



# Philippines Australia Solidarity Group

## NEWSLETTER

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20c

### **TOTAL WAR POLICY AND TOURISM TWIN BURDENS ON THE PEOPLE OF SAGADA IN THE CORDILLERA**

"The New People's Army... acknowledges and supports in full the substance of the Sagada people's proposal for peace."

Thus reads a statement of the New People's Army (NPA) command in the Mountain Province of the Cordillera in response to the proposal of the Sagada people for a ceasefire and demilitarisation of the town. The Cordillera People's Democratic Front (CPDF) also issued a statement supporting the peace proposal. Both responses were announced during a "Reconciliation Meeting" at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Sagada in January 1989.

The Sagada people submitted their peace proposal to the NPA and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) last November 1988 after a series of incidents involving the NPA and the AFP in the town. The positive response from the NPA and CPDF has brought a ray of hope to the beleaguered people of Sagada who yearn for an end to the Aquino Total War policy inflicted on their town, which has caused anguish, fear, destruction and death. This peace-loving opportunity should be seized and the AFP urged to commit their full support for the proposed ceasefire to achieve a meaningful and lasting peace. The peace making process will not be easy. In order for readers to understand what is going on, the article is concluded with portions of the formal appeal from the Sagada people and the NPA response.

An absurdity of this instance of Aquino's Total War policy is that the Cordillera is simultaneously one vast tourist attraction. The people of Sagada must endure the indignity of foreign tourists ignorant and indif-

ferent to the low intensity conflict going on around them in the town.

In the Cordillera tourism has been more disastrous than advantageous to the indigenous Igorot peoples. Tourism has caused dislocation of indigenous communities, destruction of ancestral land, commercialisation of the Igorot culture and even deprivation of basic services to the people.

Sagada, along with Banaue, Bontoc and Baguio, is now on the tourist circuit. Tourists in Sagada have pilfered and even sold many relics and even desecrated such religious sites as the mummy caves. The introduction of foreign culture from the tourists has brought in the illicit trade in marijuana and other prohibited drugs which corrupt the people of Sagada, especially the youth. Considering these grotesque impacts of tourism, it is no wonder that the people of Sagada successfully opposed the governments construction of a youth hostel which remains half finished to this day. The people wanted tourism more on their own terms and saw the hostel as unduly competing with locally provided accommodation.

Clearly what is needed in Sagada is to end the burden of tourism flourishing under the imposition of low intensity conflict. Tourism must be brought back to a human activity of going to another place, meeting other peoples and learning from their cultures. By definition, the process of mutual respect and understanding at once becomes far more important than all else. This means a radical reorientation that is possible only if tourism centres mainly on people rather than economic considerations. (Contd p2)

## APPEALS FROM THE SAGADA PEOPLE

### PROPOSAL FOR A CEASEFIRE

To: 1. The AFP  
2. The NPA

#### Background

On November 11, 1988 Benito Tumapang Jr., a 12-year old pupil at the Sagada Central School became the unfortunate victim of a war between your conflicting forces.

He was shot and died so young, not even knowing what the war was all about. He is but one among others like 4-year old Hardy Bagni Jr. and 17-year old student Kenneth Bayang, who both died on October 28, 1988 after having been shot by drunken soldiers of the 50th Infantry Battalion. Previously, there have also been incidents involving the New People's Army that caused consternation among the Sagada people.

We are worried about the present situation in Sagada. We are apprehensive because civilians have become the main victims and are in constant danger of being so if this war goes on. We have fears that more lives will be lost in the process. We air our concern for the safety and education of our children because of the threat of war brought about by your presence. Even our livelihood is threatened because we cannot regularly go to our farms and other places of work upon which our existence depends.

It is in view of these concerns that we appeal to your conscience for peace in Sagada. For this purpose, we propose a ceasefire between your forces while you give this matter your utmost consideration. Hence the attached Resolution for a ceasefire.

We respectfully request that you consider the plea of the people. If you don't, then who are you fighting for?

#### Ceasefire Resolution

Therefore, be it resolved, as it is hereby resolved, that all contending groups (AFP, NPA, CPLA, etc.) respect and observe the people's proposal for a ceasefire with the following conditions:

1. The scope of the ceasefire covers the entire municipality of Sagada with its concomitant boundaries. Adjustments will depend on negotiations among all parties concerned;
2. No operation, patrols, checkpoints and meetings within the coverage of the ceasefire zone;
3. No firing of guns within the ceasefire zone;
4. No armed detachments within the ceasefire area;
5. No harassment and intimidation of civilians and vehicles;
6. No carrying of firearms upon entering the ceasefire area for necessities;
7. No drinking liquor inside stores within the ceasefire area;
8. No arbitrary use of public buildings unless with the consent of the proper authorities;
9. Members from both sides should be out from population centers by 4:00 p.m.;
10. An Ad Hoc committee will be created to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire. It will also serve as a liaising body and a complaint bureau during the timeframe if the ceasefire;
11. The period or timeframe of the ceasefire shall be dependent upon the approval and final accomplishment of the total demilitarization of Sagada.

#### **RESPONSE FROM THE NPA** (Leonardo Pasci Command, M.P.)

The NPA, after a thorough discussion and consideration of the proposal for a ceasefire and demilitarization of Sagada, acknowledge and supports in full the substance of the Sagada people's proposal for peace.

The NPA further holds the view that a ceasefire in Sagada, in order to be more meaningful and lasting, should meet the following conditions. First, the AFP should do its responsibility to respect and observe the provisions of the

proposal. Ceasefires are never unilateral undertakings but always mutual conditions of contending forces agreeing in principle and practice to observe essential provisions. The NPA will not hesitate, and reserves the right to end the ceasefire and resume hostilities should the AFP either by direct or sinister means inflict harm and harassments on the civilian

population or on suspected NPA sympathizers. The resort to arms is just action if done to defend the people from any abusive force or to dispense justice for the wronged. Lastly, the people of Sagada should develop and strengthen their people's power in order to help implement a meaningful and just proposal.

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**STATEMENT OF THE CORDILLERA DELEGATION AT SESSION 6 OF THE UNITED NATIONS WORKING GROUP FOR INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS, GENEVA, 1-5 AUGUST, 1988 (continued from previous issue)**

The CPLA is not all which has brought us grief. Government troops have also done damage to our lives and our property - as they had always done in the Marcos Regime. In a recent Fact Finding Mission of Non-government Organizations and human rights advocates in the province of Kalinga-Apayao, it was realized that the government's CIA-sponsored Low Intensity Conflict activities in the Cordillera has taken greater toll on our human rights.

I cite from the written documentation of the Fact Finding Mission regarding the recent violations during the first half of 1988. The Mission documented:

- 1 death due to torture
- the arrest of 40 civilians
- the illegal arrest, detention and torture of 5
- the mass evacuation of 388 families in about five villages
- the massacre of a family of 3
- the strafing and bombing of 2 villages
- the massive harassments to citizens.

In behalf of my people, we will be submitting the document of human rights violations done by the Fact Finding Mission to the Working Group as proof of human rights and indigenous rights development in the Cordilleras.

We still await the government's actions on the abuses done to our people. But, we go on with our work pursuing real autonomy for the Cordillera under the context of a free and democratic Philippine nation. For this is the only

way by which our dream of self-determination can be fulfilled. We have to explain and educate our people on the process of achieving self government.

As we realize that there is not much to expect from the Aquino government to improve our situation, the CPA has launched an on-going campaign to strengthen our people politically and economically without depending on the government. This is done by encouraging our people to further organize themselves into associations, committees and other forms for them to be able to assert their rights strongly. We have also encouraged them to start setting up small economic projects which - even if minimally at the moment - will ease up poverty. Again, on behalf of the Cordillera people, I wish to convey an invitation to the members of the Working Group to visit the Cordillera for them to see our own efforts of advancing the struggle of indigenous peoples for self-determination.

We are aware of the obstacles which we would encounter in our campaign to educate and further organize our people. We are much more aware however, that this is the only way for us to start building a genuine autonomous region - not without the support of our friends in our own country and in the international body. We will then go on with asserting our right to self-determination and with much vigor for it is the only way we can realize the vision of a democratic Cordillera and Philippines. This is what Daniel Ngaya-an died for. Thank you.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE ALWAYS WELCOMED**

The Philippines Australia Solidarity Group (PASG) Queensland is part of a national organisation which has offices in all state capitals and in Canberra. It brings together people of diverse backgrounds and includes both Australians and Filipinos living in Australia. As well, it has close links with Filipino Community Organisations in Australia and the Philippines. Among its members there are people with extensive Philippine experience with information on trade unions, the role of the church (Christian and Non-Christian), women's organisations, industrial working conditions, peasant organisations, rural working conditions, teachers working conditions and the conditions of indigenous peoples in the Philippines. PASG in Queensland provides resource material such as slides and videos as well as speakers.

The objectives of PASG are to generate support in Australia for all Filipino organisations working for genuine democracy, freedom and sovereignty; to end Australian military aid to the Philippines and to oppose all forms of foreign intervention in the affairs of the Filipino people.

PASG holds regular meetings on the second Tuesday of each month in the Albion Peace Centre, 102 Macdonald Road, Windsor. For further information contact David Hyndman, Ph.377 4029 or Terry Fisher, Ph.844 9641.

ATTENTION: PASG Co-ordinator  
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I would like to:

- join PASG and receive a one year subscription to the PASG Newsletter and Philippines Issues. I enclose payment of \$15 or \$12 (concession).
- receive other Philippine information materials.
- make a donation of \$..... for solidarity work.

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