



Asian Peasant Coalition (APC)

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Day of the Landless

Stop oil palm plantations! Fight for land, fight for life!

Statement

March 30, 2016

As we mark the Day of the Landless on March 29, the Asian Peasant Coalition (APC) is launching the “Stop Oil Palm Plantations!” campaign. This, amidst the massive and aggressive expansion of the palm oil industry that further threatens the life and livelihood of countless farmers, farm workers, indigenous peoples, and other oppressed and exploited rural sectors in the region.

We note with great concern how big oil palm corporations have been expanding and deepening their control over vast areas of agricultural lands. In Indonesia, for instance, just 25 companies led by Wilmar and Sinar Mas control 29 million hectares. Wilmar is Asia’s largest agribusiness group and has presence not only in Indonesia but in more than 50 other countries as well.



In the Philippines, an ambitious plan is being pursued by landlords and compradors in cahoots with the government to expand oil palm plantations from the current 73,000 hectares to as much as 1.2 million hectares by 2030. In Thailand, oil palm plantations control more than 781,000 hectares of land.

The exploitation and plunder of agricultural lands and resources for corporate, export-oriented palm oil production are being supported by national government policies and programs and financed by big banks and international financial institutions such as the World Bank.

Aside from physically, economically and culturally displacing rural communities, the palm oil industry is also linked to rampant and systematic human rights violations, including unfair labor practices, child labor, and hazardous working conditions in the plantations. The use of toxic pesticides in oil palm cultivation contaminates the water system and the environment of the entire communities. At the same time, it is accompanied with forced migration.

But there is a strong mass movement led by peasants strongly campaigning against land grabbing and corporate oil palm plantations. Despite relentless oppression by the state and corporations, these peasant movements have been pursuing “land reform by the people” through land occupations and other forms of militant actions to assert the people’s collective rights to land and resources.

Through the “Stop Oil Palm Plantations!” campaign, APC will build on these struggles and victories by launching regionally-coordinated actions and activities to further expose and oppose the palm oil industry. We strive not only to halt the expansion of oil palm plantations but more importantly to take back the lands that rightfully belong to the farmers, farm workers and indigenous peoples.

We firmly uphold the democratic and fundamental rights of the farmers, workers and indigenous peoples.

March 29 is a historic event in the people’s struggle for land and resources in Asia when the Asian Peasant Coalition (APC) was founded on the said date 13 years ago to challenge imperialist and feudal oppression and exploitation. Yesterday, coordinated actions were organized by 22 organizations from APC and its network in 8 countries such as in Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Philippines, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Palestine on March 29. ###

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