

# Philippine Human Rights Act

One-Pager

## SAVE LUMAD SCHOOLS

The Lumad are a collective group of nearly 17 million indigenous peoples in the southern Mindanao region of the Philippines. The term Lumad is short for Katawhang Lumad (literally: “indigenous people”), a description officially adopted by delegates of the Lumad Mindanao Peoples Federation founding assembly on June 26, 1986.

Lumad schools were established as a result of the distance of Lumad communities from other public schools and the need to further protect their rights, property, and culture. However, Duterte’s Administration has repeatedly threatened to bomb Lumad schools and shut them down accusing them of being used as training centers for the New People’s Army (NPA) communist rebels.

In July 2016, there were 216 Lumad schools in Mindanao. Only 38 schools remain as of September 2020. The reality is that Duterte’s goal to open ancestral domains is to generate wealth for corporations, at the expense of Lumad communities.

The Philippines is considered the deadliest and most dangerous Asian country for land and environmental activists. Lumad have continuously been forced to defend their ancestral territories against mining and militarization, forcing them to flee their communities.

Groups such as MIPCEL have aligned themselves in collaboration with Duterte’s AFP, red-tagging the Lumad and other progressive organizations. Even after the martial law declaration in Mindanao had officially ended, the recent passing of the Anti-Terror Law has emboldened military forces to occupy Lumad communities. Issues are also magnified due to the pandemic, education worsens even more because parents cannot assist or afford remote learning

## Who is affected?

- Escalating armed conflict between the government and rebel groups in Mindanao and opening of ancestral domains have placed Lumad youth in the crossfire, forcibly displacing them to other areas of the country where they are continuing to pursue education, but are not learning about their indigenous culture as they would have if they were in Lumad schools. Lumad schools not only supply knowledge to the Lumad youth, but also allow them to preserve their culture and rights.
- Displacement also puts them at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19 due to lack of resources such as food and vitamins, and also endangers the mental health of Lumad youth due to the trauma. The Duterte administration does not only deny these children their right to education, they subject Lumad children to state violence with the continuous attacks on Lumad schools.
- The Save Our Schools (SOS) Network has already documented 584 cases of attacks, ranging from school-related extrajudicial killings to sexual harassment cases.
- There is also the risk of being red-tagged and killed. While fighting for their right to education, they also struggle with trauma from recent attacks to their community from when Duterte imposed martial law on Mindanao from 2017 until 2019

## Why we Need the PHRA

The PHRA will suspend military aid which will therefore decrease militarization of Lumad communities. The Duterte administration will be held accountable for the deaths, displacements, and other human rights infringements upon the Lumad. They will be able to return home and preserve their culture and property, through being allowed to continue their education and safely protest against the environmental destruction caused by mining corporations.