Statement on the Bong Mal Massacre

We are alarmed by the latest in a series of killings of innocent indigenous peoples. On October 18, 2012, Juvy Capion and her children Pop (13 yrs old) and John (8 yrs old) were killed in an alleged raid in Barangay Bong Mal, Kiblawan, Davao del Sur. The raid was done by elements of the 27th IB Philippine Army in the house where they live.

Barangay Bong Mal is the site of mining activities done by the Sagittarius Mines, Inc. and their Anglo-Swiss partner, Xstrata. The village is where the base camp of Xstrata-SMI is installed and is included in the area targeted for the open pit mine to be established. This plan by the mining company caused discord and even chaos among the Blaan in the community. They were divided into SMI supporters and staunch anti-mining activists. The family of Juvy Capion and her husband Daguil is one of the most active in the resistance against the mining of Xstrata-SMI.

Upon the entry of the mining company in Bong Mal, many human rights abuses were done against those who resisted. The resistors endured food blockades, intimidation, harassment and vilification. Daguil Capion in fact declared a “pangayaw” against the mining company because of these. At present, he is considered both as a warrior hero by community members and as a fugitive and criminal by the military and Xstrata-SMI. He, along with other Blaan men who took part in the “pangayaw” are now charged with criminal cases.

In a recent interaction we had with Juvy and other villagers of Bong Mal, they expressed their total opposition to what SMI is doing. Upon the entry of the mining company, their community suddenly became filled with armed men from the military and private security forces. This caused a state of insecurity among the Blaan of Bong Mal and disrupted their productive activities such as working in the fields and kaingin. They believe that there will never be peace and order until SMI leaves their community. This mining company must not force themselves on Bong Mal especially since there is a loud opposition to the project. More deaths are sure to follow if the mining activities of Xstrata-SMI push through. There will not only be death by bullets but death by economic displacement and extreme hunger as the Blaan will eventually be eliminated from their ancestral domain by the mining operation.

The killing of Juvy and her children is a direct affront not only to indigenous peoples but also to rural women who play great roles in ensuring food security for their households. It is a barbarous act that must not be done in a truly democratic society. The Aquino government must take immediate and
decisive action to stop the spate of extrajudicial killings of innocent and vulnerable indigenous peoples, and mete justice on the perpetrators.

All mining companies who disregard human and indigenous peoples’ rights must not be allowed to operate in ancestral domains. Likewise, units of the Armed Forces of the Philippines must not be used as investment defense forces for big corporate mining interests and must be punished for their human rights violations.

Justice for the Capion family! Pull out the 27th Infantry Battalion from Bong Mal! #