

**14TH SESSION OF THE UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES
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Agenda Item 8: Intervention on Future Work of the Permanent Forum
29 April 2015
Statement of Asia Indigenous Peoples Caucus
Presented by: Pallab Chakma**

Thank you, Madam Chair,

I speak on behalf of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Caucus.

Indigenous peoples in Asia, have been suffering for long from the impact of militarization, which ranges from direct extra-judicial killings of non-combatants to land grabbing, facilitating of development onslaught, economic dislocation and other violations of our collective and individual human rights, including self determination.

Militarization of indigenous territories is a state policy of deploying armed forces and military bases in areas inhabited by indigenous peoples, whereby military personnel often behave like an army of occupation and take over, or unduly interfere with, civil administration. Militarization is often employed to secure corporate interests, and to suppress community resistance against 'development' aggression and corporate plunder, such as mining and other extractive industries, hydro dams, energy projects, plantations, and other big businesses. Moreover, states and private businesses often violate indigenous peoples' rights, including by terming peaceful acts of resistance to land-grabbing as "terrorist" activities and "insurgency".

In Bangladesh, the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord stipulates that all military garrisons ("cantonments") and camps except six specified ones are to be dismantled. Instead of acting as stipulated, the government imposed de facto military rule in the region through "Operation Uttoran (Operation Upliftment) in 2001. In many cases, racist attacks by Bengali settlers on indigenous people and expansion of settlers' settlements are sponsored or facilitated, directly or clandestinely, by the military. Moreover, direct grabbing of traditional land of indigenous peoples by the military and paramilitary forces continues through the establishment of BGB (Border Guard Bangladesh) camps and tourism centres.

In Cambodia, the militarization of Indigenous Peoples' lands and territories involves a corrosive collaboration between the Royal Armed Forces of Cambodia and the private security forces of corporations, which are often camouflaged. The state forces work for the corporations. Such activities have led to illegal logging and mining, particularly in northeastern Cambodia, and persecution of indigenous peoples' human rights defenders through intimidation and killing.

In India, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958, which grants extraordinary powers to the armed forces, has been applied in so called "disturbed areas" of north-east India and Jammu and Kashmir, resulting in gross human rights violations, with impunity. This law has been invoked to provide a cover to arbitrary killings, torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and enforced disappearances.

In Japan, 74% of U.S. military bases are concentrated on the indigenous islands of *Ryukyus*, which constitutes 0.6 % of Japanese territory. Despite the strong

opposition of indigenous peoples, the Japanese and U.S. governments have forcibly constructed new military bases in *Henoko*. Allegations of rape of indigenous women and girls by U.S. military personnel remain un-investigated and unpunished, perhaps on account of the US-Japan Status of Forces Agreement.

In the context of Nepal, militarization caused forced displacement of Indigenous Peoples from their ancestral land due to establishment of National Park, Conservation Park and Protected area, especially in Chitwan, Bardiya National Park, and Annapurna Conservation. In those area indigenous peoples are not allowed even access to their natural resources, such as, fire wood for their cooking and fodder for their life stokes.

In the Philippines, militarization of indigenous territories continues through so-called counter-insurgency strategies, including “Oplan (Operation Plan) Bantay Laya” and “Oplan Bayanihan”. The strategies do not differentiate civilians from combatants, leading to the targeting of legitimate indigenous organizations in violation of international humanitarian law governing the conduct of armed conflicts. Likewise, legitimate indigenous organizations are vilified and often subjected to physical attacks. In early 2015, the Ifugao Peasant Movement continued to face threats through political vilification and harassment, leading to widespread fears of extrajudicial killings.

The Karen people in Thailand are being forcibly evicted by national park authorities and military forces from their traditional territories.

Against this backdrop, the Asia Indigenous Peoples Caucus make the following recommendations -

- Consider ‘Militarization in Indigenous Peoples Lands and Territories’ as one of the Themes of the Fifteenth (15th) Session of PFII.
- Conduct special study sessions on Militarization of Indigenous Peoples Lands and Territories. The study sessions may look into the following: (a) forms of militarization, (b) impact on women, youth and children; (c) indigenous culture and identity; and on (d) the alarming increase in the creation and use of paramilitary forces or private armed groups to protect state and corporate businesses.

Thank you Madam Chair.