

Tribe council (Mindanao, Philippines): Murder of Teduray chieftain 'meant to silence lumad struggle for rights'

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MANILA, Philippines — The murder of a Teduray chieftain in Maguindanao province on October 2 was “not an ordinary crime but an attempt to silence tribal leaders who persevere in standing for their rights,” the supreme council of the tribe said Monday.

Lencio Arig, a member of the *Minted sa Inged*, or council of leaders of the Timuay Justice and Governance, was shot dead in Sitio Keninan, Barangay Ramongaob, South Upi town by at least two gunmen as he walked home with his wife and young daughter.

In a statement, the TJG, which is the indigenous political structure of the Teduray and Lambangian tribes in Maguindanao, said Arig was actively involved in campaigning for the full recognition of the rights and ancestral domain of indigenous people, including the Dulangan Manobo, within the prospective autonomous homeland to be created with the enactment of the Bangsamoro Basic Law.

Timuay Labi (supreme chieftain) Sannie Bello, and his deputies — Timuay Santos Unsad and Letecio Datuwata — who signed the statement, said Arig was also one of the most outspoken tribal leaders against mining exploration within the Teduray’s ancestral claims in Sitio Datar Bulawan, Ranao Pilayan in Upi town.

TJG said Arig’s murder “proves that justice continues to be elusive for the Teduray, Lambangian and Dulangan Manobo within the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which is now the core area of the [prospective] Bangsamoro.”

At the same time, it urged leaders of the tribes to “persevere and intensify the work we have started” and for which Arig was murdered, to ensure that his death would not be meaningless.

The leaders challenged authorities to give justice to Arig by ensuring his killers are made to account for the crime.

“If democracy and justice truly exist in our country, prove it by solving the case as soon as possible,” it said.

They also called on the peacemaking mechanisms within the Bangsamoro, “particularly the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation” under the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro “to seriously address the lack of justice for indigenous people within the Bangsamoro to ensure that everyone enjoys genuine peace based on justice.”

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* InterAksyon.com. The online news portal of TV5. October 6, 2014 4:25 PM:

<http://www.interaksyon.com/article/96767/tribe-council-murder-of-teduray-chieftain-meant-to-silence-lumad-struggle-for-rights>