



“Paghida-et sa Kauswagan” Development Group, Inc.

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STATEMENT

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The “Paghida-et sa Kauswagan” Development Group Inc. (PDG) strongly condemns the malicious accusation and red tagging by the 303rd Brigade of the Philippine Army led by Brigadier Gen. Benedict Arevalo of various development and civil society organizations in their series of forums conducted in colleges and universities in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental last week. Such actions displayed an unfair, shameful, misplaced, unprofessional and dangerous mindset of the Philippine Army who should supposedly espouse peace with professionalism in disposing their functions. Instead, they used their uniform as badge to demonstrate how to be professional lies-mongers spreading baseless and unjust attacks on legitimate organizations that are helping alleviate the sad plight of less fortunate sectors of society clamoring for equal opportunities for all towards attaining genuine, equitable and sustainable development.

PDG was among those organizations spitefully red tagged by the Philippine Army led by Brig. Gen. Arevalo in their slide presentation during the forums with students. This action was not the first! The Philippine Army also did the same last March 2019 in an assembly they held in Talisay City in the presence of some government agencies’ personnel. Also last August 17, 2019 and in their previous weekend Philippine Army’s paid airtime program over a local radio station Radyo Natin in Kabankalan City, an anchor who just introduced himself as “Kuya Jake” was heard slandering PDG and its staff and farmer-community leaders and accused as “organizers of terrorist NPA” and “collecting money for the NPA”. PDG condemns these aggressive intimidation and dangerous acts of the 303rd Brigade of the Philippine Army and Brig. Gen. Arevalo!

It can be recalled that in early part of 2018, PDG’s Executive Director Atty. Benjamin Ramos, Jr. was vilified and maliciously accused as one of “CNN personalities” in a poster hung by the PNP Moises Padilla in public market of said town. In November 6, 2018, Atty. Ramos was mercilessly murdered. Then just a week after his funeral, two PDG staff received death threats.

The unending series of events happening in Negros Island now already bring signal of increasing risk of harassment, intimidation, unjust persecution and attack on development workers and community leaders. Fingers crossed, but whatever violence may afflict on PDG, its staff and community leaders in the future, the series of events provide us the clue of who is accountable!

PDG’s advocacy on the promotion and respect of human rights is guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Likewise, its three (3) decades of existence is consistent with the mandate of the 1987 Philippine Constitution which clearly recognizes participation and empowerment, including the important role of CSOs.

PDG is a non-stock not-for profit organization established in 1987, duly registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) with office in Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental. For thirty years, PDG has been providing services to farmers, farm-workers and fisherfolks in Southern Negros, educating them of their rights to land, food, and livelihood by implementing socio-economic, sustainable agriculture, environmental protection and rehabilitation, human rights and legal support programs. PDG constantly and critically collaborate with DAR to implement genuine land distribution, as well as with other government agencies for effective delivery of various socio-economic projects in the communities. As provided for by the Local Government Code of 1991, which promotes among others, CSOs’ participation in local government planning and policymaking and in the delivery of social services, PDG continues to be an active CSO partner of different local government units (LGUs) through the local development councils. In its three decades of grounded development work, PDG boosts to have earned recognition and respect at the local, national and international development community.

As CSO, PDG will continue to serve as watchdog to help ensure that government policies are appropriate and meaningfully serve the poor, guidelines are followed, and that government projects and public services for the rural communities are delivered.

We call on the Philippine Army to stop its unjust attack on development organizations and workers. We call on President Duterte to call off and put a stop on the attacks to development organizations, civil society organizations and farmers. Please hear our call to instead support our efforts achieve lasting peace and genuine development.

We want peace! PDG believes that peace could be attained if there is genuine and sustainable development. We want peace, a kind of peace that is based on justice! ###

Reference: Eduardo Florendo
President
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