

# On the alleged militarization of Lumad communities

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## Details

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The Armed Forces of the Philippines categorically denies the militarization of Lumad communities in Mindanao and the alleged attacks on the rights of Indigenous Peoples (IP) camping in the University of the Philippines. These allegations by Bayan Muna Representative Carlos Zarate follows the same rethoric they had in 2015 and covers up the exploitation of the Lumad by left-leaning groups.

We have already unmasked this deliberate and orchestrated efforts by left-leaning organizations and the New People's Army who encroach in IP communities. Dubbed as "*Taktikang Bakwit*," left-leaning organizations, including that of Zarate's, distort the facts and circumstances in which the Lumad are forced to evacuate their homes, blaming instead the government's legitimate peace and security operations.

The AFP's presence in IP communities has always been in response to the presence of armed NPAs as reported by Lumad leaders. It is the NPA who have militarized these areas by setting up camps and by using Lumad schools for indoctrinating, agitating, and recruiting new cadres.

This has been corroborated by an Affidavit of Unified Declaration of Tribal Leaders of Talaingod, Davao Del Norte submitted by Lumad leaders who condemned the abuses and exploitation done by left-leaning organizations in the UCCP-Haran incident, where the Lumads lived in horrid conditions in 2015. Testimonies from former NPA recruits, test papers from Lumad Schools run by left-leaning organizations, and photos of operations against NPAs also debunk the aforesaid claims of Representative Zarate.

We condemn any action that use the Lumads for propaganda against the government. This UCCP Haran incident in 2015 is unacceptable as these actions endanger the lives of Lumads, particularly their women and children, and disrupt their way of life.

Rest assured that the AFP will not stop in proactively seeking solutions through continuous dialogues with local leaders, government agencies, and non-government organizations to ensure that the rights of the Lumads are protected from exploitation and violence perpetrated by the New People's Army and its front organizations. @@@