

Mindanao (Philippines); Indigenous Peoples - Erumenen Timuay to warring parties: Do not bring your wars in our lands

Tuesday 16 January 2018 (Date first published: 5 December 2017).



Timuay Ronaldo Ambangan (second from right) holds the white rooster that will be offered in a ritual for another year of peace in the indigenous community of Aroman, Carmen, Cotabato.

“Do not bring your wars in our lands. Leave our ancestral domain”. This is the impassioned message of Timuay Ronaldo Ambangan of the Gempa te Kelindaan ne Kamal, the *Erumanen ne Menuvu*’s indigenous political structure, during the 2017 Semayaan Festival which was held in their tribal hall in Aroman, Carmen, Cotabato on November 27-29.

The Semayaan or community feast is a pengirerahun ne kevruran or annual gathering of Vansa te Sinimburanen (Sinimburanen subtribe) where Erumenen ne Menuvu leaders, coming from the different parts of their ancestral domain, are gathered for a ritual to signal the start of farm preparation for another production cycle. It is also during the Semayaan where important issues of the tribes are discussed, conflicts between and among tribal leaders are settled, and in some instances tribal weddings are taking place.

Ambangan is also one of the governing council of the Independent Indigenous Peoples’ Voice (IIPV), an independent and grassroots-led coming together of 22 tribes of the Lumad in Mindanao who wanted to actively and constructively engage in the different peace processes by bringing in the issues of the Lumad communities, such as the rising incidence of Indigenous Peoples killings and the continued militarization of their communities.

Ambangan’s strong statement came after the wake of armed confrontation between ISIS-inspired groups and the Armed Forces of the Philippines in Carmen, North Cotabato which has been going since November 7, 2017. The military airstrikes and ground armed combat led to the displacement of 1, 920 households of which 87 are Erumanen families from Bentangan and other parts of Carmen- mostly part of their ancestral domain. Ambangan said that the armed confrontation did not only cause displacements of their communities but as well as marred their peaceful communities with the blood shed by the warring parties, a war not of their own making.

Ambangan’s call for the armed groups to leave their ancestral domain is a reiteration of the proposal of the governing council of the IIPV to declare Lumad’s ancestral domains as peace sanctuaries.

This strong assertion is also reflective on the launching of the exhibit, Keetew, at the ancestral domain of the Erumenen ne Menuvu in the occasion of the Semeyaan. The exhibit features the assertion of the indigenous peoples for the full inclusion of their rights in the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law as well as other struggles which are essential in the realization of their right to self-determination. Keetew refers to identity- a term common among Erumanen ne Menuvu, Teduray and Lambangian tribes whose territories may eventually form part of the Bangsamoro territory.

IPVoice

P.S.

* Posted 5th December 2017:

<https://ipvoicemindanao.blogspot.fr/2017/12/erumenen-timuay-to-warring-parties-do.html>