

**PRESS RELEASE****DepEd statement on the alleged attacks on 'Lumad schools' operated by the Center for Lumad Advocacy and Services, Inc. (CLANS) in Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat**

The Department of Education (DepEd) maintains its position that schools and all learning institutions are zones of peace where students and teaching personnel must feel secure in their pursuit of quality basic education. The Department affirms its policy prohibiting armed personnel from entering school grounds. This was emphasized during the recent dialogue between DepEd and the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) on the protection of children in armed conflict.

The CLANS 'Lumad schools' in Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat that are allegedly subjected to harassment have yet to secure a permit to operate from the Department. Despite this, the Department is most willing to engage with CLANS for the processing of their application for a permit so that the education services availed by learners under its programs are duly recognized within the national education system.

While DepEd has strong links with local governments, it has no authority to discipline them. They are regulated by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). Complaints about the activities of local officials can be addressed directly to DILG.

The Department continues to strengthen affirmative action to expand access to quality culture-based education. In Mindanao, the Department is currently engaged in a major effort to establish new public schools in various lumad communities, particularly in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDA), with the necessary classrooms being constructed in partnership with the Kalahi-CIDSS National Community-driven Development Program (NCDDP) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

The Department has decided that it is prepared to establish additional schools on its own as the need arises. DepEd commits to respect indigenous culture and tradition in the design of school houses.

Finally, DepEd adheres to the international dictum of "education for all" and "no one left behind."

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