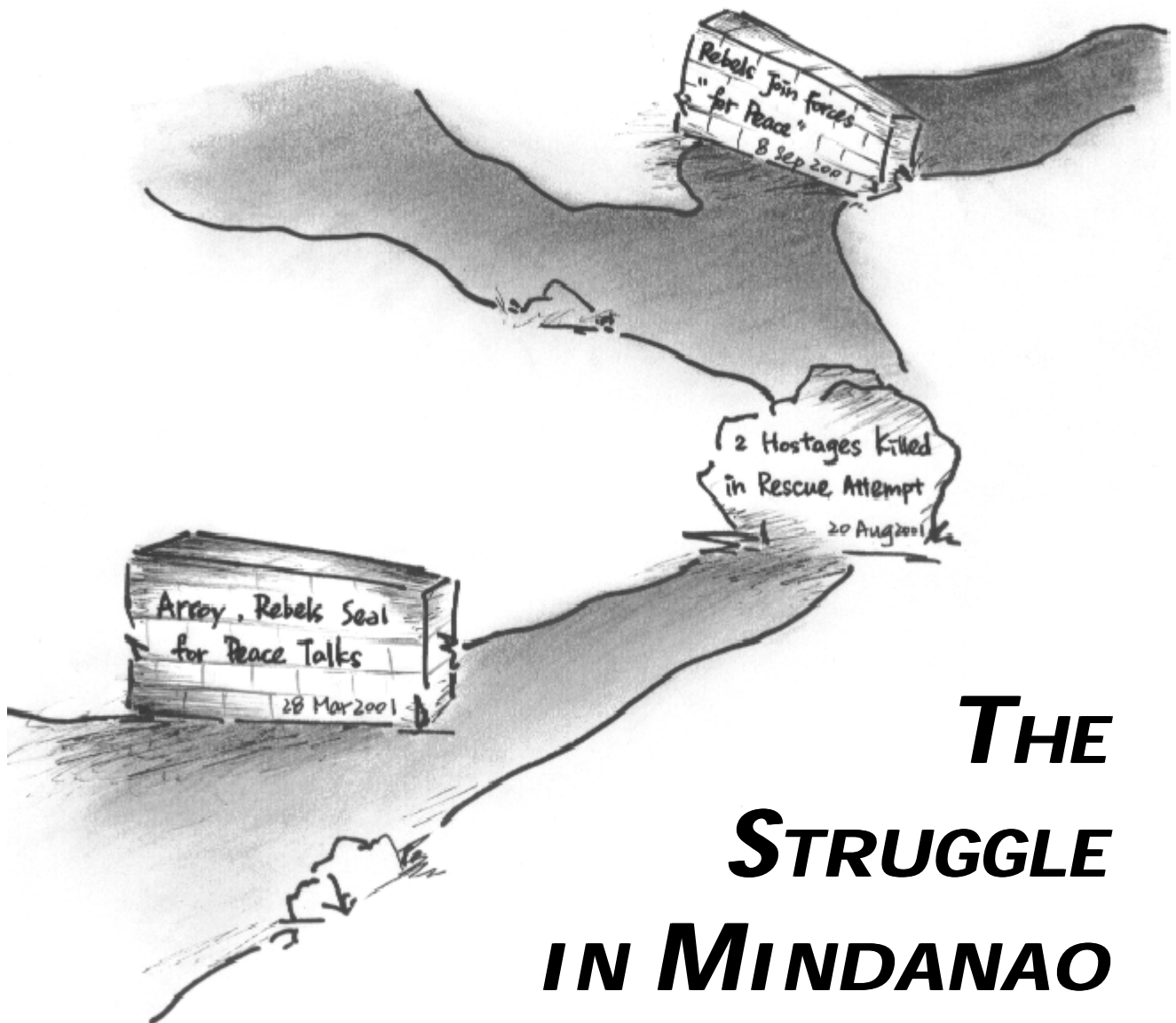


# DAGA

Documentation for Action Groups in Asia

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## *THE STRUGGLE IN MINDANAO*

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# DOSSIER

September 2001

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# INTRODUCTION

**M**indanao is a large island in the southern most part of the Philippines. For centuries it has been home to 13 Muslim ethno linguistic groups -- Islam was introduced into Mindanao in 1460 -- and 10 Lumad tribes. These groups shared the rich natural resources the island had to offer. Both the Muslim groups, known as Moros, and the Lumad tribes held a common belief that the land and resources were not to be owned by any individual or group, but were given to people to care for and use as required for survival. This belief, which protected the land and its resources for so long, was challenged, first by the Spaniards in the 16th century and later by the Americans and Filipinos who saw these resources as something to control, own and exploit.

Not only did the Spanish and American colonialists want the resources of Mindanao, they also came with a mission to Christianise both the Muslims and the Lumads. The Spanish especially had a deep hatred for the Muslims, developed during their own struggle for independence from Moorish rule. Thus, for centuries the Moros and Lumad tribes have been involved in a struggle not only for their right to occupy their traditional lands and live off its resources, but also for their right to practice their religious beliefs in freedom and dignity.

The struggle has been costly. From 1903 until 1939, the US initiated a series of “landgrabbing laws” that systematically took away land from the indigenous inhabitants. During this time, it is estimated that from 15,000 to 20,000 Muslims were killed. Despite these losses, Moro and Lumad resistance against colonial rule continued.

To further counter this resistance, in 1912 the Americans brought to Mindanao large numbers of Filipino Christians from Luzon and Visayas. This continued through the 1950s, completely changing the demographic makeup of the island. In 1918, Moro and Lumads combined made up approximately 75 percent of the total population in Cotabato Province. By 1970, they made up only about 34.5% while Christians made up 62.2 percent.

In 1972, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) emerged as the leader of the Moro secessionist movement. Several other armed groups have also become active including the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Abu Sayyaf. The international media has often tended to link all of these groups into one, probably in an attempt to simplify a very complex issue. Furthermore, the conflict has often been depicted as a religious conflict between Christians and Muslims.

In this dossier, we have attempted to provide readers with a collection of articles that give a wider perspective to the issues facing the people in Mindanao. The articles range from background materials on the island of Mindanao to various discussions about the nature of the conflict that has simmered on for so many generations.

In the final section called “The Struggle Ahead”, we have included a few articles about what some people are doing to try to help bring peace to Mindanao. Since the conflict itself is so complex, any pathway to peace will also be complex and difficult. But the fact that courageous people are committed to moving down that pathway gives hope that the day will come when the violence ends and all people can start rebuilding their lives.

We hope that you will find this issue of Dossier helpful, and that it will inspire you to do further reading and study. Your understanding and support is also needed to help build peace.

**Max Ediger**

# BACKGROUND

## ➔ THE PHILIPPINES

### Source

The World Factbook 2001,  
The Central Intelligence Agency  
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>

### B A C K G R O U N D

The Philippines were ceded by Spain to the US in 1898 following the Spanish-American War. They attained their independence in 1946 after being occupied by the Japanese in World War II. The 21-year rule of Ferdinand MARCOS ended in 1986 when a widespread popular rebellion forced him into exile. In 1992, the US closed down its last military bases on the islands. A quarter-century-old guerrilla war with Muslim separatists on the island of Mindanao, which had claimed 120,000 lives, ended with a treaty in 1996.

### G E O G R A P H Y

#### Location:

Southeastern Asia, archipelago between the Philippine Sea and the South China Sea, east of Vietnam

#### Geographic Coordinates:

13 00 N, 122 00 E

#### Map References:

Southeast Asia

#### Area:

Total - 300,000 sq km

Land - 298,170 sq km

Water - 1,830 sq km

#### Natural Resources:

Timber, Petroleum, Nickel, Cobalt, Silver, Gold, Salt, Copper

#### Land Use:

Arable Land - 19%

Permanent Crops - 12%

Permanent Pastures - 4%

Forests and Woodland - 46%

Others - 19% (1993 est.)

#### Population:

81,159,644 (July 2000 est.)

### G O V E R N M E N T

#### Country Name:

Conventional Long Form

- Republic of the Philippines

Conventional Short Form

- Philippines

Local Long Form

- Republika ng Pilipinas

Local Short Form

- Pilipinas

#### Data Code:

RP

#### Government Type:

Republic

#### Capital:

Manila

#### Flag Description:

Two equal horizontal bands of blue (top) and red with a white equilateral triangle based on the hoist side; in the center of the triangle is a yellow sun with eight primary rays (each containing three individual rays) and in each corner of the triangle is a small yellow five-pointed star



### E C O N O M Y

#### Overview:

In 1998 the Philippine economy - a mixture of agriculture, light industry, and supporting services - deteriorated as a result of spillover from the Asian financial crisis and poor weather conditions. Growth fell to about -0.5% in 1998 from 5% in 1997, but recovered to 2.9% in 1999. The government has promised to continue its economic reforms to help the Philippines match the pace of development in the newly industrialized countries of East Asia. The strategy includes improving infrastructure, overhauling the tax system to bolster government revenues, and moving toward further deregulation and privatization of the economy.

#### GDP:

Purchasing Power Parity - \$282 billion (1999 est.)

#### GDP - Real Growth Rate:

2.9% (1999 est.)

#### GDP - Per Capita:

Purchasing Power Parity - \$3,600 (1999 est.)

**GDP - Composition by Sector:**

Agriculture - 20%  
 Industry - 32%  
 Services - 48% (1997 est.)

**Population below Poverty Line:**

32% (1997 est.)

**Household Income or Consumption by Percentage Share:**

Lowest 10% - 2.4%  
 Highest 10% - 33.5% (1994)

**Inflation Rate (Consumer Prices):**

6.8% (1999)

**Labor Force:**

32 million (1999 est.)

**Labor Force - by Occupation:**

Agriculture - 39.8%  
 Government and Social Services - 19.4%  
 Services - 17.7%  
 Manufacturing - 9.8%  
 Construction - 5.8%  
 Other - 7.5% (1998 est.)

**Unemployment Rate:**

9.6% (October 1998)

**Budget:**

Revenues - \$14.5 billion  
 Expenditures - \$12.6 billion, including  
 Capital Expenditures of \$NA (1998 est.)

**Industries:**

Textiles, Pharmaceuticals, Chemicals,  
 Wood Products, Food Processing, Electronics  
 Assembly, Petroleum Refining, Fishing

**Industrial Production Growth Rate:**

1.7% (1999 est.)

**Electricity - Production:**

39.623 billion kWh (1998)

**Electricity - Production by Source:**

Fossil Fuel - 70.12%  
 Hydro - 10.75%  
 Nuclear - 0%  
 Other - 19.13% (1998)

**Electricity - Consumption:**

36.849 billion kWh (1998)

**Electricity - Exports:**

0 kWh (1998)

**Electricity - Imports:**

0 kWh (1998)

**Agriculture - Products:**

Rice, Coconuts, Corn, Sugarcane,  
 Bananas, Pineapples, Mangoes; Pork,  
 Eggs, Beef; Fish

**Exports:**

\$34.8 billion (f.o.b., 1999 est.)

**Exports - Commodities:**

Electronic Equipment, Machinery and  
 Transport Equipment, Garments, Coconut  
 Products

**Exports - Partners:**

US 34%, EU 20%, Japan 14%, Netherlands  
 8%, Singapore 6%, UK 6%, Hong Kong 4%  
 (1998)

**Imports:**

\$30.7 billion (f.o.b., 1999 est.)

**Imports - Commodities:**

Raw Materials and Intermediate Goods,  
 Capital Goods, Consumer Goods, Fuels

**Imports - Partners:**

US 22%, Japan 20%, South Korea 8%,  
 Singapore 6%, Taiwan 5%, Hong Kong 4%  
 (1998 est.)

**Debt - External:**

\$51.9 billion (1999)

**Economic Aid - Recipient:**

ODA, \$1.1 billion (1998)

**Currency:**

1 Philippine Peso (P) = 100 Centavos

**Exchange Rates:**

Philippine Pesos (P) per US\$1 -  
 40.427 (January 2000), 39.089 (1999),  
 40.893 (1998), 29.471 (1997), 26.216  
 (1996), 25.714 (1995)

**Fiscal Year:**

Calendar Year

**M I L I T A R Y****Military Branches:**

Army, Navy (includes Coast Guard and  
 Marine Corps), Air Force

**Military Manpower - Military Age:**

20 years of age

**Military Manpower - Availability:**

Males Age 15-49 - 20,731,979 (2000 est.)

**Military Manpower - Fit for Military Service:**

Males Age 15-49 - 14,607,014 (2000 est.)

**Military Manpower - Reaching Military Age Annually:**

Males - 835,817 (2000 est.)

**Military Expenditures - Dollar Figure:**

\$995 million (FY98)

**Military Expenditures - Percent of GDP:**

1.5% (FY98)

## ➔ MINDANAO

### Source

<http://www.mindanao.org>

### Overview

The southernmost region of the Republic of the Philippines, located in the heart of the Asia-Pacific region, Mindanao has become a “gateway to opportunity” for Philippine and international investors eyeing opportunities in agribusiness, industry, and tourism.

### Business

Mindanao, with an export-driven agricultural economy, has for decades been home to many successful national and multinational agribusiness firms. In 1995, the agriculture, fisheries, and forestry sectors together accounted for 41% of the island’s total economic output. Industry contributed 25% and the services sector the remaining 34%.

### Economy

Mindanao is an island economy on the move, as the following growth rates demonstrate:

- 3.9% growth in Gross Regional Domestic Product
- 3.6% growth in family income
- 31.0% growth in investments
- 18.4% growth in exports
- 22.6% growth in bank deposits
- 37.8% growth in loans
- 31.0% growth in energy use

### Source:

*Mindanao - An Island Economy with a Global Outlook (brochure by the Growth with Equity in Mindanao Program)*

### Tourism

Mindanao’s many natural attractions,



The World Factbook 2001, The Central Intelligence Agency

rich flora and fauna, cultural diversity, and colorful ethnic festivals make Mindanao one of the most exciting tourist destinations in Southeast Asia.

The number of foreign tourists visiting Mindanao more than doubled between 1991 and 1995, spurring the building of more facilities to accommodate their increasing numbers.

Mindanao’s largely-unspoiled natural resources offer vast potential for eco-tourism projects.

## **A Concise History of the People of Mindanao**

*Pastor Marshall Daul*

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*Paper read during the Forum on Indigenous History and Spirituality and Creation Spirituality sponsored by the Indigenous Peoples' Month Convenors, 4 October 1998*  
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During the past ten centuries, the Asian Continent was divided into small kingdoms ruled by kings and emperors in a series of dynasties. The religious influences of Hinduism and Buddhism are the prime cultural heritage of Asian peoples and are still evident today. The mystical relationship between man and the land, the forest and the whole of creation nourished the peoples' spirituality and search for peace and freedom.

In the 5th century, there were four brothers named Apu Sandawangan, Apu Malindangen, Apu Dulangen, and Apu Lumabet from Sumatra who sailed out to the open seas and reached the southern end of Mindanao at Palembang, now Sultan Kudarat.

The clan of Apu Malindangen, with his brother-in-law, went northwest until they reached Pagadian. The clan moved further north and when Apu Malindangen was very old, he went up the highest mountain in the territory and never returned. His brother-in-law went to the northwest and found the Lake Lanao (Ranew). Apu Sandawangan proceeded eastward and reached the foot of the highest mountain in Mindanao. He went up the mountain, never to return. Apu Dulangen was left behind at Palembang, while Apu Lumabet kept travelling from coast to coast of the island. Other tribes migrated to the island from Sangihi-Talaude, Timor and Eastern Manado (Minahasa Tribe). They are the ancestors of the B'laans/T'boli, Tagakaolo, Tagabawa, Mandaya who had intermarriages with the generation of Apu Sandawangan, creating other Tribal Family Clans such as the Ata/Tala-inged, Mansaka, Dibabawen, Banwaen of Agusan and later on the Kemayu subtribe of Mandaya in Surigao. In Cotabato, other family clans of Dulangen had inter-married with the T'boli, thus we have the Lambangian. Later, when the Tribal Clan from Sarawak and Sandacan arrived in Cotabato at Pulangi river, they intermarried with B'laans and thus we have the Tiduray (Tidulay --- the bridge between two tribes). The Tribal Clan at Cotabato were called Dungguanen or Idelemen. The gen-

erations of Apu Malindangen are the Subanen (upstream Manubu) and their brother-in-law are the Higaonon (Igaonen-gone uphill/upward). The Higaonon intermarried with the Dungguanen and being called Ilantungan, the Higaonon intermarried with the Banwa-on.

In the 11th to the 13th centuries, more small groups of Tribal Family Clans, who were resisting the Islam faith and the political system in the mainland, arrived. During these centuries, there were waves of migrators from the Sri-Visaya tribes to the small islands, now the Visayas, and to Luzon from the Indo-China territory seeking freedom, better sustenance and resources.

The term 'Min' is a common prefix meaning 'gi' or 'being'. 'Danaw' is also Malayo-Indonesian term for 'lake.' Mindanao had vast wide tracts of forestlands, fresh sea and riverbeds. Nobody farmed because the forest had all the peoples' needs such as food, medicines, 'golden stones', and animals. And nature contributed to their yearning for peace.

During these centuries, the main trading centers are at Pagadian, Iligan, Tagoloan, Butuan, Caraga, Panabo, Malalag, Tuguis, Palembang, and Cotabato, at the mouth of the Pulangi River. The Manubus had raw materials and the Asian traders had clothing, trinkets, brassware, gongs, bolos, and all other finished products such as salt.

### **Entry of the Islam Religion**

The whole Asian kingdoms were already influenced by the Islam faith. Missionaries were also business traders. In 1310, the first Islam Mosque was erected at Jolo, where the Sultan of Sulu had his set of Kingdom, which also included the Mindanao island, because there were already Muslims who migrated to the island under Rajah Maguinda and the Iranon.

Shariff Kabungsuwan, who was a businessman and also a missionary of the Islam faith, convinced the Dungguanen clan under Timuey Mamalu to Marry Puteli Aminah, their adopted sisters. When they got married, he again convinced them that Tabunaway should study Arabic and Islam. The brothers consented and so they had an agreement that 1) the Muslims must be given the riverside and seaside as their ancestral domain, while the Manubus would occupy the higher ground; 2) trading shall continue, but each tribal group must respect others' traditional rites and ceremonies and their community laws; 3) political power

should rest upon the Tribal Elders who were now called as 'datus'; and 4) when problems arise between them, these must be resolved before sundown.

However, as the centuries advanced, there were changes of leadership on both tribal groups, the Islam brothers and the non-Islam brothers, all those agreements were not observed. So during the half quarter of the 15th century, Apu Agyu revolted against the Muslim brothers' leadership. His adventures were written in the Ulahingan. The uprising had mellowed down when they learned that new 'nemeses' --- aggressors/colonizers --- were sighted moving around the island. That was when the warriors of Apu Lagawlaw and Datu Pamutuan of Agusan engaged the landing Gal- leon of Magellan until they moved to Limasawa, Leyte.

### **Spanish Regime**

The 'Arumanen marauding bagani unit' of Apu Agyu, Apu Lena (the elder brother), their cousins Apu Tulalang and Apu Menelisim from the Arakan Valley (Kulaman Valley) kept on monitoring by consultations with the tribal leaders from coast to coast, and evaded further encounters against the Muslim warriors. Finally, the tribal leaders decided to a 'Dyandi' --- a peace pact agreement, because many of the Jangan, Tagakaolo and Mansaka were converted to Islam, and called Klagan. The result was that there were other tribal groups who had enmity against the bagani group of Apu Agyu. The peace pact was done at Mt. Mibuwalew near the foot of Mt. Apu Sandawa, facilitated by Apo Tiu, and ended in a pilgrimage to the top of Mt. Apo. Apu Agyu and Apu Lena concentrated on the defence of the whole island. Later on, there were 'Dyandi' done by the Dungguanen and the Maguindanao and the Iranon, the B'laans and the Sangil; the Muslim/Tausog and the Iranon at Lake Lanao, had a peace pact with the Higaonon.

Apu Agyu requested Datu Lagawlaw and his brother at Tagoloan, the father of Apu Datu Pabulusan, to send emissaries to their partners in Leyte, Samar, Bohol, Cebu and Negros. They learned that only Datu Lapu-lapu was opposing the Spanish contingent. According to the Subanen story, the two great warriors met Dapitan (Halapitan) and discussed the battle plan with representation from Bohol. Later on, Datu Bangkaw of Samar also revolted against Villalobos and Legaspi in 1624, after the B'laans drove them out from Sarangani with the forefathers of Rajah Buayan. The B'laans were led by

Fulong Kafitan. The Arumanen bagani went on to other islands until he reached Maynilad. He joined forces with Rajah Soliman in 1567-1574 against Lopez de Legaspi. When he learned of the eruption of Mt. Apo in 1573 (according to Muslim Tarsila), he sailed back evading the Spanish Gal- leon and reached Tagoloan safely. He proceeded to Mt. Kitanlad for reflection and pilgrimage. They went to Pidlintangan where they left Mungan, his sister-in-law who was sick with white leprosy. Her healing was regarded as a blessing from god.

During the five-year long drought, all the forests were burned, and many of their people in Davao, Cotabato, and Bukidnon, died. From that time on, they were not found. The children of Datu Pabulusan were left to defend Higaonon territory from the Spaniards, who were using other Visayan tribes to fight against them. When Datu Pabulusan died, his son Datu Namegiyu took over the defence of Northern Mindanao.

In Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat continued fighting the Spanish fleet, so with Rajah Buayan (Datu Lumanda) with the B'laans as their ally. In the same manner, in Davao, when Apu Dabu died, Apu Bagu took over the leadership with Datu Undas of Sta. Cruz and Datu Balingan of Caraga who took over his father's place in the 19th century. The Kaolo had Datu Mangulayon and his brother Datu Angun defend the Malita Valley. The father of Datu Manlavew of Bukidnon assisted Datu Namegiyu of Northern Mindanao even up to the American regime. Datu Puti Piang and his nephew Datu Alih (Rajah Muda) defended Cotabato who continued fighting even up to 1901 against the Americans. He submitted to the Americans, but his nephew Datu Alih continued fighting even up to 1901 against the Spanish and later the Americans. The Arumanen warriors under Timuey Puntungan, Tunggal, Datu Tomanggong of Pikit, Datu Dengepan of Midsayap and Libungan, assisted Rajah Muda in his last battle at Salunayan against the American forces.

### **American Regime - Philippine Republic**

The Manubu tribal groups of Mindanao were so weakened when Mt. Makaturing of Wao erupted in 1876 and they were not able to recover from the four-year drought, which was another deluge in their time. So they became submissive to the new 'nemeses' who put up schools and introduced a new way of religious expression. There were laws that contravened their understanding of land ownership, political systems, economic resourcing processes. They were farming.



Mindanao was subdivided into small parcels of land, there was a heavy influx of 'Dumagat' --- people coming from the other side of the sea. Land becomes a source of owning money. Survival and subsistence started among the tribal groups who were not used to farming. The cultural heritage of the educated tribal group/individuals was changed from communal to cash value. Much more when the island became under the Philippine Government system. After the Second World War, more than one hundred logging concessionaires divided Mindanao, thus denuding the plains and the mountains, even the sacred places of the Tribes of Mindanao. And now at the 20th century ending, the mountains are being dug like the Wild Boar who keeps digging the earth to get materials that soothe them. The Mining Act of 1995 legalizes the ethnocidal system against the Minubu of Mindanao.

### **Concluding Statements**

Indeed, the Minubu of Mindanao are on a survival stage of their life. When they are invited to participate in "Kadayawan" or any celebration in Manila or anywhere in the Philippines, they return back and wallow again in poverty and pointless projections. Their abode are devastated, their children disarrayed and deculturized, their hopes and dreams, songs and dances are meaningless. There is nothing to rejoice during this so-called "Centennial Celebration of Freedom." There is nothing to be proud of, nothing to consider as memories of the past, but despair. Yet, the spirituality of the "Menubu Te Mindanao" remain to be an assurance of changes in the coming age and time. New ROOTS shall prosper and prevail and continue the journey of the past. There shall be new visions and ventures. For as long as the stalwart Apu Sandawa stands, there are hopes to expect and shall happen in the cradle of the cultural heritage of the Minubu of Mindanao.

*Reproduced by:*

#### **Solidarity Action Group for Indigenous Peoples**

In commemoration of Indigenous Peoples' Month 1998

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PHILIPPINES  
Tel: 221-7305

## ➤ **THE INVOLVED GROUPS**

### **Source**

Federation of American Scientists  
<http://www.fas.org>

### **Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)**

The Philippines has had a long history of Moro insurgent movements dating back to Spanish rule. Resistance to colonization was especially strong among the Muslim population of southwestern Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago. With pride in their cultural heritage and a strong desire for independence, Moros fought Christian and foreign domination. Spanish control over the Moros was never complete, and the Muslim struggle carried over into the United States colonial era. The Moros earned a reputation as fierce fighters in combat against United States troops. Following independence, Filipino Muslims continued to resist Manila's rule, leading to widespread conflict in the 1970s.

More immediate causes of insurgency rose out of the increasing lawlessness in the southern Philippines during the late 1960s, when violence associated with political disputes, personal feuds, and armed gangs proliferated. In this climate of civil turmoil, longstanding tensions between Moro and Christian communities escalated. Already in competition over land, economic resources, and political power, the Moros became increasingly alarmed by the immigration of Christians from the north who were making Moros a minority in what they felt was their own land (see Muslim Filipinos, ch. 2). By mid-1972, partisan political violence, generally divided along religious lines, gripped all of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago. After martial law was declared in September 1972 and all civilians were ordered to surrender their guns, spontaneous rebellions arose among Moros, who traditionally had equated the right to carry arms with their religious heritage and were suspicious of the government's intentions toward them.

In its initial phases, the rebellion was a series of isolated uprisings that rapidly spread in scope and size. But one group, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) led by Nur Misuari, managed to bring most partisan Moro forces into the loosely unified MNLF framework. Fighting for an independent Moro nation, the MNLF received support from Muslim backers in Libya and Malaysia. When the conflict reached its peak in 1973-75, the military arm of the MNLF, the

Bangsa Moro Army, was able to field some 30,000 armed fighters. The military responded by deploying 70 to 80 percent of its combat forces against the Moros. Destruction and casualties, both military and civilian, were heavy; an estimated 50,000 people were killed. The government also employed a variety of nonmilitary tactics, announced economic aid programs and political concessions, and encouraged factionalism and defections in the Muslim ranks by offering incentives such as amnesty and land. The government's programs, and a sharp decrease in the flow of arms from Malaysia, set back the Moro movement. In 1976 the conflict began to wane.

Talks between the government and the Moros began in late 1976 under the auspices of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, a union of Muslim nations to which the Moros looked for support. The talks led to an agreement between the Philippine government and the MNLF signed in Tripoli that year providing for Moro autonomy in the southern Philippines and for a cease-fire. After a lull in the fighting, the truce broke down in 1977 amid Moro charges that the government's autonomy plan allowed only token self-rule.

The Moro rebellion never regained its former vigor. Muslim factionalism was a major factor in the movement's decline. Differing goals, traditional tribal rivalries, and competition among Moro leaders for control of the movement produced a threeway split in the MNLF during the late 1970s. The first break occurred in 1977 when Hashim Salamat, supported by ethnic Maguindanaos from Mindanao, formed the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which advocated a more moderate and conciliatory approach toward the government. Misuari's larger and more militant MNLF was further weakened during that period when rival leaders formed the Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization, drawing many Mindanao Maranaos away from the MNLF, dominated by Misuari's Sulu-based Tausug tribe. The Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization eventually collapsed, giving way to the Moro National Liberation Front/Reformist Movement. Moro factionalism, compounded by declining foreign support and general war weariness, hurt the Muslim movement both on the battlefield and at the negotiating table. Moro fighting strength declined to about 15,000 by 1983, and Muslim and government forces only occasionally clashed during Marcos's last years in office.

In keeping with her campaign pledge of national reconciliation, Aquino initiated talks with the MNLF -- the largest of the three major factions -- in 1986 to resolve the conflict with Muslim separatists. Dis-

cussions produced a cease-fire in September, followed by further talks under the auspices of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. In January 1987, the MNLF signed an agreement relinquishing its goal of independence for Muslim regions and accepting the government's offer of autonomy. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the next largest faction, refused to accept the accord and initiated a brief offensive that ended in a truce later that month. Talks between the government and the MNLF over the proposed autonomous region continued sporadically throughout 1987 but eventually deadlocked. Following the government's successful diplomatic efforts to block the MNLF's latest bid for Organization of the Islamic Conference membership, the MNLF officially resumed its armed insurrection in February 1988, but little fighting resulted.

The government, meanwhile, pressed ahead with plans for Muslim autonomy without the MNLF's cooperation. Article 10 of the 1987 constitution mandates that the new congress establish an Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. In the November 1989 plebiscite, only two Mindanao provinces -- Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur -- and two in the Sulu Archipelago -- Sulu and Tawitawi -- opted to accept the government's autonomy measure. The fragmented four-province Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao, with its own governor and unicameral legislature, was officially inaugurated on November 6, 1990.

Armed activity by the Moros continued at a relatively low level through the late 1980s, with sporadic clashes between government and Muslim forces. The military still based army and marine battalions in Moro areas to maintain order in 1990, but far fewer units than it had in the 1970s. (Four battalions were on Jolo Island, a Moro stronghold, down from twenty-four at the rebellion's height.) Most of the endemic violence in Muslim areas was directed at rival clans, not at the military's peace-keeping forces.

The Moro movement remained divided along tribal lines in three major factions. Misuari's MNLF forces in the Sulu Archipelago totaled 15,000, and the Mindanao-based Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the MNLF-Reformist Movement fielded around 2,900 and 900 troops, respectively. Weakened by these divisions, Muslim infighting, and the formation of an autonomous region, the Moro armies did not appear to be an imminent threat. Still, the MNLF -- which did not recognize the autonomous region -- showed no sign of surrendering, and it promised to remain a potent military and political force in the southern Philippines.

## **Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)**

The MILF is the vanguard of the Islamic movement in the Bangsamoro homeland in Mindanao and the neighbouring islands. The MILF was formed in 1977 when Hashim Salamat, supported by ethnic Maguindanaos from Mindanao, split from the Moro National Liberation Front, advocating a more moderate and conciliatory approach toward the government. In January 1987, the MNLF signed an agreement relinquishing its goal of independence for Muslim regions and accepting the government's offer of autonomy. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the next largest faction, refused to accept the accord and initiated a brief offensive that ended in a truce later that month. The Mindanao-based Moro Islamic Liberation Front fields around 2,900 troops.

Islam in the Philippines has absorbed indigenous elements, much as has Catholicism. Moros thus make offerings to spirits (diwatas), malevolent or benign, believing that such spirits can and will have an effect on one's health, family, and crops. They also include pre-Islamic customs in ceremonies marking rites of passage -- birth, marriage, and death. Moros share the essentials of Islam, but specific practices vary from one Moro group to another. Although Muslim Filipino women are required to stay at the back of the mosque for prayers (out of the sight of men), they are much freer in daily life than are women in many other Islamic societies.

Because of the world resurgence of Islam since World War II, Muslims in the Philippines have a stronger sense of their unity as a religious community than they had in the past. Since the early 1970s, more Muslim teachers have visited the nation and more Philippine Muslims have gone abroad -- either on the hajj or on scholarships -- to Islamic centers than ever before. They have returned revitalized in their faith and determined to strengthen the ties of their fellow Moros with the international Islamic community. As a result, Muslims have built many new mosques and religious schools, where students (male and female) learn the basic rituals and principles of Islam and learn to read the Quran in Arabic. A number of Muslim institutions of higher learning, such as the Jamiatul Philippine al-Islamia in Marawi, also offer advanced courses in Islamic studies.

Divisions along generational lines have emerged among Moros since the 1960s. Many young Muslims, dissatisfied with the old leaders, asserted that datu and sultans were unnecessary in modern Islamic society. Among themselves, these young reformers were divided between moderates, working within the system for their political goals, and militants, engaging in guerrilla-style warfare. To some degree, the government managed to isolate the militants, but Muslim reformers, whether moderates or militants, were united in their strong religious adherence. This bond was significant, because the Moros felt threatened by the continued expansion of Christians into southern Mindanao and by the prolonged presence of Philippine army troops in their homeland.

## **Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)**

### **Description**

Islamic extremist group operating in the southern Philippines led by Abdurajik Abubakar Janjalani. Split from the Moro National Liberation Front in 1991.

### **Activities**

Uses bombs, assassinations, kidnappings for ransom, and extortion payments from companies and businessmen in its efforts to promote an Iranian-style Islamic state in Mindanao, an island in the southern Philippines heavily populated by Muslims. Staged a raid on the town of Ipil in Mindanao in April 1995, the group's first large-scale action. The group is suspected in several assassinations in 1997, including that of a Catholic bishop in February.

On 17 April 2000 a spokesperson for the Abu Sayyaf organization stated that unless its demands for the release of terrorists being held in the US were met, it would take retaliatory action against Americans throughout the Philippines in the form of kidnappings or shootings. The Abu Sayyaf organization is holding 29 Filipino hostages in Basilan (50 miles south of the southwestern tip of Mindanao) dating back to a 20 March 2000 raid on two schools.

### **Strength**

Unknown, but believed to be about 200 members, mostly younger Muslims, many of whom have studied or worked in the Gulf states, where they were exposed to radical Islamic ideology.

### **Location/Area of Operation**

The ASG operates in the southern Philippines and occasionally in Manila.

### **External Aid**

Probably has ties to Islamic extremists in the Middle East.

## ➔ OVERVIEW OF THE MORO STRUGGLE

### Source

"Overview of the Moro Struggle"  
by Prof. Datu Amilusin A. Jumaani

- 1280** Presence of Muslim traders in Southern Philippines brought about by the expansion of commercial contacts between China and Arab lands.
- 1450** Sultanate in Sulu established.
- 1521** Advent of Christianity. Portuguese Navigator, Ferdinand Magellan, lands and claims the Philippines for Spain. For more than 3 centuries, the Spanish rule prevailed over the archipelago, particularly in Luzon and the Visayas. However, the colonialist failed to conquer Muslim areas in the South, which have been characterized as having their own system of government and practices their own politics and cultures.
- 1835** Spanish attack on the Banuwa Bangingih in Sepak island (Jolo, Sulu). Full scale attack on the island, not even a single coconut tree left standing. There was fierce resistance.
- 1836** King of Spain & Sultan Sulu, "Treaty of Peace, Protection & Commerce"
- 1842** The Commander of American Naval Expedition concluded a "Trade & Navigation Treaty between US & Sultanate of Sulu".
- 1898**
- 12 JUN** Emilio Aguinaldo declared independence of the Philippines from Spain in Cavite.
- 10 DEC** Spain sells Philippines to USA for 20 million Mexican dollars after losing Spanish-American War under the terms of the Treaty of Paris. US troops begin to forcibly incorporate Muslim areas into the Philippine state. The Moros did not recognize the agreement, which clinched the American takeover. The BangsaMoro homeland over which Spain could not claim to have colonial authority was included as part of the territory transferred to the USA. The BangsaMoro people were never consulted. They waged a fierce resistance to defend their homeland.
- 1899**
- 20 AUG** USA negotiated with the BangsaMoro people under the leadership of Sultan Jamalul II. This negotiation led to the Bates Treaty signed between the Sultan and John C. Bates. The treaty was in no certain terms a recognition of the US of the sovereign character of the BangsaMoro state and precisely distinct from the Aguinaldo Republic.
- 1902** Philippine bill of July 1 of 1902 - the American government recognized the distinctions between the Moro, the "Pagan" and the Christian Filipinos and adapted their methods of governance accordingly.
- 1903-14** USA established the Moro Province.
- 1915** American governor, Frank Carpenter, tricked and virtually forced the Sulu Sultanate to renounce his temporal sovereignty at the time US halted military campaign and policy of attraction was launched.
- 1916** Battle of Bud Dahoh Jolo, Sulu, where 1,000 Moros were massacred by the Americans.
- 1917** Bureau of non-Christian tribes was organized to established "mutual understanding and complete fusion" of the Muslims into the majority segment of Filipino Christians.
- 1921**
- 9 JUN** 57 Moro Datus and leaders of Sulu petitioned the American authorities in Manila and Washington, part of the petition, reads: "Whereas, it would be an act of great injustice to cast our people aside, turnover our country to the Filipinos in the north to be governed by them without our consent and thrust upon us a government not of our own people, nor by our people, nor for our own people.
- 1926** US congressman Robert Bacon introduces House Bill No. 12772 during 2 successive sessions. The bill proposed to separate Mindanao and Sulu from the rest of the Philippines and to have US permanently retain these islands under American sovereignty.



Excerpt from  
**Deeper Look at the Moro Problem**  
 By Satur C. Ocampo, Sun Star Manila  
 5 May 2000

Even as the Moros resisted US colonial rule after the signing of the Bates-Kiram Treaty on August 20, 1899, the latter applied the **Land Registration Act** (Act 4960) in Mindanao. It required the registration in writing of all lands occupied by any person, group or corporation. That mother act gave way to the following "landgrabbing laws":

**1** Public Act 718 (April 4, 1903), declaring as null and void all the lands granted by Moro sultans and datus or non-Christian chiefs without state authority. This law effectively dispossessed the Moros of their ancestral landholdings.

**2** Public Act 926 (Oct 7, 1903), declaring all the lands registered under Act 496 as public lands, making them available for homestead, sale or lease by individuals or corporations.

**3** Mining Act of 1905, declaring all public lands free and open for exploration, occupation and purchase even by US citizens.

**4** Cadastral Act of 1907 which facilitated land acquisition by educated natives, money bureaucrats and American speculators

**5** Acts 2254 and 2280 which created agricultural colo-

nies amidst Moro communities (7 in Cotabato, one each in Lanao and Basilan) purportedly to integrate the Moros and Christians into a "homogenous Filipino people." Act 2254 was glaringly inequitable: it awarded 16 hectares to a Filipino but only 8 hectares to a Moro.

**6** Public Land Act 2894 (1919), which allowed Filipinos to apply for ownership of 24 hectares, while allowing Moros only 10 hectares.

Under the Commonwealth, more inequitable laws were issues:

**1** Act 4197 (Feb. 12, 1935), which declared land settlement as the "only lasting solution" to the problem of Mindanao and Sulu. It "opened the floodgates to the massive influx of settlers into Mindanao;" who took over the choicest parcels of land, especially along the highways, and began cultivation even before the areas were subdivided.

**2** Act 141 (Nov. 7, 1936), which declared all Moro ancestral land-holdings as public lands. Each Moro was allowed to apply for no more than four hectares; whereas a Christian could own 24 hectares and a corporation, 1,024 hectares. That led to foreign firms hogging thousands of hectares as pineapple, banana and other crop plantations.

**3** Act 441 (June 1939), creating the National Land Settlement Administration' it gave priority for land settlement to those who had completed military training (in preparation for the Japanese invasion). Two of three settlements were set up in the Cotabato Valley (one headed by Gen. Paulino Santos, after whom the city was named).

After World War II, settlements in Mindanao were resumed under the Rice and Corn Production Administration and later the Land Settlement Development Corp, which resettled 1,500 families. Then under RA 1160 or the NARRA program, 20,500 families of former members of the Hukbalahaps were resettled from 1954 to 1963.

In September 1971 the Department of Agrarian Reform, formed under RA 6389, took over the settlement projects. By 1983 the DAR resettled 22,639 families in 23 projects in Mindanao. Sadly, says Jubair, under the 1987 Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), the Moros continued to be dispossessed of their remaining landholdings. This the MILF, and Bangsamoro, cannot abide.

**1935**

**18 MAR** A historic assembly of more than 100 Maranao leaders passed a strongly worded manifesto known as the Dansalan Declaration addressed to the US President which vehemently opposed the annexation of the BangsaMoro homeland in reaction to the conspiracy of the constitutional con-

vention organized by America to write the Philippine constitution.

**1946** US grants Philippine independence, but they continue to determine the economic and political direction of the fledging Republic.

**1960s** The central government in Manila enforced a "homestead" policy, which propelled the escalation of Christian migra-

tion to Mindanao region. Settlers from Luzon and Visayas occupied the ancestral land of the Moros and other indigenous people in Southern Philippines. Local and foreign big business obtained titles over the Moro lands. Enraged by the "legal" land grabbing, the Moros responded with arms, which ignited a long drawn and bitter conflict between the BangsaMoro people and the Philippine government.

**1961** Sulu congressman Datu Ombra Amilbansa introduced house bill no. 5682 entitled "An Act Granting and Recognizing the Independence of the Province of Sulu".

**1968**  
**MAR** At least 28 Moro army recruits killed in the Jabidah Massacre on Corregidor Island, triggering widespread Muslim indignation. The incident releases pent-up anger from years of prejudice, ill treatment, and discrimination. Moro students in Manila hold a weeklong protest vigil over an empty coffin marked "Jabidah" in front of the presidential palace.

**1968-71** Moro student activism grows. Moro consciousness, based on Islamic revivalism and knowledge of a distinct history and identity, gathers steam. Political organizations emerge to culminate eventually in the establishment of the MNLF under Nur Misuari with the goal of carving an independent muslim nation in the Southern Philippines.

Land conflicts in Mindanao escalates. Para-military groups proliferate; some attached to Christian politicians, some to loggers, and some to Muslim politicians. Hundreds of young Moros are sent to Malaysia for military training. Sabah becomes a supply depot, communication center and sanctuary for Moro rebels.

Towards 1971, the constabulary takes control of many towns because of growing violence. Schools are closed, farms abandoned, commerce stagnates, refugees increased. The Christian led Ilagah para-military group enters the scene. One attack at a mosque in Cotabato, leaves 65 men, women and children, dead and mutilated. A BBC radio report of the massacre draws the attention of Libyan leader Muammar Khadafy.

**1971**

**21 JUL** Leaders from all sectors of Moro soci-

ety published a manifesto demanding that the government take action to stop the attacks. The government calls the manifesto a threat. In August, the residents of Buldon (Cotabato) fortified their town after killing some Christian loggers. The army responds with a week-long artillery bombardment.

**SEP-OCT** The cycle of reprisals is uncontrollable. Fighting between the Baracudas (paramilitary group led by Muslims) and government troops leaves hundreds dead on both sides.

**NOV** 40 Maranao Muslims are summarily executed at a military checkpoint in Tacub. Muslims accused the government of genocide.

**1972**

**JAN** The government takes 8 Muslims ambassadors on a tour of Mindanao to show that the charges of genocide are exaggerated. The third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) in Jeddah, KSA requests the Philippine government to protect the lives and property of Muslims.

**JUL** A Libyan and Egyptian delegation tours the troubled areas and concludes that while no strong evidence exists of state supported genocide, there is clearly a war between Christians and Muslims.

**21 SEP** President Ferdinand Marcos declares Martial Law. One month later the first organized Moro counter offensive is launched in Marawi. The MNLF comes out into the open and claims leadership of the Moro secessionist movement.

**1973** Marcos attempts to improve socioeconomic development in the South while maintaining military operations. Presidential decrees order relief and welfare projects and resettlement refugees, declare certain Morolands as inalienable. A Presidential task force for the reconstruction and development of Mindanao is constituted to rebuild areas devastated by violence. Marcos wins over key Muslim leaders outside the MNLF. The Philippine Amanah Bank is created to expand the class of Muslim entrepreneurs. The Southern Philippine Development Administration (SPDA) is created to bolster business activity.

The 4th ICFM (in Benghazi) maintains the pressure on Marcos, but recog-

nizes that the problem is "internal to an independent sovereign state". Marcos responds by realigning his foreign policy and organizing diplomatic initiatives to win over the Muslim world.

**1974** The MNLF gathers strength and broad support from Philippine Muslims. Fighting escalates into large-scale conventional warfare. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) creates two integrated commands - the Central Mindanao Command (CEMCOM) for the Cotabato-Lanao Areas, and the Southern Command (SouthCom) for Zamboanga Peninsula and Sulu Archipelago.

**FEB** SouthCom unleashes full force on MNLF rebels, who have taken control of Jolo, in the biggest battle of the war. In mainland Mindanao CemCom attacks the MNLF forces in Cotabato. Abroad, the MNLF gains official recognition from Muslim countries as the representative of the Moror people. The 5th ICFM urges the Philippine government "to find a political and peaceful solution through negotiation" and officially recognized the MNLF. The war reaches stalemate.

**MAR** The Philippine government panel holds its first meeting with MNLF chairman Nur Misuari and his deputy Salamat Hashil in Jeddah. Marcos sends negotiating panels to MNLF commanders in the field. The MNLF undergoes fierce debates on how to respond to the Marcos initiatives. The issue is settled for the MNLF by the 5th ICFM, which supports autonomy as basis for negotiations between the MNLF and GRP. The definition of autonomy comes from the working paper of the committee of four (Senegal, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Somalia) which provides for self government within the framework of Philippine national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Marcos intensifies his diplomatic initiatives, sending delegations including special emissary Imelda Marcos to Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Algeria. The Philippine government opens embassies in Saudi Arabia, UAE, Islamic Republic of Iran, Algeria, Lebanon and Kuwait. Relations with 13 other South Asian, Middle-Eastern and African muslim nations are strengthened. The Philippine also lobbies the Non-aligned Foreign Ministers Meeting.

**1976** With negotiations in full swing, Marcos builds his case. He meets the OIC Secretary General, the Senagalese Amadou Karim Gaye, in Kenya; sends a delegation

to the 7th ICFM (Istanbul) and the Non-Aligned Summit (Colombo); invites the committee of four to Zamboanga City and Manila; and sends Imelda Marcos to personally confer with Khadafy. In the field, local ceasefires are forged, providing space to implement a "policy of attraction" Key rebel leaders are offered amnesty, livelihood projects and business opportunities as well as political positions that allow them to surrender with "dignity". Surrenderist include Amelil Malaguio, of the Kutawato (Cotabato) revolutionary committee, and Abdulhamid Lukman, a former municipal judge who was Misuari's legal adviser in Jeddah.

**23 DEC** Misuari and defense undersecretary Carmelo Barbero signs the Tripoli Agreement. It provides for autonomy in 13 provinces and 9 cities in the Southern Philippines. Marcos instructs Barbero to include one last point in the text; that "the Philippine government shall take all necessary constitutional processes for the implementation of the entire agreement.

**1977**

**JAN-APR** A general ceasefire is arranged. Marcos approves the code of Muslim personal laws, which establishes Shari'ah courts as part of the national system of courts. Talks resume in February to hammer out details of implementing the Tripoli Agreement. A deadlock arises when the MNLF insists that the 13 provinces be immediately declared a single autonomous unit. Marcos maintains that certain constitutional procedures, including a plebiscite are needed because the majority of the people in the 13 provinces are not Muslims. Imelda Marcos hurries to Libya on 12 March to solicit Khadafy's help. He suggests forming a provisional government to supervise the plebiscite. Misuari refuses to head the provisional government. On 25 March, Marcos issues proclamation 1628 declaring autonomy in the 13 provinces. On 17 April, a plebiscite is called over objections from the MNLF. Only 10 of the 13 provinces vote for autonomy. Marcos implements his own version of autonomy by dividing the 10 provinces into two autonomous regions, IX and XII. Negotiations broke

down.

- MAY-DEC** The 8th ICFM (in Tripoli) allows Misuari, for the first time, to address the conference. Ministers express disappointment over the outcome of negotiations. By this time, however, the improved image of the Philippines is working in its favor and the ICFM simply recommends that negotiations continue. This shakes the MNLF leadership, and the split emerges. In Jeddah on 26 Dec., Salamat Hashim announces an "instrument of takeover" of the MNLF leadership, a move supported by traditional leaders Rashid Lucman, Dumacao Alonto and Salipada Pendatun. Misuari counters by expelling Hashim Salamat and charging him with treason. Arabs supporters are equally divided: Egypt supports Salamat while Libya leans towards Misuari. Mediation by the OIC and Muslim World League fails. Not wishing to be used by the traditional politicians, Hashim transfers to Cairo and goes on to form the "new MNLF", eventually the Moro Islamic liberation Front (MILF). Lucman and Pendatun reinvigorate the BangsaMoro Liberation Organization to gain support, but Arab states ignore them.
- 1978** Negotiations between GRP and the MNLF resume but the Philippine panel chooses to meet Hashim Salamat rather than Misuari. Meanwhile the Marcos government presents a report to the OIC on the functioning of the new autonomous regional government.
- 17-29 APR** The 9th ICFM meets in Dakkar, Senegal and Misuari is recognized as the chairman and spokesman for the MNLF. Hashim cannot be present because Egyptian authorities, not wishing to antagonize Libya further, prevent him from leaving Cairo. MNLF members in the field conduct kidnappings and ambushes. In Patikul, Sulu a local MNLF leader invites the AFP to a peace dialogue. When they arrived, Gen. Teodulfo Bautista and 33 soldiers are shot dead. Government policy turns increasingly violent.
- 1979** Misuari reverts to his former goal of secession and renews efforts to convince Islamic States but to no

avail. Meanwhile the Philippine panel continues negotiations with the Hashim faction in Cairo. Surrendered MNLF founder Abul Khayr Alonto joins the government panel. The 10th ICFM in Morocco affirms support for the Tripoli Agreement. Diplomatic initiatives focus on ensuring that the agreement is actually being implemented.

- 1980** Pocket wars and skirmishes continue. In March, Malaysia and Indonesia offer to serve as "honest brokers" arguing that the problem has regional implications that could be resolved by ASEAN. The Philippine government takes newly installed OIC secretary general Habib Chatti of Tunisia on a tour around Mindanao to meet Muslims and the new Regional Legislative Assemblies. The 11th ICFM in Islamabad request Philippine government to implement the Tripoli Agreement.
- 1981** Misuari fails to convince a summit conference of heads of states in Taif, Saudi Arabia to support secession. He fails likewise to convince the 12th ICFM in Baghdad, which resolves to "make new contact with the GRP for the implementation of the Tripoli Agreement in text and spirit." Marcos "lifts" Martial Law but keeps his dictatorial powers in a bid to win further legitimacy for his regime. In May, opposition leader Benigno Aquino, released from prison and allowed to go into exile in the US, visits Misuari in Jeddah and promises to support the Tripoli Agreement. MNLF forces kill 120 government soldiers in Pata island, off Jolo. In retaliation, more than 15,000 troops are sent to the island in a massive operation that infuriates Muslim local government officials.
- 1982** Marcos consolidates the Philippine diplomatic position. He visits Saudi Arabia King Khaled and OIC's Habib Chatti. The 13th ICFM calls on government "to speed the implementation" of the agreement. It also appeals to the MNLF to prepare for new talks "as a united front". The newly established Moro Revolutionary Organization, a member of the communist-led National Democratic Front (NDF) calls for a "people's war as the main form of the Moro people's revolutionary struggle". Efforts to link communist and Moro insurgencies fail, but local forces cooperate on the ground.
- 1983** The 14th ICFM in Dhaka calls on Moros to unite prior to new negotiations that will put the Tripoli Agreement into effect. MNLF military activities begin to wane but the New People's Army (NPA, armed group of the



- NDF) offensives in Mindanao keep the AFP engaged. Benigno Aquino returns from exile and is assassinated on arrival at the Manila Airport. Popular challenge to Marcos regime intensifies throughout the country.
- 1984** Marcos wins new battles on the diplomatic front. He sends emissaries to the 4th Islamic Summit in Casablanca and to the World Muslim congress in Karachi. In February, he holds bilateral meetings with the Presidents of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Singapore. The 15th ICFM reaffirms its commitment to respect the territorial integrity of the Philippines and again calls on the MNLF to close ranks. In March, Hashim's "new MNLF" officially declares itself a separate organization with the name Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), with a religious as well as nationalist agenda. The NPA gains in strength and starts to launch larger attacks. Mass demonstrations become spontaneous and the first nationally coordinated Welgang Bayan (People's Strike) shows the depth of popular opposition to Marcos.
- 1985** Armed attacks by the NPA intensify along with legal, popular opposition to the regime. Marcos schedules a snap presidential election to defuse widespread tension. The legal opposition unites behind Corazon Aquino, Benigno's widow, as the anti-Marcos candidate. The NDF boycotts the exercise calling the election a "sham".
- 1986** Snap elections are held, with Marcos proclaimed as winner. Days later, he is ousted after a failed coup sends millions of people to the main thoroughfare, known as "EDSA" to protect mutineers from counter attack. The Marcos family is flown to Hawaii by the US government. Corazon Aquino takes her oath as President and establishes a revolutionary government. She appoints a commission to draft a new constitution, which includes provisions for autonomy in Muslim Mindanao and the Cordillera Region of Luzon.
- In March, the MILF sends a message of its readiness to discuss peace with Aquino. In August, OIC and Muslim World League mediation, the MILF and MNLF agree in principle to negotiate jointly in an expanded panel. But on Sept.5 Aquino visits the MNLF camp in Sulu, to talk peace with Misuari. Misuari seizes the initiative and gains recognition for the MNLF from the government as its negotiating partner. The MILF displays political strength through a militant consultative assembly in October, but fails to elicit government response.
- 1987** GRP and MNLF panels meet in Jeddah and agree to discuss autonomy, "subject to democratic processes" Aquino turns down MNLF requests to suspend autonomy provisions in draft constitution, which is ratified in February. The MILF launches a 5-day offensive to assert its presence. This prompts a meeting with GRP panel Chair Aquilino Pimentel, who requests a temporary cease-fire. Talks between GRP and MNLF breakdown as the government unilaterally implements the autonomy mandate in the newly approved constitution over MNLF objections. A Mindanao Regional Consultative Commission (RCC) is organized, and a new autonomy bill is submitted to congress. Both MNLF and MILF bitterly denounce the government's moves.
- 1988** Aquino meets with the RCC, and starts diplomatic initiatives by briefing Islamic diplomats in Manila about the government's peace program, emphasizing the Tripoli Agreement is being implemented within constitutional processes. Draft autonomy bills are submitted to both House of Congress.
- 1989** Congress passes Republic Act 6734, which creates the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and Aquino signs into law on 1 August. A plebiscite is held on 19 November and the MNLF and MILF call for a boycott of exercise. Only 4 provinces-Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi opt for autonomy, because of opposition from MNLF and MILF and Christian residents.
- 1990** Regional election are held in ARMM. A regional governor and regional assembly assume positions. Aquino signs executive orders that define central government relations with ARMM, which is officially inaugurated on 6 November.
- 1991** The 20th ICFM in Istanbul calls for a resumption of negotiations between GRP and MNLF. Abu Sayyaf emerges as a group of young Moro radicals.
- 1992** **FEB** Fidel Ramos candidate in the forthcoming Presidential elections, meets Khadaffy in Tripoli to discuss comprehensive and permanent solution to the war in Mindanao. In May, he is elected President and immediately issues a call for peace. He appoints a National Unification Commission (NUC) in July to formulate an amnesty program and

a negotiation process, based on public consultations. The first round of exploratory talks with MNLF is held in October in Tripoli. The NUC starts a consultation process, including a meeting with the MILF.

**1993** Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas hosts a second round of exploratory talks. The NUC submits its consolidated recommendations in July, prompting Ramos to issue Executive Order 125 defining the approach and administrative structure for government peace efforts. The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) is created to continue the work begun by the NUC. Formal talks between GRP and the MNLF begin in October in Jakarta. An Interim Ceasefire is signed, along with a memorandum creating support committees to discuss substantive concerns. Alatas reports the progress of negotiations to the 21st ICFM in Karachi. The MILF poses no objections to the talks. The OIC visits Sulu in December.

**1995** Support committees meet to discuss defense and regional and security forces, education; economic and financial systems, mines and minerals; the functioning of the Legislative Assembly, Executive Council and representation in the national government and administrative system; and Shari'ah courts. On 4 April, armed men believed to be members of a new Moro rebel group, Abu Sayyaf, raid the town of Ipil (Zamboanga del Sur) killing 50 people and causing millions of pesos worth of damage in looting and burning. Both GRP and MNLF issue separate statements calling for a greater commitment to peace. The government sponsors a series of Mindanao Peace and Development Summits in key cities from May to November. The GRP panel briefs Libya on the progress of the talks in October. At the end of the year, the third round of formal talks resumes in Jakarta. An Interim Agreement is signed, containing 81 points of consensus. Predominantly Christian opponents throughout Mindanao denounce this agreement. Political opposition increases. Vigilantes vow to attack if the agreement is finalized.

**1996**

**JAN-JUN** The government rushes to mollify politicians opposing the Interim Agreement. Consultations are held every month with local officials and members of the Congress, with Ramos himself participating in some consultations. The government organizes public meetings in Mindanao to promote the Interim Agreement. In June, Indonesia calls a consultation of the OIC committee of six. A meeting of the GRP-MNLF Mixed Committee results in Agreement to establish the Southern Philippines Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD).

**JUL-AUG** Members of Congress express opposition to the Interim Agreement. The Senate organizes public hearings and calls on the executive to justify its actions and commitments. The Senate agrees to support the agreement, but only with 9 substantial amendments, which dilute the powers and autonomy of institutions to be set up under the agreement. Six senators continue their opposition, and lead a group of politicians who file a 54-page petition asking the Supreme court to nullify the agreement. Catholic Bishops express support for the agreement, subject to refinements in the text. Misuari announces his bill for the ARMM governorship. The 9th Mixed Committee meeting and 4th round of formal talks take place in Jakarta. Exploratory talks with the MILF begin.

**SEP-DEC** The Final Peace Agreement is signed on 2 September. The MILF distances itself from the agreement, but commits not to stand in the way of peace. In the ARMM elections, Misuari runs for governor and wins, and six MNLF leaders are elected to the Regional Legislative Assembly. Ramos issues Executive Order 371, which departs from the agreement on some significant points. The government forms a new negotiating panel for talks with the MILF in October. The MILF, in a display of strength, holds a huge assembly near Cotabato City from 3-5 December and reaffirms commitment to independence.

**1997** GRP and MILF representatives meet and issue a joint press statement. Heavy fighting in Buldon (Cotabato) leaves more than a hundred dead and

inars talks. Another meeting in early February is suspended because of renewed fighting. The committees meet again in March and agree to form an Interim Ceasefire Monitoring Committee, with Fr. Eliseo Mercado (NDU president in Cotabato) as chair. Meetings take place in April, May and June but are bogged down by continued fighting. The AFP launches its biggest offensive in June. By July, an agreement on cessation of hostilities is forged. Further meetings between the two sides follow.

**1998**

**AUG** Organization of SADEM (Sulu Archipelago Decolonization Movement) for restoration of independence of Sulu Archipelago through the United Nations. Hadji Limpasan is chairman of SADEM central committee.

A new President, Joseph Ejercito Estrada is elected, He has an electoral alliance with politicians who opposed the Peace Agreement. Anti-agreement politicians do well in the local elections. MNLF leaders, save for one, lose their bids for local positions. Ten congressional representatives draft a bill to amend the Organic Act on ARMM in accordance with the peace agreement's provisions. A new government negotiating panel is constituted to talk to the MILF. In December 1998, Abu Sayyaf founder Abdurajak Janjalani dies in clash with police.

**1999** New outbreaks of fighting between MILF and AFP followed by re-establishment of ceasefire. Government recognizes two MILF camps. ARMM elections are due in September. Three bills have been filed in Congress to amend the Organic Act on the ARMM, expanding it in accordance with the 1996 Peace Agreement. A plebiscite on the new autonomous region is due by the end of the year, but may be deferred.

**2000**

**MAR** Abu Sayyaf snatches 50 people from schools in Basilan province including many school children, teachers and Catholic priests.

**23 APR** Abu Sayyaf kidnaps 21 people, including 10 foreign tourists from a Malaysian resort and takes them to the Philippine Island of Jolo.

**30 APR** MILF walks out of peace talks with the government after the Army attacks rebels holding a highway near their

headquarters in Maguindanao province.

**9 JUL** The AFP declared it captured the MILF camp Abubakar in Matanog Maguindanao following at least one week of air and ground assaults.

**16 SEP** Military assaults on Abu Sayyaf in Jolo. Four thousand soldiers were deployed.

**16 OCT** OIC mission team from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Somalia, Senegal and Brunei - to look into the implementation of the 1996 Peace Accord between GRP and MNLF.

#### 'CIA Monster'

*By Edmundo Santuario III*

*Excerpt from Sayyaf: The CIA's Monster Gone Berserk  
Published in Bulatlat.com*

U.S. military efforts to intervene in the Abu Sayyaf hostage crisis appears to be a turnaround from their reported links to the Mindanao extremists several years ago. In May last year, Senate President Aquilino Pimentel Jr. described the Abu Sayyaf ("Bearer [or Father] of the Sword" in Arabic) as a "CIA monster." Abu Sayyaf members, Pimentel said, were initially recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency as mujahideens to fight the U.S. proxy war in Afghanistan in the '80s. Before their deployment, they were trained by AFP officers in Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan and other remote areas in Mindanao. But the arms and funds came from U.S. covert operations connected with the CIA, Pimentel said.

The mujahideens returned to Mindanao after the Afghan war to constitute the core of the Abu Sayyaf, the Senate president added. In his revelations, Pimentel cited the book, *Blowback* by Chalmers Johnson. But it was American writer John K. Cooley in his book, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, American and International Terrorism*, who made "the most direct statement regarding the training and funding of the (Abu Sayyaf) by the CIA," he said. Cooley was the Middle East correspondent for the reputable *Christian Science Monitor* and *ABC News*. In his "Ghosts of the Past" report for *ABC News* in August last year, Cooley said the Abu Sayyaf, like many "international terrorists," has its origins in the 1979-89 jihad or "holy war" to expel the Soviets from Afghanistan. Wanting to tie down the Soviets to their own little Vietnam war, the CIA recruited and trained thousands of Islamic militants to support the Afghan resistance against the Soviet invasion forces. The American quarterly *Foreign Affairs* reported that some 35,000 Muslim militants from 40 countries — including the Philippines — took part in the Afghan jihad. Related historical accounts said among the recruits was Osama bin Laden, now the U.S.'s No. 1 "terrorist enemy."

## The Socio-Political Dimension of the Mindanao Conflict

Jun Anave  
Third World Network Features  
June 2000

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Manila: The Bangsamoro regard it as their 'historical homeland'. Non-Muslims believe that it is the 'land of promise'.

Indeed, Mindanao boasts of a very rich history, a history anchored largely on the centuries-old struggle of its Muslim inhabitants. And it sure is promising: its 94,227 sq km land area abounds with mineral, forest, agricultural and fishery resources.

But while the Bangsamoro should be taking pleasure in its natural wealth, they continue to languish in poverty and maldevelopment. The Muslim population, now comprising only about 18% of the estimated 18 million people in Mindanao, is still struggling for self-determination.

During the Spanish colonisation, the predominantly-Muslim Mindanao was successful in defying the colonisers through wars financed by its economic surplus. The Muslims, however, were not as successful against the Americans. Through the Bates Treaty signed in 1899, The US effectively put the Bangsamoro - as the Muslims now call themselves - under its control.

The American colonial period witnessed the promulgation of several land laws that encouraged emigration to Mindanao. According to a study by Dr Samuel K Tan of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP-CIDS), these land laws did not only quell anti-American sentiments, but also deprived the Moros and the natives or *lumads* of the lands they regard as ancestral.

The Moro population in Mindanao dwindled subsequently when Christians from Luzon and the Visayas began moving in. In the 1918 census, the Moros and *lumads* still made up 78% of the

Mindanao population while the Christians comprised the remaining 22%. However, the 1970 census revealed a big reversal when the Christians had outnumbered the natives, 3 to 1.

At present, Moros dominate only five provinces in Mindanao. These are Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Basilan. The first four constitute the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Alongside the massive migration of Christians was the entry of American firms that capitalised on the regions economic potential. Dr Tan reveals that between 1900 and 1920, about 46 US firms were established in Zamboanga and Sulu. Agricultural colonies were also said to have been established in Cotabato, Davao, Lanao and Agusan by 1930.

Despite efforts to spur development such as the creation of the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD) and the Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA), poverty still pervades in Mindanao, exacerbated further by the ongoing hostilities between government troops and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Based on the 1997 Poverty Statistics from the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB), Mindanao records the highest poverty incidence among the island groups, with half of its population mired in poverty. Of the country's 27 million poor population, Mindanao accounts for 32% of the figure.

ARMM has the highest poverty incidence among the country's 15 regions, with 62.5% of its population considered poor. It also has the lowest per capita gross regional domestic product in the country and the second lowest average annual family income.

Moro-dominated areas still have untapped cradles of rich natural resources, raw materials and cheap labour. In a public statement, the Davao chapter of the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) contends that these areas, especially those where camps of the MILF are situated, are 'overflowing wells for super profit' and 'veritably an investor's haven'.

## The Bangsamoro after 100 years of US Colonization

Antonio Tujan, Jr.  
*IBON Perspectives*  
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More activists see this as among the reasons for the military's aggression.

'The present administration is on a mad rampage to hold, consolidate and clear the Moro-occupied lands to make early the rolling of the red carpet for foreign capitalists,' adds the BAYAN-Davao statement.

Around 19 corporations are currently operating in the Moro provinces of Basilan, Sulu and Maguindanao. These include transnationals American Rubber Corporation and Sime Darby Tires.

Also, the Moroland Sugar Corporation (MSC), established as part of the previous administration's reconciliation bid with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), is eyeing some 25,000 hectares of land in Maguindanao as the site of its milling facility. Maguindanao was chosen supposedly because of its vast tracts of land, abundant labour, absence of strikes and its typhoon-free weather.

It can be remembered that in early 1999, the military clashed with the MILE troops manning the contested lands.

The government has reportedly begun implementing the Liguasan Marsh Development Project through the Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC). The project, which involves extraction of natural gas, will operate on the Liguasan marshland largely occupied by Moro communities.

But While local and foreign capitalists continue to extract profits from Moro lands, Moros are still being denied their right to economic benefits and resources and their right to self-determination.

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One hundred years ago, the United States accomplished what the Spaniards were not able to do in three centuries. The US was able to gain control of the Moro Sultanates through the Bates Treaty that it signed with Sultan Jama-ul Kiram.

It is true that the Spaniards were victorious in one of the wars which resulted in treaty by the Sultanate of Sulu in 1851. But the US was able to wangle a more comprehensive treaty that effectively put the Bangsamoro under US sovereign control. In order to achieve this, they had help from the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire who was at the same time the Caliph of the Sunni Muslims, and thus was the religious leader of the Bangsamoro.

Through the Bates Treaty, the Sultanate recognized US sovereignty in exchange for US recognition of their religion, laws at commerce, recognition of the authority of the Sultan and protection from foreign aggression. The US also provided the sultan and the datus with a salary ranging from \$200 for the sultan and \$75 to \$15 for the datus.

The US as a new global superpower insinuated itself into the south of the Philippines at around the same time that it insinuated itself into the Katipunan's good graces, becoming the 'great North American' protector of the fledgling nation. But after the US decisively defeated the Katipunan in 1901 (not to mention the guerrilla warfare that followed for the next 12 years), the US turned its attention to Moroland. Before long the Moro people rose in arms against the Americans in such famous rebellions as Bud Dajo (1906) and Bud Bagsak (1913) but were themselves eventually vanquished.

One hundred years after, Moroland is mostly populated by Christians, their wealth now in the hands of the transnational corporations (TNCs) and the comprador-landlords and the Moro people still wonder when they will ever savor freedom and development. Thus no one can blame the Moro people for being suspicious of everyone and for wanting to set up a separate Islamic nation and state.

The popular uproar regarding the recent outbreak

of the long festering silent war in Mindanao against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is very heartening and shows the Filipinos' genuine concern for peace and brotherhood.

Some also view this recent outbreak with concern over the business reputation of the country. There is nothing worse for business than to remind current and potential investors about the communist insurgency and the Moro rebellion. This would feed into the bad reputation of the country's lack of peace and order that could decisively end our favorable current credit ratings.

For this reason, the government acts immediately to pacify the situation: militarily neutralize the Moro rebels through field action and politically neutralize them through ceasefire negotiations. And if confidence-building is most appropriate, then send the President over to Mindanao to get this ceasefire agreement. End of story.

But there are many who are quick to blame the Moros for being responsible every time there is an intensification of the conflict. Why? Because they are Moros, and the litany that dates back to the time of Spanish colonial rule starts: they are war-like *huramentados*, have no word of honor, they are crime-prone and so on.

Many of us grew up in an atmosphere that included Moro-bashing so that attitudes and prejudices against our Moro countrymen have become second-nature and difficult to overcome. At the very least, they are looked upon as people who are different and do not belong.

Another form of Moro-bashing is the more political witch-hunt, which sees a terrorist in every Muslim and points the picture popularized by US policy which renders every international Muslim solidarity organization suspect of terrorism.

This is the line being promoted by the military and some people in Malacañang with the help of some media practitioners. Arab terrorist organizations abound and their activities can never be justifiable.

But to paint a picture of terrorism against the MILF and bring up the US' favorite terrorist bogeyman like Bin Laden and Yusuf smacks of militarist psy-war tactics. These will only worsen our problem of prejudice against our Moro countrymen and women. It will only serve to lead us farther and farther away from understanding the Moro problem and how to solve these problems peacefully as Filipinos.

## Understanding the Mindanao Conflict: Mindanao at the Crossroad

Dr. Samuel Tan  
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July 11, 2000

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*This paper was prepared and presented at the Cotabato City Peace and Development Forum, 20 July 2000.*  
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**At no time in history** had the issue of Mindanao independence been brought to a critical point as it is today. The issue had already been expressed as early as 1910 when the Zamboanga business sector presented a written petition to isolate the island for the development of "plantation interests". The same sentiment was aired in the written petition of Muslim *datus*, sultans, and leaders in 1930 when the question of Philippine independence from the United States elicited Muslim preference for exclusion from the projected free Philippines under Filipino rule. Then in the late 1970s the Independence aspiration of Mindanao was again revived by the Mindanao Independence Movement of Datu Udtog Matalam of Pagalungan Cotabato, Ruben Canoy of Cagayan de Oro, and Nur Misuari of the Moro National Liberation Front. Only the latter succeeded in achieving a compromise agreement known as the Tripoli Agreement on December 23, 1976 through the mediation of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). Although the OIC explanation was for the Agreement to be a Comprehensive representation of the Filipino Muslim Community, this was not acceptable to Hashim Salamat and his MILF. This was where the critical point began from the Muslim perspective creating the problems, ambiguities, and dilemma in the government responses to the Mindanao conflict.

The government from Marcos to Estrada operated on the clear premises of the Tripoli Agreement that autonomy not independence was to be the framework of any resolution of issues and conflict and that the Philippine Constitution would be the point of reference for the definition of the meaningful extent of autonomy. But what the government has ignored and belittled were certain fundamental realities and facts that have remained active in Muslim consciousness:

1. That independence was still the underlying essence of autonomy for all Muslim social movements (MNLF,

- MILF, etc.) regardless of differences
2. That any modus vivendi or compromise agreement related to the implementation of the Tripoli Accord would be temporary and tactical in nature, and
  3. That the ultimate hope of the Muslim Community in the Philippines for progress and prosperity lies not in the Christian dominated state but in the dynamic relation and linkage to the Islamic world.

In effect, the three foregoing facts are the underlying premises that constitute the general framework of the Muslim struggle however divided it seems are the various groups in their activities, leadership roles, rhetorics, and approaches. There are no perceivable indications that these premises are weakening. The contrary is what is obviously emerging. There are several corroborative factors that have contributed to the hardening of the independence imperative of the Muslim struggle, peaceful or otherwise:

First is the inability of the State through the government and its agencies to adequately or substantially meet the basic and ideal needs of the Muslim Community. While the government has not failed to initiate policies and draw up development plans along constitutional lines administration after administration since 1946 has somehow ended with the centuries old Moro Problem still unresolved. It is not easy and fair to altogether blame the government on the Bangsamoro armed groups and their supporters for the elusiveness and increasing difficulties of finding the permanent or, at least, a relatively long enduring peace vital to the kind of socioeconomic, political and cultural growth and progress the Philippines desires.

Second is the obvious trend on the part of the Muslim Community to seek ultimate satisfaction of their aspirations from within their own societies and the Muslim world given the decades of underdevelopment, the rising level of frustration, resentment, and anger over the extreme difficulty and costliness of recovering their lost historic rights to ancestral lands and equitable social and political benefits therefrom. These are confounded by the increasing socioeconomic problems of life that have haunted their communities for decades without immediate prospects of resolution from State initiatives or programs.

Third is the exploitation of the Mindanao conflict for a long time by external vested interests for

reasons not necessarily for the good or benefit of the marginalized sectors or government. The suspected involvement of international agencies or groups such as Islamic radical movements including terrorist groups or central intelligence agencies of powers cannot be ignored.

Fourth is the failure of civil society particularly the dominant Christian sector to really remove the lingering anti-Muslim bias in historical consciousness. The hardening of irreconcilable premises in the rhetorics of government and Muslim positions is not helping enhance a truly meaningful peace process. Apparently, the subtle hands of ugly politics in local and national levels and fora including the inner sanctums of Congress are nurturing the culture of conflict along irreconcilable lines making use of the rhetorics of constitutionalism, legalism, morality, public order, humanism, and democracy to rally the processes of tri-media for their purposes. It is these political riders in the Mindanao conflict from the viewpoints of the armed protagonists that are prolonging the agonies of war and the ecstasies of vested interests not affected directly by the violence of conflict.

In reality, the Mindanao conflict is a microcosm of the national and international conflict between the marginalized and exploited social sectors and the State and / or dominant sector. The Bangsamoro and Lumad struggles are not in a sense different from those of the working classes and farmers in other areas of the country and the world represented by different factions of the NDF-NPA network coordinated either by leaders from abroad or within the country or by other similar radical groups. They are similar to the struggles of the Muslim minority in Patani, Thailand, The LTTE (Liberation Tiger of Tamil Eelam minority in Sri Lanka, the Muslim Majority against a Hindu minority leadership in Kashmir, the East Timorese majority against the Indonesian minority leadership, the Fijian majority against an Indian minority leadership, the Chechen majority against the Russian minority, etc. Their common aspiration regardless of racial, ethnic or socio-cultural differences is the enjoyment of freedom and its maximum benefits without outside interferences. Understandably, such aspiration is basic to human nature and is natural to all people having a common origin and sharing a common tradition.

**Today the Mindanao conflict**, while rooted in the same rationale or fundamental causes related to ancestral lands and historic rights versus modern and democratic numbers, has greatly changed

in strategies, techniques and extent. This fact is quite apparent in the military confrontation between the government and Bangsamoro rebel forces. The battles in Lanao del Sur, del Norte, Maguindanao, and Basilan involved men on both sides equipped with modern and high destructive weapons of war radically different from the numerous armed encounters and battles in colonial times in which the use of weapons was largely limited to spears, bolos, knives, bows-and-arrows, krises, etc. on the part of the indigenous warriors and arms and artilleries with limited capacity on the part of the colonial powers. The contemporary military power of the government is certainly superior to that of the rebels (backed up as it is by air and naval contingents, which the rebels do not have). Consequently, there is no doubt that the government forces will ultimately neutralize the military capacity of the rebel to defeat government troops but it is also clear that the rebels' defeat in battles will not ensure permanent victory. It merely changes the rebels' strategy of armed struggle to a variety of choices with emphasis on the guerilla attacks or the Islamic concept of Fil-Sabilillah (Jihad and its unique individual version created by the Bangsamoro struggle in the late 19th century called Parang Sabil by the Sulu Muslims). It was the Muslim intense sense of hopelessness brought about by the loss of military capacity that led to what the Spaniard called juramentados or individuals who took the vows of killing as many of the enemies as their lives would allow. The Spanish introduction of the steamboat in various expeditions to Sulu from 1850 to 1890 led to the devastation of Jolo and other island communities including the stronghold of Maguindanao, Iranun, and Maranaw datuships and sultanates in mainland Mindanao... The state of jihad will emerge as the weapon of the Bangsamoro struggle... And there is no clear response to this possibility given its necessity in view of the gradual loss of fortified state camps of Muslim resistance and the increasing level of prejudice and hostility being seen in the attitude of both the government and the Christian populace as shown in tri-media.

The socio-economic conditions certainly continue to worsen as population increase naturally exerts more pressures on the capacity of traditional sources of revenues and livelihood such as the land, rivers, lakes, and seas within reach of the inadequate local technologies and crafts. The centuries-old barter trade which has provided a good alternative source of livelihood has dwindled into a few stalls of smuggled items, and has lost its very rationale for being. It had gradually died from exploitation of the system by capitalists

and politicians and smugglers of luxury goods, guns and drugs. In short, Muslim and Lumad Mindanao has lost a lot of their traditional means of survival and has inevitably been drawn to the undergrowth of the economic system that offers lucrative but dangerous and illegal sources of revenues such as smuggling of guns, drug trafficking, piracies, kidnapping for ransom, and, for those who are idealistic, the radical movements of political Islam have become the logical source of help and self-fulfillment to displaced Muslim youths. To a significant extent, the MILF, MNLF and the Abu Sayyaf have derived their base support from the idealist youths and displaced elements of Muslim society called by Janjalani in the "Ummat Akhir Jaman" who have no credentials or opportunities to be absorbed into the Christian or non-Muslim dominated employment field especially in the agencies, institutions, and businesses of government.

It is to be expected that deteriorating socioeconomic conditions would seriously affect all aspects of life and society such as physical well-being due to health and sanitation problems compounded by lack or absence of medical facilities and ecological balance, access to education for development of skills and potentials for advancement and progress because of inability to pay for its prohibitive cost, and absence of cultural enjoyment and enhancement due to lack of international interactions with outside cultures (except cultures of violence) on account of persistent armed conflict and its consequences.

Lamentably, the social crisis in Muslim Mindanao arising from armed conflict is not eased by the democratic system and process which look religiously at democratic numbers that favor the dominant majority in all decision-making from national to local levels. Political representation contingent on national election will not insure election of Muslim or Lumad to the Senate and certainly not the highest executive positions unless a national political party, which vigorously supports a Muslim or Lumad candidate, carries him. Philippine democracy, unless radically reformed in essence and form, perpetuates the injustice against the national minorities.

The political economy of Mindanao demonstrates how the power elite, and the multinational and national entities have remarkably developed the mining and agro-industrial potentials of the region through the years and yet, have reserved to themselves the greater part of the resources and benefits of development leaving a very small portion to the indigenous people to divide among them-



selves. Altruism has not yet been a developed virtue or even a rhetorical reality in an ironically Christian society very often marked by lavish devotion to the rituals and icons of the Christian faith. The outside exploiters of Mindanao resources do not even pay their taxes in the region but secure them in their national coffers or abroad. They have also established themselves in the region as political and economic power blocks capable of putting the military resources of the State behind their interests and purposes in case of need. But until lately, their own security forces had been able to cow and eliminate permanently the rebellious and loquacious elements in the indigenous communities except in Muslim Mindanao where resistance has been intense. The colonial prejudice they have inherited from the Christian tradition has colored their treatment of the non-Christian minorities still considered by them as remnants of the savage and uncivilized world whose treatment as such had dominated the pages of colonial literature for centuries.

Consequently, the cultural portrait, if the dominant majority had the decisive choice, would have altogether excluded the indigenous animistic and Islamic cultures from the cultural transformation of Mindanao. But the way things are moving in the region this portrait may still emerge if the Bangsamoro struggle is effectively neutralized thus making the Muslim sector the only remaining force in the region that has continued to preserve the integrity of its indigenous tradition.

Only the indigenous arts and crafts have been acquired for propagation and promotion for their highly socioeconomic value to the dominant majority as the tourist and antique shops of Metro Manila and abroad indicate. They are not preserved to restore the lost historic rights of Lumad and Muslim Mindanao but to assimilate into mainstream society the desirable feature of indigenous culture. It is thus understandable that the Muslims perceive their Islamic heritage as being threatened by the subtle intrusion of Christian and non-Islamic elements into their lifeways.

**In view of the foregoing realities** obtaining in Mindanao, the Muslim community has more and more desired the option of independence. The adamant position of the Estrada government against independence, even as a point of discussion, confronts the Muslim community with a choice between continuous war and real autonomy which is offered by the government. Actually, this offer is not something new. It was the same thing offered to the MNLF and Misuari and

led to the Tripoli Agreement, but what is different is the emphasis given by the Estrada negotiation that the offer is for real autonomy, which admits that autonomy from Marcos to Ramos had been less than real, largely rhetorical and palliative in nature. But for real autonomy to be realized, certain things must be accepted and done:

1. The present democratic system is not sufficient for real autonomy the Muslims may accept short of total independence. It must be something where the Christian majority has no more say or influence in Muslim affairs except ceremonial and nominal requirements of symbolic sovereignty. Consequently, the government should seriously consider the earlier proposed Federal status for Muslim Mindanao. This was originally proposed by Mabini and Aguinaldo in 1899 and the reinforced by Judge James Blount following the American model in 1912 in his American Occupation in the Philippines (1912). As conceptualized by Aguinaldo, the Federal system involves the three federated governments or states of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao symbolized according to O.D. Corpuz, by the three stars in the Philippine Flag. Judge Blount preferred about a dozen states based on certain geographic formations like: Ilocos, Cagayan, Pangasinan, Pampanga, Manila, Cavite, etc. In effect, Federalism for Muslim Mindanao liberates the Philippine government and the Christian majority from the psychological and real burden of a people who no longer wants to be called Filipinos but Bangsamoro with a government, territory, and Islamic institutions of their own.
2. Political representation as a consequence of No. 1 includes at least two senators in the Senate to be elected by all registered Muslim voters throughout the country, an undersecretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs and in the Department of National Defense, and a member in the Central Bank since the nominal ties of Muslim Mindanao to the State are: Foreign Affairs, National Defense, and Currency.
3. A national subsidy system for, at least,

ten years gradually diminished until only a nominal token remains after the tenth year to allow the Federated state substantial support while developing its internal resources and support system including that from the Islamic world.

4. The status of Muslim communities outside of Muslim Mindanao has to be defined as extension of the Federated Muslim State, which should devise a proper plan of action for them. For instance, the Sama (Bajao) migrants in various parts of Visayas and Luzon must be resettled back to their home in Southern Philippines including the Spratly Islands which can be ideal resettlement sites because the islands are natural habitats of the Sama. The government can undertake this resettlement of the Sama in the Kalayaan Groups of Islands with modern facilities in addition to their traditional institutions to facilitate communication, transport, education, and trade. The Sama settlements can be perfect reinforcement of the Philippine security system in the area to preserve the Philippine sovereignty against external encroachment and threat.

Finally, it is necessary to conclude with the fact that in the ongoing military clashes between thousands of government troops and hundreds of Muslim rebels the government may eventually win the war because of sheer military superiority in land, air, sea, but it may lose permanently the enduring peace it seeks. As in the decades of American campaigns against the Moros from 1899 to 1936, military superiority may destroy the capacity of the Bangsamoro to win the war but it will not destroy their will to resist as it was during the entire era of colonial rule and conquest which lasted for more than four hundred years. Contributing to the undying will to resist is the arrogance of the military triumph expressed through the rhetorics of contempt and ridicule for the vanquished "Moros" as bandits, criminals, and savages without consideration and respect for the ideals and aspirations that have propelled their long and costly armed struggle. This is not the time to hide the facts and tell lies. This is the time to tell the truth to make us free indeed. It is not enough to know adequately the Mindanao conflict. It is necessary to understand it. I hope I have contributed to this objective.

## The Tri-People Relationship

Rudy B. Rodil

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*Excerpt from The Tri-People Relationship and the Peace Process in Mindanao. The full article is divided into three parts. Part One is on the historical background of the relationship; Part Two covers the GRP-MNLF peace process, and Part Three focuses on the basic considerations in advocacy for peace and development.*

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*Full text is available at [www.mindanao.com](http://www.mindanao.com)*  
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Within the whole country, it is only in Mindanao that we speak of a tri-people relationship. By tri-people we refer to the Muslims (or Moros), the Lumad and the Christians. The grouping is loose and there is plenty of overlaps in between but the designations are popularly used in the region.

### The Moros

The name Moro is originally given by the Spaniards to those Muslims of northern Africa who occupied Spain for nearly eight centuries, 711-1492 A.D.. Now, it refers to the 13 ethno-linguistic groups of the Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausug, Sama, Sangil, Iranun, Kalagan, Kalibugan, Yakan, Jama Mapun, Palawani, Molbog and Badjao. They are mostly Muslims except for the Kalagan and Palawani who are partly Muslim and partly not; the Badjaos are generally non-Muslims. They constitute, according to the 1970 census, about 20.2 percent of the entire population of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago and they are the majority population only in the five provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi and in eleven other towns, namely, one in Cotabato, seven in Lanao del Norte, two in Zamboanga del Norte and one in Palawan.

### The Lumad

The Lumad include the 18 ethno-linguistic groups indigenous to Mindanao, namely, in alphabetical order, the Ata, Bagobo, Banwaon, Bla-an, Bukidnon, Dibabawon, Higaunon or Talaandig, Mamanwa, Mandaya, Mang-guwangan, Manobo, Mansaka, Subanon, Tagakaolo, T'boli, Tiruray and the Ubo. There may be more because they normally refer to each other by their geographical

and not by their ethno-linguistic names. They constitute, according to the 1970 census, about five percent of the entire population of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago, and are the majority only in eight towns, namely, one in Agusan del Sur, four in Bukidnon, two in Davao del Sur, and one in Zamboanga del Sur.

The name Lumad is Cebuano Bisaya but is the product of an agreement among representatives of 15 out of 18 ethno-linguistic groups, arrived at during the founding congress of Lumad Mindanaw in June 1986. Cebuano is their lingua franca. Although most of them are Christians, usually belonging to various Protestant denominations, depending on which arrived at their place first, they seldom refer to themselves in their religious identities. Lumad seems to be the more popular term nowadays. Or simply, their specific geographical and/or ethno-linguistic identities.

### **The Christians**

Composed mostly of those settler population of the 20th century and their descendants, the Christians include the Bisayan speaking natives of Mindanao, mostly from northern and eastern Mindanao, who were converted to Christianity during the Spanish period and also the Chabacanos of Zamboanga. Many of them are still known by their geographic place names, like, Davaweño, Tandagnon, Surigaonon, Butuanon, Camiguinon, Cagayanon, Misamisnon, Iliganon, Ozamiznon, Dapitanon, and so on and by some peculiarity in their respective accents.

The Chabacanos were originally the Mardicas or Merdicas, meaning “free people” who were natives of Ternate, Tidore, Siao, Manados, Cauripa, Celebes and Macassar. They were brought to Manila as soldiers by the Spaniards in 1663. Later, some of them were settled in Ternate, Cavite; the others must have been assigned to Zamboanga, possibly in 1718.

Constituting nearly two hundred thousand in 1898, these native Christians are now integrated into the majority population. The entire Christian population constitutes approximately seventy percent of the entire population of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago.

### **Emergence of the Tri-People Concept**

The tri-people concept did not emerge in our his-

tory until around the early 1980s, shortly before Lumad Mindanaw was founded. They were asserting their right to self-determination as a distinct segment of the Mindanao population, and they wanted to govern themselves within their ancestral domains in accordance with their custom laws. Genuine autonomy within the republic was their battle cry.

The Moros, for their part have been vocal in their demand for recognition of their distinctness as a people. Their political awakening reached its maturation under the leadership of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) which originally advocated independence from the colonial clutches of the Republic of the Philippines through armed struggle. They wanted their own Bangsamoro Republik.

In the face of these Moro and Lumad assertions of their respective rights to self-determination, the Christian population will have to rethink their position. Although they constitute the majority population, it does not seem appropriate anymore to speak in simple terms of majority rule. Democracy in Mindanao will have to be redefined. There are fundamental rights, interests and sensibilities involved that should be considered.

### **Stepping Back into History: Clarifying Political Realities**

We are presently in the process of commemorating the centennial of the Philippine Revolution which culminated in the establishment of the Republic of the Philippines in 1898. We take great pride in recalling the long process how from the bondage of colonialism we rose to establish our national identity and won our national independence.

But often we overlook, or we are simply not conscious that many of our Lumad and Moro brothers and sisters in Mindanao cannot identify with our commemorative activities. Let us move back into history for a few moments and examine why this is so.

### **Political Situation in 1898**

On December 10, 1898, at the time of the signing of the Treaty of Paris between Spain and the United States, the Republic of the Philippines was almost six months old, still in its infant stage but a perfectly legitimate de facto state. We declared

our independence on June 12, 1898, and it is this date that we now celebrate as our independence day.

The Sultanate of Sulu, a state in its own right, was established in 1450, fought the Spaniards for 333 years and had remained free until 1898.

The Sultanate of Maguindanao, formed in 1619 by the famous Sultan Kudarat from the two powerful datuships of Rajah Buayan and Maguindanao, also fought the same Spanish colonizers and remained independent until 1898.

In short, there were at least three states at that time, all free and independent. If such was the case, what part of the Philippine archipelago belonged to Spain which she had the right to cede to the United States in the Treaty of Paris? Maybe we could say Intramuros. The political leaders of the United States were aware of this situation but chose to ignore it. When they paid the twenty million Mexican dollars to Spain for the Philippine archipelago, they claimed that there were no nations in existence here at that time, only scattered tribes fighting one another, thus neatly deflecting any possible accusation that the United States was guilty of invading free nation states.

We say that the Treaty of Paris was a spurious transaction in which Spain sold what did not belong to her. The sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao, including the Moros of the Pat a Pongampong sa Ranaw were never her colonies, and the Filipino people have just won their independence from her.

In any case, the United States won the day by force of arms, and since then the Philippine islands were described in American textbooks as "Our Insular Possessions."

In 1946, independence was given back to the Republic of the Philippines, but not to the Sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao.

What about the case of the other indigenous peoples? Apparently, they did not have any social structures which would merit the status of states. But in their simplicity, they contributed immensely to the anti-colonial struggle. The peoples of the Cordillera fought off the Spaniards successfully until 1898 and were never colonized. The Aetas of Luzon, the Mangyans of Mindoro, the indigenous peoples of Palawan and the Lumads of Mindanao chose to avoid or evaded contacts with the Spaniards and so remained free.

### **One Ugly Twist in Our History**

But the stain of an ugly twist in our history remains with us until today. Those of our people who were colonized and became the Christians fought and struggled to eventually give birth to the Filipino nation and to the Republic of the Philippines. This is what we are commemorating in the centennial today. Those of our people, the Moros of the two sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao and the Cordillerans who were never conquered and colonized because they fought tooth and nail for their independence; the Aetas of Luzon, the Mangyans of Mindoro, the indigenous peoples of Palawan and the Lumads of Mindanao who succeeded in avoiding contact with the Spaniards and also remained free, they all must now suffer the status of cultural minorities.

Their own struggles against colonialism have yet to find a place in the Philippine flag and their own accomplishments have yet to be made part of the centennial activities. This is because we have yet to cleanse our consciousness of the stains of colonial mentality. Colonialism contributed to the sowing of these stains but the cleansing process is now in our hands.

### **American Share in the Process**

One of the achievements of the American colonizers which has endured to this day are the labels that they have neatly put on us. First, they categorized the population into two broad groupings of Christians and non-Christians. The Christians were generally those belonging to any one of the eight linguistic groups of the Tagalog, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Waray, Bikol, Iloko, Kapampangan, and Pangasinan, who predominated the Christian population; they were also characterized and called civilized. They were colonized by the Spaniards. It was this group of people who rebelled against the colonizers and, after more than 300 years, their struggle ripened into the Philippine Revolution. They gave birth to the Filipino nation and to the Republic of the Philippines. In 1898, they were the Filipino people.

The non-Christians, also tagged as uncivilized, were those — let me reiterate very quickly for emphasis — who fought back and were successful in maintaining their independence throughout the period of Spanish presence. These were the proud Moros of the two sultanates of Maguindanao and Sulu and the Pat a

Pongampong sa Ranaw and the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera, known today as the Bontoc, Ibaloi and Kankanaey, Ifugao, Ikalahan or Kalangoya; Isneg; Kalinga, Kankanaes or Applais, and Tinguian. The others were those who kept out of Spanish reach, thereby remaining free, among whom may be counted the Aetas of Luzon, the Mangyans of Mindoro, the indigenous peoples of Palawan and the more or less eighteen Lumad communities of Mindanao, namely, Ata, Bagobo, Banwaon, Bla-an, Bukidnon, Dibabawon, Higaunon or Talaandig, Kalagan, Mamanwa, Mandaya, Mangguwangan, Manobo, Mansaka, Subanon, Tagakaolo, T'boli, Tiruray, Ubo.

Because unconquered and uncolonized, they never had to rebel against the Spaniards. The Moros and the Cordillerans were always at war with these aggressors. They had their record of struggle against the Spaniards, separate and apart from those fought by the Christians, and they are proud of it. Naturally, they had no part in the formation of the Filipino nation and cannot identify with the symbolisms of the Filipino flag. Their struggle is also not reflected in the Filipino flag.

### **Our Own Contribution in the Labeling Process**

Within ten years after the Republic of the Philippines regained its independence, Congress passed R.A. 1888 formalizing and making official the labels National Cultural Minorities upon those earlier called non-Christians. The labels have since taken deep root in our consciousness. Some minor changes in the labels have been made later to remove the social stigma – Cultural Communities in the 1973 Constitution and Indigenous Cultural Communities in the 1987 Constitution. But the general public continue to refer to the Lumad groups and individuals as non-Christian, uncivilized, or just minorities.

### **Displacement in their Ancestral Homelands**

Worse than the labels, it was the American initiated resettlement programs which created permanent damage on the lives of the indigenous population. It opened the floodgates to a heavy influx of Filipino settlers from the north, starting from 1913, leading to the massive displacement of the local people from their ancestral lands. This inflow of settlers was so heavy that by 1948, the census indicated that where once the indigenous population predominated, they now had become

the numerical minorities. By 1970, we are told that the Muslims retained numerical majority only in the five provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi. The Lumads remained the majority in only eight towns all over Mindanao.

The provisions of the public land law and other related laws were stacked against the indigenous communities. Let us have a quick look at them.

First, the Philippine Commission passed a law (Act No. 718) on 4 April 1903, six months after the passage of the land registration act, making void "land grants from Moro sultans or dattos or from chiefs of Non-Christian tribes when made without governmental authority or consent." Section 82 of Public Land Act No. 926 which was amended by Act No. 2874 by the Senate and House of Representatives on 29 November 1919 in accordance with the provisions of the Jones Law, continues to carry the almost exact wordings of said law, reiterating further the legitimacy of the transfer of sovereign authority from Spain to the United States, and the illegality of indigenous claims. This same provision is still in effect to this day (1993).

Second, the Land Registration Act No. 496 of 6 November 1902 requires the registration of lands occupied by private persons or corporations, and the application for registration of title, says Sec. 21, "shall be in writing, signed and sworn to by the applicant". The very matter of registration was not only totally alien to the indigenous communities, most of them would have been unable to comply, illiterate that they were, even if by some miracle they acquired the desire to register. Also, what would they register? There was no room for registration of communal lands. As a young Filipino lawyer recently pointed out, "under our present property law, communal ownership is a mere fiction of the mind; it is unregistrable and deserves no legal protection."

Third, the Public Land Act No. 926 of 7 October 1903, passed by the Philippine Commission allowed individuals to acquire homesteads not exceeding 16 hectares each, and corporations 1,024 hectares each of, "unoccupied, unreserved, unappropriated agricultural public lands" as stated by Sec. 1. Nothing was said about the unique customs of the indigenous communities.

Fourth, Public Land Act No. 926, amended through Act No. 2874 by the Senate and the House of Representatives on 29 November 1919 in accordance with the provisions of the Jones Law, provided that the 16 hectares allowed earlier to

individuals was increased to 24, but the non-Christian was allowed an area (Sec. 22) "which shall not exceed ten (10) hectares" with very stringent conditions, that is, "It shall be an essential condition that the applicant for the permit cultivate and improve the land, and if such cultivation has not begun within six months from and after the date on which the permit was granted, the permit shall ipso facto be cancelled. The permit shall be for a term of five years. If at the expiration of this term or at any time theretofore, the holder of the permit shall apply for a homestead under the provisions of this chapter, including the portions for which a permit was granted to him, he shall have the priority, otherwise the land shall be again open to disposition at the expiration of the five years."

"For each permit the sum of five pesos shall be paid, which may be done in annual installments."

Fifth, Commonwealth Act No. 41, as amended on 7 November 1936, withdrew the privilege earlier granted to the settlers of owning more than one homestead at 24 hectares each and reverted to only one not exceeding 16 hectares. But the non-Christians who were earlier allowed a maximum of ten hectares were now permitted only four (4) hectares!

The Moros and the Lumads lost their lands to the settlers through the operation of law. Their displacement and dispossession in their own ancestral lands was legal!

### **Moro Response**

The MNLF-led revolution was the maturation of a series of Moro protests against the discriminatory treatment that they experienced within the Republic, the most infamous being the Jabidah massacre wherein an undetermined number of young Moro recruits undergoing secret military training in Corregidor were massacred for alleged mutiny. This is not the place to recall the details of the story but the groundswell of Moro protests spiced with reports of secret military training became one of two excuses for President Marcos' declaration of martial rule. Martial law for its part

provided the valve for the eruption of the Bangsamoro armed struggle for national liberation from the clutches of alleged Philippine colonialism.

Although never advocating armed struggle, Lumad Mindanaw and all its affiliate organizations have clearly indicated their desire to attain genuine autonomy within the republic. Lumad Mindanaw, the organization, is no longer in existence but the concepts its advocates have sown are very much alive. They wanted to govern themselves in accordance with their own traditional laws.

### **Delayed Government Response**

For the first time in our political history, the 1987 Constitution states its recognition of the ancestral domains of the indigenous communities. Being a product of the EDSA Revolution, the 1987 Charter carries a sincere attempt to cleanse our political and social system of the various stigma of the martial law regime and our colonial past. Political autonomy, too, is clearly provided for with the Cordillerans and the Muslims of Mindanao as direct beneficiaries.

### **Peoples' Response to Martial Law**

By its oppressiveness the martial law regime of President Ferdinand Marcos created the occasion for the people of Mindanao to realize their own situation. The Lumad, the Muslims and the Christians were helping each other against martial law. Out of this was born the need to evaluate our view of one another. Out of this emerged the tri-people concept.

The Lumads, the Moros and the Christians must view one another, not in numerical terms but as distinct peoples, with their respective histories, identities and dignity. As inhabitants of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago, they also have a common destiny. The problem now is how to arrive at a common vision. To what extent this will affect our centennial activities remains to be seen.

## A Journey Towards Lasting Peace

*Lt. Gen. Ismael Z. Villareal*  
AFP

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*This article was published by the Philippine Graphic, March 6, 2000 barely a month before the declaration of all-out war against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front by then President Joseph Ejercito Estrada.*

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Mindanao today is a zone of conflict. The three Bangsa Moro revolutionary organizations - the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and the MNLF-Reformist Group (MNLF-RG) continue their armed and political resistance against the Philippine government. On the other hand, the non-Muslim tribes indigenous to Mindanao, known as the "Lumads", continue their struggle for self-determination.

Confronting the Philippine government in a bloody war during the early 70's, the MNLF initially demanded an independent Bangsa Moro Republic comprising of Mindanao, the Sulu Archipelago and Palawan. In the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, the MNLF reduced its demand to regional autonomy covering a territory of 13 provinces and nine cities. During the Marcos regime, the agreement was not fully implemented in view of unresolved differences over details. With the Aquino government, the MNLF rejected the framework for regional autonomy authorized by Republic Act (RA) 6734, asserting that the Tripoli Agreement was not used as primary basis for regional autonomy. Similarly, the MILF, an MNLF-breakaway organization, has joined the MNLF demanding the full implementation of the Tripoli Agreement. The other MNLF breakaway group; the MNLF-RG, opted to take the path to parliamentary struggle against the government.

The central issue in the Lumad struggle centers on their ancestral domain. While expressing their desire to remain as Filipino citizens, the Lumad demand that they be allowed to govern themselves within their ancestral lands in accordance with their respective customary laws.

Since 1946, the Philippine government has tried to resolve the various conflicts in Mindanao through a combination of military, political, economic and social means. Two public policies, namely, assimilation and autonomy, were pursued to integrate the Muslims and the Lumads into the

nation body politic. Unfortunately, these conflicts continue to evade peaceful resolution.

(This article shall examine the current conflicts in Mindanao, evaluate past government efforts to resolve them, and suggest approaches that the Philippine government may adopt to bring peace and progress to the area. The revolutionary struggle of the Communist Party of the Philippines in Mindanao, another important conflict, shall not be investigated by this article.)

Mindanao, the Sulu Archipelago and Palawan have been the traditional indigenous territory to 13 Muslim ethno linguistics groups and 10 Lumad tribes. prior to the arrival of the Spaniards, they had their own distinct cultural, social and Political institutions. Importantly, they were free to run their own lives.

For several centuries, Mindanao and the rest of the Philippines were, in effect, separate countries. Introduced in 1460, Islam developed the various communities in Mindanao into sultanate and principalities while the other Filipino tribes in Luzon and the Visayas were scattered and unconsolidated. These sultanates and principalities participated in an expansive maritime network of trade with Southeast Asia, India, Japan and China. Jolo and Maguindanao served as international trading ports, frequented by Arabs, Chinese, and other Asian traders. Diplomatic relations linking these sultanates and principalities with Spain, France, the Netherlands and Britain occurred during the pre-Spanish period.

When the Spaniards arrived in the 16th century, they found highly organized Muslim communities with built-in cultural and religious defenses against foreign intrusion. Coming with a deep-seated hatred of Muslims developed during their struggle for independence from Moorish rule in the Iberian Peninsula, the Spaniards attempted to colonize the Muslims through the use of the cross and the sword. However, the Muslims mobilized themselves and resisted Spanish colonialism for over three centuries. Ironically, Christianized natives from Luzon and the Visayas were commissioned to help man several Spanish punitive expeditions against the Muslims.

Except for small settlements in Northern and Eastern Mindanao, the Spaniards were unable to gain a significant foothold in Mindanao. Virtually outside Spanish jurisdiction, Mindanao developed itself more in affinity with the Muslim world of Southeast Asia than with the rest of Spanish-colo-

nized Philipppines.

Despite the failure of Spanish colonization, Spain included Mindanao in the transfer of sovereignty to the United States by virtue of the Treaty of Paris in 1898. The Muslims vehemently objected to this transfer, claiming that they never had the intention to be part of the Philippines. In 1899, the Muslims rejected the efforts of the First Philippine Republic under Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo to have Mindanao included in the new Republic.

After a temporary peace between the Americans and the Muslims from 1899-1902 as a result of the Bates Treaty, the Americans started its military campaign. Muslim armed resistance from 1902-1913, particularly in Mindanao, Lanao and Jolo, was suppressed by brute military force; however, Muslim defiance continued intermittently in several decades after 1913. It was estimated that between the years 1903-1935, some 15,000 to 20,000 Muslims were killed as a consequence of Muslim armed resistance to American colonization.

During the American colonial period, Mindanao became a separate administrative region, apart from the rest of the country. Initially, it was called the Moro Province under military rule from 1899 to 1913. In 1914, the Americans placed the area under the Department of Mindanao and Sulu headed by a civilian American governor and in 1920 to the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes under a Christian Filipino administrator. Following the establishment of the Commonwealth, the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes was abolished and a commissioner for Mindanao and Sulu, again a Christian Filipino, was made responsible for Mindanao. Throughout the American Regime, Christian Filipino officials, both military and civilian, manned the middle and lower administrative machineries in Mindanao. It was only after World war II that Muslims were appointed as governors in the Muslim populated provinces.

After the neutralization of Muslim resistance, the Americans began the resettlement of Mindanao by Christian from Luzon and Visayas. This demographic movement was accompanied by economic and social changes as forest were cleared, plantation and ranches were established, businesses were opened, and settlements were organized. The Catholic Church followed the immigrants, establishing its presence in the various settlements in Mindanao.

Starting with a handful of settlements in 1912, the resettlement program intensified during the Com-

monwealth period and continued after World War II. Agricultural colonies began growing in Cotabato in 1913 where Christians, Muslims and Lumads were enjoined to live together, By 1935, other colonies rose in Lanao, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga, Davao, Bukidnon, and Agusan. In the 1950s, additional government-sponsored resettlement areas were established in the heart of Maguindanao and Maranao territories by the Philippine Government's National Resettlements and Rehabilitation Administration (NARRA) and Economic Development Corporation (EDCOR). Other Christian settlers from Luzon and the Visayas arrived on their own, further contributing to the change in the demographic landscape.

As a result of the various resettlement programs, the balance of population in Mindanao shifted in favor of Christian Filipinos. In 1918, the Muslims and Lumads constituted some 60 percent and 25 percent of the total population in Cotabato compared to 2.6 percent for Christians. By 1970, the distribution was reversed: 62.2 percent for Christians, 27.8 percent for Muslims and 6.7 percents for Lumads. Progressively, the Muslims and Lumads were eased out from their indigenous territory.

To further incorporate Mindanao into the American colonial system, several land laws, all patterned after Western land used doctrines were passed. The first was the Land Registration Act (No. 496) of November 6, 1902, requiring the registration of lands occupied by private persons or corporations, and the application for registration of title. The second was land Act No. 718 of April 4, 1903, declaring as void all land grants from Muslim sultans or datus or chiefs of non-Christian tribes, when made without government authority and consent. The third was public lands, all lands not registered under Act No. 496 of 1902 and acquire homesteads. The fourth was the Mining Act of 1095 declaring all public lands in the Philippines as free, open for exploration, occupation and purchase by citizens of the Philippines and the United States. Both the Muslims and the Lumads vehemently opposed these public land laws, claiming that their communal ancestral domains were not recognized by these laws. Together with the competition for land with immigrant settlers spawned by the resettlement programs, the passage of these land laws became a major source of conflict between Christians and Muslims.

To transform the culturally diverse elements of the population into a Filipino nation, the Americans saw the need for cultural uniformity or ho-



mogeneity among the Filipino people. In this regard, the Americans and Christian Filipino Administrators, eliminated certain Muslims political and social institutions which they considered as obstacles to national integration. among them was the role of the sultans and datus in governing the people in Mindanao. American officials removed from the sultans and datus their police and judicial powers and instituted measures prohibiting succession to traditional titles. Even Commonwealth President Manuel Quezon directed that sultans and datus should have no official role in the Sultan Hamil-ul Kiran of Sulu died in 1936, the Commonwealth Government did not recognized his successor.

Except for a few, the Muslims did not participate actively in the independence movement during the American regime. Many considered American protection and tutelage as better than being under Christian domination. In fact, some 100 datus in 1935 appealed to the United States not to include Mindanao in the proposed independent Philippine state. Muslims leaders aired their desire for Mindanao to be excluded from the Philippine Republic in 1946.

In the years following the declaration of Philippine Independence in 1946, the Muslims experienced major difficulties in trying to identify themselves as Filipino citizens. For one, they could not acknowledge the primacy of the national laws of the country. Since they could not accept Western or Christian moral values alien to them, they continued to organize their lives according to Islamic values, often in conflict with Philippine laws. Muslim found it difficult to be convinced that the public educational system with its uniform curriculum for both Muslims and Christians was not intended to separate them from Islam. Because of this impression, the Muslims often hesitated to have their children schooled in the public education system, insisting that their own parochial schools be used instead.

A major reason for the Muslim's inability to consider themselves as Filipino citizens was their deep resentment and violent reaction to the increasing flow of Christian settlers to Mindanao. As stated earlier, the resettlement programs started during the American regime and continued by the Philippine government after 1946 resulted in their gradual displacement from their traditional ancestral areas. Agricultural communities, established by the government in the heart of Muslim indigenous territories, created bitter conflicts in land distribution and ownership among Muslims and Christian settlers.

**Despite the failure of Spanish colonization, Spain included Mindanao in the transfer of sovereignty to the United States by virtue of the Treaty of Paris in 1898.**

The Muslims complained that they were not only displaced from their traditional areas but they were also dispossessed of their communal property needed for their economic survival. Although there were bloody confrontations between Christians and Muslims particularly over land disputes, there were no organized Muslim revolts against the new Philippine Republic. Occasional breakdowns of peace and order occurred in some areas in Mindanao, mostly traceable to economic problems of both Christians and Muslims. In the early '50s, Datu Hadji Kamlon led a revolt in Sulu which dragged on for several years. Towards the 1960s. Christian and/or Muslim initiated-cattle rustling became widespread in Mindanao. Illegal logging also prospered. Often victimizing the Muslims, unsuccessful Christian settlers turned to banditry in order to survive.

To defend themselves, armed groups and private armies were formed by Christian communities. Similarly, Muslim groups organized themselves along clan lines. As the conflict persisted, the Muslims complained that the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), particularly the Philippine Constabulary (PC) were arming the Christians to fight the Muslims. By the late 1960s, armed clashes between Christian settlers calling themselves "Ilagas" and groups of Muslims known as "Black shirts" and "Barracudas" escalated in Mindanao. In 1968, two months after Muslim military recruits were allegedly massacred in Corrigedor under mysterious circumstance, The Muslim (later Mindanao) Independence Movement (MIM) was organized by a Muslim politician, Udtog Matalam, with a Cotabato as the heart of the movement. The MIM political goal was to create an Islamic Republic for the Muslims out of the Mindanao, Sulu, Palawan.

Despite the intervention of the Philippine government, the fighting between Christian settlers and Muslims continued into the 1970s. Massacres of Muslim and Christian civilians were reported in several areas of Mindanao. On June 19, 1971, for instance, a massacre occurred at Manili, Carmen, North Cotabato, where at least 70 Muslims, mostly women and children, were killed inside a mosque presumably by armed "Ilagas". This incident prompted 30 Muslim leaders, including a senator, high government officials, heads of Muslim associations, professionals, businessmen, and

students to send a manifesto to the Philippine government demanding a stop to the armed depredations of the "Ilagas", the protection of the Muslims by the Philippine government, and the respect of Islam and the Muslims as the basis for peace and harmony. In 1972, letters from a certain Commander X based in Cotabato were circulated to various Muslim communities, urging the Muslims to join the Christian crusade to drive away Islam from the Philippines.

An important post-war development in Mindanao was the resurgence of Islam and the deepening of the Muslim's consciousness of themselves as a people separate from the rest of the Philippine population. As new mosques and religious schools were constructed, Islamic education among the Muslims increased. Several young Muslims also had the opportunity to study in the Middle East where they became aware of the religious movements in other Muslim countries. Acknowledging the need to redress socio-cultural, political, and economic grievances of Muslims in Mindanao, several young Muslims organized themselves into Islamic societies such as the Philippine Muslim Nationalist League and the Bangsamoro Liberation Organization.

It was against this background that the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was born in the early 1970s to take over the cause of the Muslims from the MIM and to launch the Bangsa Moro armed struggle against the Philippine government. Like the Muslims, the Lumads were also affected by Spanish and American colonization of Philippines. Having escaped Spanish colonization by avoiding contact with the Spaniards, the Lumads were not identified as Filipinos by the Americans who took over political control of the Philippines in 1898. The Lumads too had difficulty in identifying themselves as Filipinos. Since they were considered as "non-Christians", the same special administrative machineries created for the Muslims were equally applied on them. The special laws affecting the system of land ownership and land use which both the Lumads and Muslims opposed became one of the causes of the Lumad struggle for self-determination.

The *Lumad* struggle had been peaceful since the American colonial period. In mid-1986, a coalition of all-Lumad local and regional organizations known as the Lumad-Mindanao assumed the leadership of the struggle for the protection of the Lumad people's identity and rights, protection of their ancestral domain, and the protection and preservation of their cultural heritage.

Two incidents have highlighted the Lumad struggle as it entered into the 1990s. They were the opposition to the Mount Apo Geothermal Project and to the Lake Sebu fishponds leases which the Lumads claim are incursions into their indigenous communities.

The conflict between Christians and Muslims, conditioned by almost three and a half centuries of Spanish and American colonial rule remains unresolved up to this day. The same is true of the conflict between the Christians and the Lumads. The Muslims and the Lumads, at one time the majority population groups in Mindanao, are presently the poor and landless minority. Population pressures and government-sponsored resettlement programs have eased them out of their traditional areas, threatening their very existence and culture. On the other hand, the Christians from Luzon and Visayas have found a new home in Mindanao. Predominating in the former traditional territories of the Muslims and the Lumads, they have established their own social, economic, and political institutions in these areas and have contributed significantly to the progressive economy of Mindanao. Like the Muslims and the Lumads, they are fighting for their continued existence in Mindanao.

Unfortunately, the long period of conflict in Mindanao has contributed to the development of ethnocentrism or in-group bias in both the Christians and the Muslims. The Christians have the tendency to see its own group in favorable terms and the Muslims as an out-group in unfavorable terms. The same may be said of Muslim attitude towards the Christians. It is not common for Christians to picture a Muslim as a savage, a bandit, a traitor, and a raider. This image includes a perception of the Muslims as illiterate, culturally backward and unprogressive. The Christians often regard themselves as advanced, modern and progressive. From the Muslim standpoint, a Christian is perceived as a coward, a land-grabber, and a cheat who, if he could, would wipe out Islam and Muslim culture.

The responses of the Christians and the Muslims to these in-group biases intensify the conflict situation in Mindanao. The Muslims, irritated by the Christian picture of themselves, justify the more their ethnocentricity and continue to relate themselves with their own Ummah, or community which is based on Islam, thus making uncertain their integration into the national body politic. With the stereotype emerge of the Muslims in their minds, the Christians oppose any political action that would enable the Muslims to dominate them,

thereby directly weakening government efforts to develop national unity.

What caused the Muslims to launch a rebellion against the Philippine government under the banner of the MNLF? The opening statement in the "Manifesto on the establishment of the Bangs Moro Republic" dated March 18, 1974 as shown hereunder, provides the reasons why the Muslims rebelled: "We, the oppressed Bangsamoro people, wishing to free ourselves from the terror, oppression and tyranny of Filipino colonialism which has caused us untold suffering and misery by criminally usurping our land, by threatening Islam through wholesale destruction and desecration of its places of worship and its Holy Book, and murdering our innocent brothers, sisters and old folks in a genocidal campaign of a terrifying magnitude."

As can be discerned from the MNLF Manifesto and further bolstered by numerous interview with Muslim rebel returnees, Muslim civilians and Muslims military officers, while this writer was based in Mindanao as a bridge commander, four major grievances appear to be consistently surfacing as the source of Muslim discontentment. Further analysis indicate that these are the very grievances espoused by the Muslims as evidence by history.

The first grievance is economic deprivation. The majority of the Muslims in Mindanao are poor. Displaced from their traditional territories and stripped of their lands by various national laws, they lack the resources to enable them to participate in economic activities in order to improve their quality of life. The rise of resettlement areas and the implementation of land laws alien to their culture made difficult their participation in agriculture. Few Muslims were able to benefit from the exploitation of the natural resources in Mindanao.

On economic development, Muslim communities have been neglected in the location of government services. The various government development agencies for Mindanao like the Commission on National Integration (CNI), Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA) and the Autonomous Regional Government failed to uplift the economic plight of the Muslims because

they were not given sufficient political power and financial resources to pursue development programs. Relatedly, Christian in-groups bias made difficult the provision of employment for the Muslims in various private or public business and even in government.

The second Muslim grievance is the lack of participation in the governance of the Muslim people. As stated earlier, the traditional political role of the sultans and datus was not recognized by the Americans, and Philippine Commonwealth. Instead, American and Christian Filipino administrator directly governed the Muslims in Mindanao. It was only after World War II that the first Muslim Filipino became a governor of a Muslim province. But this did not solve the problem. Because of the continuing centralization of policy making and policy implementation, particularly on revenue collection, no perceivable political authority well enough to ensure effective implementation of development programs for the Muslims was exerted by Muslim consider the Philippine government as another colonial government similar to those of Spain and the United States.

Aside from weakening of the political traditions of the Muslims society, the Muslims fear the destruction of their religious and cultural traditions through various from of political, economic and cultural assimilation initiated by the past colonial governments and continued by the Philippine government. This is the third Muslim grievance. Aware that their roots are firmly established in Islamized Malay world, Arabia and the Middle east, the Muslims have resisted efforts to be integrated with the Christians whom they consider as more oriented to the Western culture and the values of Spain and the United States. They want Islamic law to govern their social lives, an arrangement which could only be partially allowed by the Philippine legal system. But they have other fears and apprehensions. They fear that they are losing their cultural identity because of the diminution of their territorial base and of their transformation into a minority in their indigenous territory. Additionally, they fear that the Philippine government is out to eliminate Islam in Mindanao through massive military operations. The Muslims even refer to the AFP as an "Army of Occupation" of a colonial government.

**An Interview with Wahab Guialal**  
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It was only in 1993 that ancestral domain was put on the agenda among NGOs and POs in Mindanao, in recognition that the agrarian reform concept of the government and the progressive movement may not be appropriate to the situation of the Moros and Lumads. That's why we insisted that an appropriate agrarian reform program be adopted, taking seriously the question of Moro and Lumad ancestral domain. So the Tri-Com (Tri-People Commission) was established to undertake a research on ancestral domain. At that time, DAO-2, or Department Administrative Order No.2, had been issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), which permitted surveys and delineation of the ancestral domain of indigenous communities. It was a good opportunity to address the ancestral domain claims of the Moros and Lumads within legal parameters, but not limited to this DAO-2 or any other legal ordinance.

**PIR:** Before we talk about the DAO-2 and how it's being used as a vehicle for ancestral domain "claim-taking," could you describe the different conceptions that exist in Mindanao of the relationship between humans and land?

**WG:** To the Moro people, ownership of land is not based on the Western idea or government practice of land titling, but is rooted in their Islamic faith and concept of stewardship, which means everyone is just a trustee of that land. Therefore, a Muslim should not be bound by any legal proceedings or document to claim ownership of that land.

The Lumad people, or un-Islamized and non-Christianized indigenous tribes in Mindanao, also have this concept as given to them by their magbabaya (their god). For them also, their life is very close to the land. It starts from the same point of view that nobody owns the land, but is just there as a trustee to safeguard it for their community and for their clan, not for any individual. In the Lumad communities, they have land utilized by the clan, land for a certain family, and land for the entire community.

The difference with the Moros or the Muslims is that, although they say they are just the trustee of

that land, at the same time they allow individual cultivation of the land. So that's the basic concept of the Moros and the Lumad. Although both claim Mindanao is their ancestral domain, they never say they own Mindanao, because there's a difference between saying, "we own Mindanao," and saying, "Mindanao is our ancestral domain." The land is owned by a clan or a family, though they don't have legal titles or any legal papers, unlike the concept of land titling or the western concept where you have the Torrens titling system to prove you really own that land.

**PIR:** Can you describe how the MNLF and the MILF have dealt with the ancestral domain issue?

**WG:** The MNLF has a very general concept of land, going back to their secessionist demand that Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan, or MINSUPALA, belong to the Moro people as their ancestral territory and therefore, it is their right to claim this. We are not sure whether they subscribe to the ancestral domain concept or to the difference between ancestral territory and ancestral domain. That's still vague to us among the NGOs. During a dialogue with Nur Misuari and our representative of the farmers' organization in Southern Cotabato, we asked him about ancestral domain and land reform. He told our representative that we should not talk about this because it is a sensitive issue. Then we asked why he made that kind of answer to us. All we know is the people behind him are the landlords, the landed people of the Muslims. Maybe that is one of the reasons why he did not want to discuss land reform and ancestral domain. Also, maybe because he is still overwhelmed by these thirteen provinces, as the territory he has defined as the ancestral lands of the Moros. As I said, it was (and still is) very vague to us. Many things have yet to be done on the land question.

At that time, most of the Christian opposition, I would say, was very political because of fears the Muslims might dominate them if given the chance to rule these thirteen provinces. And it's a reality that in these provinces the Christians are the majority. I could understand the sentiments of the Christians, but they should also be conscious of the Moro struggle and understand why we Muslims are struggling. All they have in mind is that we are struggling because we want to dominate. But this is not the reason. The Moro people, the Muslims, are struggling, basically, to have self-rule and genuine self-determination, and not for one people to dominate or rule over another. That's why during the peace negotiations we

pushed for 'meaningful peace and development'. We felt the government and the MNLF should be given a period where they could spend more time to give more education to our people that this problem has nothing to do with the domination of the Christians by the Muslims, or the Christians over the Muslims.

But still, the problem is very much attached to the land question. For example, Congresswoman Lobregat was very much against the SPCPD because she has acquired many landholdings and properties in Mindanao. She is very afraid that the MNLF, if given the chance to administer Mindanao under Nur Misuari's leadership, would sequester these lands. Of course, these politicians were able to mobilize their Christian constituents because of anti-Muslim sentiments. That's why we are saying that the MNLF leadership has still so much to work on in terms of land problems, because the issue of ancestral domain was not addressed in that peace agreement. For its part, the MILF is more practical and realistic in approaching this kind of problem. One of the main items on the agenda in their peace negotiations with the government is the ancestral land issue.

**PIR:** The MILF has also used the term 'land reform' in their list of negotiation topics. What do they mean when they say 'ancestral domain' and then also 'land reform'?

**WG:** Land reform for them refers more to the territorial claim of the Moros. But for us, our understanding as observers of this peace negotiation, of what the MILF is trying to say here is that they are not very particular on the thirteen provinces. They are more concerned with implementing the Islamic way of government in provinces where the Muslims are the majority. So they could have these five provinces, or at least the present autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao composed of four provinces. With respect to agrarian reform, we have been asking them what is their idea of Islamic government, because for us when we talk of Islamic government, we are talking about the whole aspect of society and how to deal with agrarian reform and other basic services and human rights. But to them it seems these are just very general concepts. Their agrarian reform concept is still very crude, and therefore maybe we, as NGOs, can help them, even with our own limited concept and experience in how to deal with agrarian reform.

**PIR:** Do you mean agrarian reform in the sense

of Torrens titling, or in a more general sense?

**WG:** In a more general sense. In other words, a portion of land is claimed first by acquiring a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC), and then we do land use management. Of course, we need to do a lot of baseline studies to undertake this kind of management based on the indigenous way of the community. For example, the Muslim group in Surallah has identified this portion of land for agricultural use, another portion for watershed reservation, another for pasture, another for a school, madrasa and mosque. This is their indigenous concept of land management and utilization. Of course, the reality is there are many Muslim landlords in the area, but we can still work in a very practical way, starting with communities which already have this concept.

**PIR:** You mean in communities where that kind of concept is already expressed in concrete ways?

**WG:** Yes. But since they lack resources, as does the community in Upper Sepaka, Surallah, maybe what we need now is to pool our resources in collaboration with the government and bring them to the community.

**PIR:** What are the existing legal mechanisms that are already being used by Moro communities to gain or solidify their access and right to land? There's the CARP at the present moment that makes some effort to address ancestral domain claim issues, and also the DAO-2. Are these the main legal mechanisms currently being used?

**WG:** Yes, so far. CARP is being used in "CARPable" areas, and NAAMO has already started working on this.

**PIR:** What aspects of CARP are they using?

**WG:** Landholdings of 24 to 100 hectares should be distributed to the tenants, but I don't think the government is very serious in implementing this aspect. In Maguindanao, for example, I don't know of any Muslim landlord who has already distributed his land under CARP. This is really one practical problem that the Muslims in our area are facing now — how to deal with these landed Muslims. That's why it is better to have a pilot area where we can work on this problem as a kind of experiment. If we are successful in that community, then we can apply the approach to other lands.

**PIR:** There was a newspaper report during the time of the fighting between the AFP and MILF back in February or so, which said that Garilao came down and met with the leader of the MILF.

**WG:** Yes, and he promised to award some portion of land to the people in this area as ancestral domain. But that is still a pronouncement on paper that needs to be implemented. We also have an experience in our pilot areas in Upi, Maguindanao and in Zamboanga del Sur where we filed an ancestral domain claim through the DENR in 1996, but until now there is still no progress. I did hear the claim of Upi is about to be awarded. But there are also other problems, like in Zamboanga del Sur we are facing strong opposition from a big corporation there. You can expect that kind of reality.

**PIR:** Please describe the process of ancestral domain "claim-taking" among the Moros.

**WG:** The process is very much the same as that of the Lumads. We conduct research, gathering anthropological and historical data to prove to the DENR that these people of the community own the land.

**PIR:** What are the measurements you use to prove that?

**WG:** Through anthropological and historical data gathered on the geneology of the people in that area, like photos of the graves and other landmarks, like big trees and centuries-old bamboo, and other sacred places. After doing that, the claimant organization in the area gets the signatures of the council of elders and, in most cases, all other people in the area. In Titay, Zamboanga del Sur for example, we were able to gather 300 signatures which we filed with the regional office of the DENR and we also initiated the convention of the Provincial Special Task Force for Ancestral Domain Claim, a technical working group in every province which handles cases. They conduct surveys for the delineation of a certain portion of the land to be awarded to a certain community. It is composed of NGOs, POs, and government agencies like DENR, PENRO, the Office of Southern Cultural Communities (OSCC), the DAR, and the DA. But the final say is on the regional or national level. Even if this provincial body recommends awarding the land, but the national government does not pay attention, you may have to wait for years, even centuries.

**PIR:** When did the DAO-2 start?

**WG:** This started in 1993 as a result of the very strong movement of the indigenous people to address this ancestral domain claim. The struggle of the Moro people also probably made the government deal with the matter of ancestral domain seriously. International entities may also have something to do with it because 1993 was the year when the UN declaration on indigenous communities was issued. In addition, the government, specifically the DENR, has a lot of funding for this. The DAO-2 is coterminous with the Ramos administration in 1998.

**PIR:** Do you think there are progressive people within the DENR that help promote this issue?

**WG:** We heard there are progressives. But our experience with the Secretary of the DENR, who was very much attached to the NGOs before, makes us question how progressive they are. Maybe there are progressives from their own backgrounds and points of view, but being in the administration surrounded by landlords and cronies of multinational corporations (MNCs) may be another thing to consider. Our aim is, firstly, to secure the land of the Moros and the indigenous against MNC incursions. In Mindanao today, there are 480 MNCs threatening these lands. Secondly, we want to try to influence policymakers in the national government to adopt a more cohesive, strong and clear policy on this. We are not satisfied with the DAO-2. We do not need to research or do other such things because since time immemorial the people owned these lands. Finally, there is a need for strong national government intervention to closely and properly coordinate with the people in the local area on land utilization and management. During the development, conceptualization, planning, implementation, evaluation and in all aspects and cycles of management and development initiatives, the people's representative should be there. For example, look what happened in the PNOC area which is supposed to be the ancestral domain of the Moros and where the MILF is very active. There was no consultation. And not feeling the government services, the people there believe that the revolutionary forces are the government in that area. This creates friction with the government. We are not against development, but we push for the genuine and realistic representation of our people in the community.

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## Profits from the Mindanao War

*Eric Gutierrez*

Who are profiting from the Mindanao war? I was going through the websites of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and soon developed a hunch that among those pushing the military agenda versus the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Mindanao are those who stand to profit from the subtle manipulation of the AFP Modernization Program.

The AFP Modernization Program is a 15-year PhP331.62-billion arms acquisition, equipment acquisition, base development, personnel development and organizational restructuring program mandated by Republic Act 7898 (AFP Modernization Act, signed into law on 23 February 1995).

This program is the most ambitious ever in the Philippines, meant by its proponents to drive the Philippine military to an increased profile and presence in Southeast Asia, particularly in the South China Sea. Security analysts see that an incapable and ill-equipped Philippine military, given the country's strategic location, makes Southeast Asia security arrangements more unpredictable, especially with a resurgent China increasingly projecting itself and its interests in the region.

It should be noted that the most important premise for this Modernization Program, however, is the reform, re-orientation and restructuring of Philippine military and police forces. Through the years, it has been the military doing most of the counter-insurgency operations in the country. The plan was to wean the military away from this role, and re-orient/re-structure it towards external defense functions. This has tremendous consequences for the military organization -- not only will it need to change its equipment and weapons, it will also need to re-train, re-deploy and re-organize its troops. Consequently, police forces will take on more of the counter-insurgency tasks, also with the corresponding reform and changes in its structure and orientation -- including developing the sensitivity to human rights issues.

The chief question asked when RA 7898 was still being deliberated upon was where our poor country will get the money to finance this modernization. The answer was easily found in what the Ramos administration was already good at doing -- selling government assets (e.g. Fort Bonifacio, BCDA, etc) Eventually, the law created an AFP Modernization Act Trust Fund which will hold and

administer the funds sourced from -- a) annual appropriations, as provided for by RA 7898; b) proceeds from the sale, lease or joint development of military reservations; c) AFP share from the sale of military camps; d) proceeds from the sale of products from the government arsenal and sale of other AFP assets; e) funds from budgetary surplus; f) interest income from the Trust Fund. (I am not sure about how the Trust Fund operates, who its Trustees are, how they were selected, etc.)

The Modernization Program, however, was suspended in July 1998 due to economic and legal issues. In April 1999, President Joseph Estrada issued a memorandum ordering the resumption of the modernization projects (i.e. purchasing equipment), but which also called on optimizing resources by procuring weapons systems that satisfy both internal and external defense requirements at affordable prices. The AFP re-prioritized its shopping list, putting on top equipment that will enhance its capability in internal security operations. For the army, this meant communications, weapons, night vision devices, armored vehicles and unmanned aerial vehicles. For the navy, this included the upgrading and acquisition of patrol vessels that enhance naval presence (naval gunfire support, sea transport and logistics support to ground troops) in operational areas. For the air force, existing aircraft will be upgraded to provide air support and for rapid deployment of ground troops. For AFP headquarters, this means fixed and special purpose communications and information systems for the co-ordination of civil and military operations.

On May 13, 2000, President Joseph Estrada approved the re-prioritized shopping list, which basically wiped out whatever has been achieved in military and police reform that was the premise of modernization. With the new shopping list, the military was again back on track as the main counterinsurgency force. Some PhP5.484 billion was allocated to jumpstart the Modernization Program and consequently, the Department of Budget and Management has issued the corresponding Special Allotment Release Order (SARO).

What should be noted here now is the timing of the decisions. The approval of the re-prioritized shopping list was made two weeks after the armed forces launched an all-out assault on MILF encampments, without the knowledge of government negotiators in the peace talks.

What this all boils down to is that the original spirit of the AFP Modernization Act is in fact being sub-

verted. That law was passed mandating reforms as well as providing funds (billions) for the purchase of new equipment and weapons. But now, what President Estrada, defense secretary Orly Mercado and armed forces chief Angelo Reyes are saying is -- drop the peace talks, bring back the military in counter-insurgency operations, get the money from the modernization program, and to hell with police reform. (Police chief Ping Lacson is doing a good job at this).

A website has been created primarily for arms companies around the world to offer schemes for the military's buying spree. (See <http://www.afpmodernization.mil.ph/projects-main.html>). At least two British companies have been listed -- British Aerospace to provide J-39 Gripen aircraft; and Vosper Thornycraft to provide all-purpose vehicles (I'm not sure if this means the Simba APCs). Other companies listed are Dassault Aviation (France); Israel Aircraft Industries (Israel); Lockheed Martin (USA); McDonnell Douglas (USA); Moscow Aircraft Production Organization (Russia); Bazan Nacional (Spain); Blohm & Voss (Germany); DCN International (France); Hyundai (France); Litton Ingalls (USA); Lurssen Werft (Germany); and Tenix Defence Systems Pty Ltd (Australia).

There is an approved Defense Procurement Policy posted at the website. There are the usual SOPs for open and transparent bidding. Some items in the policy worth noting are:

*"Equipment Acquisition and Contract Negotiation shall be treated as two sequential but separate steps, each requiring a separate decision of the Secretary of National Defense. The decision making process for Equipment Acquisition shall start at the appropriate service command, submitted to the AFP Modernization Board - while Contract Negotiations shall start at AFP General Headquarters GHQ level."*

*"The Chief of Staff, AFP, prescribes the composition and designates the members of the Pre-qualification, Bidding and Awards Committee (PBAC) for each project under the capability, materiel, and technology development component of the Program -"*

*"The Major Services shall organize their respective Project Management Teams (PMTs), each of which shall be responsible for a single procurement project in all its stages, except the Contract Negotiation stage -"*

*"All prospective bidders shall be required to submit a statement waiving any right to seek and obtain a writ of injunction or prohibition, or a restraining order - to prevent or restrain the pre-qualification and bidding processes or any proceeding related thereto -"*

*"- a sovereign or government guarantee shall be allowed in addition to other forms of allowable bid security -"*

*"Upon signing of the contract with the winning bidder, the SND shall, as applicable, submit the contract to the President for approval -"*

*What I'm just saying is that Congress should at least investigate the possible subversion or corruption of the AFP Modernization Act by the military themselves. The war situation, of course, can be used to justify the decisions they've made -- but an investigation will at least put on record the larger chain of events that provide the context -- and identify those personalities and companies who stand to profit from this renewed fighting.*

### Philippine News and Features

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## Religious Intolerance in Mindanao

*PhilRights*  
5 June 2000

The recent conflict that resulted to brutal deaths, the internationally publicized hostaging of foreign nationals and the massive displacements of thousands of families in Mindanao is very alarming. Equally alarming are the reported incidents of discrimination and religious intolerance perpetrated by members of the armed forces against our Muslim brothers and sisters.

In the June 1 issue of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, the front page displayed a picture of government soldiers waving a Philippine flag on top of a bombed mosque at the MILF's Camp Bushra. In spite of the AFP's avowal that its members undergo human rights training, it is surprising that such incidents happen. This is indeed a blatant illustration of religious intolerance and cultural insensitivity that happens in situations of armed conflict. Such is an insult to Muslim people around the world. Not only this, the possibility of an MILF retaliation is not remote.

What if a group of MILF troops pose in front of a wrecked Manila Cathedral or San Agustin Church while waving their flag?

It cannot be denied that Muslim Fundamentalist groups are one of the actors that spurred the conflict. And because of this, it is inevitable that initial outbursts of animosity be felt against these groups. But it is clear that not all members of the Muslim population are rebels or insurgents. Hence, not everybody should be attacked with discrimination and intolerance.

Article 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that, *"each State Party... undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights... without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status"*.

Among the rights included here is respect for one's religious belief. Any untoward act against a person simply because he or she is a Muslim, or any

similar act of desecration against their religion is a violation of this basic human right.

The Philippine government ratified the said Covenant in 1986.

In addition, article 53 of the Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 prohibits any act of hostility against places of worship and other cultural objects which contribute to the cultural or spiritual heritage of peoples.

With such incident, it is vivid that the military is unaware of this.

We must therefore urge government especially the Commission on Human Rights to investigate and to stop the discriminatory practices of the military and the national police against our Muslim brothers and sisters. We likewise need to demand that respect and religious tolerance be practiced at all times.

The Mindanao conflict's root cause can be traced to the continuing situations of discrimination and neglect that our Moro brothers and sisters have long been subjected to. By letting the armed forces instigate and continue its insensitive acts, the conflict will only exacerbate. The vicious cycle of conflict will only perpetuate.

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# THE STRUGGLE AHEAD

## Palace Sees Lasting Peace with MNLF-MILF Unity Pact

*Francis T. Wakefield  
Tempo ONLINE  
Sunday, August 5, 2001*

Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Eduardo Ermita expressed optimism yesterday that peace in Mindanao will be finally attained after both the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) decided to join forces after almost 22 years of separation.

In a radio interview, Ermita also doused fears raised by military officials about the possibility that the merger of the MILF and MNLF will create a stronger force that might challenge the military.

"That is a remote possibility. I don't think the MILF and MNLF will take advantage of the said merger," Ermita explained.

Ermita also said with the help of the MNLF, it can convince the MILF to finally sign a peace agreement with the government similar to that of the GRP-MNLF peace pact in 1996.

"With the two forces joining together, I think lasting peace might be finally achieved in the whole of Mindanao," he added.

Ermita also said that it's also very impossible for the MILF to push for a separatist Islamic Independent state after the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) declared that such a declaration will not solicit any support from them.

As this developed, Armed Force spokesman Brig. Edilberto Adan said that the military would not hesitate to resume hostilities against the MILF and MNLF should the two take advantage of their merger.

## A People's Movement for Muslim-Christian Unity in the Philippines

*Amirah Ali Lidasan  
Moro-Christian People's Alliance*

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*Excerpt from Justice and Land for the Bangsamoro: The Moro People's Struggle for Self-Determination, presented to the URM Southeast Asia Sub-Regional Forum, June 23-27, 2001, Davao City, Philippines*

*Email: mcpaphils@edsamail.com.ph*  
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At the height of the government's total war campaign against the Moro people in Mindanao, human rights activists, church workers and peace advocates in the progressive movement created a people's organization uniting Moros, Christians and the Indigenous Peoples to counter the government's propaganda of a Muslim-Christian conflict as behind its aggression in Mindanao.

In 1999, the Moro-Christian People's Alliance (MCPA) was established with members ranging from Moro peace advocates, church workers from the UCCP and the NCCP, indigenous peoples and advocates as well as human rights advocates. The organization's unity was its recognition and support of the struggle of the Moro people for their right to self-determination.

The MCPA is the progressive movement's support to the Moro people's struggle. Instead of isolating the Moro people from the over-all struggle of the Filipino people for national liberation and democracy, as what the Philippine government has done, the progressive people's movement in the Philippines has openly supported the Moro struggle and advocated for its justness.

MCPA serves as a venue to help tone down the projected Muslim-Christian conflict as the basis of the war in Mindanao and explain further the real reason behind the Bangsamoro struggle, that the Moro struggle for land, life, and self-determination is not apart and different in the struggle of the Christian peoples in their struggle for human rights, justice and genuine freedom and democracy.

It recognizes the revolutionary movements of the Moro people as its weapon against the government's war aggression and genocidal campaigns. It also recognizes "secession" as the Moro people's last recourse in attaining justice and peace for the Moro people against the Philippine governments desperate moves to get their lands and indiscriminately kill their people.

To be able to help the Moro people and the whole Filipino people understand the situations and struggles of the Moro people, MCPA initiates forums and symposiums, lecture series, book launchings to help advocates of peace and interested people in Manila understand the issues behind the Mindanao war and the struggle for the right to self-determination of the Moro people.

MCPA conducts educational and media campaigns regarding human rights and Moro situation, as well as our services to Moro communities, to clarify to the Moros and the Christians here in Manila the need to unite in safeguarding their fundamental rights. It also promotes and facilitates exposure and integration programs with Moro minorities in rural and urban communities.

MCPA releases major educational primers detailing the current Moro situation and detailing the human rights of the Moro people and conducts educational discussions and training in different urban poor communities here in Manila as well as symposiums in schools. MCPA also initiates and joins advocacy campaigns and protest rallies.

### **The Future of the Moro People's Struggle**

The Moro people's struggle for self-determination should not be viewed as the Moro's assertion of nationalism against their Filipino counterparts. The Moro people's right to secede is not the cause of the problems faced by the Filipino people.

As the Filipino people face harsh conditions under an oppressive government, they are no different from the Moro peasants being ripped of their lands, Moros who are prey to the development programs of the government, Moros who are indiscriminately killed, or a simple Moro individual praying for a good life in one's country.

In turn, it would be hard for the Moro people to isolate themselves from their Filipino counterparts. Their struggle for independence is not far from the struggle of liberation of the Filipino people. It is part and parcel of the struggle of the Filipino people for land, life and liberation of our people.

In the midst of our diversity, in culture, in religion and in tribes, the answer to our liberation is a united and common struggle of the peoples of the Philippines against oppression and exploitation.

In Surahatul Maida verse 75 of the Holy Koran tells us Muslims:

*"Our Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us Thee one who will protect; And raise for us Thee one who will help!"*

Let us unite for the liberation of our people.

***Asalamu Alaikum to all.***

### **Alternative to War: Maladeg Peace Zone and Dungos Peace Pact**

*Rudy B. Rodil*

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*An excerpt from New Friendship Must be Born, the Story by the GRP-MILF Peace Process 1975-1996*  
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Homespun, designed by the very people themselves, the Maladeg Peace Zone stands out as the most unique all over the country. It sprang forth in Maladeg, a coastal barangay of Sultan Gumander, Lanao del Sur, a province more than 93 percent of whose population is Maranao Muslim. Sultan Gumander itself is nearly 98 percent Maranao.

But in Maladeg itself, the population is 90 percent Maranao and 10 percent Christian, made up of 876 houses in all. When the zone started, there were slightly more than ten Christian houses, now there are more than a hundred.

Many of the Maranaos do not come from Maladeg. A good number of them hail from the nearby towns of Nunungan, Calanugas, Malabang, Ganassi, Karomatan and Balabagan. They either came as evacuees during Martial Law days or simply sought shelter on account of unstable conditions in their places of origin. Muslim residents are clustered on the north side of the coast, the Christian on the south side; the leading families, the Antons stay in the middle.

They used to be mixed in the early days but then because of differences in culture, like the sale and drinking of liquor and the raising of hogs among Christians, which were built-in irritants among them, it was decided to separate them. Islam prohibits the sale and drinking of liquor, so Muslims are not allowed to buy or take liquor. There has been no trouble ever since they made the

agreement.

Elected leader of the peace zone is 60-year old Manuel Anton -- more popularly known as Bob, half Maranao, a Catholic Christian. Youngest in a brood of eight, his father was Miguel, half Spanish, one-fourth Maranao, one-fourth Maguindanao, former Chief of Police and four-term mayor of Malabang, Lanao del Sur. His mother is Mareg Limano of the respected Ibrahim clan of Pualas, Lanao del Sur. Her own father was the former Sultan Dalumangkob of Pualas. Married to a Trinidad Carpio, a charming Zamboangueña, Bob is referred to endearingly by the Maranao residents as the Ama-Ina (Father-Mother) of the zone. One reason he is called Ina-Ama, said Mauyag Ampuan, one of the original authors of the Peace Zone, is that "he protects his family, meaning not only his blood relatives but all the people who believe in him in the peace zone. When his family is in distress, he forgets himself and he will take maximum measure to save the lives of his family."

All the signatories of the Covenant of Peace and Development -- the original of this document is in Maranao -- used to be Bob's mortal enemies, riduai in Maranao, with whom his family was at war for more than two decades. They were sworn to eliminate his family from Maladeg; his family fought them to survive. In the process he lost some members of his family. He himself is a veteran of countless armed encounters with them. Now, they are allies, sworn to protect each other in a peace zone.

When they arrived in Maladeg, said Sangcupan Kilab, one of the authors of the peace zone, there were about ten houses there. They conferred with the Antons. They decided to create a committee whose task was to fix all kinds of rido, and also to prevent the escalation of trouble particularly inside the zone. There were so many rido all around them at the time. Now, the committee has more than 30 members and the houses have increased to more than 800.

They also decided to create a Peace Zone which would be bounded by areas inside Turayas in the east, boundary of Liangan-Subuan in the west and then, going up to the north, kalumpang or Kaludan and then going up to Mamaanan and back of Turayas. The area is about seven kilometers in width and about 15 kilometers in length.

The members of the peace zone represent clans; they also have MNLF and MILF commanders among them, all sworn to uphold the eight rules

and regulations of the zone. The Zone did not have a name in the beginning, just a Committee made up of 13 leaders, and the covenant was not written either (it was put on paper later). From the original 13 in 1978, the Zone covenant's signatories has now increased to 41. Four of the signatories are MNLF commanders, one a Chief Inspector of the PNP and another a Colonel of the Philippine Army. The incumbent mayor of Sultan Gumander is so pleased with the peace and order situation in Maladeg he decided to relocate his office there.

A Council of Elders see to it that these rules are implemented. To ensure proper implementation the rules are disseminated to all the families in the zone. Where a family or clan is unable to implement the rules, the signatories -- datus and leaders -- of the covenant will take over the implementation. They have a community jail for violators. The first tenant was the son of Bob himself for a minor infraction, proof that he favored no one. The community respected him for that. Many others have been imprisoned there, including soldiers, CAFGUs. No exceptions as long as they violate the rules.

Armed conflict, gambling, the use of prohibited drugs, any form of criminality, in fact, anything considered bad, are prohibited inside the Zone of Peace. Good deeds, however, are encouraged.

Outsiders who wish to reside inside the Zone are required to seek the permission of the Council of Elders and commit themselves to a strict compliance of the rules and regulations prior to approval.

Any outsider of the Zone who has rido or family feuds but does not wish to be part of the rido, can avail of sanctuary inside the Zone, provided he will promise to renounce violence and cut off his support for his relatives involved in the rido. This also means that he may not use the Zone as his base of operations to participate in rido. The Zone leaders, in turn, will provide him protection and assistance from any trouble maker.

They also have a committee whose members are constantly alert for any outbreak of actual conflict or potential conflict. If they feel that a conflict is about to break out, they would immediately visit the involved parties and talk them out of it. Where armed conflict has already broken out, they will visit the contending parties and persuade them to a cease-fire. As soon as the parties agree, the next move is to get them to negotiate for a peaceful resolution. In cases of murder or attempted murder, Zone rules require that the weapon used

in the crime must first be turned over to the Committee before resolution.

The committee has not only confined its services to the people of Maladeg, it has also extended assistance to those in need in nearby Maganding, Malabang, Nunungan, Karomatan.

Women violators, married or unmarried may not be subjected to interrogation without the presence of male relatives of the first degree.

The Committee's success record at settling conflict has been spectacularly high. Also, contrary to the practice of mediation common among Maranaos of requiring a fee of 30% of the settlement sum, they as mediators do not charge a single centavo for their services. Neither are they compensated for their work. They have also built a reputation for fairness, regardless of social rank.

### **Feedback From the People**

Some feedback from the signatories will reveal to what extent the Peace Zone has been successful in creating a new way of life in Lanao del Sur. In the interviews with the Maranao leaders, they were asked to respond especially to two questions: (a) Describe life with rido and life without rido, and (b) Why did he choose to live in Maladeg? .

Originally from Nunungan, Mauyag "Mawi" Ampuan has lived 40 years in Maladeg. He is one of the authors of the Peace Zone and is also one of the signatories of the Covenant of Peace and Development. Asked about his opinion on life with or without rido, he said: "A person without rido can go anywhere. A person with rido is like a carabao tethered to a tree. He can only move around as far as the rope will allow."

To Ustadz Ampaso, originally from Uyaan, leader of more than 50 families from the same place and one of the original signatories of the covenant, life with rido is being a "prisoner inside your own household." What attracted him to Maladeg was that the place is "peaceful and I decided to stay here because this is where I found peace of mind."

Kadi Abbas who hails from Nunungan heads more than 200 families. He has lived in Maladeg in the last 20 years. He commented: "When you have rido, you are never stable, you are like a prisoner. You cannot work, you cannot go out of your house, you cannot extend assistance to anybody because you are afraid to go out. Your enemy

might be somewhere else and might take any a chance on you. He can kill you."

He chose to stay in Maladeg "because of you and your brothers, he told Bob Anton. We have identified you as people who are concerned about helping other people especially when they are oppressed, when they are hard up. Your family is always there to extend assistance to these oppressed people, To these people who are financially hard up. And most of all, your place is identified with peaceful coexistence among the inhabitants. We find this place very ideal for future plans. This is the place where we can rest with peace of mind. This is a place where we can feel safe even if we have enemies. We believe you will not leave us unprotected."

To Datu Bra who has lived in Maladeg for 40 years, "The bad thing about rido is that our livelihood is really paralyzed. The advantage of having no rido is you are free to move wherever place you like to go, no problem." Why did he choose to stay in Maladeg. This is where he discovered that he can make a living in peace."

Alim Abu Jabir, originally known as Khalid Rajah Muda Ali, is from Nunungan. He studied Arabic in Matampay, Marawi City and went to Kuwait University on a scholarship. He graduated in 1991. He came home when Iraq attacked Kuwait. As an Islamic teacher, he moves around a lot. Even if he does not concern himself with the rido of his clan, he still takes precautionary measures. He plans his movements. He is aware that rido is prohibited in Islam. One of the things he does in his travels is to tell people the efforts being made by the people of Maladeg.

But how does one sustain the peace zone? Makaorao Sarif, Sultan sa Liangan and regular emissary during settlement processes, believes that to maintain the integrity of the peace zone, the datus must first of all agree. Every leader must discipline his followers and his subjects. When the datus agree among themselves, it means that they have one motive, which is to find peace for themselves and their followers. Leadership is very important. The leaders and datus' participation is very important to achieve this aim.

### **Dungos Peace Pact**

I visited Barangay Dungos in Tulunan on September 11, 1999. One month before the visit, Barangay Chairman Mario M. Baloniebro Sr. said that a group of MILF arrived at the place to inform

the people that they were going to establish an armed detachment there, Dungos being part of MILF Camp Rajamuda.

Christian and Muslim residents of the place met with them to inform them that they have this peace pact in Dungos not to allow any armed men inside the area. And this included the military and police as well.

They recalled that this Peace Pact was signed on March 20, 1995 by representatives of the Christian and Muslim inhabitants of the Barangay. Among the signatories were the Barangay Chairman himself, Mayor Rodolfo Peñafiel of Tulunan, the parish priest, Father Buenaflor, and witnesses included no less than Governor Rosario Diaz of Cotabato, Congressman Gregorio Andolana of Cotabato, Mayor Ibrahim Paglas III of datu Paglas, Mayor Saidona Pendatun of SK Pendatun, the Provincial director of the PNP, the Battalion Commander of 40IB, 6ID, and Boy Hasim, MNLF Brigade Commander of the Upper Kutawatu Revolutionary Command.

Sometime after the signing, a delegation led by Mayor Peñafiel traveled to Camp Abubakar where they informed Hadji Murad, MILF Vice Chairman for Military Affairs about the peace pact. The response of the MILF leader was encouraging. As a result of the August attempt of the MILF to establish a detachment in Dungos, the people again conferred with the MILF leadership. The latter decided to respect the agreement of the people.

The Dungos peace pact was born out of the turbulence of the early 70s and the insecurities resulting from the raging war between the AFP and the MNLF afterwards. It was also inspired by the successful creation of the Peace Zones of Sitios of Miatub and New Alimodian and barangays Bituan, Banayal and Tuburan in the same municipality of Tulunan that became one of the Ten (10) Outstanding Awardee for development programs throughout the country. Declared as a Special Development Area (SDA), the Peace Zones gained the support of the national government and were extended financial support for the people's livelihood program.

Among the agreements of Dungos were the settlement of internal conflicts by peaceful means and the disallowance of armed groups, including the military, to enter the area unless requested by the members of the Ad Hoc Committee.

**Lessons from the Peace Zones**

What the peace zone of Maladeg and the peace pact of Dungos teach us is that the people need not wait for top level negotiations between GRP and MNLF or GRP and MILF to come to terms. They know what kind of peace they want and they can agree among themselves within the community. Self-regulation is an important ingredient here because it illustrates that establishing a peace zone or the creation of a peace pact area and maintaining the same requires vigilance and a constant demonstration of the stakeholders' political will. There is nothing better than peace that flows and is nurtured from within.

**Understanding  
The 'Relations' Between  
Christians and Muslims**

*Fr. Eliseo R. Mercado, Jr., OMI*

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**IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM**, the suspicion and fears that exist between the Christians and the Muslims still linger. In fact, there are places and cultures where, because of some "extremist" groups, the suspicion and fears have actually become antagonism and hostility. The depressing fact, nay tragedy, is that, despite globalization and the rapid advances of technology and mass communications, the misunderstanding between Christians and Muslims continues. Yes, distrust, fear and even hostility continue to persist.

The many and varying peace processes as well as "democratization" in many hot spots are very remarkable and encouraging events. The Peace Processes in the Middle East are prospering albeit very slowly. The "return" to democracy of Indonesia considered the "largest Islamic" country is positive development in a new and growing perception about Islam. The Final Peace Accord between the Philippine Government and the Moro National Liberation Front is another story of successful negotiated peace settlement. The victory of President Khatami in Iran is also seen as the victory of moderate Islam versus its extremist and ugly face. The return to sanity and normalcy in East Timor after so much atrocities is another story of a new birth.

The suspicion and fear, even hostility, are deeply rooted in history. People claim that the "rootedness" of misunderstanding is also to be found in the very "psyche" of the two cultures and two worlds. The history is

marred by conflict. The history of relationship between Christianity and Islam has given rise to an enduring tradition of fear, distrust and hostility, because the two worlds have so often charted collision and contradictory ways/courses. The history of crusades, the Spanish re-conquista, the fall of Constantinople, the Ottoman expansion to Europe in 1529 and 1683, the Napoleon's conquest of Egypt in 1798, the West colonial expansion embracing almost all the world of Islam and the fall of the Ottoman Empire are few examples of the historical "rootedness" of the fears, distrust and hostilities. The legacies of the past are still alive. They remind the living of the bitter encounters between Christianity and Islam. They continue to enslave the present day consciousness that prevents both Christians and the Muslims from embarking into new relationships of trust and friendship.

**FOR ALL THE FEARS**, distrust and hostilities between the two worlds, there are interesting, nay wonderful convergences or "kindredness between Christianity and Islam. First and foremost, Christians, Muslims and Jews are all "Peoples of the Book." Yes, Christianity and Islam share a common monotheistic vision. In the language of Vatican II: "They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has also spoken to people" (Vat. II, NA, No. 3). In fact, the same Council recognizes the quarrels and dissensions between Christians and Muslims over the centuries and (it) "now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding; for the benefit of all, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values" (ibid.).

Moreover, Christians and Muslims share many key values in common: respect for knowledge, for justice, compassion towards the poor and underprivileged, the importance of family life, respect for parents and elders and consultations/consensus in the determination of societal/community affairs.

These days, there is a growing myopia not only in our common attitude toward each other, but also in the way we understand the roles of religions and the religious in society. It is a tragedy that the extreme and the superficial versions of Christianity and Islam have temporarily hijacked our attitudes and understanding. Many Christians view Islam in terms of the tragic wars in the Balkans, the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo, and the extreme developments in Afghanistan, Iran and

Pakistan. No doubt, the extremes exist on both Islam and Christianity, and they must be dealt with. But when used as a basis to judge a people and society, they lead to distortion and unfairness.

**OFTENTIMES, OUR JUDGEMENT** of each other has been grossly distorted by taking the extremes to be the norm. This is a serious mistake! It is like judging the quality of life in a community by the existence of murder, rape, drug addiction, etc. We have to school ourselves to see things that the extremes are rarely practised and the extremists are, indeed, very little minority. By highlighting the extremes, we are actually engaged in peddling those unthinking prejudices. The truth is, of course, different and always more complex.

Moreover, in the cases of the world of Islam, there is the urgent need to distinguish the religion of Islam from the practices of some Islamic States. We do not judge Islam by the practices of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the "fundamentalists" in many countries today. We must not succumb to the temptation to believe that extremism is in some way the hallmark and essence of Islam and/or Muslims. In the first place, extremism is not the monopoly of Islam. Religions and ideologies including Christianity have their share of extremism. The good news is the fact that the vast majority of Christians and Muslims are moderates in their politics. Theirs is the religion of the "middle way" or moderation. Thus, if we are to understand each other, we must learn to distinguish clearly between the vast majority of believers who are moderates and the terrible violence of a small minority who are known as "Extremists."

The challenge to us today is to learn to understand each other, and to educate our children – a new generation, whose attitudes and cultural outlook may be different from ours – so that they understand too. We have to show trust, mutual respect, and tolerance, if we are to find the common ground between us and work together to find solutions to the many and varied issues that divide us. We can no longer afford to stand apart from a common effort to solve our common problems of "unpeace" and lack/little development.

**UNDERSTANDING AND MOVEMENT** toward peace has to be two-way. Each of us needs to understand the importance of peace, reconciliation, development, and of reflection. There is the necessity to open our minds and unlock our hearts to each other. The Arabic word for this is "TADABBAR"!

St. Francis of Assisi in his famous prayer invites us to:

*Where there is hatred, let me bring love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light; and  
Where there is sadness, joy.*

Yes, there are failing of understanding and tolerance right on our own doorstep. In the coming months and as we begin the New Millennium, we hope that we shall learn to demonstrate that we are not bigots and extremists ourselves! We continue to build bridges of understanding in the spirit of genuine tolerance. Christians and Muslims must spare no effort to live and work each other, and with others, towards reconciling conflicts and helping grassroots level communities to act upon their own choices in self-development towards a more just, participatory society.

There are no simple answers to the question of living together as Christians and Muslims. Every situation ought to be handled after seriously considering the factors at play. Some of them are historical, social or doctrinal. Whatever the factors and their magnitude, it is our duty to see a better society where people of different faiths and cultures live in love, justice and peace. We have the obligation to emphasize that which unites us and make an effort to set aside that which would divide us. We can only do this if we have full understanding of what the other believes, and are committed to the principle of respect and recognition of the beliefs and feelings of every community and person.

We cannot conclude this reflection without showing our admiration and applause to those men and women of goodwill, Muslims and Christians, who work tirelessly to promote good and friendly relations between Christians and Muslims. We have much to offer each other. We have much to do together. We have much work ahead of us. We shall need to work harder to understand each other, to drain out poison between us, and to lay the ghost of suspicion and fear. The further down that road we can travel the better the world that we shall create for our children and for future generations.

## A View from the MILF — Interview with Mohagher Iqbal

**Source:**  
[http://www.c-r.org/acc\\_min/iqbal.htm](http://www.c-r.org/acc_min/iqbal.htm)  
(The Interview was conducted in Cotabato City on September 18, 1998 by Macrina Morados and Editha Cabanban.)

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) broke away from the MNLF, stressing the importance of Islamic renewal as part of the struggle for self-determination. Its goal is an independent Islamic state.

The MILF is still at war with the Philippine government. However, exploratory talks with the Ramos administration did lead to a ceasefire agreement, and preparations for substantive negotiations under the Estrada government continue amid further intermittent fighting.

Despite being described as 'fundamentalist', the MILF has maintained an open relationship with other political forces and with civil society organisations within and beyond the Muslim community. MILF leader, Salamat Hashim, heads a council of reclusive ulama (Islamic scholars), who live strictly according to Islamic rules and meditate on the Qur'an daily. This council sets policy for the Front and decisions are then implemented by political and military leaders, among whom is Mohagher Iqbal.

Chair of the Committee on Information of the MILF Central Committee, Mohagher Iqbal joined the Jabidah protests in 1968 as a student, has written books on the Mindanao conflict, and is considered a leading ideologue of the MILF.

*'The MILF entered into a general framework of agreement of intent [to negotiate] with the government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) on 27 August 1998.*

*'We [in the MILF] reiterate our right to self-determination. This right entails three important elements, namely:*

- ◆ *Islam is our way of life;*
- ◆ *we should be governed according to the teachings of Islam;*
- ◆ *self-governance — we do not want to be governed by outsiders.*

*'If the MILF enters into a peace agreement with the Philippine government, there will be three major points where we differ [from the MNLF]:*

- ◆ *Difference in approach: Under the MNLF peace agreement, Misuari gave so much emphasis to foreign participation, i.e. the involvement of the OIC. In our case, though we welcome the OIC*



and other Muslim states, we can pursue peace talks on our own because we emphasize internal factors.

- ◆ Different political approach, especially on the question of territory. MNLF asked for 14 provinces and 10 cities. [The] MILF does not give so much emphasis on autonomy. It seeks to establish an independent Islamic Government in areas where Muslims are predominant.
- ◆ On plans to develop and uplift the living conditions of the Muslims: projects for the development of Muslims, Highlanders and Christians were conceptualised only after the signing of the agreement. Under the MILF, we are already involving them with some livelihood and development projects in order to uplift their living conditions even before we have entered into an agreement with the GRP. This is because we give more importance to self-reliance, to internal factors rather than external ones, especially aid.

*'The Peace Agreement between the MNLF and the GRP is significant because it is formalised and signed by the negotiating parties. It is an international affair because OIC was part of it. Theoretically, the seed of peace has already been sown with the signing of the agreement. Moreover, [there] is a ceasefire - no more armed encounters between the MNLF and the government forces.*

*'In the absence of fighting, there is peace in areas previously considered hot spots. The highlander, MNLF and local people have also benefited from the presence of international organisations and some government programmes.*

*'Before, [women were among] those who were deprived, but at least after the signing of the Agreement, women are given opportunities. They are now recipients of some livelihood programs. Some funding institutions have given the women a chance, and I believe they really have an important role to play in the development of society.*

*'[The agreement] has not solved the Moro problem. An indication of this is the government's invitation to forge a peace agreement with the MILF. [The] MILF cause represents the Moro problems and demands. Misuari himself is now discontented, the government did not fulfil its promises. The issue on land has not been properly addressed.'*

## **Internationalizing the Mindanao Crisis: The Need for Peoples Solidarity**

*Augusto N. Miclat, Jr.*

A scan of the current conflicts besetting the region affirms the need for broader and firmer solidarity relations among peoples in the South.

The rekindling of armed hostilities in Mindanao between government forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is the latest of a spate of upheavals sweeping the region. Over the past several months and weeks, disputes have stalked the region: East Timor, Aceh, West Papua, Ambon, Burma and lately not so far away, Sri Lanka.

The recent regional financial meltdown may have exacerbated these discords, engendering radical political rearrangements such as in East Timor and Indonesia. Still the denouement of these conflicts will only be played out if the historical socioeconomic roots of the problem are earnestly addressed and not dangerously glossed over as either ethnic or religious-based quarrels.

The need for international solidarity as both a process and conduit to forge common calls and actions among the affected populations has now become even starker. It is this "grassroots internationalism" that may help empower peoples to force the transparency, if not, the actual contour of responses from political entities to these issues.

The situation in Mindanao mirrors the conditions in the region.

Decades-old problems spawned by the colonial era have created synthetic geographical divisions and bred economic elites trampling on evolving cultures and civilizations in their wanton pursuit for profit and glory. This has resulted in the displacements of entire peoples by artificial boundaries, the skewing of their cultures and their subjugation by these economic gentry.

Struggles for self-determination and liberation are thus a natural reaction to these injustices.

Even as the world seem to advance towards a global village and technology digitizes information and relationships among peoples, these struggles retain its moral purpose and the rationale and ascendancy of its aims.

Thus the MILF's avowed goal for its peoples'

separate state is morally legitimate and must be dispassionately viewed from the prism of their struggle for self-determination. This goal is the acme of that right, albeit, not perhaps the actual bottomline.

What is worrying in this present combat is the seeming careless abandon the incumbent government is treating this war as a black-and-white issue with no less than a decisive military victory as its outright objective. And more worrisome and dangerous-is the parallel encouragement of an anti-Muslim hysteria among the majority of the populace to back-up this goal. This is abetted by the string of abhorrent criminal deeds of the fringe cum virtual bandit group Abu Sayyaf. It has been reported that the Abu Sayyaf is actually a creation of the military and the CIA to drive a wedge in the Muslim rebellion but has metamorphosed into a "Frankenstein" which its inventors can no longer control. Other cynics however contend that the timing of the Abu Sayyaf's latest forays is fishy as it converged with the attacks on the MILF strongholds.

Thus the latest round of hostilities instigated by the GRP against the MILF on the pretext of asserting its sovereignty over a lonely 15-kilometer stretch of highway has given the former the impetus it needs to eradicate what it sees as a festering boil. Alas, the disease is more than a boil-it is a cancer that may metastasize if not surgically removed through lasting political, social, economic and cultural solutions.

The Mindanao war is clearly parallel to festering issues in the region.

Thus the projection of the Mindanao crisis internationally is necessary in adding pressure to the contending parties - specially the Philippine government -- to seek out more peaceful avenues to their present political deadlock. International attention, and more so in an Asian context -- has a mode of its own, a way of making a political process more transparent and thus less prone to violent resolutions. Involvement of independent third parties from abroad, however miniscule, can likewise lend the path of negotiations and political settlement more tenable.

There has already anyway been "intervention" from outside parties even before the Tripoli agreement. The Organization of Islamic Countries and in particular, Indonesia, Malaysia and Libya have dabbled their hands in the conflict and some say have significantly determined the eventual outcome of both the Tripoli agreement and even the

virtual capitulation of the MNLF to the Ramos government.

What is missing here is the participation of the major stakeholders-the peoples, both in Mindanao and the region -- in the "intervention" or mediation process.

Particular to the Mindanao problem - and to similar clones in the region -- is addressing the delicate and thus emotional issue of ethnicity and religion. This, while stripping the layers of neglect and injustice that historically bred the conflict.

It is thus likewise an immediate need to help quell the unmitigated passions spawned by this latest upsurge of hostilities. An anti-Muslim hysteria is apparently being fanned, if not, systematically generated by certain dark forces in the body politic. Whether this has the tacit blessing or worse, the backing of policy from the authorities makes this even more alarming. This potent frenzy has to be nipped at the bud before it escalates into an incurable delirium that even its authors may not have dared imagined.

Bringing the issue to the pit of international concern may help allay this tragedy.

Perhaps there is a need to also correlate Mindanao with the sores in other parts of the region. This in turn will provide a window to campaign along parallel and more strategic calls among peoples in the area. It could also provide these voices with a platform for a call to peace and justice in this conflict-laden region, i.e. Ambon, Aceh, West Papua, Burma, Sri Lanka.

An immediate objective is of course to contribute in helping put the brakes on the war freaks among the combatants, particularly the Philippine government. And more strategically, this campaign can render a signal to the other similar players in the area that peoples and civil societies in the region are in fact in solidarity with each other and will thus not stand idly by when they are displaced or impaled by those in power.

#### Initiatives for International Dialogue

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