

**STATEMENT BY OFELIA “INDAY” DAVI, OF SIOCON, ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE, MINDANAO, PHILIPPINES**

**TO**

**THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**MARCH 23, 2005 - OTTAWA**

Dear Chairman Kilgour and honorable members of this Subcommittee,

**I am presenting you this statement in order to defend myself against accusations made against me by an employee, Mr. Juanito Tumangkis of the Canadian mining company TVI Pacific and posted by TVI Pacific to their web site - and so that you may know the true situation of my people as we are threatened by the operations of TVI Pacific.**

I am Ofelia “Inday” Davi. I have been a resident Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte since birth. I am a Filipina and am married and have five children. My father’s first wife was an indigenous Subanon and I grew up in a Subanon community. My husband is also Subanon. I am the Indigenous People’s Community Facilitator for the DIOPIM Committee on Mining Issues. An organization set up by six Roman Catholic dioceses in our area.

I am very much disturbed by the statement that TVI Pacific’s Juanito Tumangkis made about me in his “open letter” to various NGOs and media on February 20, 2005 that was posted to TVI Pacific’s web site. Mr. Tumangkis claims that since I am not a Subanon I am “ignorant of ways, culture and traditions of the Subanons” and so cannot speak up to protect my people against TVI Pacific. This statement is completely untrue and is another attempt to blacken the names of those of us who dare to openly oppose TVI. I can hardly “be ignorant” of Subanon ways since I have lived and worked with Subanons for my whole life. My husband and children actively practice the Subanon traditions in our house. It is all the more painful as my father’s first wife is the grandmother of Mr. Tumangkis and he has always called me “aunt.” This is how the mining is dividing our families.

In 1992, I was elected to the position of Secretary with the Siocon Federation of Subanon Tribal Councils (SFSTC). This organization started opposing the entry of TVI to tribal lands in 1994. I have continued on at this post until the present. In 1989, I was designated as Secretary for Barangay Dionisio Riconalla and I worked at this post until 1993 when I went back to college and graduated with my Bachelor of Science and Accountancy.

On April 1, 2003, I began to work with the DIOPIM Community on Mining Issues (DCMI) as the Indigenous People’s (IPs) Community Facilitator in Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte. As the IP Community Facilitator I partner with the Subanon community to assist them in protecting their land, rights and culture. I work with them to help them strengthen their organizations and make their voices heard. I listen to their concerns, attend their meetings and provide them with information and updates about the mining industry.

From my work with the Subanons of Siocon and from my observations as a resident of Siocon, I am strongly opposed to the continuing operations of TVI Pacific in Canatuan, Siocon. It is my knowledge that most of Subanon and Visayan residents in Siocon are also opposed to TVI’s continuing occupation of their land. I believe that TVI has nothing to offer this community but a handful of broken promises.

TVI is destroying our land, ruining our livelihoods, ignoring our rights and mocking our cultures and traditions through its dirty practices. Since their arrival we have witnessed serious environmental destruction – the top of the sacred Mt. Canatuan has been bulldozed and this has left the residents of Siocon vulnerable to soil erosion and flooding in a highly flood prone region. Our waterways are affected by silt from the mine. The Siocon River is getting noticeably shallower and farmers and fishers have seen their livelihoods affected. Fishers are complaining that their fish catches have decreased and that many more of the fish caught are exhibiting signs of skin disease. Farmers have complained of decreasing rice yields as the sources of water for irrigation decrease.

TVI is also guilty of blatant human rights abuses, especially in the case of the indigenous Subanon and the Visayan people who live where they want to have their mine. The company entered the area and set up its operations despite the continued protests of the local people. It ignored the Subanons previous claim to their traditional land and made light of the fact that they were desecrating a sacred mountain. Now, because of their many armed paramilitary guards, many Subanon and others, such as myself, who are opposed to TVI cannot pass through the paramilitaries to visit our families and neighbours in that place. Even Subanon who used to live there such as the Timuay (the rightful Chief of the Subanon of that place) cannot reach their own house anymore. And as of February 2005, TVI Pacific is threatening to evict remaining members of the Canatuan community who are in the way of the mine.

TVI's response to the Subanon became much more strategic when the indigenous community was granted legal rights to the land by obtaining a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT). TVI has been adopting the strategy of "divide and conquer" of the community so that it can pretend it has the support of the community. Through bribes and intimidation TVI has managed to set up a puppet Subanon organization that it can claim support from. Some of the members of this organization, such as TVI employee Mr. Tumangkis, have gone so far as to call themselves Timuay (traditional Subanon leader) in full mockery of Subanon traditions.

I am asking you, Honourable Members of Parliament, to take action on these important issues. Canadian Companies have responsibilities towards the people in the countries where they operate. TVI Pacific should not be placing untruthful information about people who oppose them, such as myself, on their web site. Some members of the Subanon community who have been slandered by TVI Pacific on their web site have received death threats. Our area of the Philippines is a militarized zone. There are many guns. It is irresponsible and dangerous for a Canadian company to accuse our people of terrible things, without any proof, simply because we oppose their operations. We call on you as Canadians to hear our concerns and help us.

Sincerely,

Ofelia "Inday" Davi

March 11, 2005

*I was helped with my English in preparing this statement by Maryanne Mutch of the Mennonite Central Committee but the thoughts in this statement are my own. Inday Davi.*