PRESS RELEASE

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Batangas fishers harassed by police and stopped from conducting protest at sea against fossil gas projects

BATANGAS, PHILIPPINES – A planned protest at sea by fishers and community members from three barangays in Batangas was blocked by the police and coast guard yesterday, preventing them from joining a global day of action that demanded an immediate halt to all gas projects in the Philippines and worldwide as part of the new "Don't Gas the South" campaign launch.

"We only wanted to hold a peaceful assembly and express our solidarity with the global effort calling on governments gathering in Belém for COP30 to stop the massive gas build-out in the Global South that is undermining global climate goals. But the police said we are not allowed to go out to sea with our boats and hold placards and streamers in front of the gas infrastructures that have invaded our fishing grounds, " said Larry Pascua, senior energy officer of the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ).

Pascua said their group, along with 80 fishermen from barangays Simlong, Pinamucan, and Sta Clara were stopped by local police, coast guards, and SWAT members holding assault rifles. The fifty boats that were supposed to participate in the demonstration were told to stand down and not to bring out campaign placards and streamers. The coast guard also threatened to confiscate the boats and impose a ₱20,000 fine if the group proceeds with the planned action.

"*Nakakagalit na ginagawa ito ng pulis, mas tumutugon pa sila sa pagpapatahimik sa amin kaysa pakinggan kami at ihinto ang mga gas power plants. Pero hindi parin kami titigil sa pag-sisigurado na wala nang maruruming enerhiya dito sa Batangas*" said Joseph Vargas, a rdsident of Brgy. Sta. Clara. (It's outrageous that the police are doing this to us, they focus more on silencing us rather than stopping gas power plants. But we will not stop in making sure that there is no more dirty energy here in Batangas)

Batangas is widely known as the Philippines' fossil gas hub, hosting one of the country's highest concentrations of gas infrastructure, including seven major operating fossil gas power plants with a combined capacity of approximately 4,610.5 megawatts (MW). This dense network includes major facilities like the 1,436.5 MW Ilijan Combined-Cycle Power Plant, Santa Rita (1,133.9 MW) and San Lorenzo (586.5 MW) power plants, San Gabriel Power Plant (442.9 MW) at the First Gen Clean Energy Complex, Avion Power Plant (130.8 MW) in Barangay Bolbok, and the newly operational EERI Power Plants (880 MW). This extensive development highlights the environmental and health burdens placed on the surrounding communities by the immense scale of gas operations in the area.

Gas-fired power plants remain a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions, undermining the Philippines' commitment to the Paris Agreement and its goal to reduce carbon emissions by 75% by 2030. The Philippines is also a signatory to the Global Methane Pledge which aims to reduce global methane emissions by at least 30% by 2030 compared to 2020 levels.

"We need a rapid and just energy transition to combat the climate crisis, protect public health, and ensure energy security. Fossil gas is not the bridge to our renewable energy future. Its continued use and

expansion pose severe climate, economic, and environmental risks that undermine the urgent need for a rapid energy transition," said Pascua.

In Batangas City, where LNG facilities operate, 17,803 and 10,315 people suffered from respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, respectively, according to the Batangas City Health Office's 2024 data. The facilities also impact the livelihoods of Batanguenos: the fishing yield of Batangas plummeted from around 93,090 metric tons in 2019 to only around 65,857 in 2020.

Global energy consumption is expected to surge past 29,000 terawatt-hours (TWh) in 2026, according to the International Energy Agency. Gas is being pushed to meet this increasing demand, and the Global South is planned to build these massive fleets of gas infrastructure. The proposed expansion is staggering: 284 discovered gas fields and new gas extraction projects, 153 proposed LNG terminals, 300 planned pipelines for construction, and 768 gas power plants that are currently in the announced or pre-construction stage. Asia accounts for the largest share of the planned gas build-out, hosting 104 newly discovered and in-development gas fields, 530 planned gas power plants.

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