

**Eighth Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
20-24 July 2015**

Item 9: Proposals to be submitted to the Human Rights Council for its consideration and approval

Proposal Statement of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Caucus

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Mr. Chair,

The experiences and history of indigenous peoples worldwide, for hundreds of years, has been indelibly etched with that of militarization that accompanied the agenda of colonization and assimilation. The story has not changed; this experience and history continues even today.

In Asia, indigenous peoples are undergoing and experiencing massive militarization and its continued impact varying from the obliteration of whole peoples and nations to that of extra-judicial killing of individuals. Militarization, for indigenous peoples in Asia, is not about security and safety but about violation of our rights through horrific acts such as rape, torture, illegal detention, disappearances etc.

While militarization has always been used by states to suppress its population; vis-à-vis indigenous peoples in Asia and elsewhere in the world, what is extremely alarming is its emergence as a tool used to advance the interest of corporations, big businesses, powerful individuals and even the self-interests of the military at the expense of the survival and existence of indigenous peoples. The backdrop for rationalizing such militarization and the rights violation that it entails has been the argument of “development” juxtaposed against the argument of “national economic interests”. It is this that has allowed the proliferation of plantations, hydro-projects, tourism projects, mining and extractive industries, and other big businesses in the lands and territories of indigenous peoples.

The legitimization of militarization and actions of the military find further force in the harsh security laws imposed on indigenous peoples. In India, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act provides absolute impunity to the military even to the extent of killing. In Philippines, the Oplan Bayanihan has militarized the whole civil administration resulting in widespread human rights violation of indigenous peoples.

What adds to the seriousness and urgency for the need to address the link between militarization and “development” is that in some Asian states, the military dictates the agenda for “development” and actually owns and operates businesses and companies! In Burma, the Myanmar Economic Holdings Company is one of the major conglomerates owned by the Burmese Military. In Philippines, the military is part of the Investment Defense Force which are armed units funded by corporations for their interests. Further, in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh, the military is

extensively involved in operating tourism businesses. These have serious widespread ramifications for indigenous peoples because the distinction between corporations and military establishment becomes non-existent.

Mr. Chair, there are numerous cases of militarization that is intrinsically linked with the idea of "development" as espoused by the state but which offers nothing but destruction and violation of rights for indigenous peoples.

Therefore in the context of the indigenous peoples of Asia, the Asia Indigenous Peoples' Caucus recommends:

1. That the Human Rights Council consider "Militarization and Development" as a theme for the next study by the EMRIP;
2. And in doing this, the EMRIP look into the issues of:
 - a. Forms of militarization;
 - b. The link between militarization and "development";
 - c. The use of military for corporate and business interests; and
3. The impact of militarization on the life and livelihood of indigenous peoples.

Thank you, Chair.

RAK NAZIM