

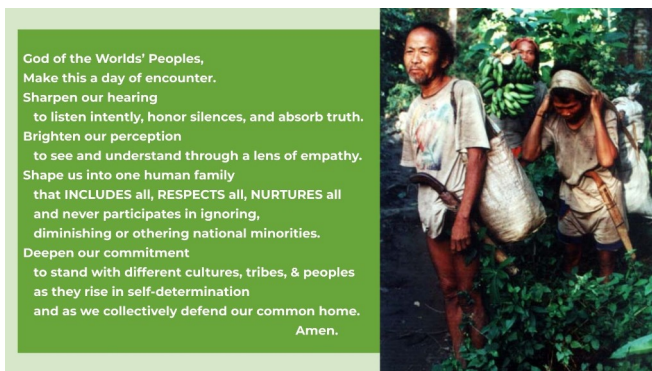
# Living a Culture of Encounter: Rising in Resistance, Standing in Solidarity!



## Introduction

Mabuhay! Mabuhì! Agbiag tako am-in (*Igorot*)! Matagu-tagu taku losan (*Kalinga*)! Allos kow (*Welcome ((not 'long life')) in Ubo Manobo*)! A blessed International Day for the World's Indigenous Peoples to us all.

May I invite our IP brothers and sisters to stand. Thank you for this day! Today, we celebrate YOU! IP advocates and rights defenders, shall we join them? Let us pray.



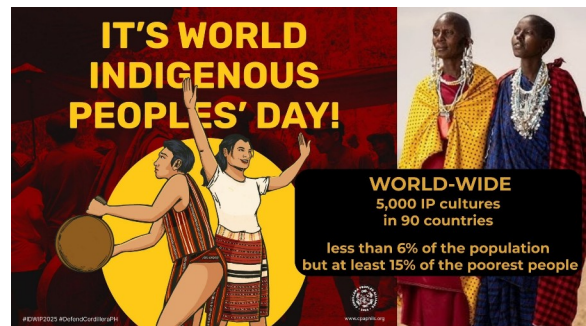
God of the Worlds' Peoples,  
Make this a day of encounter.  
Sharpen our hearing  
to listen intently, honor silences, and absorb truth.  
Brighten our perception  
to see and understand through a lens of empathy.  
Shape us into one human family  
that includes all, respects all, nurtures all  
and never participates in ignoring, diminishing  
or othering national minorities.

Deepen our commitment  
to stand with different cultures, tribes, and peoples  
as they rise in self-determination  
and as we collectively defend our common home.  
In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Encounter of Cultures

The United Nations says that there are  
5,000 different Indigenous Peoples' cultures  
in more than 90 countries around the world.

With approximately 476 million IPs worldwide, Indigenous Peoples' groups are  
less than 6% of the world's population,  
but account for at least 15% of the world's poorest people.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> United Nations-Strategic Development Goals, Knowledge Hub, <https://www.sdg.iisd.org/events/international-day-of-the-worlds-indigenous-peoples-2025/>

This Day for the World's Indigenous Peoples is a call to RENEWAL!  
A challenge to do better — and to be better.



Let me begin with an idea from Pope Francis of good memory.

In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis encourages us that the way to **restore hope** and **bring about renewal** is through a **CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER**.

He said it this way: “[I]t is closeness; it is the culture of encounter. Isolation, no; closeness, yes. Culture clash, no; culture of encounter, yes.”<sup>2</sup>

HOPE will be found through engaging with others.  
This is surely so. We can unite, when we understand.  
And the only way we will truly understand is through REAL and LIVING interconnectedness.  
HOPE comes in living TOGETHER — in ENCOUNTERING one another.

## Indigenous Peoples Overview

We have many cultures in the Philippines.  
One indicator is our many languages.  
According to *Ethnologue*,  
the Philippines has 175 living languages,  
of which only 9 are non-indigenous.<sup>3</sup>

KATRIBU, our gracious host for today, reports:

Indigenous peoples belong to

**110 ethnolinguistic groups**

Estimated at **14 million people**, (Note 2020 census had error in ethnic identification.)  
they are more than **10% of the population**.

They are distributed across the country: **Mindanao 63% Luzon 34% Visayas 3%.**



On the island of Negros, where I am from, we have at least 5 ethnic groups:  
**Ati. Ata. Ituman Bukidnon. Magahat Bukidnon. Carol-anon Bukidnon.**

I would want to tell you that we, in Negros, have done well...

That we have ENCOUNTERED the Ati, the Ata, the Bukidnon...

That we have learned, lifted up, and celebrated their distinct cultural traditions.

**We have work to do.**

**Too often, we only take notice when they have problems.**

**Worse, we notice them, when a dance is desired for a cultural festival or tourism project.**

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, §30, [www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20201003\\_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html)

<sup>3</sup> [www.ethnologue.com/country/PH](http://www.ethnologue.com/country/PH)



## IGNORING, not IGNORANCE

Our problem in Negros is like most of the Philippines, or even the world.

It isn't ignorance—a word with Latin roots meaning not knowing. We **know** IP cultures exist.

It is **IGNORE**-ance, or **IGNORING**. We **IGNORE**—a word that has developed to mean that we **INTENTIONALLY DISREGARD** something or someone.

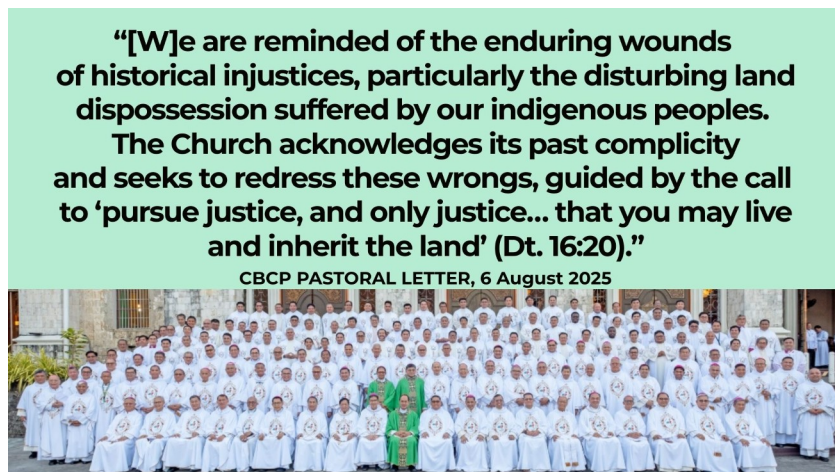
We have evolved from a state of not knowing to an active choice of not acknowledging.

In essence,  
our Indigenous  
Peoples are  
marginalized.  
We **IGNORE**  
their cultures.  
The majority  
**IGNORES**  
cultural  
minorities  
because it  
benefits us...  
it is to our  
advantage,  
our gain,  
our comfort.  
We **IGNORE**  
their suffering.



The Church has been complicit. This was included in a pastoral statement that the CBCP released just a few days ago:

**“[W]e are reminded of the enduring wounds of historical injustices, particularly the disturbing land dispossession suffered by our indigenous peoples. The Church acknowledges its past complicity and seeks to redress these wrongs, guided by the call to ‘pursue justice, and only justice... that you may live and inherit the land’ (Dt. 16:20).”<sup>4</sup>**



<sup>4</sup> PASTORAL LETTER ON THE PLIGHT OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (IP) COMMUNITIES ESPECIALLY THE MOLBOG AND CAGAYANEN IN PALAWAN, CBCP, 6 August 2025

## Project ELIMINATION

Ruby Dunstan of the Lil'wat People in South-Western British Columbia (Canada) explained:



All over the world, indigenous peoples have been and are being systematically destroyed in the name of development. Languages are being eradicated, family relationships are being stretched and broken, traditional values are belittled, and as a last resort, genocide is being practiced. What is by now a well-oiled and finely-tuned machine of elimination of indigenous people and thoughts has been practiced at least since the dawn of that day called Industrial Development.

### Why?

Because the perspectives and philosophies of indigenous peoples—our traditional rules and laws—would never allow this stripping of resources from our traditional homelands on this planet at a net cost to future generations and to life itself.

Ruby Dunstan of the Lil'wat People in South-Western British Columbia

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“**Why?** Because the perspectives and philosophies of indigenous peoples—our traditional rules and laws—would never allow this stripping of resources from our traditional homelands on this planet at a net cost to future generations and to life itself.”<sup>5</sup>

## Development Aggression and Plunder

This CANCEL CULTURE and DEVELOPMENT AGGRESSION and PLUNDER are so real — especially here in the Philippines.

Again, thanks to Katribu, I share an overview:

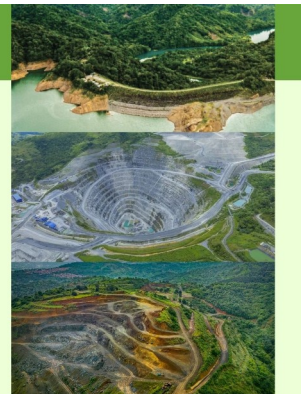
### MINING

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<sup>5</sup> Wisdom of the Elders, ed. Knudtson, Peter and Suzuki, David, p 188



## DAMS AND ENERGY PROJECTS

-5 energy development priority projects of **BBM's "Build Better More"** are located within ancestral lands, covering a combined area of 143,000 hectares.

-101 hydropower projects are lined up or installed across the Cordillera.

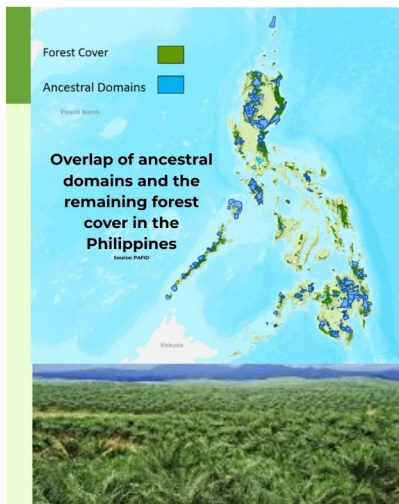
-Other dams projects span the country.

## DAMS and ENERGY PROJECTS

-5 energy development priority projects of **BBM's "Build Better More"** are located within ancestral lands, covering a combined area of 143,000 hectares.

- Chico River Irrigation Pump Project
- Balog-balog Multi Purpose Project,
- Wawa Bulk Water Supply Project,
- New Centennial Water System Kaliwa Dam
- Jalaur River Multi Purpose Project II.

-101 hydropower projects are lined up or installed across the Cordillera.  
-Other dams projects span the country.



## AGRIBUSINESS PLANTATION

-320,000 hectares of ancestral lands are controlled by giant, local and foreign corporations (mono-crops of banana, pineapple, oil palm, bioethanol, coffee and others), displacing or adversely affecting IP communities, especially in Mindanao.

-DENR pushed the Sustainable Forest Land Management Agreement that disproportionately favors large corporations to manage up to 40,000 hectares.

-Palm Oil Plantation agreements with foreign countries and local corporations are increasing, like HAPI in Candoni, Negros.

## AGRIBUSINESS PLANTATIONS

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-DENR recently rescinded previous community-based forest management and integrated social forestry policies for a Sustainable Forest Land Management Agreement that disproportionately favors large corporations to manage up to 40,000 hectares, with some areas overlapping ancestral domains.<sup>7</sup>

-Palm Oil Plantation agreements with foreign countries and local corporations are increasing, like HAPI in Candoni, Negros.

## TOURISM/DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Threats of land dispossession

-**Molbog** and **Cagayanen** in Maria Hangin Island, Bugsuk, Balabac, Palawan vs San Miguel Corporation luxury resort

-**Ayta** in Capas, Tarlac, Pampanga, vs Clark Development Corp. (CDC) & Bases Conversion Development Authority

-**Ati** in Boracay, Aklan vs multiple claimants

## TOURISM PROJECTS

Ecotourism and 'development' threaten land dispossession of IP communities

- the **Molbog and Cagayanen of Mariahangin Island in Bugsuk, Palawan** are fighting back against the San Miguel Corporation's development of a luxury resort within their remaining ancestral land.
- The **Ayta in Capas Tarlac, Pampanga** are fighting against the Clark Development Corporation (CDC) and the Bases Conversion Development Authority
- the **Ati in Boracay, Aklan**, are threatened with displacement due to a luxury resort



<sup>6</sup> Territories of Life Report of Bukluran, 2021

<sup>7</sup><https://www.rappler.com/philippines/denr-multiple-use-forest-lands-good-economy-environment/>

Development aggression and plunder directly affect many Indigenous communities. And even more, many groups are ignored as they wait for years and decades to secure their **Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles**. Indigenous Peoples remain under-represented and under-served. **IP Mandatory Representation** for Municipalities and Provinces with Indigenous populations often goes unimplemented.

## Rising in Resistance

And still, the Good-News is twofold:

*First*, not all Civil Society Organizations and Churches have been **IGNORING** our Indigenous Peoples. In fact, many of the legal cases faced by Church and CSO leaders (the Bad-News) are precisely because of their **SOLIDARITY** with Indigenous Peoples.

Let me highlight just a few from the Church:

**+ United Church of Christ in the Philippines**  
**HARAN Center** is facing confiscation proceedings under the Terrorism Financing Law because of their extensive ministry with bakwet lumad.



**+ Rural Missionaries of the Philippines**  
- North Mindanao Region was attacked because of their EU-funded “Healing the Hurts Project” which was for Indigenous Peoples and Peasants.



+ **Rev. Glofie Baluntong, United Methodist Church.** had Anti-Terrorism Act charges dismissed, but is still under trial for attempted murder charges, after her mission work with the Mangyans in Mindoro.

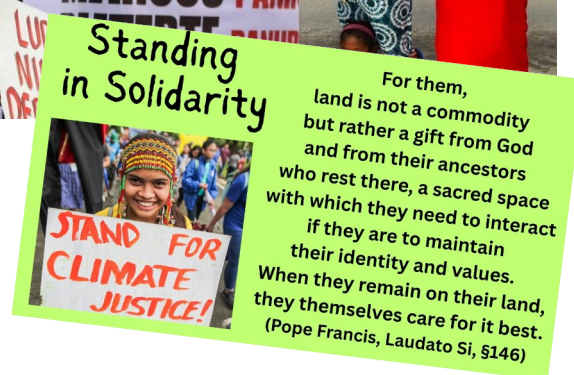


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Second, Indigenous Peoples, many in the room with us here today, are leading the cause. They rise not only for themselves, but for the environment.



For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best.<sup>8</sup> (Laudato Si', §146)



Their deep CONNECTION and CONVICTION that AND IS LIFE reverberates loudly, from one ethnic group to another, from the countryside to the cities, from ancestral lands to cathedrals, schools, and halls of power.

<sup>8</sup> Pope Francis, Laudato Si', §146, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)



We, non-Indigenous Peoples, have fallen short in nurturing a **CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER**. But, many of our IP siblings have persevered. They brought their **CULTURE FORWARD IN ENCOUNTER!** They are the ones taking the lead. They invite us into solidarity. They summon us to the fight. They rise in resistance and defend the lands and the environment. They demonstrate what Pope Francis calls in Laudato Si' "**Intergenerational Solidarity.**"<sup>9</sup>

Initiating encounters with us, YOU (*pointing to IPs in the room*) **restore hope**. YOU bring us all to **renewal**.

## Initiating encounters, Indigenous Peoples **RESTORE HOPE!** Your bring us all to renewal.



The **Ati** in Boracay are accompanied by the Daughters of Charity. The **Molbog** and **Cagayanen** in Bugsuk have Bp Pabillo and Bp Mesiona supporting their cause. The **Magahat Bukidnon** in Candoni, Negros are networking with Negrosanon Initiative for Climate and the Environment (NICE), One Negros Ecumenical Council, and others.

### **Militarism and Terror**

Our culture of encounter will continue to be important as we face militarism together. There are places in the Philippines, where rising in resistance is very difficult these days. Harassment and surveillance, red-tagging operations, so-called 'surrender' programs, the control of LGUs by NTF-ELCAC: all these make defending the rights of poor communities very difficult.

<sup>9</sup> Pope Francis, Laudato Si', §159-162



*Save Our Schools in Mindanao* has reported:

21 Lumad schools destroyed,  
10 incidents of aerial bombing  
and Lumad children criminalized.

In many far-flung communities peace initiatives  
are often blocked by militarization.

More than 100 political prisoners  
across the country are Indigenous Peoples.  
One IP leader and two IP advocates  
are among the disappeared.

Many have been extra-judicially killed. This is not just injustice—it is a spiritual wound.

Let us remember: These are our *kapwa*—our sacred neighbors.

## MILITARISM & TERROR

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it is a spiritual wound.

Let us remember:  
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The government files charges of supporting terrorism left and right;  
yet, the communities struggling to defend the land and their rights  
and those who help them are the ones afraid and pushing back fear.

On Negros Island, we will continue to stand with the Magahat farmers in Candoni against the land-grabbing of Hacienda Asia Plantation Inc. (HAPI). In fact, I am Chairperson of the Negrosanon Initiative for Climate and the Environment (NICE). NICE's leaders and members come from various youth groups in Negros Occidental, who gave strong support in our anti-coal campaign in San Carlos. We have written letters seeking clarification and asking for meetings with government entities on the operational structure and accountability of HAPI. We are not happy with HAPI! We will stand with our IP neighbors!

## Stand Up in Solidarity: DREAM IN HOPE

In the CBCP's National Synodal Implementation Framework, it says:

**We dream of a Church where everyone belongs, and no one is invisible.**

**We dream of a Church  
where everyone belongs,  
and no one is invisible.**

We STAND IN SOLIDARITY TOGETHER!  
Our "closeness" restores HOPE.  
CONNECTION **Yes!**  
SOLIDARITY **Yes!**  
JUSTICE **Yes!**  
**PEACE & HOPE Yes!**

We STAND IN SOLIDARITY  
TOGETHER!

Our "closeness" restores  
HOPE.

In working TOGETHER, in  
including EVERYONE, we  
are renewed  
and will be strengthened to  
ACT for JUSTICE!

CONNECTION-YES!  
SOLIDARITY-YES!  
JUSTICE-YES!  
PEACE & HOPE- YES!



Our solidarity encounters must continue—  
especially with Indigenous Peoples and the red-tagged,  
the falsely accused and detained,  
the disappeared and their families,  
and all who protect the environment and defend the land for generations to come.



Hope is not a feeling.  
It is a discipline.  
It is a muscle we build.  
A seed we plant. A tree we tend.  
A path we walk.

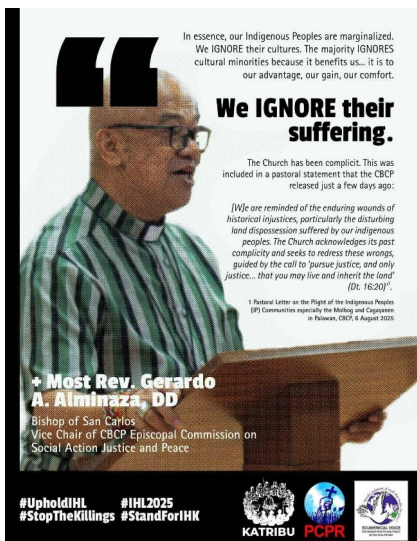
We restore hope  
by standing in solidarity.  
**Let's make everyone  
VISIBLE.**  
**Let's keep working together!**  
Amen.

*Presented by:*

**MOST. REV. GERARDO A. ALMINAZA, D.D.**  
**Bishop of San Carlos**  
**Vice-President of CARITAS Philippines**

*at*

**A Forum on the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples**  
**August 9, 2025 (Saturday) | 10:00AM to 12NOON**  
**Maryhill School of Theology, #62 14th Street corner Gilmore Avenue, QC**  
**initiated by Katribu Kalipunan ng Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas**



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