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6

Lumads protest SC ruling on martial law

By EDU PUNAY

Lumads from Mindanao trooped to the Supreme Court (SC) yesterday to protest its decision upholding the legality of the one-year extension of martial law declaration in the south.

Accompanied by human rights advocates, the indigenous peoples' group slammed the SC justices who voted to dismiss the petitions challenging the constitutionality of martial law extension in Mindanao.

Jong Monzon, secretary-general of the Pasaka Confederation of Lumad Organizations in Southern Mindanao, specifically questioned the decision of the high court that claims of

human rights violations by the military were speculative.

"When martial law was declared, there were 18 incidents of aerial strikes by the military that hit *lumad* communities, while 68 *lumad* leaders were victims of extrajudicial killings. Around 7,000 *lumad* families have been displaced due to military operations," he told reporters in an interview.

Monzon said that 44 *lumad* schools run by non-government organizations and church groups were forcibly closed due to intimidation by soldiers and paramilitary.

Datu Isidro Indao, Manobo leader of Tinananon-Kulamanon Lumadnong Paraghuisa (Tikulpa), said they went to Manila to "expose the real condition" in Mindanao.

"The military is the one sowing terror in the communities in Mindanao," he said in Filipino, and that the SC ruling was "like rubbing salt to our wounds."

Another group, Barug Katungod Mindanao, claimed that there had been an increase in extrajudicial killings in Mindanao since martial law was declared in the region in May last year.

"There are already 126 victims of political killings in Mindanao in the wake of Duterte's all-out war and martial law," the group claimed in a statement.

Last Tuesday, the high court voted 10-5 to dismiss for lack of merit the consolidated petitions of former Commission on Elections chair Christian Monsod, former

Commission on Human Rights chairperson Loretta Ann Rosales, a group of congressmen led by Albay 1st District Rep. Edcel Lagman and another group led by Bayan Muna Rep. Carlos Zarate and Anakpawis Rep. Ariel Casilao seeking to stop the extended implementation of martial law as approved by Congress.

Among the key points in the ruling was that there are safeguards against abuse under martial law implementation under the Constitution as it dismissed as speculative the claims of human rights violations by the military.

The 10 justices in the majority ruling were Associate Justices Presbitero Velasco Jr., Teresita Leonardo-de Castro, Diosdado Peralta, Lucas Bersamin, Mariano del Castillo, Estela Perlas-Bernabe, Noel Tijam, Samuel Martires, Andres Reyes Jr. and Alexander Gesmundo.

Chief Justice Ma. Lourdes Sereno dissented from the ruling along with Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio, Associate Justices Marvic Leonen, Francis Jardeleza and Alfredo Benjamin Caguioa.

The SC has yet to release the 12 different concurring and dissenting opinions of the justices.

On May 23 last year, Duterte declared martial law over Mindanao following Maute's attack in Marawi City. The SC upheld its legality in a ruling last July, which became final last month.

→ MARTIAL LAW