

**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 16th Session,
24 April to 5 May 2017**

AGENDA ITEM 10: Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples and the Chair of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with regard to Indigenous human rights defenders.

Presented by Jazmin Alfaro, United Confederation of Taíno People, on behalf of participants in the Project Access 12th Annual Global Capacity-Building Training Workshop for Indigenous Peoples (Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and the Pacific, Eastern Europe, Russia and Transcaucasia)

Thank you Madam Chair, Indigenous brothers and sisters,

I read on behalf of Project Access members of Tribal Link. Human rights defenders risk ultimate removal politically, socially, or physically, particularly Indigenous peoples.

As the chair of EMRIP stated in his intervention today, 49% of the 282 human rights defenders that were murdered in 2016, were Indigenous and environmental rights defenders. In a vast majority of cases, murders were preceded by warning, death threats and intimidation, which, when reported to the police were routinely ignored.

Criminalization is the first choice of state and non-state actors to silence defenders and to dissuade others. Physical attacks, threats, smear campaigns, and arrest for peaceful protest, are commonly used, particularly in the context of development projects. In addition to these examples at NoDAPL prayer camps, journalists and documentary film-makers covering Standing Rock were criminally charged in an attempt to silence media coverage.

Judicial harassment, such as in Cameroon, has had Mr. Musa Usman Ndamba in court appearances *one thousand and thirteen times* for the same case of defending community land against land grab. In Russia, Mr. Pavel Sulyandziga - who is a member of United Nations Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, is being subjected to political persecution and is currently in exile for his work. Further, we note with lament, that Leonard Pelletier was not given clemency from the United States.

In the Philippines, on February 4 2017, Mr. Renato Anglao, a leader of the Lumad Tribe was murdered for defending his peoples' territory against mining interests. 14 other Indigenous land rights activists vocal in their opposition to corporate resource extraction were also murdered in the Philippines in the first quarter of 2017 alone. Further, disappearances with particular spot light to Pakistan, China, and Thailand were also reported.

We acknowledge the increasing pattern of these atrocities and state complicity in these violations in apparent favor of corporate interests over Indigenous human rights obligations.

Given continued retaliation on Indigenous peoples and communities opposing environmentally destructive industry projects, we demand states to stop militarization of Indigenous peoples' lands.

We challenge EMRIP to issue stronger statements to member states, and ask the special rapporteur on human rights to pursue further investigations on these harassments and killings.

We recommend that the Chair of the Permanent Forum oversee the creation of a database of all Indigenous human rights defenders who have lost their lives in this noble cause.

Finally, we recommend EMRIP, in its new mandate, to invest particular attention to Articles 27, 28, and 40 of the Declaration, and create a process that is fair and equitable to protect Indigenous human rights defenders.

Thank you.