



## Cordillera Human Rights Alliance Forum

Human rights groups and indigenous peoples alliances gathered in Baguio for International Human Rights Day to address social and political issues in the Cordillera region. The forum featured a keynote address by former-Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno.



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Various human rights groups and indigenous peoples organizations gathered in the CAP building on Session Road early this afternoon. The forum featured keynote speaker, Maria Lourdes Sereno, who was formerly a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines. Mrs. Sereno was removed from the Supreme Court after a *quo warranto* petition was filed against her on the basis of failing to declare a Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net worth (SALN). Supporters of Mrs. Sereno believe that her removal from office was politically-motivated due to her criticisms over President Duterte's controversial executive orders, such as the implementation of martial law in Mindanao.



Mrs. Sereno expounded that the new generation of activists are at the forefront of defending the country's democratic ideals. She stated that the use of new technologies and methods are some examples of the youth's innovation in activism. Mrs. Sereno stated that she is "with the people" on several occasions during her keynote address. This sentiment is reinforced by her background in the Cordillera region.

Although born and raised in Manila, Mrs. Sereno conducted research on land grabbing in Kalinga, in 1983. She also dedicated a significant portion of her address to [Duterte's war on drugs](#). Mrs. Sereno said to the audience, "When the law becomes an instrument of

injustice, then what is the discourse of the people?" Mrs. Sereno concluded that "when the law becomes a weapon, the nation loses its soul."



Joanna Patricia Cariño of the Cordillera People's Alliance also spoke at the forum. Her lecture, titled "Input on Tyranny in the Cordillera," addressed social and political issues in the region, such as land grabbing and the "red tagging" of human rights activists. Mrs. Cariño was a student activist during the Marcos administration and was arrested in 1974. She served two years in prison and, according to her, was tortured during her incarceration. Even today, Mrs. Cariño stated that she and her colleagues have been labeled as terrorists by the government and local authorities.

Mrs. Cariño began her presentation by examining "Dutertenomics." In particular, she explained the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN), and how the majority of impoverished Filipinos--an estimated 60%--do not benefit from income tax reforms.

Mrs. Cariño also spoke at length about the political complexities of Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representation (IPMR), and how the Mayor of Baguio City himself, Mauricio Domogan, does not recognize the democratically-elected IPMR for the region. Mrs. Cariño stated that local governments have tried to override the election process by selecting IPMRs who they favor or have political connections with.

She concluded her address by citing examples of atrocities and human rights violations in the Cordillera region. Mrs. Cariño mentioned the murder of Ricardo Mayumi of Kiangan, Ifugao and spoke about Rachel Mariano--who was the Health Program Desk Coordinator for Cordillera Health, Education, Services and Training in the Cordillera (CHESTCORE)--and was charged with murder this past September by the 81st Infantry Battalion.



The forum featured musical performances by young activists.

## Termination of Peace Talks

- Termination of the Peace Talks: EO 370, 374
- DOJ case Feb 21, 2018: Proscription of CPP-NPA as terrorist, terrorist listing
- Arrest of Peace Consultants on trumped-up charges and planted evidence – Rafael Baylosis, Adel Silva, Vic Ladlad, Rey and Cora Casambre
- Amendments to Anti-Terror Law

The illegal detention of activists were among the many topics discussed at the forum.



The majority of the lyrics by musical performers were political in nature.



A song by a music performer at the forum called for the ouster of President Duterte, which was an audience favorite.



Joanna Patricia Cariño of the Cordillera People's Alliance and former-Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno answered questions from the audience.





A diverse range of human rights groups and indigenous peoples alliances attended the forum, including Alejandro Muñoz from Chile, who represented the Mapuche tribe of South America.



The forum concluded with a declaration of solidarity and mission statement by all of the attendees.



After the forum, a majority of the attendees prepared for a march through Session Road to Igorot Park.