

Country-Report Philippines

Australian-Canadian mining company OceanaGold was recently granted a renewal of its permit to mine gold and copper in the northern Philippines in Nueva Vizcaya. OceanaGold hold a “financial or technical assistance agreement or FTAA issued by the Philippine Government that allows a wholly foreign-owned mining company to operate in the country. This was already expired in 2019 because of the persistent resistance of the residents and local government but now foreign-owned mining companies can freely operate in the Philippines until 2044. Most foreign-owned companies do both open-pit mining and underground mining. This threatens the local water system, agricultural livelihood, and ecosystems as well as the general welfare of the Filipino people. Landslides and floods have become a normal occurrence. Not only that, but as a third world country, most of the mining is done manually or without much machines.

Because of the open-pit mining, mining companies in the Philippines violently demolished houses and without a demolition permit. The illegally displaced communities also did not receive relocation or any type of compensation. Of course, the people will resist this and they set up people’s barricades along the mines but we are met with both police and military brutality. The big mining companies and the state work together to militarize our communities. In April 2020, three oil tankers were escorted by at least 100 policemen armed with riot shields and sticks, beating up protestors to force their way into the mine sites just in a single night. Many have become afraid to express their support for miners but the same goes with making the people’s anger more justifies and the people’s struggle more necessary.

This is one of the few stories of miners in the Philippines but every Filipino experience low wages, no benefits, no occupational safety, and worsening working conditions in the mines. The reactionary state does not recognise our right to self-organization or unionizing, right to collective bargaining negotiation, and right to strike. Because the workers assert their rights, it results into police brutality and military aggression. The big mining corporations have become allies of the reactionary state.

The goal of the reactionary state is the anti-communist policy so that concerned citizens and activists alike are illegally harassed, kidnapped, arrested, and even murdered by the state. If you do not die from hunger, you are killed for justly defending your rights, your families, your people. sumusulong genuinely ng interes nila inaatake yung rights. Those determined workers are being bombed to be displace that is why many lose their livelihood, ancestral land, demolition of houses, and killings to crush our unions.

The apparatus of the state is the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police that is using the state policy of the whole of nation approach through the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict and anti-communist program. It’s become a repeating occurrence in the Philippines to bomb communities of those who genuinely struggle for their human rights. They twist the story and accuse and demonize the mass activists, unionists, miners, and indigenous people as

supporters of terrorists. They even go as far to announce them as members and cadres of the New People's Army.

That is why there is an increasing number of indigenous people who are working for the mining industry and become members of militant unions and people's organization. This is also why many have become victims of extra judicial arrest, arbitrary arrest, disappearance or salvaged missing people, and extra judicial killings. US imperialism has made even more policies and military bases in these communities and mining sites to crush the national democratic movement and the people's war.

We are calling for a strong solidarity! That is possible is happening to other countries too. So this will be our initial country report but we will send a more detailed article and reports on the struggle.