

IC MAGAZINE

NEWS

Philippines: Oil palm company A. Brown grabs Higaonon indigenous people's lands

By [John Ahni Schertow](#) • Aug 6, 2012 • [2 Comments](#)

43

SHARE

**PAGE
TOP**

An International Fact-Finding Mission (IFFM) recently confirmed that the Philippines-based *A. Brown Company, Inc.* never had the right to open a palm oil plantation in Opol, Misamis Oriental in Southern Philippines, where it displaced hundreds of families from the Higaonon Peoples.

The organizations involved in the IFFM are now calling for:

- ▶ A Brown to immediately pull-out of Opol and respect the farmers' and indigenous people's right to their ancestral lands;
- ▶ All forms of human rights violations be stopped, the perpetrators punished, and the victims indemnified;
- ▶ Desecration of sacred sites must also be stopped; and
- ▶ A Brown, together with all concerned units and agencies of the Philippine government to clean-up and rehabilitate the contaminated areas, provide immediate economic relief to the farmers, and strictly follow the FPIC process that is mandated not only by Philippine law, but by international law as well.

A petition to support these demands is available here:

<http://www.panap.net/en/fs/page/food->

[sovereignty/1130](#).

Below, an *article* by the *World Rainforest Movement*

Philippines: Oil palm company A. Brown grabs Higaonon indigenous people's lands

The Philippine A. Brown Company, Inc. is engaged in the business of oil palm plantation development and milling. In 2010, the company started planting oil palm on 520 hectares of public land claimed by the Higaonon indigenous people.

The Higaonon people of the barangays (villages) of Bagocboc and Tingalan in the municipality of Opol, in the southern Philippine province of Misamis Oriental, claim that they have been occupying these lands since before the Spanish colonial era. Their ancestors hunted animals, gathered honey and kept small portions of land for agriculture, maintaining their unique culture. Although the Higaonon were displaced in the 1950s to make way for the logging and livestock grazing ventures of landlords, they kept coming back to their lands, making them productive.

A. Brown entered the Higaonon people's land to establish an oil palm plantation without obtaining their free, prior and informed consent. This land grab has involved numerous human rights violations, including the shooting and illegal arrest of farmers, burning of houses, uprooting of crops, harassment and death threats.

All of this was revealed by an International Fact-Finding Mission (IFFM) that began last May 6 and was conducted by the

Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific (PAN AP), the Peasant Movement of the Philippines (KMP), the Asian Peasant Coalition (APC), Sentro Kitanglad, Kalumbay Regional Lumad Organization and other organizations based in Opol.

The IFFM discovered that A. Brown does not yet have a permit to operate in the said area. Officials from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said that the government agency has not issued any permit for these operations, which means the company is violating existing forestry and environmental laws.

The findings of the IFFM were presented in a public forum at the University of the Philippines-Diliman, where demands were reiterated for the pull-out of A. Brown from Opol and the immediate return of the indigenous peoples to their ancestral land. They also called for the investigation of human rights violations against the Higaonon (see the IFFM findings at

<http://www.panap.net/en/fs/post/food-sovereignty-resistance-land-grabbing/1069>).

The establishment of large-scale oil palm plantations also undermines the Higaonon people's food sovereignty. "With our lands being taken away, our families left to starve, and our rights violated, we have no choice but to fight. As indigenous peoples, we have the right to land, yet this has continuously been denied to us," said Rubenson Batuto, whose family has lived in Tingalan since the pre-Spanish colonization era.

Agrochemicals applied in the company's industrial oil palm plantations, including carbofuran and glyphosate, are gradually affecting the health of the Higaonon; residents of Opol have reported an increase in the incidence of coughs and colds, skin diseases, diarrhea and

other illnesses since the plantation started spraying pesticides. In addition, their coconut and banana trees – their only source of livelihood – have been slowly dying since the plantation's entry.

Erwin Navarro of PAN AP warned of the social, cultural, health and environmental impacts of large-scale oil palm plantations, which have expanded in other Asian countries, bulldozing forests and displacing numerous indigenous peoples. Now, industrial oil palm plantations are entering the Philippines to become a major export crop, as is also the case in the municipalities of Española, Quezon and Brooke's Point in Palawan, denounced by the Philippines-based advocacy campaign network of indigenous peoples ALDAW and reported this year in WRM Bulletin N^o 174.

A campaign is being carried out to gather signatures for a petition calling on the Philippine government to oust A. Brown immediately from Opol; to stop human rights violations, as well as punish the perpetrators and indemnify the victims; and to stop the desecration of sacred sites. The petition also demands that A. Brown, together with all concerned units and agencies of the Philippine government, clean up and rehabilitate the contaminated areas, provide immediate economic relief to the farmers, and follow the free, prior and informed consent process.

You are invited to support the farmers and indigenous peoples of Opol in reclaiming their lands by signing the petition letter at <http://www.panap.net/en/fs/page/food-sovereignty/1130>

Globally, the expansion of oil palm has been made possible through land grabbing, land use conversion, and rapid deforestation. Displaced farmers and indigenous peoples

have been forced to become agricultural workers in oil palm plantations. Oil palm expansion has in general brought about increased hunger and poverty while benefitting only a few private interests.

Article based on information from:
"Palm oil plantation in Misamis Oriental has no right to occupy indigenous lands, IFFM says",
Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific (PAN AP),
<http://www.panap.net/en/fs/post/food-sovereignty-resistance-land-grabbing/1070>



Related Posts

1 2 3



Palm Oil Project in Cameroon Continues Producing Controversy, Opposition • Sep 18, 2013



Mexico judiciary stops all mining operations in the sacred territory of Wirikuta • Sep 13, 2013



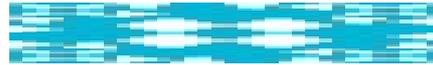
Ethiopia to Continue Land Grabbing and Forced Resettlement • Sep 12, 2013



Running over Creation: Gila River Alliance continues to oppose South Mountain Freeway • Sep 1, 2013

**2 comments on
"Philippines: Oil palm company A. Brown grabs Higaonon indigenous**

people's lands"



Jerry Ramos says:

[September 28, 2012 at 12:10 am](#)

Now, your slip is showing. While there were some misgivings in some companies in setting oil palm plantations that must not be condoned, the biggest threat, as anticipated by foreign funded organizations, is the displacement of the market for soya oil, canola oil, rapeseed oil, all products of the Western countries, where oil palm can never be planted economically.

Palm oil is the most profitable oil plant in the world, and is seen by western countries as threat to their oil business, that's the only reason why they vigorously funded organizations that will stop or impede the spread of the palm oil industry in the Philippines, and other countries that lie within 20 degrees north and south of the equator, said region on the globe is where palm oil can be grown economically.

This is an economic war, and the foreign funded organizations are well funded. The countries where palm oil can be grown economically must recognize this, and not be misguided .

Reply



Ahni says:

[September 29, 2012 at 11:18 am](#)

Jerry, that's treacherously inaccurate. Western countries love Palm oil. In the US alone, palm oil imports have jumped 485% in the last ten years. Tonnes of western companies are also neck deep in the industry, including Cargill (the largest privately owned company in the US) and Unilever (the world's third-largest consumer goods company). Palm Oil is good for business. And it doesn't matter where it's grown... Location is irrelevant in the global market economy, which western countries have always relied on.

Also, a bit of a heads up: all the talk out there about 'Foreign funded organizations' is a distraction from the real issue: the fact that the palm oil industry systemically obliterates biodiversity and destroys local economies so the government (eg, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea) and their partners (domestic and foreign companies, like

Cargill) can make money. That's why there's such a big push for sustainable palm oil. Sure, a lot of NGOs are in it for themselves (that shouldn't come as a surprise, after all, NGOs are non-profit corporations) but this pales in comparison to the social, cultural and environmental impacts of palm oil. The same is true for mining, hydro dams, logging and pretty much every other resource-based industry.

Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published.

Required fields are marked *

Name *

Email *

Website

Comment

You may use these HTML tags and attributes: `` `<abbr title="">` `<acronym title="">` `` `<blockquote cite="">` `<code>` `<del date="">` `` `<i>` `<q cite="">` `<strike>` ``

Post Comment

ANNOUNCEMENT



People Land Truth 2013 is now available in digital and print. Get it while it's hot!

[DOWNLOAD / ORDER](#)

CONNECT WITH US

6.322 Personen gefällt Intercontinental Cry.



Soziales Plug-in von Facebook



POPULAR LATEST COMMENTS

[Brazil: 1500 Indigenous Peoples occupy the Esplanade of Ministries](#)

[Big Oil funds Reconciliation in Vancouver](#)

[Indigenous Penan continue protesting as Murum dam begins to fill](#)

[Mexico judiciary stops all mining operations in the sacred territory of Wirikuta](#)

[Ethiopia to Continue Land Grabbing and Forced Resettlement](#)

"In a media landscape made up of lies, flash, giant blind spots and corporatized sites of distraction, Intercontinental Cry is a trustworthy pathway to the truth where people who are committed to understanding Indigenous realities can gain insight and information to illuminate and activate their struggles."

Taiiake Alfred

Professor of Indigenous Governance at UVIC and author of Wasáse

FRIENDS AND ALLIES

[Upside Down World](#)

[Indigenous Action](#)

[Center for World Indigenous Studies](#)

[Honor the Earth](#)

[Indigenous Environmental Network](#)

[WW4 Report](#)

[First Voices Indigenous Radio](#)

[Protest Barrick](#)

[Real World Radio](#)

[MiningWatch](#)

[Briarpatch Magazine](#)

[Mines and Communities](#)

[Climate Connections](#)

Defenders of the Land

Wrong Kind of Green

Public Good Project

Sacred Land Film Project

Media Coop

Climate and Capitalism

Rights Action

Conversations with the Earth

Cultural Survival

Indigenous Nationhood Movement



Design by Ahni / Hosted by May First /
People Link

Write for us / Become a sustainer!