fascist attack on the unarmed protesters not only violates the farmers' rights but ultimately undermines the very concept of fundamental rights and freedoms. Ironically, this comes from an education institution which is supposed to exemplify to its students and to its immediate community the values of good governance.

We are further disturbed that the CMU is resorting to unjustifiable harassments. It is hiring security guards under the Chevron agency to intimidate the peasants, and employ grave threats against peasants whose only means to survive is by tilling the land. We condemn the recent indiscriminate firing against peasants whose democratic right for assembly and freedom of expression was violated. We likewise condemn the continuous violence being em-

ployed by the CMU Chevron guards among peasants who are doing their productive farming in their fields.

We denounce the CMU's scheme of depriving the peasants of their rights is purposely to favor a contract to a private corporation, the DAVCO and Del Monte Philippines, for the expansion of their pineapple and banana plantations.

Without doubt, the failure of the government to implement genuine agrarian reform is the root of the land dispute. Lives have been sacrificed and the generational struggle continuous. The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program did not resolve the problem of landlessness of BTL. It aggravates the burden of peasant as it only gives them false hope .

As a mission in solidarity with the BTL, we:

- Honor the struggle of BTL peasants for land. We uphold and support their just demands to own the piece of land that they have nurtured for decades. We call upon the CMU to, for humanitarian consideration and in view of the government's agrarian reform program, respect the peasants' right to land and life over profits .
- Demand for the removal of CMU President Ma. Luisa Soliven for the bloody June 14 dispersal of the farmers' picket lines, and for other atrocities committed this year against the farmers. We demand for the immediate termination of the services of Chevron Security agency, and make CMU accountable for the atrocities done against the peasants.
- Call on the government to address the agrarian unrest at CMU by way of implementing genuine agrarian reform that will award ultimately titles of ownership to the BTL farmers. We invoke President Aquino III's personal and his government's sense of history and social

justice by taking notice and adherence to the 1971 Cadastral Court Decision allotting 321.9 hectares of land to the landless farmers for humanitarian reasons and in pursuit of the government's agrarian reform program. We are also calling on the national government to immediately enact the House Bill # 374 or the Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill (GARB).

- Call on the different sectors to share their solidarity support to the BTL peasants and make their struggle and hope be known across the country and the global community.

June 24, 2011

Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines

Organizations represented in the Mission:

Office of Congressman Rafael Mariano
of Anakpawis Partylist
AMIHAN Northern Mindanao
Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP)
Ecumenical Bishops Forum (EBF)
Promotion of Church People's Response (PCPR)
Barug Katungod Mindanao
KARAPATAN Alliance for the Advancement
of People's Rights
Task Force BTL
Asia Pacific Women Forum
in Law and Development (APWLD)
Asian Rural Women's Coalition (AWRC)
Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP)
Health Alliance for Human Rights (HAHR)
Community-based Health Services (CBHS)
Bayan Muna Partylist
Anakpawis Partylist
Gabriela
League of Filipino Students (Iligan City and Marawi)
Kabataan Partylist (Cagayan de Oro and Pagadian Cities)

Kalumbay Regional Lumad Organization
Madagway Babaeyon
Union of People's Lawyers in Mindanao (UPLM)
Sisters Association in Mindanao (SAMIN)
STI Students
Alagad sa Maayong Panglawas (ALAMAPA)
Union of of Communication Studies Studen (UNICA)
Mindanao State University
STAND-MSU-IIT
STAND-Iligan Computer Institute
United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP)
Philippine Independent Church (PIC)
Kadamay Urban Poor Organization
Kapatirang Simbahan para sa Bayan (KASIMBAYAN)

**Students stage a die-in protest
in front of the Central
Mindanao University
in support of the BTL
farmers' struggle**



Afterword

Afterword

After achieving a temporary status quo when the CMU Board of Regents allowed the BTL farmers to till for six more months, the farmers received an invitation to join the 26th Regular Session of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan (SP or Provincial Council) of Bukidnon.

According to the letter, it was extended by Hon. Jay S. Albarece, chairman of the Committee on Laws, and Peace and Order. It further states that the purpose of the session was to discuss the reports that CMU Director of Security Services, George Ceasar B. Gewan, submitted to CMU President, Maria Luisa Soliven and copy furnished the SP.

The reports accused the BTL farmers of (1) forcible intrusions and (2) unruly mass actions. The farmers decline the invitation, stating that they refuse to have their agricultural struggle brought down to a mere issue of peace and order wherein they have become the offenders. They were outraged that they, who had been fired at, harassed, and threatened now have become the threat to security.

Also of late, on August 4, 2011, 16 armed men entered the BTL communities without informing the Village Leaders of their plans. They reportedly introduced themselves as members of the Regional Police Intelligence, looking for a certain Commander Lawin. Again, the community was alarmed by this, wary that this incident would be made a premise of future plans to harass them. They fear that should there be another shooting incident, the CMU hired men – guards, police or military – could argue that they encountered rebels and had engaged in combat with them. The BTL farmers maintain that there were no rebels among them, that this is just another ploy of the CMU, and even the government, to curtail their right to till their

lands.

Personnel from the Davao Agricultural Ventures Corporation (DAVCO) are now also attempting to talk to BTL members, dissuading them from continuing their fight.

Adding to the pressure the CMU is putting on the farmers, the university has been spreading discriminatory statements against the BTL children enrolled in CMU. To avoid harassments, they were forced to change their address, denying that they are part of the BTL community.



BTL Chair Wennie Loable
earlier feared of losing
his right eye sight
after being injured
on June 14.

Annexes

**Resolution
for a Congressional
Investigation
on the Violent Dispersal
of the BTL Kampuhan**

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

FIFTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 1418



INTRODUCED BY ANAKPAWIS PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVE
RAFAEL V. MARLANO

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE REPORTED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS COMMITTED BY SECURITY PERSONNEL OF CENTRAL MINDANAO UNIVERSITY (CMU), ELEMENTS OF CIVILIAN ARMED FORCES GEOGRAPHICAL UNIT (CAFGU) AND MEMBERS OF PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE AGAINST FARMERS BELONGING TO BUKIDNON FREE FARMERS AND AGRICULTURAL LABORERS ASSOCIATION (BUFFALO), TRAD AGRICULTURAL MANPOWER OF RURAL ACTIVE WORKERS (TAMARAW) AND LANDLESS TILLERS INHABITANTS OF MUSUAN (LMUSU)

WHEREAS, it was reported that in the morning of May 23, 2011, Rosendo Hilado was working on his farm in Purok 19, Begg, Dologan, Maramag, Misamis Oriental when two (2) security guards of Central Mindanao University (CMU) passed by his house. Later, Alma Hilado, wife of Rosendo, heard firing of guns and then saw her husband being chased by the aforesaid security guards. The guns were pointed at Rosendo's direction;

WHEREAS, in another incident, while Rosendo was plowing his farm, security personnel of Central Mindanao University (CMU) fired their guns, armaline and shotgun, at him. Later, the security personnel confiscated his tractor;

WHEREAS, the security personnel also dragged Rosendo into a Toyota vehicle owned by the Central Mindanao University (CMU). The vehicle was identified as property of the university because of the presence in the area of Central Mindanao University (CMU) Chief Security George Caesar Geron and Security Team Leader Nestor Borrasan. Those who harassed Rosendo were security guards Saldivar, Lagway, Pedida, Solon, Maculao and three (3) unidentified men. The aforesaid men were armed with armaline and .45 caliber pistols.

WHEREAS, Rosendo and his wife are known to be active members of Landless Tillers Inhabitants of Musuan (LMUSU);

WHEREAS, on May 28, 2011, farmers belonging to Bukidnon Free Farmers and Agricultural Laborers Association (BUFFALO), Trad

Agricultural Managers of Rural Action Workers (TAMARAN) and Landless Tillers Initiatives of Marikina (LINTI) were using their farms when eighteen (18) armed men, known to be security guards of Central Mindanao University (CMU) approached them. The security guards told the farmers to stop cultivating the land and stated that there is no threat of Sugrenas (SUG) armed division allowing them to start cultivating the land.

WHEREAS, in the afternoon of that same day, the farmers were surprised to see, once in two, three (3) armed men entering the land that they are cultivating. The armed men went in two (2) groups; one came from Field 1 and the other from Field 2. Two (2) of them went to fill their gun. Witnesses mentioned that some of the armed men were members of the Philippine Forest Guard Force (PFGF) but no other status. There were also armed (7) members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) who were about forty (40) meters away from the area. The latter were also in full battle gear.

WHEREAS, on June 3, 2011, it was reported that more than fifty (50) security guards, security guards of Central Mindanao University (CMU) and members of Civilian Armed Forces Organizational Unit (CAFOU) had infiltrated in the division of the farmers using the "Operation Tidal". The armed men also confiscated the farm tools of the farmers.

WHEREAS, while negotiating between the Central Mindanao University (CMU) administrators and the farmers are being held, the farmers launched "Operation Tidal". "Operation Tidal" is the term used for the intensive tilling of land within the Central Mindanao University (CMU) by farmers belonging to Farmers Free Farmers and Agricultural Laborers Association (MFFALO), Total Agricultural Managers of Rural Action Workers (TAMARAN) and Landless Tillers Initiatives of Marikina (LINTI). "Operation Tidal" was launched when the farmers received a letter from the President of Central Mindanao University (CMU) Mr. Isaac Indares prohibiting them from further cultivating their land until the conclusion of a new Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

WHEREAS, consistent with the launching of "Operation Tidal" is the staging of farmers' campaign in favor of the university. The campaign started as "Campaign on Sugrenas" was staged to attract to the Central Mindanao University (CMU) administrators that the farmers will partake their land. The land should be awarded to them, and to stoppage about stop.

WHEREAS, on June 14, 2011, the camp-out organized by the farmers in favor of the Central Mindanao University (CMU) was threatened by its security guards. About thirty (30) security guards headed by Police Platoon infiltrated in the farmers' farms. Some farmers were also injured. As a result of the incident, Jose Domestico and Martin Fortin were arrested. Mahabes Jardon, Bengala Lucille and Larte de Vera were also arrested while Wilson Lucido was struck in the eye by some Sugrenas and in danger of losing his sight.

WHEREAS, since the launching of "Operation Tidal", farmers belonging to Farmers Free Farmers and Agricultural Laborers

Agreement (MIRFAA), Third Agricultural Program of Rural Areas Workers (TAMARAW) and Landless Third Settlement of Mexico (TMSLTS) were subjected to harassment of the Mexican government of General Francisco Madero (CMG).

WIERZAL, the agreement between the Central Mexican University (CMU) administration and the Mexican government (the terms of land rights, the agreement that the farmers have been occupying and using for a long time. The Third Party which was involved in this was the union. From 1902 a First Committee in 1902 was the union. The union agreed to enter the administration and process, in the Third Party First Committee meeting, the Central Mexican University (CMU) administration proposed that the farmers will continue using the land for a period of 10 years. If more is necessary in 1911. The type of contract is temporary, non-transferable and there is no payment, no education. The farmers have proposed that the contract should be for a period of 10 years, non-transferable but there is a provision for extension by 10 years. They also proposed that the contract be renewable. There was failure to reach a written agreement at the Third Party First Committee. At this meeting, it was decided that the Central Mexican University (CMU) administration's proposal is that the farmers proposed is not yet final because the farmers are still open for agreement. The Presiding Officer at this meeting also declared that the First Committee will submit two (2) proposals to the Third Party which shall decide what is best for both parties.

WIERZAL, the farmers also alleged that the government administration wanted to enter them from the land so that they can exploit their property, police forces and non-farmers but in fact CMU members will only pass up for the extension of property and farming plantations of Santa Veracruz Corporation (SANCOR). It was alleged that Santa Veracruz Corporation (SANCOR) is interested in using the land.

WIERZAL, the farmers following the 1902 Rural Credit Municipal University (CMU) were subject beneficiaries of Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) and were given certificates of Land Ownership (CLOAs). However, in 1902, the Agrarian Court made a ruling withdrawing the land of the almost entirely from the ownership of Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

WIERZAL, after the Agrarian Court made the ruling, farmers belonging to National Free Farmers and Agricultural Workers Association (MIRFAA), Third Agricultural Program of Rural Areas Workers (TAMARAW) and Landless Third Settlement of Mexico (TMSLTS) were violating their level of agreement with the government of Madero. In 1902, the CMU entered into an agreement with the government of Madero (CMG) administration and

WIERZAL, the farmers agree voluntary surrender against the farmers on one side and authorities on other and their families but will also need to agreement of their union of landless, non-farmers, beneficiaries of Comprehensive and national credit services.

**NOTE: THEREFORE, AS IT RESULTS AS IT IS HEREBY
REMOVED.** But the Committee on Human Rights conduct an inquiry
in all of violations in the reported human rights violations committed
in security personnel of Central Intelligence Directorate (CID), elements of
Central Armed Forces Commandment Unit (CAFU) and members of the
National Armed Force (NAF) against persons belonging to National
For Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Association (NFFAL), Trade
Associations, Members of Rural Justice Society (RJS) and families
these members of Human Rights.

Admitted,


RAFAEL V. MANTADO

Current Land Use Map of Central Mindanao University

CURRENT LAND USE MAP

ALFRED RICHARDS UNIVERSITY
STRADE, BRISBANE



- LEGEND**
- 1. BUILT-UP AREA
 - 2. OPEN SPACE
 - 3. OPEN SPACE (PARKS)
 - 4. OPEN SPACE (WOODLAND)
 - 5. OPEN SPACE (WATER)
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Petition On-Line

Support to Peasant Women, Asserting Right to Life and Lands in Central Mindanao, Philippines

Petition Letter

His Excellency Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III
President of the Philippines
Malacañang Palace, Metro Manila

Dear President Aquino:

We are profoundly disturbed by the reported conduct of the Central Mindanao University (CMU), through President Maria Luisa R. Soliven, in prohibiting the farmers-members of Buffalo-Tamaraw-Limus (BTL) to continue tilling their farm-lots inside the CMU premises at Dologon, Maramag, Bukidnon.

Some 800 families of the BTL farmers tilling in good faith about 400 hectares out of the 3,080 state-owned CMU agricultural lands face eviction and its inevitable consequence, hunger.

While last of BTL's series of lease agreement with CMU expired in 2007, we stand with the farmers on their position that unless appropriate relocation site is provided to them by the local government unit of Bukidnon, they should not be driven out from their farms inside the CMU premises.

We have known that the initiatives of the Provincial Government of Bukidnon, represented by then governor and now vice-governor Jose Maria Zubiri, together with the 3rd Congressional District of Bukidnon, represented by then congressman and now senator Juan Miguel Zubiri, of providing relocation sites at the municipalities of Talakag and San Fernando for the BTL farmers have by

far failed because the relocation sites are situated at the mountainous areas, the lands not suitable to agriculture and with persistent peace and order problems.

We are alarmed by reports of human rights violations perpetrated by the Chevron Security agency hired by the CMU and by the paramilitary elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' 23rd Infantry Battalion as means of forcing the BTL farmers to leave the premises.

We condemn the assault on the picket line on June 14, 2011, resulting to seriously wounding three farmers. We are, therefore, tagging the CMU President, Maria Luisa R. Soliven, as criminally liable.

We seek for swift and impartial investigation and appropriate actions from the Philippines' Department of Justice, Commission of Human Rights, Committee for Human Rights of the House of Representatives and Committee for Human Rights of the Philippines Senate, and from independent national and international human rights organizations over reports of sustained harassments against the farmers and their families, and unlawful confiscation of their farm implements by the CMU guards. We look forward to an end of these human rights violations, and those responsible duly held accountable therefore.

The BTL farmers have been cultivating their lands since 1986 and have long struggled for ownership of said lands for the same period. They were even awarded Certificate of Land Ownership Awards (CLOAs) as beneficiaries of the Republic Act 6657, or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) under the government of your esteemed mother, Mrs. Corazon C. Aquino. Sadly, the Supreme Court divested the BTL farmers of their CLOAs in 1992 and exempted the CMU from CARP, in favor of CMU's Income Enhancement Program aimed at leasing its lands to multinational corporations (MNCs) as means to generate revenues and to offset the government's lack of budget for state colleges and universities.

We find no justification or urgent reason for CMU to evict immediately the BTL farmers from the lands they have been tilling for almost 25 years reckoned from 1986. Certainly, CMU's reasons for converting the same to 'fish ponds, piggery and poultry' educational enterprise could never be accepted as supreme over the farmers' right to life and their right to till the land.

Mr. President, we hope that your government consider with sincerity the gravity of the case of the BTL farmers, and action be taken promptly to arrive at the just resolution of the CMU land dispute with lasting effects. We call on your government to address the agrarian unrest at CMU by way of implementing genuine agrarian reform that will award ultimately titles of ownership to the BTL farmers. We invoke on your personal and your government's sense of history and social justice by taking notice and adherence to the 1971 Cadastral Court Decision allotting 321.9 hectares of land to the landless farmers for humanitarian reasons and in pursuit of the government's agrarian reform program.

Pending resolution of the BTL's claim for ownership of lands pursuant to the agrarian reform law, we urge the Philippine government to direct CMU administration to enter into a 50-year lease contract, taking into consideration the period covered by the past lease agreements beginning in 1992, and extendable for another 50 years in the same manner that the Philippine government has been allowing multi-national corporations to lease public lands for the same period. Such arrangement will allow peace and order to prevail inside the contested CMU areas.

Thank you very much.

Very truly yours,

**1. Sr. Mary Francis Añover, RSM (Philippines,
Rural Missionaries of the Philippines)**

2. Yuwen Abela (Philippines, Karatula)
3. Jeffry Acaba (Philippines, Amnesty International Philippines)
4. Fleur Adcock (Australia)
5. Albert Aguilar (Philippines, First Quarter Storm Movement)
6. Ayodele Akele (Nigeria, Labour, Health and Human Rights Development Centre)
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8. Badrul Alam (Bangladesh, Bangladesh Krishok Federation)
9. Alamira Rasmia Nafisa Alonto (Saudi Arabia)
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13. Edgar Arbozo (Philippines, Antipolo Peoples' Congress (APC) or Kongreso ng mga Mamamayan ng Antipolo)
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15. Asian Pacific Resource & Research Centre For Women ARROW (Malaysia)
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17. Esther C Bangcawayan (Hong Kong, Pinatud A Saleng ti Umili)
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19. Balram Banskota (Nepal)
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22. Fernando Bejarano G (Mexico, Pesticide Action Network in Mexico)
23. Bae Adelfa Belayong (Philippines, Madagway Babaeyon)
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for Native Title & Reconciliation)
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PINAY Canada)
28. Clare Borinski (Ireland)
29. Kim Brewster (Ireland)
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Asian Rural Women's Coalition)
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32. Fr. Dionito Cabillas (Philippines,
Iglesia Filipina Independiente)
33. Bishop Felixberto Calang (Philippines,
Initiatives for Peace in Mindanao)
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MIGRANTE-Canada)
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PINAY-Filipino Women's Organization
in Quebec, Canada)

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56. Eugenie Depatie-Pelletier (Canada, Migrant Workers Rights – Canada)
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71. Lian Marie Gallardo (Philippines)
72. Sabela Gayo (Indonesia, Gayonese Youth Association)
73. Thet Gloria (Germany, AMEN)

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Alliance of Health Workers)
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Vikalpani National Women's Federation)
83. Fernando Hicap (Philippines, Pamalakaya)
84. Froi Hizon (Philippines, CEGP)
85. Sy Ho Van (Vietnam, Center of Research
and Assistance for Development Projects)
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Foundation of Reclaiming Rural Agriculture
and Food Sovereignty Action)
95. Tomoko Kashiwazaki (Thailand,
Asia Pacific Forum on Women,
Law and Development)
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Future In Our Hands Development Fund)
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League of Filipino Students)
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Asia Pacific Forum on Women,
Law and Development)
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Association Congolaise d'Education
et de Prévention contre les Maladies
et la Drogue)
111. Athing Lungharwo (India,
Naga peoples movement for human rights)
112. Isabel Macasieb (Philippines,
Sangguniang Kabataan)
113. Maru Maesa (Canada, Migrant Canada)
114. Lornito Jr., Mahinay (Philippines,
Mindanao State University
Supreme Student Government)
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Peoples Partner for Development
and Democracy)
116. JPaul Manzanilla (Philippines,
University of the Philippines, Manila)
117. Rafael V. Mariano (Philippines,
Anakpawis Party-List)
118. April Argen Pat Marzon (Philippines,
Amihan Northern Mindanao Region)
119. Ashley Mathew (Canada)
120. Greg McDonald (United States of America)
121. Don Mendez (Philippines,
MAKABAYANG MALILIIT NA NEGOSYANTE)

NG PILIPINAS)

122. Matthew Mendoza (Saudi Arabia,
KGS MIGRANTE)
123. John Ryan Mendoza, RN (Philippines,
Community-Based Health Association
Northern Mindanao)
124. Norly Grace Mercado (Philippines,
Bank Information Center)
125. Denise Mijares (Philippines)
126. Sandra Miller (Australia)
127. Pastor Ray Minniecon (Australia,
Bunji Consultancies)
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Movement Against All Forms
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Vikalpani National Women's Federation)
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ng Kabataan sa Baguio, Alliance of Concerned
Students)
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ANAKPAWIS PAL CHAPTER NCR)

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Kalipunan ng mga Katutubong Mamamayan
ng Pilipinas)
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UNIFIL-MIGRANTE-Hong Kong)
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IBON Foundation)
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Initiatives:Women In Development)
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KARATULA)
158. Kamlavally R (Malaysia, Pesticide
Action Network Asia Pacific)
159. Cy Rago (Netherlands)
160. Hommiza Mimi Raman (India, NSUD)
161. Keshia Redoble (Philippines, STAND-IIT)
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Kabataan Consortium, Inc.)
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Cagayan de Oro Press Club)
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University of the Philippines-Cebu)
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168. Rosel Serrano (Philippines)
169. Reena Shadaan (Canada)
170. Chanda Shahahni (Philippines,
Diliman Diary)
171. Ariel Bernard Silverio (Philippines,
Junior Philippine Society
of Mechanical Engineering)

172. Kay Singh (Canada, School Board)
173. Andrew Smith (United States of America)
174. Sr. Maria Famita Somogod, MSM
(Philippines, RURAL MISSIONARIES
OF THE PHILIPPINES Northern Mindanao
Sub-Region)
175. Sr. Maria Famita Somogod, MSM
(Philippines, RURAL MISSIONARIES
OF THE PHILIPPINES Northern Mindanao
Sub-Region)
177. Connie Sorio (Canada)
178. Liva Sreedharan (Malaysia, Tenaganita)
179. Lacey Strong (United States of America)
180. Juland Suazo (Philippines,
Panalipdan-SMR Environmental Rights
Network)
181. Judy Taguiwalo (Philippines,
University of the Philippines)
182. Jingo Tamayao (Philippines, PAN AP)
183. Barbara Tanne (Papua New Guinea,
Leitana Nehan Women's Development
Agency)
184. Jun Tellez (Hong Kong,
Mission for Migrant Workers)
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Katribu Partylist)
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Likha Filipino Migrants' Cultural
Organization)
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195. Maria Villazón (Spain,
Ministry of Education – Spain)
196. Gary Ben Villocino (Philippines,

Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas – NMR)

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- 198. Meriel Watts (New Zealand)**
- 199. Andrew Whitmore (United Kingdom)**
- 200. Brian Wyatt (Australia)**
- 201. Teharuru Yannick (Polynesia,
Conseil National des Droits des Peuples
Autochtones des Cinq Archipels Maohi
du Royaume de Tahiti et)**
- 202. Mister Yu (Bahamas)**
- 203. Atty. Carlos Isagani Zarate (Philippines,
Union of Peoples' Lawyers in Mindanao)**

Copy Furnished:

Hon. Loretta Ann Rosales
Chairperson, Commission on Human Rights
SAAC Building, Commonwealth Avenue
UP Complex, Diliman, Quezon City

Atty. Virgilio R. Delos Reyes
Secretary, Department of Agrarian Reform
Elliptical Road, Diliman, Quezon City

Senator Jose Ma. R. Zubiri III
Senate of the Philippines

Gov. Alex Calingasan
Province of Bukidnon
Malaybalay City

Vice Gov. Jose Ma. R. Zubiri
Province of Bukidnon
Malaybalay City

Maria Luisa R. Soliven
President, Central Mindanao University
University Town, Musuan, Bukidnon, Philippines

**AMIHAN
Northern Mindanao
Statement:
Defend Agrarian Rights,
Uphold Human Rights
and Fundamental
Freedoms!**

14 June 2011

The administration of Pres. Benigno Aquino III seriously puts into doubt the respect for human rights of the farmers in the country. Aquino III is heir to the vast Hacienda Luisita Incorporated landholdings where, in 2004, 14 farmer leaders were massacred in front of its gates for protesting a bogus land distribution scheme that virtually dodges coverage from former President Corazon Aquino's agrarian reform program. The now infamous Hacienda Luisita Massacre continues to hound the Aquino presidency.

The neglect of the plights of the farmers is becoming a central human rights issue under the present administration, further illustrated by this new brutal incident in Central Mindanao.

We, the members of AMIHAN Northern Mindanao, a coalition of 43 community-based organizations of peasant women in the Region, deeply revile the acts of violence committed by the Security Guards under Chevron Security Agency against the peaceful protest of the Buffalo-Tamaraw-Limus (Bukidnon Free Farmers and Agricultural Laborers Association Triad Agricultural Manpower of Rural Active Workers Landless Tillers Inhabitants of Musuan) on June 14, 2011.

We condemn the indiscriminate firing of the guards on the protesters, consequently wounding six farmers Winnie Loable, Jose Benemerito, Marilou Fortin, Abelardo Jarden, Larry de Vera and Gregorio Santillan. The guards also tore down the *kampuhan* (protest camps), took away the cooking utensils and other essentials, and destroyed the group's loudspeaker to stop them from continuing their protest.

We salute BTL Women's Association member Marilou Fortin, and all the other BTL members in *kampuhan*, for courageously fighting for their rights despite the threats

posed on them by the CMU and its hired goons. Their plight has been long, more than a decade, and yet they continue to stand by their principles and hope for the realization of their demands.

We call on the Local Government Unit of Bukidnon to act for the immediate arrest of guards and the authorities responsible for the incident, and to assist in the treatment of the wounded farmers. Moreover, we challenge them to support the call of the farmers for a genuine agrarian reform that would not just dangle their land ownership in front of them and take it away when it is already within their reach.

We call for the Central Mindanao University president, Maria Luisa Soliven, be made accountable for the incident this early, and call for her suspension to prevent her from interfering with the necessary investigations.

We call for the cancellation of Chevron Security Agency's permit to operate. They are not protectors of anything but brutal hired goons who, like rabid guard dogs, would bite and kill at the beck and call of their master.

We call on the human rights workers and advocates, and the international community to reverberate the condemnation against the extent of the culture of impunity in Bukidnon – a reflection of what is happening in many parts of the Philippines – and extend assistance for the medication and other needs of the victims and the protestors now in crises because of hunger and diseases.

Most importantly, we call on the Government of the Philippines to review the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program Extension with Reforms (CARPER). Despite the few boasted successes of the program, most of the Bukidnon farmers do not support CARPER because they are its victims.



NGO on the Roster in consultative status
with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

Statement from Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)

5 July 2011

APWLD participated in a solidarity mission from 22 – 23 June 2011 in Northern Mindanao where farmers are being forced from their lands by Central Mindanao University (CMU). The mission took place days after protesters were shot at by private security hired by the state run university.

The Mission team visited the *kampuhan* (camp-out) in front of the CMU where the farmers of the Buffalo-Tamaraw-Limus Farmers' Association (BTL) have been protesting the CMU's responses for a month. The result of the fact finding mission confirmed that :

- The farmers have been protesting in a peaceful way against CMU's coercive elimination of the farmers from the land.
- The farmers have sought peaceful resolution and negotiation.
- The CMU's response to the farmers demands were coordinated threats and attacks using armed security guards.

Several people were injured by bullets shot from CMU hired security guards. These people were sitting peacefully in the established campsite.

On June 23, 2011 APWLD observed a formal meeting between some of the CMU board and representatives of the farmers held on the university campus. CMU brought an armed private security guard inside the room for the negotiation.

APWLD concludes that the attacks and threats to civilians amount to grave human rights violations. The right to peaceful assembly, freedom of association, freedom of expression have been violated. Further, the removal

of the farmers' lands without proper compensation is the denial of the right to livelihood.

APWLD reminds the Philippines Government of its numerous human rights obligations under its own constitution as well as international conventions. We draw particular attention to the Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which recognises the right to adequate standard of living for herself and her family including adequate food, clothing and housing and right to be free from hunger. Those rights must be realised particularly for women farmers in conjunction with the Article 14 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which the state of the Philippines is party to:

States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.

APWLD condemns the violent suppression of the BTL farmers by the CMU and demands that the CMU and the Philippines government be accountable for the series of threats and violence, particularly the recent shootings by bringing the perpetrators of the attacks to justice – particularly those who ordered and arranged the attacks on protesters.

APWLD demands that the Philippines government to take prompt and appropriate measures to respect, protect and fulfill human rights. The government should immediately intervene to ensure the farmers are not forcibly removed from their lands and that economic, social and cultural rights are enabled for all in North Mindanao, particularly women and those living in poverty. APWLD also calls for genuine agrarian reform legislated and imple-

mented, from which every farmer will be able to secure their land to till.

APWLD expresses solidarity and support for the farmers and particularly BTL women for their struggle. Women continue to lead non-violent negotiations despite the threatening presence of armed security guards hired by the university. We congratulate women farmers for their determination to defend the land and livelihoods they are entitled to under the Constitution of the Philippines.



**International Women's Alliance (IWA):
Statement condemning
the human rights violations
committed by the security personnel hired
by the Central Mindanao University
against the farmers of Maramag, Bukidnon
protesting against forcible relocation
and supporting the farmers' struggle for land!**

June 23, 2011

The International Women's Alliance condemns the human rights violations committed by 15 security personnel hired by the Central Mindanao University against the farmers of Maramag, Bukidnon who peacefully set up protest camps in front of the university to protest against the plan to illegally and forcibly displace thousands families from their homes and sources of livelihood.

The indiscriminate firing, beating, harsh dismantling of the protest camps and other brutal acts done to intimidate the protesters and which left six people, including two women, wounded, are violations of the basic human rights, including the right to life, property and to freedom of speech and to protest. We demand that immediate justice be served to the victims: hold the security guards, their security agency and the CMU administration accountable and compensate the wounded. We also demand that the harassment and intimidation against the farmers immediately stop and that the Philippine government put an end to the culture of impunity that reigns not only in Bukidnon but in all parts of the country.

We call on the Aquino administration to immediately resolve the land problem in Bukidnon and other parts of the Philippines and give the farmers the right and freedom to the land they till. We likewise call for the review of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, which has been proven to be one of biggest roadblock in the equitable distribution of agricultural land in the country. The continued and worsening landlessness and poverty of the women and men in the rural areas attest to the inability of the CARP to deliver social justice despite its more than 20 years of implementation.

Lastly, the International Women's Alliance commends

the perseverance of the Buffalo-Tamaraw-Limus (BTL) and the BTL Women's Association in continuing the fight for the farmers' rights and welfare in Bukidnon, despite the numerous threats and other barriers thrown their way by the Central University of Mindanao and the Philippine government's blatant disregard of the plight of the farmers. We give our full support to this decades-old struggle for land and pledge to be with the women and men of Maramag, Bukidnon in every step of the way towards the attainment of social justice



Solidarity Message from International Action for Liberation (INTAL)

We, participants of the exposure-trip of International Action for Liberation (INTAL), a Belgian NGO/mass-movement hereby wants to express our solidarity and admiration for the struggle of the families of subsistence farmers living in Maramag, Bukidnon, who are facing forcible eviction from the land they till. In particular, we have read on the courageous stance of the members of the Buffalo-Tamaraw-Limus (BTL) Association and BTL Women's Association to defend the 400 hectares of land they have collectively cultivated for over three decades, growing rice and garden vegetables.

As students and young professionals, visiting several sectors and provinces in the Philippines we feel the struggles of the BTL families for land justice and livelihood rights are a testament to the urgent need for all farmers to own the land they till and thus for a genuine land reform.

We call upon the Aquino Administration to take urgent action in protecting the families from military and paramilitary harassment and to settle the case while upholding principles of justice.

Signed July 22 2011,

Delphine Vecchiato (Belgium)

Sophia El Mouatakil (United Kingdom)

Ghassen Fridhi (Greece)

Stephanie Bertijn (Belgium)

Samya Amechgal (Morocco)

Elly Van Reusel, MD (Belgium)



**Peoples' Coalition
on Food Sovereignty (PCFS)
Solidarity Statement with
the Farming Families
of Buffalo-Tamaraw-Limus:
For Land, Life and Justice**

The Peoples' Coalition on Food Sovereignty (PCFS) - a growing international network of grassroots groups of small food producers and their allies - expresses staunch solidarity with the families of subsistence farmers living in Maramag, Bukidnon, who are facing forcible eviction from the lands they rely upon for their livelihoods due to the plans of the Davao Ventures Corporation (DAVCO) for plantations of pineapples and bananas, hen houses and hog farming.

In particular, PCFS notes the courageous stance of the members of the Buffalo-Tamaraw-Limus (BTL) Association and BTL Women's Association to defend the 400 hectares of land they have collectively cultivated for over three decades, growing rice and garden vegetables. PCFS commends their determination to continue to till the lands with their families, and to demand respect for their livelihood and basic human rights through protest pickets - despite brutal harassment by security guards hired by the Central Mindanao University (CMU) and members of the paramilitary Civilian Auxiliary Geographical Forces Unit (CAFGU).

PCFS condemns the use of armed security and CAFGU forces to intimidate and harm members of the BTL communities, including the reported incidences of gun shots being aimed at farmers, the harassment of peasant advocates, and the destruction of farm tools. The perpetrators - including individuals in the CMU administration providing direction to the eviction orders - must be held accountable for the grave violations of the farmers' rights to life, security of person and civil as well as political freedoms, and be duly prosecuted. The national Government of the Philippines has a responsibility to intervene immediately and ensure that the harassment does not continue. Furthermore, since the farming families are the rightful beneficiaries of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) administered under the Cory Aquino Government, their rights as a community to till the land

should be upheld.

The struggles of the BTL families for land justice and livelihood rights are a testament to the urgent need for national genuine agrarian reform, in which land must be redistributed to be in the hands of the tillers themselves, and serve the basic needs of all Filipinos. Displacing small food producers for developments of large-scale plantations for fruit exports on CMU lands will not contribute to food security. Instead, profits will be directed towards corporations, and will provide neither food security nor significant incomes to local communities. Meanwhile, the trend of evicting subsistence farmers to hand over land to corporate growers - which PCFS notes is in fact becoming increasingly normalized throughout the country - contributes to an unsustainable pattern of reliance on food imports, ecologically destructive mono-cropping farming that uses heavy inputs of chemical fertilizers, intensive water-use, and dispossession of local people. Greater hunger, dire poverty, desperation and intensified conflicts over land use are all inevitable consequences of this situation.

PCFS asserts that CMU and the Aquino Administration must heed the demands of all affected families of the BTL communities, and take urgent, immediate remedial action to respect their rights, upholding principles of social, economic, political, environmental, gender and land justice. Finally, PCFS supports the demands of the BTL communities for the withdrawal of armed security from the vicinity; for expedited proceedings to address the human rights violations committed against them; for dealings with DAVCO to be re-assessed; and for the disputed land to be committed to the tillers who rely upon it for the basis of their very survival.



Solidarity Message of Front Line to BTL women and men, and Amihan Northern Mindanao

*Greetings from Front Line – the International Foundation
for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Dublin.*

We want to express our solidarity with the human rights defenders of the BTL women's organisation, BTL farmer's organisation, and AMIHAN that, for decades, have been protesting against forced eviction by Central Mindanao University.

Human rights defender is a universally recognised concept which refers to individuals working peacefully to promote and protect rights under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Therefore, most people who are gathering here today are human rights defenders.

The recent attack on the peaceful protesters affiliated with BTL women's organisation and BLT farmer's organisation which resulted in the injuries of five human rights defenders is a serious matter that needs to be thoroughly addressed by the Philippines government.

The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which is a document outlining the right to defend human rights, was passed in 1998 by the UN General Assembly. The Philippines government is a member of the assembly. This, therefore, means that the Philippines government agrees to abide by the Declaration which highlights that for "the purpose of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, everyone has the right [to] meet and assembly peacefully".

Therefore, we call on the authorities in the Philippines to carry out immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the violent dispersal of the protest staged by BTL and the use of force by the private guards employed by the Central Mindanao University and to bring those responsible in justice.

Front Line will continue to support the peaceful struggle of BTL human rights defenders and continue to monitor

the development closely.

In solidarity,

Mary Lawlor

Director

Front Line – the International Foundation

for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

Dublin, Ireland

**URGENT
ACTION
FUND +**

FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

Solidarity Message from the Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights

22 June, 2011

Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights stands in solidarity with the farmers of the Buffalo-Timaraw-Limus and their struggle for the rights to the land on which they worked and lived for decades.

We strongly condemn the unacceptable acts of violence against the farmers by the security forces of Central Mindanao University and call on the local government of Bukidnon to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Furthermore, we call on the current Aquino administration to immediately grant and safeguard these farmers the rights to their lands and to implement a genuine agrarian reform.

We call on the international community to join us and stand in solidarity for farmers' rights, which are inalienably human rights.

To Justice!



**ARWC in Solidarity
with the Women and Men
Peasants of the BTL
Farmers' Association!
Defend Agrarian Rights,
Uphold Human Rights
and Fundamental Freedoms!**

22 June 2011

The Asian Rural Women's Coalition extends its strong support and solidarity to the collective struggle of the Buffalo-Tamaraw-Limus (BTL) Farmers Association in Bukidnon, Southern Philippines.

Around 800 rice-farming families from 400 hectares of the Central Mindanao University (CMU) premises face eviction, and its inevitable consequence, hunger. ARWC stands with the farmers who have tilled and nurtured the land for decades.

In their defense of land and life, the women and men peasants have organised a Camp Out in front of the CMU since May 2011, a peaceful campaign by the peasants with the aspiration to freely cultivate the lands which they can call their own. However, the peaceful protest was met with bullets and harassment. The guards indiscriminately fired at the farmers wounding 6 men and women farmers, tore down the protest camp, took away the cooking utensils and other essentials, and destroyed the group's loudspeaker to stop them from continuing their protest. The violent assault on June 14 2011 perpetrated by the CMU to force out the farmers from their land was not an isolated case. The long history of their peasant struggle for land were systematically met with intense harassment and violence over the years.

The Asian Rural Women's Coalition (ARWC) vehemently condemns the harassment and human rights violations perpetrated by the Central Mindanao University as means of forcing the BTL women and men farmers to leave their farm-lots and prohibiting them from continuing to till the lands.

The ARWC expresses its support and solidarity to the women and men peasants who remain to be vigilant and courageous, despite the odds, in fighting for their rights to their land, livelihood and life. Even for more

than a decade of struggle, they have continued to stand by their principles, willing to risk their lives, and hope for the realisation of their demands. ARWC especially salutes the women for courageously fighting for their rights, as mothers, as sisters, as farmers.

The Asian Rural Women's Coalition, comprising more than 700 women from various sectors coming from 21 countries in Asia joins the call of the women and men peasants to Defend Agrarian Rights, Uphold Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms!

The Women United Will Never Be Defeated!

Long Live International Solidarity!

A Night at the Kampuhan¹

It was cold and dark at the *kampuhan*, (a camp out - a la picket line) in front of the Central Mindanao University(CMU), Bukidnon in Mindanao. Around 500 farmers and family members joined the *kampuhan* to pursue their rightful claim to 400 out of more than 3,000 hectares of land being claimed by CMU. Farmers belonging to Buffalo-Tamaraw-Limus(BTL) resolved to demonstrate their demand by setting up the *kampuhan* so that the people may know of their rightful claim. It was also their way of telling CMU to act in favour of their just demand.

“If we do not till the land, then we would not be able to eat. My dream is for my children to be able to study. I also long for the day when I am free from anxiety. I wish for the day when there is no harassment from the security guards of the CMU.” These were the words of Welma Bernaldes, 30 years old. Her voice was soft yet optimistic. With her was her three-month old baby, quietly asleep while the program was going on. Along with her husband who is also an active member of the BTL, they put up a mosquito net within the *kampuhan*. “This is a way in which we can show our support to each other as farmers. I am bringing with me my child, so that he/she can become part of our struggle.”

Rosalie is another mother who was nursing her baby when the program started. Like Welma, she would love to see her family enjoying the assurance of three meals every day. Her dream is for her family to be secured of daily food which for now seems beyond their reach as they were not allowed to farm the land.

Welma and Rosalie are just two among the mothers and women in the *kampuhan*. They represent the fair dreams of the peasants in Bukidnon and the rest of the country. They, too, are farmers who alongside their husbands are working from dawn to dusk in order to survive. But their economic productive work has been disrupted because CMU did not only disallow them to till the land, but also

resorted to violent means to forbid them from farming. The remaining option for them to fulfil their dream is to fight for their right. Their presence in the kampuhan is a representation of their collective hope and struggle.

The university as centre of education represents the farmers' desire for their children to learn. The stark irony now is that it is CMU that denies them their economic and social-political rights. The farmers are only asking for 400 hectares² of the more than 3,000 hectares which the university own. That is just like crumbs that fall from the master's table. The demand of 800 families is not too high or impossible to grant especially that the demand is a matter of life-and-death. They are not asking for a piece of land for luxury purposes or for caprices that big business bureaucrats are enjoying. They simply would like to till the land, enjoy its harvest so that they will live each day of the year.

Farmers must be given highest honour and respect as they are the ones who feed the nation. The only way to render them due recognition is to fully implement a land reform that would liberate them from long years of enslavement.

The night was dark and cold. No shining stars up in the sky to behold. Gentle showers of rain added to the coolness of the night. The sounds of the guitar echo throughout the camp and the music of hope and dreams reverberate. The song of anger and freedom rhymes with the stories being told and re-told.

The music, the stories, the laughter and the humming of people camping are the lullabies that keep the infants and children in blissful rest. This is the night of inheriting the courage and love, hope and perseverance of farmers who would always say, 'PADAYON'³.

Norma P. Dollaga
KASIMBAYAN, June 22, 2011

[1] I joined the Hunglos Solidarity Mission on June 22-24 in Bukidnon among the peasants who are camping out at the gate of CMU. Few days before the Solidarity Mission, security guards hired by the university open fired at the peasants who were camping at the gate. Many were wounded. There were around 150 Solidarity Mission team participants. We conducted relief work, medical services and documentation of human rights violations.

[2] CMU claims 3,084 hectares of land. Of this the farmers claimed 800 hectares of land for 1,200 of its members in their application to become beneficiaries of the Pres. Corazon Aquino government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). The Department of Agrarian Reform granted 400 hectares of land and gave out Certificates of Land Ownership Awards (CLOA) to the farmers. But in 1992 the Supreme Court favoured CMU on the grounds that the lands used for education purposes are exempted from CARP. The CLOAs awarded to farmers became mere papers. (Hunglos Solidarity Mission Concept Paper, June 22-24)

[3] "Padayon" means "persevere" in Cebuano.

News Articles

Guards shot protesting farmers

Sun.Star Cagayan de Oro newspaper

June 15, 2011.

A PEACEFUL encampment by the members of the Buffalo-Tamaraw-Limus (BTL) in front of the Central Mindanao University (CMU) in Maramag, Bukidnon on Tuesday has turned into a bloody demonstration.

April Argen Pat B. Marzon, staff of Amihan Northern Mindanao Region, a progressive group supporting farmers in the region, said three protesters, identified as Billy Jardin, Gregorio Santillan and Larry de Vera, sustained gunshot wounds and were rushed to the nearest hospital after 15 security guards belonging to the Chevron Security Agency “mercilessly fired at the farmers.”

Not contented, Marzon said the security guards, headed by a certain Nestor Honasan, dismantled the campsite and hit the farmers while keeping guard over their camp.

She said the BTL Women’s Association joined the men in trying to defend every farmer from the attacks of the armed private guards, who were allegedly hired by the CMU administration to trouble the protesters.

Though there was no reported casualty, Marzon said the victims have to be attended by medical aides.

“At the scene, no one from the government authorities bothered to help the farmers,” she said.

Marzon also said another victim, Weni Loable, feared of losing his eyesight after stone fragment from shards coming from the bullets that the security forces fired on the ground hit his eye.

“The members of the BTL had set up the *kampuhan* on May 23 to protest on CMU’s claim over the 400 hectares

of land which more than 800 families have been tilling for years,” Marzon said.

In 1987, she said the farmers had originally applied for 1,200 hectares of the land under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program and were given a Certificate of Land Ownership Award (CLOA) for 400 hectares in 1992.

However, Marzon said the CLOA was canceled with no specific reason.

“In 2002 to 2007, the farmers had no choice but to go into a five-year lease contract. The contract stated that they would not be driven out of their lands,” Marzon explained.

However, when the lease expired, she said CMU insisted to relocate the displaced farmers to San Fernando, a hinterland municipality in the borders of Bukidnon, Davao del Sur and Talakag; and another border municipality between Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental.

Marzon said the farmers protested, arguing that the land which they have developed for more than a decade was rightfully theirs.

She said the BTL and the BTL Women’s Association continue to condemn the CARPER and push for Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill. (LSM)

Bukidnon farmers hold camp-out in front of Central Mindanao University to protest harassment

By INA ALLECO R. SILVERIO

Bulatlat.com

June 10, 2011

A university in Bukidnon continues its campaign to drive away some 800 farmers and their families from their land.

Farmers led by the Buffalo-Tamaraw-Limus Farmers' Association (BTL) and the BTL Women's Association continue to fight against the attempts of Central Mindanao University (CMU) in Musuan, Maramag, Bukidnon to evict them from their land. The farmers have put up a protest camp last June 3 in front of the university to denounce its violent tactics. BTL Women's Association is a part of the 43 peasant women organizations under Amihan Northern Mindanao.

On the morning of June 3, more than 50 heavily armed university guards from the Chevron Security Agency and elements of the paramilitary Civilian Auxiliary Geographical Forces Unit (CAFGU) came with high-powered rifles and hand guns. They fired at the farmers as they worked at the rice fields. They also brought with them two tractors to destroy the farmers farm tools. Many women and children were reportedly traumatized because of the firing.

At the time, the farmers were conducting "Operation Tikad," it's what they call their efforts to continue tilling the land while no agreement has been made between them and the university.

A history of land conflict

According to reports from Amihan-Northern Mindanao, the farmers of the towns of Buffalo, Tamaraw and Limus in Maramag, Valencia, Bukidnon have been asserting their right to the land since the 1980s. The farmers have collectively owned 400 hectares which they planted with rice. They are also rightful beneficiaries of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) of the Cory Aquino government. In 1987, the BTL applied for coverage under the CARP; in 1991, the Department of Agrarian Reform Adjudication Board (DARAB) issued certificates of land ownership award (CLOA) to the farmers.

In 2001, however, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the appeal of the CMU Administration to exempt the CMU lands from distribution. It said that it needed the land for “educational and scientific purposes.”

It has been discovered, however, that the university administration aims to put up new piggeries, poultry houses in the area. Another party is also involved: Davao Ventures Corporation (DAVCO) has announced that it wants to utilize the BTL land area to expand its pineapple and banana plantations. Expansion of corporate plantations inside the university would make more than 800 families search for another area as a source of food and sustenance.

The CMU previously ordered the farmers to vacate following an offer by the provincial government of a relocation in nearby Talakag town. The farmers refused, and has since then been the target of harassment by university guards and the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

In 2001, the BTL, through the help of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), held a dialogue with the CMU administration. As a result, a memorandum of agreement (MOA) was signed by the two parties. The farmers agreed to pay P4,000 (US\$78.446 at the 2001 exchange rate of

\$1=P50.99) per hectare per year as rent to CMU. The MOA was effective until March 2007, and the local government agreed to find a suitable relocation site for the farmers.

When the MOA expired, there was still no relocation site for the farmers. Since then, CMU security guards, goons and CAFGU have been roaming the area, supposedly guarding it against the farmers.

The most recent attack happened on June 3. Previously, on May 23, university guards went to the farm areas and accosted the residents. The armed guards took the farmers' tools and implements and threatened them at gunpoint. Some of the guards also fired their guns in the air to further frighten the farmers. They also blocked the irrigation canals with the help of the military.

On May 27, CMU president Dr. Ma. Luisa Soliven said in a radio interview that the CMU board of regents will give the farmers three more years to stay and that farmers should pay one peso per hectare for every year of lease. She said that the end of the three years, the farmers should leave, but this time there would be no relocation site waiting for them.

BTL Women's Association chairwoman Felomina Santillan appealed to the university to allow them to continue farming. "Our families will starve if we don't. For humanitarian reasons, we ask the CMU administration to allow us to sow seeds in our rice fields while waiting for the final agreement."

Santillan said that there was no truth to the university's claims that it wants to use the land for educational purposes. "We are being driven away just so DAVCO can expand its banana and pineapple plantations! There's nothing scientific or educational about that. That's business," she said.

Santillan said that the CMU administration's move to at-

tack them was calculated. “It’s the planting season. If we don’t begin cultivation and planting, we will not have food for the next months and we will be forced to leave the land. Their attacks are deliberately timed,” she said.

Aside from the security guards and the CAFGUs, the farmers are also worried over the presence of a certain Antonio Pamisa. They said that Pamisa is a man notorious for killing Lumads. They said that the man was now employed by the CMU to harass and intimidate the farmers.

The farmers , however, are still determined to stay.

“We have no choice but to assert our right to the land. We need to begin planting or we will starve. Our land is our life. Take it away from us, and you take our life too,” she said.

“Examine your conscience”

The famers are not without support in their fight for the land. The Sisters’ Association in Mindanao have denounced the CMU for harassing the farmers.

“We support the farmers in their claim over the 400-hectare property. It should be given to them. The land is their life. We demand for a speedy investigation relating to these incidents of human rights violations,” they said.

The nuns called on the CMU Board of Regents to “reexamine their conscience and uphold the principle of ‘land to the tiller.’”

“The CMU regents should know that education must serve the interests of the poor and the marginalized, especially farmers and indigenous peoples. The need for a redistribution of wealth is echoed in the words of Pope Pius XI as affirmed in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church: “The distribution of created goods, which, as every discerning person knows, is laboring to-

day under the gravest evils due to the huge disparity between the few exceedingly rich and the numerous propertyless, must be effectively called back to and brought into conformity with the norms of the common good, that is, social justice,” they said

Brutal dispersal of farmers in Bukidnon angered lawmaker

By Gerry Albert Corpuz in Manila and Bb. Joyce Cabral

Manila, Philippines

June 14, 2011

MANILA, Philippines- The poorest congressman and the only farmer lawmaker of the Philippine Parliament is angered by the shooting escapade of private security guards who led the violent dispersal of farmers in Bukidnon province in Southern Philippines.

Anakpawis (Toiling Masses) Partylist Rep. Rafael Mariano condemned to highest the continued harassment of protesting farmers in Central Mindanao University (CMU) in Bukidon.

Last June 14, six farmers were wounded after security guards from CMU's security agency Chevron, opened fired against farmers who are holding a camp out in protest of CMU's landgrabbing of more than 400 hectares of land which more than 800 families have been tilling for years.

Farmers Abelardo Jardin, Gregorio Santillan and Larry de Vera sustained gunshot wounds while Weni Loable, Jose Benemirito and Marilou Portin were also wounded after armed security guards led by Nestor Honasan assaulted the protesting farmers and attempted to dismantle the camp set up by the Buffalo-Tamaraw-Limus (BTL), an alliance of farmers' group in Maramag, Bukidnon.

About 800 farmers in the disputed lands claimed by CMU, were beneficiaries of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). They were awarded with 400 has. of land in 1992 but their Certificate of Land Ownership Awards (CLOAs) were cancelled from 2002 to 2007. The farmers were force to to enter into a 5-year lease

contract with the CMU administration. After the lease expired, the farmers were driven away from their lands and were forced to relocate to hinterland municipalities of San Fernando and Talakag within the borders of Bukidnon, Davao del Sur and Misamis Oriental.

“We will conduct a congressional probe into this serious violation of human rights of farmers in Bukidnon. Aside from filing criminal charges against the perpetrators, CMU President Maria Luisa Soliven must also be made accountable for the harassment and violence against farmers who are exercising their right to peaceful assembly, asserting their right to lands and campaigning to end the perpetual social injustice in the countryside,” Mariano said over a phone interview with all voices.

Mariano said the situation of farmers at CMU is a glaring example of how the 23-year old CARP and CARP extension with reforms (CARPER) failed to address the decades-old problem of landlessness, land grabbing. In lieu of the bogus and anti-farmer CARP and CARPER, Mariano is pushing for the passage of House Bill 374 or the Genuine Agrarian Reform Bill (GARB).

The militant peasant group Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) echoed Mariano’s condemnation of the violent dispersal and indiscriminate firing yesterday by private security guards of the Central Mindanao University (CMU). In a separate statement, the KMP said the farmers were asserting their rights to the lands.

KMP secretary general Danilo Ramos told all voices that his group is calling for the immediate ouster of the university president and a congressional probe of the incident.

“Heads should roll on this violent incident,” Ramos said adding: “We demand the immediate ouster of CMU president, Dr. Ma. Luisa Soliven, and the immediate cancellation of Chevron Security Agency’s licence due to their brazen attack against farmers.”

“A human rights violator like Dr. Soliven has no place in an academic institution like the CMU,” Ramos said as he called on Congress to immediately probe the violent dispersal.

The violent attack against farmers stemmed from an agrarian dispute between farmers and the CMU administration. Members of the Buffalo-Tamaraw-Limus farmers groups in CMU had set up a ‘kampuhan’(camp-out) since May 23 this year to protest the CMU’s claim over the 400 hectares of land which more than 800 families have been tilling for years.

In 1987, the farmers had originally applied for 1,200 hectares of the land under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program. They were given a Certificate of Land Ownership Award for 400 hectares in 1992. However, the CLOA was cancelled and in 2002-2007, they had no choice but to go into a 5-year lease contract. The contract stated that they would not be driven out of their lands.

However, when the lease expired, CMU insisted they relocate to San Fernando, a hinterland municipality at the borders of Bukidnon and Davao del Sur, and Talakag, another border municipality between Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental.

Activist nuns join farmers' struggle for their land rights

Asia Pacific Ecumenical News

20 August 2011

MANILA (APEN) – A group of activist nuns in the southern Philippines has joined the ongoing struggle of the Buffalo, Tamaraw and Limus Farmers' Association (BTL) and the BTL Women's Association in Maramag, Valencia and Bukidnon against efforts by the administration of the Central Mindanao University (CMU) to harass and prevent them from cultivating their lands.

The Buffalo, Tamaraw and Limus farmers continue to fight for their lands which they have tilled since the 1980s. The 400-hectare land is planted with rice among other crops. The CMU administration plans to evict more than 800 families from their source of food and sustenance.

"We support the farmers in their claim over the 400-hectare property. It should be given to them. The land is their life," the Sisters' Association of Mindanao (SAMIN) said in a statement.

We are alarmed by the harassments and injustices suffered by the farmers and their families, the activist sisters said adding that armed guards, aided by police and military men, reportedly employed by the CMU administration, have disrupted the Operation Tikad (Operation Collective Tilling) conducted by the BTL farmers and women on 28 May.

SAMIN noted that fearing for their lives and being threatened of confiscation of their farm equipments by the CMU-employed Blue Guards, the farmers have decided to stop their Operation Tikad,

The sisters demanded a speedy investigation relating to

these incidents of human rights violations.

They called on the CMU Board of Regents to reexamine their conscience and uphold the principle of 'land to the tiller'. Education must serve the interests of the poor and the marginalized, especially of farmers and indigenous peoples, they said.

According to SAMIN, the need for a redistribution of wealth is echoed in the words of Pope Pius XI as affirmed in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church: "The distribution of created goods, which, as every discerning person knows, is laboring today under the gravest evils due to the huge disparity between the few exceedingly rich and the unnumbered properties, must be effectively called back to and brought into conformity with the norms of the common good, that is, social justice".

The sisters pledged to support the farmers by joining them in prayer and in action "until we are one with the common aspirations of the poor for genuine agrarian reform and national industrialization."

4 farmers hurt as Bukidnon campus guards open fire at protesters

Jeffrey M. Tupas
Inquirer Mindanao
June 15, 2011

DAVAO CITY, Philippines—Four farmers were wounded when armed security personnel hired by the state-run Central Mindanao University in Maramag, Bukidnon stormed their picket line outside the campus Tuesday morning, a non-government organization said.

The Amihan Northern Mindanao Region, one of the NGOs that have been helping the protesting farmers, said in a statement the incident occurred 10 a.m.

Angel Pat Marzon of Amihan said the farmers, belonging to the Buffalo-Tamaraw-Limus (BTL) Farmers Association; and BTL Women's Association, were camped outside the CMU campus when at least 15 armed CMU guards fired at them.

Marzon said farmers Billy Jardin, Gregorio Santillan and Larry de Vera were rushed to a hospital for gunshot wounds. Another farmer, identified as Weni Loable, was wounded when her eye was hit by a rock, she added.

Marzon identified the head of the security personnel as Nestor Honasan of Chevron Security Agency.

"They mercilessly fired at the farmers and beat up those near them," Marzon said.

Marzon said the farmers have been protesting their forced eviction from the 400-hectare land inside CMU, which their families had been tilling for more than 30

years.

The Department of Agrarian Reform even issued certificates of land ownership (Cloas) in 1992 but the said agency later revoked it.

The farmers eventually entered into a five-year lease contract with CMU, which stated that they would not be forced out of the land even after its expiration 2007.

Marzon said the CMU management reneged on the agreement on the non-eviction of the farmers and forced them to be relocated to San Fernando town.

The Asian Rural Women's Coalition said that the action of the CMU was clearly a form of "harassment and human rights violations."

"We condemn the harassment and human rights violations perpetrated by the Central Mindanao University as means of forcing the BTL women and men farmers to leave their farm-lots and prohibiting them from continuing to till the lands. The ARWC expresses its support to the women and men peasants who remain to be vigilant and courageous, despite the odds, in fighting for their rights to their land, livelihood and life," Marjo Busto Quinto of the ARWC said.

The ARWC recently launched an online campaign that aims to win more support for the farmers.

"I am dumbstruck at this turn of events (the June 14 dispersal),
and would like to express my solidarity to the farmers.

Let us respond to the urgent appeals
and invoke international condemnation for the violence."

-Niza Concepcion
Committee for Asian Women, Bangkok, Thailand

"Front Line views the dispersal of the protest outside the CMU
by officials as a serious infringement
on the right to freedom of assembly."

-Frontline International, Dublin, Ireland

"We condemn the indiscriminate firing of the guards
on the protesters, wounding six farmers."

-Tamil Nadu Women's Forum, Tamil Nadu, India

"We stand against the repression of people living off the land...
where families have farmed the land for decades
and it has become their primary source for survival."

-Larry Hales
Fight Imperialism, Stand Together!, New York, USA

