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PANAGHIUSA PHILIPPINE NETWORK: NEWSLETTER



INDIGENOUS WOMEN EMBODIED BAI BIBYAON, STOOD AGAINST CHACHA ON INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY



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"As much as ChaCha undermines our lands, it also undermines the dignity of women. Therefore, on this day, the eighth of March, women have marched to fight against Marcos Jr.'s ChaCha"

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Mass efforts against the latest Charter Change

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INDIGENOUS WOMEN EMBODIED BAI BIBYAON, STOOD AGAINST CHACHA ON INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY - BAI INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S NETWORK

On March 8, as the world commemorates the International Working Women's Day, Katribu Kalipunan ng Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas, Sandugo - Movement of Moro and Indigenous Peoples for Self-Determination, and Bai Indigenous Women's Network joined Filipino women in Manila to protest against the rushed implementation of charter change (ChaCha) under the Marcos Jr administration. Together, they unite under the banner "Kabuhayan, Karapatan, at Kasarinlan, Hindi Charter Change ng Dayuhan at lilan," reflecting the broad opposition of Filipino women to policies that threaten their livelihoods, rights, and sovereignty.



IP and advocates march, bringing Bai Bibyaon's powerful statement. Photo courtesy of Bai Indigenous Women's Network

"In this crucial moment, we join hands with our fellow Filipino women to assert our collective voice against the imposition of charter change," stated Beverly Longid, an Igorot woman leader and national convenor of Katribu. "Our unity sends a powerful message: we will not allow our rights to be undermined by policies that serve the interests of a few."

Meanwhile, Eufemia Cullamat, a Lumad woman leader and council member of Sandugo, added, “Kung gaano binubusabos ng ChaCha ang mga kalupaan natin, ganoon ding binubusabos ang dignidad ng kababaihan. Kaya sa araw na ito, Marso Otso, nagmartsa ang mga kababaihan upang labanan ang ChaCha ni Marcos Jr.

(As much as ChaCha undermines our lands, it also undermines the dignity of women. Therefore, on this day, the eighth of March, women have marched to fight against Marcos Jr.'s ChaCha.)

Amidst the protest, Indigenous and Moro women leaders also advocate for pressing issues affecting their communities. They demand the release of Indigenous and Moro political prisoners, including Julieta Gomez, Niezel Velasco, Gloria Tomalon, and Mary Joyce Lizada, emphasizing the injustice of their detention.



Indigenous women march with the women's sector in protesting against ChaCha ang pushing for women's agenda. Photo courtesy of Bai Indigenous Women's Network

Furthermore, they oppose the labeling of activists like Jennifer Awingan and Sarah Alikes as terrorists and condemn the militarization and bombings of Indigenous and Moro communities, which threaten the safety and well-being of their people.

On this day, Indigenous and Moro women also pay tribute to Bai Bibyaon Ligkayan Bigkay, a legendary woman warrior fighter whose courage and resilience continue to inspire generations. Her legacy serves as a reminder of the strength and determination inherent in Indigenous and Moro women as they navigate the challenges of their struggles for justice and equality.

“Sa ating pagbibigay-pugay kay Bai Bibyaon Ligkayan Bigkay, isinasabuhay natin ang diwa ng kanyang katatagan at paglaban,” affirmed Kakay Tolentino, a Dumagat woman leader and national coordinator of Bai Indigenous Women’s Network. “Sa harap ng mga hamon, patuloy kaming makikibaka para sa karapatan sa lupa at sariling pagpapasya.”

(As we honor Bai Bibyaon Ligkayan Bigkay, we enliven the spirit of her steadfastness and struggle. In the face of challenges, we continue to fight for our rights to land and self-determination.)

As the rally concludes, Indigenous and Moro women reaffirm their commitment to the fight for the rights to land and self-determination. They vow to remain resolute in their resistance against all forms of violence and oppression, embodying the courage and determination of Bai Bibyaon Ligkayan Bigkay./

Bai
Bai Indigenous Women's Network

PRESS RELEASE ON
INTERNATIONAL WORKING
WOMEN'S DAY

“Sa ating pagbibigay-pugay kay Bai Bibyaon Ligkayan Bigkay, isinasabuhay natin ang diwa ng kanyang katatagan at paglaban. Sa harap ng mga hamon, patuloy kaming makikibaka para sa karapatan sa lupa at sariling pagpapasya.”

@bai_women @bai.women

Photo courtesy of Bai Indigenous Women’s Network

INDIGENOUS WOMEN CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S MONTH: DEMANDS GOV'T TO PRIORITIZE FOOD AND LIVELIHOOD, NOT CHA-CHA - LILAK

Every year, LILAK celebrates International Women's Month to remember the bravery of all women who fought for women's human rights worldwide. It is a time when we celebrate the women who offered their lives, stood up, and raised women's voices, place, and status in different aspects of society. Ultimately, this month is more than just a celebration. It is a protest where women continue to assert and demand a better life and meaningful participation in all spaces.



Women's Month Community Action 2024 at the Midsayap Municipal Plaza with Eumanen ne Menuvu, Teduray, Lambangian, Kirinteken, Pulangiye, and Manobo women. Photo courtesy of LILAK

To honor the pivotal role of indigenous women as frontrunners in the struggle of women and indigenous communities, and as key contributors to food production, 200 indigenous women gathered at Midsayap, North Cotabato on March 5, 2024. It served as a platform for indigenous women to voice their strong opposition to all forms of violence and harassment directed at indigenous peoples and indigenous women. The Eumanen ne Menuvu of North Cotabato, the Teduray and Lambangian of Maguindanao, and the Manobo from Bukidnon also expressed strong opposition to the recent moves toward Charter Change – standing against the extractive and anti-poor provisions that will gravely affect indigenous communities.

The Marcos-Romualdez camp pushes for a unicameral system through Charter Change, citing the alleged rigidity of our economic policy as reason behind altering our legislative process. Notably, the Resolution of Both Houses No. 6 (RBH 6) was previously filed in Congress to allow 100% foreign ownership of public services and academic institutions, and 100% foreign exploration of the country's natural resources – a resolution awaiting the success of a dubious People's Initiative to hasten its legislation.

Tessie Ambol, a Lambangian woman leader opposes the proposed Charter Change as it would mean more mining explorations within and around their ancestral domains in Maguindanao and this will disrupt their traditional ways of life and destroy the environment where they get food, water, and their livelihood. She added that the projects would only benefit a few but would have a massive and negative impact on their community.

Further carrying the stance against Charter Change, LILAK joined an International Women's Day Action led by the In Defense of Human Rights and Dignity Movement (iDEFEND) on March 7, at the Bonifacio Shrine, Ermita, Manila. The protest denounced attempts at constitutional reform and called for the prioritization of women



Cheryl Polutan of LILAK delivers a solidarity message with other iDEFEND member organizations at the Women's Day Action against Charter Change at the Bonifacio Shrine. Photo courtesy of LILAK

and Filipino people's welfare, saying "Pagkain, Trabaho, Lupa, Hustisya, Hindi Cha-Cha!" The mobilization drew attention to how across sectors, women bear the brunt of the greedy, corrupt, and corporate-led framework of development at work in the country.

In her message of solidarity, Cheryl Polutan of LILAK said that women will not permit our constitution to be amended for such vested interests. She declared that now, as we celebrate Women's Month, women will continue to condemn violence, and refuse to allow such violence to persist – violence that splinters from various directions, violence that will only be exacerbated by the interests of the few as they forward their version of Charter Change.

Women’s Month is a protest, and protests can take many forms, including music. In collaboration with Asian Music for Peoples’ Peace and Progress (AMP3), LILAK previously organized a songwriting workshop for indigenous women in March 2023 to provide a safe space for indigenous women to share their stories and struggles and express their activism through music.



Fëgëlukës at Linggëng artists with producers LILAK and AMP3 in the album launch event held at UP Fine Arts Gallery. Photo courtesy of LILAK

These songs were compiled in an album entitled “Fëgëlukës at Linggëng: Awit at Kwento ng mga Katutubong Kababaihan,” and launched last March 22, where Judy Pasimio of LILAK emphasized the organization’s dedication to exploring creative forms of criticism, activism, advocacy, and resistance, as spaces for such are marred by red-tagging, overt harassment, and marginalization. Combatting false narratives necessitates us to innovate and engage in creative approaches to connect with more people, especially the youth.

International Women’s Month continues to serve as a platform for resistance, demanding better circumstances and meaningful participation for women across sectors. Over the decades, indigenous women have maintained steadfast resistance against the harassment and exploitation of women and indigenous communities, defended their claim over their ancestral domain, and asserted the protection of our natural resources.

Through various forms – mobilizations, gatherings, art, and music – LILAK strives to amplify the voices of indigenous women who challenge profit and power-driven politicians and corporations that continue to marginalize and victimize women, indigenous people, and indigenous women. LILAK hopes to carry on her goal to foster solidarity and empowerment by bringing women and advocates together – drawing strength from each other’s courage and spirits./

UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPOORTEUR IRENE KHAN ADVOCATES FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN THE PHILIPPINES

In a significant visit to the Philippines, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression Irene Khan emphasized the essential need of sustaining and protecting the country's fundamental freedoms. Khan's visit comes at a time when there are growing worries about press freedom and free expression both domestically and abroad.



SR Irene Khan's visit to the Philippines. Photo from Philstar.com

Throughout her tenure as Special Rapporteur, Khan has continuously campaigned for the international protection of these fundamental rights. Her presence in the Philippines represents the international community's proactive effort to addressing human rights and civil liberties concerns.

During her visit, Khan spoke with a variety of stakeholders, including government officials, civil society organizations, journalists, and members of marginalized communities.

She listened intently to their worries and experiences, obtaining personal knowledge of the barriers experienced by persons exercising their right to free expression in the Philippines.

One of the main topics of Khan's discussions was the rising prevalence of attacks and harassment of journalists, activists, and dissenting voices. She voiced grave worry over accusations of intimidation, assault, and legal harassment directed at those who criticize the government. Such measures not only damage democracy, but also restrict the range of viewpoints required for a thriving society.

Khan also underlined the role of a free and independent media in holding power accountable and promoting transparency and accountability. She emphasized the critical role journalists play in democracy and asked the Philippine government to foster an atmosphere in which journalists can work without fear of repercussions.

She also addressed the subject of online freedom of expression, recognizing the internet's critical function as a platform for free speech and access to knowledge. She asked the government not to take any measures that would unnecessarily restrict online expression, highlighting the importance of striking a balance between security concerns and the safeguarding of fundamental rights.

During her encounters, Khan stressed the international community's commitment to fostering and preserving free expression in the Philippines. She encouraged the administration to comply with international human rights legislation and to take tangible efforts to overcome the impediments to freedom of expression in the country.

As Special Rapporteur, Khan's visit serves as a reminder that respecting human rights, especially freedom of opinion and expression, is not just a moral obligation, but also a foundation for democracy and effective government. It is essential to all stakeholders, including the Philippine government, to collaborate to guarantee that these fundamental rights are respected and protected for all people, regardless of background or views./



Irene Khan, UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression, recommends the abolition of the "outdated" NTF-ELCAC and the issuance of an executive order against red-tagging. From Philstar.com

MASS EFFORTS AGAINST THE LATEST CHARTER CHANGE

The move to amend the 1987 Constitution has been rife with legal issues and political controversy. The “People’s Initiative” as a mode for constitutional amendment propelled by some politicians for their dynasty’s political interests was done in surprise and speed, shocking the masses and even their fellow politicians. People were distracted by and caught in between a mere political factional fight between Marcos and Duterte.



Participants and speakers at the meeting of a broad network

Proponents have reasoned that the present Constitution itself is the hindrance to our country’s economic growth. However, changing the 1987 Constitution will deal heavy blows on our patrimony, and in the case of the Indigenous Peoples, it will lead to a more intensified series of violations of their rights to land.

On February 1, Panaghiusa Philippine Network attended a meeting involving a broad network, which aimed to come up with a coordinated campaign in order to combat this cunning scheme. Along with a number of professionals and concerned citizens, the No to Chacha Coalition, Movement Against Tyranny, 1Sambayan, Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, the National Council of Churches of the Philippines, and the Makabayan bloc were represented in attendance in a previous meeting.

Other attendees were from the Bunyog political partylist in Bicol, United Church of Christ in the Philippines, United Methodist Church, The Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines, Student Christian Movement, the Faculty Association of De La Salle University, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, and Kilusang Mayo Uno. Moreover, this meeting was attended by Justice Antonio Carpio, and Sen. JV Ejercito as the Senate's liaison representative.

The groups were united that everyone is against this latest attempt at Charter Change, and that changing the Constitution isn't needed in developing the economy; the effort to change the Constitution is driven by self-serving interests by the Marcoses to propel themselves to power; everyone is against this particular mode of change where all powers will be given to the lower house, losing the checks and balances system in the government, and lastly, that there is a need for a coordinated, nationwide grassroots participation.

All networks were urged to call on their formations across the country in order to educate the public about the truth behind this People's Initiative (PI) and attempt at Charter Change, launch campaigns to counteract the signature campaign of the PI, and mobilize the people in joining the broad February 25 mass mobilization to voice out the calls for genuine democracy and nationalism, reinvigorating the spirit of the People Power Revolution./



Sen. JV Ejercito gives an update from the Senate

PANAGHIUSA 2ND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

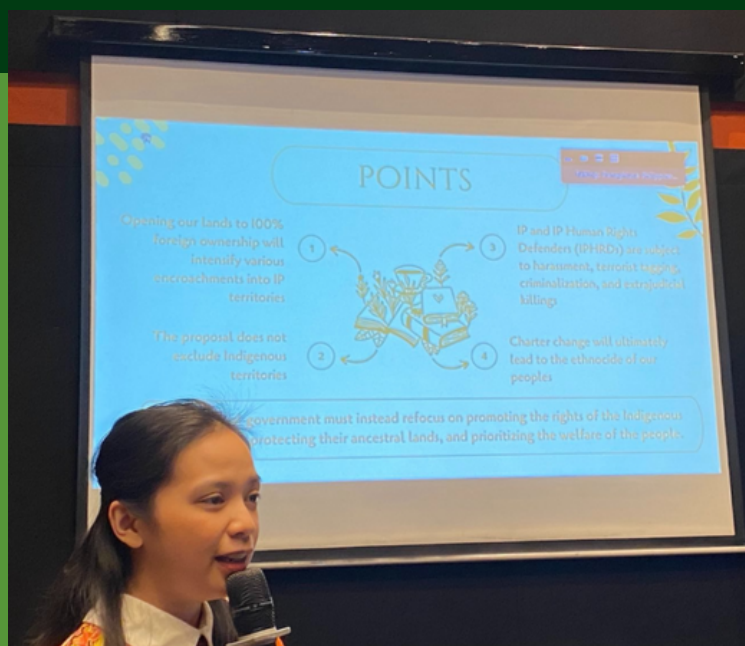


The Panaghiusa Philippine Network at its 2nd National Assembly

Last February 26, 2024, the Panaghiusa Philippine Network held a successful second National Assembly in Quezon City.

The assembly was conducted through a hybrid setup, wherein representatives of national member organizations gathered together in Quezon City while subnational and regional member organizations attended through a simultaneous online meeting.

This served as a get-together for the member organizations and a venue for planning and identifying collaborative activities. The new secretariat members also introduced themselves to the member organizations. The secretariat gave a brief report of its 2023 activities, presented Panaghiusa's rolling plans or its major activities for the year, and called for partnerships for the activities. Member organizations also shared their 2024 plans.



Discussion of Panaghiusa's statement against ChaCha

A highlight of the assembly was that the network was able to discuss, affirm, and comment on the draft of Panaghiusa's stand on the latest attempt at Charter change. At the end of the assembly, the network was united that the Charter change will have heavy, negative impacts on the Indigenous Peoples' rights to land and aggravate the attacks on their right to life.*

This timely assembly helped improve and maintain proactive membership participation for collaboration and developing shared goals and initiatives./

* for the statement, see <https://www.panaghiusa.com/post/the-panaghiusa-philippine-network-to-uphold-indigenous-peoples-rights-condemns-the-latest-attempt-a>



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Philippine Network to Uphold
Indigenous Peoples' Rights

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