

Linking the Moro People with the rest of the world



THE BANGSAMORO JOURNAL

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Remembering the Battle of Bud Dahu



Honouring the martyrs,
RECOGNIZING THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE

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Our Cover



The smokey Bud Dahu seems to mourn the martyrs of the century-old infamous yet and horrible Bud Dahu Massacre.

Saki, (above photo) an immediate descendant of one of the four survivors had the principled "recollection of the event with vehement condemnation against the American colonial regime for perpetuating such barbaric act against his ancestors whose only fault, if at all, is to resist against colonialism to preserve their freedom and independence.

Gen. Leonard Wood (lower photo) seems to have thought that his mission was accomplished without any inkling that such struggle had been carried over by the offspring of the Bangsamoro which they are still waging today.

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Remembering the infamous Battle and Massacre in Bud Dahu a Century Ago

*Are the souls of the victims crying out for justice?
Or have they forgiven already their aggressors?*

One hundred years ago on March 5, 1906, a tragic event happened which the present generation of the Bangsamoro would always recall as legacy of American colonial aggression in the Bangsamoro Homeland. This tragedy is known in history as the Bud Dahu battle between the resistance force of the Moro and the American colonial forces which led to the massacre of women and children. What happened 100 years ago partly made what the Bangsamoro of today – their resolute resistance against foreign aggression and relentless struggle for their right to self-determination.

A hundred years ago, over 1,000 Tausugs including women and children were slaughtered, "leaving not even a baby alive to cry for its dead mother for refusal to recognize the sovereignty of United States over them. "This is incomparably the greatest victory that was ever achieved by the Christian soldiers of the United States", this was how an American satirist Mark Twain described that gory massacre at the *langgal* (prayer house) in a bowl at the crater of Bud (mount) Dahu on March 8, 1906 – the killing of mujahideens and the killing of unarmed women and children was described in the US as "the most hideous Philippine... picture published in the United States." The perpetrators were some 500 US colonial troops under General Leonard Wood who, Twain revealed, was also a medical doctor who was supposedly dedicated to preserving life instead of ending them.

Several massacres happened in the post Philippine Independence, notably of which are the Manili massacre in North Cotabato; Mileb massacre in Sultan sa Barongis; Kulong-kulong and Malisbong massacres in Sultan Kudarat; and the Jabidah massacre which triggered a renewed struggle for Bangsamoro Independence. Unless we remember and seek for these historical injustices by honoring the local martyrs, the wounds it caused on their descendants would never heal. Are the souls of the victims of the Bud Dahu massacre and those in Central Mindanao crying out for justice? Or have they forgiven their aggressors?

The Peace agreement of 1996 is supposed to provide response to the cry for justice but as it is now, the agreement has become a tragedy itself.

So how would injustice be dispensed of? Will the US ask for forgiveness? Will the descendants accept blood money? In some countries, talking peace with rebel movements, they ask for apology for wrongs done as a gesture of sincerity and as part of the confidence-building measures. Is the Philippines willing to apologize for what it has done to the Bangsamoro?

The centenary of the Bud Dahu battle and massacre shall serve as a staging point for our renewed and revitalized struggle for peace and justice. It shall provide inspiration to the continuing struggle of the Bangsamoro for the recognition and respect of their right to self-determination and freedom.

What happened to Bud Dajo:

A forgotten massacre and its lessons

By Andrew J. Bacevich
The Boston Globe
March 12, 2006

Note: [The author is a professor of International Relations at the Boston University]

One hundred Years ago this past week, on March 7, 1906, the American military's first sustained incursion into the Islamic world reached a climax of sorts. At Bud Dajo, on an island in the southern Philippines, US troops massacred as many as a thousand Filipino Muslims.

In the conventional narrative of America's rise to greatness, Bud Dajo hardly qualifies for a footnote. Yet the events that occurred there a century ago deserve their own chapter. For those hankering today to use American power to transform the world of Islam, Bud Dajo offers a cautionary tale.

The US troops had arrived on a mission of liberation, promising to uplift the oppressed. But the subjects of American beneficence, holding views of their own, proved recalcitrant. Doing good required first that the liberators pacify resistance and establish order. Before it was over, the Americans' honor had been lost, and uplift had given way to savagery.

Although it had seized the Philippines in 1898 during the course of its war with Spain, the United States made little immediate attempt to impose its authority over the Muslim minority – known as Moros – concentrated in the southern reaches of the archipelago. Under the terms of the 1899 Bates Agreement, American colonial administrators had promised the Moros autonomy in return for acknowledging nominal US sovereignty.

But after the US suppressed the so-called Philippine Insurrection of 1899-1902, during which US forces defeated Filipino nationalists led by Emilio Aguinaldo, authorities in Manila turned their attention to the Moros. In 1903 they abrogated the Bates Agreement and ordered Major General Leonard Wood to assert unambiguous jurisdiction over what the Americans were now calling the Moro province.

The imperious Wood, President Theodore Roosevelt's favorite general, viewed his new charges as "nothing more nor less than an

unimportant collection of pirates and highwaymen." He did not bother to disguise his intentions: The Moros would either submit or suffer harsh consequences. As one of Wood's subordinates noted approvingly, "We are going after Mr. Moro with a rough hand, we are holding him up to all the high ideals of civilization."

A rough hand it proved to be. Personally offended by the Moro propensity for blood feuds, polygamy and human trafficking, Wood set out to render Moro culture compatible with prevailing Western values. Doing so meant first creating a new political order. Certain that a generous dose of American firepower would make the Moros amenable to his program of reform, he arrived at his new headquarters in Zamboanga hankering for a fight. As he assured the president, "one clean-cut lesson will be quite sufficient for them."

Wood miscalculated. Neither one, nor a dozen, nor several dozen such lessons did the trick. His efforts to root out offending Moro customs – issuing edicts that declared ancient Moro practices illegal, demanding that Moro tribal chiefs profess their fealty to Washington, and visiting reprisals on those who refused – triggered a fierce backlash.



A marker posted at the foot of the mass grave of over a thousand cadavers of the victims of the massacre. It contains a message honouring the martyrs of the uncompromising stand in resisting against the American colonial rule.



The delegates to the Bud Dahu Massacre Centennial Commemoration ascend to the peak of Bud (mount) Dahu.

An ugly war ensued, pitting poorly armed Moro warriors against seasoned US Army regulars. The Moro weapon of choice was the kris, a short sword with a wavy blade; the Americans toted Springfield rifles and field guns. As in present-day Iraq, the Americans never lost an engagement. Yet even as they demolished one Moro stronghold after another and wracked up an impressive body count, the fighting persisted. The Moros remained incorrigible.

At Bud Dajo, a volcanic crater on the Island of Jolo, things came to a head. In later 1905, hundreds of Moros – determined to avoid paying a US-imposed head tax, which they considered blasphemous – began taking refuge on the peak.

Refusing orders to disperse, they posed, at least in the eyes of nervous American officials, an intolerable threat. In "open defiance of the American authority," the district governor on Jolo complained, the Moros of Bud Dajo were setting themselves up as "patriots and semi-liberators." These would-be revolutionaries had to be crushed. So Wood dispatched several battalions of infantry to Bud Dajo with orders to "clean it up."

On March 5, 1906, the reinforcements arrived and laid siege to the heights. The next day, they began shelling the crater with artillery. At daybreak on March 7, the final assault commenced, the Americans working deliberately along the rim of the crater and firing into the pit. Periodically, "a rush of shrieking men and women would come cutting the air and dash

amongst the soldiers like mad dogs," one eyewitness reported, but the results were foreordained. When the action finally ended some 24 hours later, the extermination of the Bud Dajo Moros had been accomplished. Among the dead lay several hundred women and children.

Differing in scope but not in character from countless prior "battles," the incident at Bud Dajo would have gone entirely unnoticed had word of it not leaked to the press.

When reports of the slaughter reached Washington, a minor flap ensued. Indignant members of Congress – chiefly Democrats hoping to embarrass the Republican Roosevelt – demanded an explanation. Perhaps predictably, an official inquiry found the conduct of US troops beyond reproach. When the War Department cleared Wood of any

wrongdoing, the scandal faded as quickly as it had begun. For his part, Wood remained chillingly unrepentant. "Work of this kind," he wrote privately to Roosevelt, "has its disagreeable side, which is the unavoidable killing of women and children; but it must be done." The president concurred.

And yet the bloodletting at Bud Dajo accomplished next to nothing. The nameless dead were soon forgotten. Wood moved onward and upward, soon thereafter becoming Army chief of staff and eventually returning to the Philippines as governor-general. The American self-image as upholder of civilization's high ideals emerged a bit the worse for fear, but still intact, at least as far as



Bud (mount) Dahu, a living witness to the gory killings of Tausugs carried out by the US troops a hundred years ago.

Sulu Peoples March Towards Justice

and their Centuries-Old Fight For Freedom

By **Amirah Ali Lidasan**

[National vice-chairperson, Suara Bangsamoro Partylist Organizations]

To an outsider, Sulu is a very scary place. The word "juramentado" was coined by the Spanish to describe a bolo-wielding army of the Sultan while Americans created a .45 calibre so they can easily shoot down these juramentados. Sulu is known to be the birthplace of the Moro National Liberation Front who in the 70's was one of the fiercest fighters against the military during Marcos dictatorship that strongman Ferdinand Marcos had to order the military to burn its capital Jolo to the ground. Sulu is also known as the base of the Abu Sayyaf group who placed Sulu on the map of international terrorist network.

But for an outsider like me, who has experienced all the horrors of war in my home province Maguindanao, I see Sulu as a battered place, whipped by foreign invaders, tyrant rulers and soldiers who seek promotion in the Armed Forces in the Philippines, in the hopes of breaking the will and spirit of its people.

Here is an island that lies in the southernmost tip of Philippines, much nearer to Malaysia than to mainland Mindanao, which has survived a war for three centuries, since the coming of conquistadores, the militarist regime of Filipino presidents and US government's war on terror. Here are the descendants of the proud people of the Sultanate, whose fortress lies in the ferocious spirit of people who will defend Sulu until their death.

Sulu is not for the feint hearted. When one comes to Sulu, one has to be brave enough to experience the violence that would go on from the moment you land on its port. I am filled with stories of armed soldiers being attacked by civilians the moment their feet lands the dock, journalists being shot at while covering for news stories, marketplaces being bombed, and beautiful women who were bound to be abducted and forced to marry Tausugs. And still I went to Sulu on May 2002, along with 50 human rights defenders, mass activists, sisters, priests and pastors, paralegal and human rights documenters to conduct a national fact-finding mission on reported human rights violations in Sulu.

Despite of facing danger while conducting the fact-finding mission, I have been a constant visitor in Sulu. On May 20, year 2002, our team was chased by a military helicopter in Indanan who was spraying bullets at the ground where we were doing our ocular inspection. I ran with the rest of the members of the

fact-finding mission and was still sane enough to document the incident on tape.

For a visitor like me, a week in Sulu is a nightmare. Everyday there are people being killed and shot at, in the marketplace, outside their homes, inside their homes, in front of a mosque or a *kaday* (coffee shop), after speaking in an assembly, after holding a meeting, or while conducting a mass rally in front of the Jolo town hall.

Outsiders say that the Tausugs love their guns much more than their wife or their kids. But I don't see the Tausugs as that. I see Tausug men as passionate people, who love their wives and are very protective of their children, that they have to arm themselves to be able to protect them from harm. Their love for their family and clans is the same intensity that you feel when they speak of their love for Lupah Sug.

In my experience as a human rights worker and documenter of human rights violations in Sulu, harm comes to Tausug families in the form of a miscalculated aim of a military mortar, a missed hit of a military helicopter, or a military vendetta against religious groups or known sympathizers of the Moro National Liberation Front.

Unresolved cases of human rights violations

If a member of a military dies in the hands of suspected armed Tausugs, whether they be civilians or belonging to the MNLF or the Abu Sayyaf, the military retaliates through assassinations or spraying bullets in the community by masked men. This is the grim picture of Sulu, what outsiders call a cycle of violence. I call it a cycle of injustice and unresolved cases of human rights violations.

On January 31 this year, at 10 in the evening, while residents in Sitio Kaatian in Poblacion, Indanan were sleeping, they were awakened by a loud sound of mortar. A grandfather screamed and asked for help from his neighbors, his two granddaughters were hit with shrapnels of the bomb that cut through their *nipa* houses. He brought their bodies to the nearest authorities – the dreaded 35th IB of the 104th Brigade in Sulu.

This is the same military unit that was accused of the infamous Padiwan massacre in Kapuk Punggul, the killing of a family reported by the 35th to be the result of

an encounter with the Abu Sayyaf in Indanan's neighboring municipality, Maimbong. Exactly a year before, on February 1, the 35th IB led by Col. Dennis Villanueva strafed the house of Tal Padiwan killing his pregnant wife Sidang and his 14 yr old son. Three has survived the massacre but the wounds in their bodies and in their soul was never healed, instead inflamed as the military tagged them as ASG fugitives that they were forced to escape Sulu. The incident resulted to almost a weeklong attack on military posts by the MNLF last year and the death of Col. Dennis Villanueva.

The camp of the 35th IB is just a walk away from the site where the mortar hit the community. The grandfather asked for help from the military, he knew a Tausug officer and a distant relative who might offer help and explanation as to why a bomb hit their community. True enough, the Tausug officer, recently promoted to 104th Brigade, brought the kids to the Southern Command Hospital in downtown Jolo, promised to pay for their expenses, but the grandfather was asked never to complain to higher authorities about the bombing.

When the mortar hit the road of Sitio Kaatian, the

conducted at that time. Rumors of drunken military men at the 35th IB could accidentally trigger the mortar spread through the community. For them, this is not the first time though.

In 2002, the day that the fact-finding mission team packed up for the mainland, a mortar accidentally hit an evacuation center, the Kahuy Sinah Elementary School in Parang, wounding a 13 year-old kid whose left leg had to be amputated. The fact-finding mission brought this to the attention of the committee on human rights in the House of Representatives. This in turn became one of the reasons why Representatives Hussin Amin of Sulu and Satur Ocampo of Bayan Muna Partylist grilled Col. Romeo Tolentino on his promotion in 2002. Col. Tolentino could only give "miscalculation" as an excuse.

The case of Kahuy Sinah is already in the House of Representatives, but neither justice nor indemnification has been rendered to the victims. Col. Romeo Tolentino was rewarded with a promotion and is now a general holding a higher office in the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

On January 28, 2006 two motorcycle-riding masked men sprayed bullets on the community of Busbus, Jolo. Armed with a .45 cal., one of the masked men began shooting bystanders and worshippers standing in front of the mosque. Eleven wounded were rushed to Sulu provincial hospital. It was alleged that the masked men were members of the marines who wanted to avenge the death of a fellow marines at the hands possibly of the *jamaah* (members or worshippers) of the Busbus mosque. Witnesses say that the motorcycle was as a "G2" (intelligence) motorcycle used by the marines, and that the masked men probably came from a detachment in the neighboring sitio connecting the Patikul municipality and turned towards another detachment, the 104th Brigade.

On February 3, while members of the House of Representatives' Committee on Peace, Unity and Reconciliation were conducting a congressional inquiry in Jolo, Sulu Representative Hussin Amin, Bayan Muna Partylist Representatives Satur Ocampo and Joel Virador, received a report about a massacre of civilians (including an eight-month baby) in at a housing project of the Vicariate of Sulu in Brgy. Palar, Patikul.

The committee went to the area to investigate and learned that six Muslim civilians were killed and five others were injured when armed men opened fire at the community.

The village is surrounded by military forces and is very near the 3rd Marine Brigade camp. Residents and witnesses told the representatives that immediately after the massacre, they saw armed men — believed are military assets — arrived in the area after the shooting to collect all empty shells.

Jolo councilor Cocoy Tulawie could not believe that the perpetrators would commit the crime knowing that



Tausugs march on the streets of Jolo to protest against the presence of US troops in their place among other issues.

road cracked and the shrapnel hit about 10 houses; it also cut in half 10 of the banana trees nearby and wounded a farmer's cow. The whole community demanded to know why a mortar was aimed at them. There was no MNLF in their community, no armed men; they knew nothing about any military operation being

there was a congressional inquiry going on in Sulu at that time. The congressional inquiry was well publicized in Sulu because this was a response to the reports given by Sulu residents about the participation of American soldiers in military offensives against the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

Councilor Tulawie was set to present evidence such as affidavit and witnesses who would testify on the incident that happened on November 24, 2005. The congressional inquiry took place in the afternoon of February 3 at the Sulu State College gymnasium in Jolo. Anak Mindanao Partylist Representative Mujiv Hataman, a member of the committee, also attended the committee hearing.

US troops in Sulu

Cocoy Tulawie observed that in the minds of the people of Sulu the presence of American soldiers in Sulu has emboldened the Filipino soldiers deployed in Sulu to commit these more violations. They have become more daring. In the three reported incidents that took place in Sulu during the congressional inquiry, they were the prime suspects.

The inquiry arose from an unresolved issue about the participation of American soldiers in the military offensives last November 23-25, 2005 in Indanan, Sulu that concentrated on a community known to be one of the main camps of the Moro National Liberation Front. All military intelligence know, as all the people in Sulu know, that Sitio Marang in Brgy. Buansa, Indanan is the base camp of Khaid Ajibon, Sulu State Revolutionary Chairman of the MNLF. And yet they attacked that area twice on November 11 and November 23 on the pretext of finding Commander Putol, Radullan Sahiron of the Abu Sayyaf Group.

Residents of Brgy Buansa, including the wife of its chairman, went to Tulawie and told him about the presence of US soldiers in their community. They were seen stationed in Umul Qura, a sitio that connects Indanan from its *guimba* (mountain) Bud Tumantangis and is the place where the military set up its detachment and checkpoint. Facing the *guimba* are two military tanks stationed on the left side, with the military camp on the right.

Since their area is the gateway to Sitio Sindang, residents are afraid that the presence of US troops will trigger another war. Residents say they were curious about the kite-looking airplanes that the US troops were flying which has been a familiar sight for sometime now.

On November 24, evacuees temporarily settled at Bato-Bato Elementary School on the coastal side of Indanan, just below Sitio Sindang, saw four American soldiers got down from a military helicopter that landed in the school ground. They were dressed in seven

colors (camouflage) and were armed with a "double body" (M203 armalite).

They were later seen riding a military tank, a Semite as they described it, and was seen accompanying almost a hundred Filipino soldiers marching towards Sitio Sindang. A war has already started a day before; hence those who witnessed the presence of the American soldiers in Indanan that day knew that the US soldiers came to assist the Filipino troops in the war.

According to the Terms of Reference, a guideline issued by the US Asia Pacific Command for the Balikatan 02-1 in Basilan in year 2002, the US soldiers will not participate in the AFP combat operations, but they will conduct training at a company level. In the military, a hundred or more soldier is equivalent to one company.

Bud Daho, Never Again!

This incident recalls to mind the old wounds that never healed in Sulu. On March 6, 1906, in the mountains of Bud Daho, a clan fought the American soldiers headed by General Pershing. The people, including the women and children, armed themselves to drive away the invaders. Almost a thousand Tausugs,

“for an outsider like me, who has experienced all the horrors of war in my home province Maguindanao, I see Sulu as a battered place, whipped by foreign invaders, tyrant rulers and soldiers who seek promotion in the Armed Forces in the Philippines, in the hopes of breaking the will and spirit of its people.”

mostly women and children, were massacred by the American soldiers with bombs and heavy artillery. This is the infamous Bud Daho massacre, embedded in the collective memory of all Tausugs. The American government never issued an apology nor reparation for the massacre.

When President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo decided in year 2002 that Sulu would be the next venue for US-RP joint military exercises after Basilan, the Tausugs protested the coming of the US troops that prompted then Governor Jikiri to appeal to Malacanang to defer the Balikatan. In year 2005, current Sulu Governor Ben Loong welcomed freely the US troops in Sulu, allaying the fears of the people by telling them that their presence is confined to doing socio-civic work only.



The excursionists endure the muddy path towards the peak of Bud Dahu where over a thousand Tausugs were slain and buried for their refusal to succumb to the rules of the Americans.

FORGOTTEN ... from page 5

most Americans were concerned.


In the Moro Province, the US campaign of pacification ground on, lasting several more years. Other atrocities followed. In short order, the incident at Bud Dajo and soon thereafter the entire American encounter with the Moros slipped by other, bigger, less ambiguous wars.

With the United States engaged today in an ambitious effort to transform large swathes of the

Muslim world, the campaign against the Moros warns against the dangers of misreading the subjects of one's kindly intentions. Viewing the Moros as weak and malleable, Wood underestimated their determination and capacity to resist. This history also reminds us of how easily righteousness can kindle contempt. Wood's soldiers saw themselves as bearers of civilization; but when their exertions met with hostility rather than gratitude, they came to see the Moros as beyond saving and hence as disposable.

Above all, however, the results of the campaign to pacify the Moros suggest that pacifying Afghans or Iraqis or others in the Muslim world today will require extraordinary persistence. The Moros never did submit. A full century after Leonard Wood confidently predicted that "one clean-cut lesson" would bring the Moros to heel, their resistance to outside rule continues: the present day Moro

Islamic Liberation Front, classified by the Bush administration as an Al-Qaeda affiliate, carries on the fight for Moro independence.

For advocates of today's "long war," eager to confer on Muslims everywhere the blessings of freedom and democracy, while preserving the honor of the US military, the sheer doggedness of Moro resistance ought to give pause. 

Sleepless Kid in Jolo

By Anthony Tan

I wake up to the sounds of
guns
Bursting in the air
Tora-Toras flying by
Strafing here and there
Dropping their vintage bombs
On brothers down below
People run and hide
We gather our thoughts aside
In this chaotic place
Nobody has a face

Nobody has a future either
And when all the noises
wither
And all the smoke is gone
Silence makes us one
As brothers lie breathless
We are all sleepless
And silently we pray
And silently we weep
With our poor little souls
For Almighty Allah to keep.

Reprinted from www.bangsamoro.com

Message of Solidarity (with the Mindanao Peaceweavers (MPW)) from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on the Occasion of the Centenary Anniversary of the Bud Dahu Massacre

One hundred years ago today, on the same spot where we stand right now, American occupation forces massacred 1,600 Moro men, women, and children. It was complete rout, perhaps unparalleled in the entire war of expansion of the United States, including the Vietnam War, in terms of helplessness of the "enemy". The Moros were practically unarmed against the most powerful army on earth then – and also now. The savagery was so complete that many of those slain bore more than 60 bullet wounds in their bodies, the signature of hatred beyond human comprehension.

As we are gathered here today in this hallowed ground, the mass burial of those who chose to die rather than to bow down in shame even in the face of a formidable enemy. To commemorate the centennial anniversary of Bud Dahu massacre, we must think of them not as dead but living in the contemporary of their Lord. It is for us the living to ensure that justice and genuine closure to this massacre shall be finally given to the victims of this madness.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) perfectly agrees with the organizers of this "Journey of Peace" to Bud Dahu that this effort is "not to rekindle hatred" among the Tausugs, nay Bangsamoro people, against Americans who are now back in Sulu on what they claim a "humanitarian mission". But reliving the past by mere rhetoric or even a harsh trip to the crater of Bud Dahu is not enough. We are sure everybody, especially the organizers, does not have this in mind. Much more things concrete are desired.

Let us remember that it was the Americans, who were responsible for planting the seeds of the Problem in Mindanao, which turns this region into a "killing field" where more than 100,000 people have lost their lives already.

To paraphrase the words of the late MILF Chairman Salamat Hashim, the root of the problem in Mindanao is the "illegal and immoral annexation of Mindanao and Sulu" into the national territory of the Philippines. He said that had not the Americans annexed our homeland in the grant of Philippine independence in 1946, there would have been no "Moro Problem" as we know it today. Quite certainly, the turn of the event would be totally different; we will not be suffering from the crisis after crisis in this country like the one in Manila today, which is not of the liking or making of the Bangsamoro people.

In his letter to President George Bush in 2003, Salamat Hashim had asked the US Government to do its share of the burden of correcting the "historic injustice" committed against the Bangsamoro people that resulted in the loss of their homeland. The US government, aside from recognizing the legitimate grievances of the Bangsamoro people, responded by assuring the MILF that it is committed to extend "diplomatic and financial support" to renewed peace process between the MILF and the Philippine government.

The theme of this Peace Pilgrimage, "Healing Bud Dahu", is not only appropriate but it has far reaching significance. We could only approximate, but certainly we cannot ascertain the message contained therein. But suffice to state here that MILF wishes to assure all and sundry that the heroes of Bud Dahu – and all succeeding massacres, Bud Bagsak, Jabidah, Patikul, Lebak, Tacub, Manili, and elsewhere – will not be forgotten and the cause that they offered their lives will serve as our beacon light in moving forward our just struggle for freedom and right to self-determination. God willing! We will not rest until the Bangsamoro people shall have a rightful place in the family of nations with dignity.

Lastly, in the name of the Central Committee of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front under the leadership of Brother Al-Haj Murad Ebrahim we would like to express our gratitude for this opportunity to be part of the historic and sentimental revisit of the Massacre at Bud Dahu.

*[Note: Delivered by a member of the TWG of MILF Peace Panel during
the Solidarity Conference of the Bud Dahu Massacre Centennial
Commemoration in Jolo, Sulu on March 8, 2006.]*

the trouble and expense of electing "another Congress" or another House of Representatives" to draft a new constitution? That would be like electing a Con Ass.

The alternative is a well-fashioned Con Com which may be wholly appointive or a combination of elective and appointive delegates, as may be provided in the law calling for a Con Com. *The point is to have delegates suited to constitution-making* – something probably better achieved through a good appointment process rather than popular elections, undemocratic and elitist-sounding though this may seem. The appointments need not be at the sole discretion of the President and may instead be more ministerial on her/his part after a process of territorial and sectoral caucuses to nominate and/or (s)elect delegates. Aside from savings in election, personnel and operating expenses, a manageably-sized Co Com can also save time. The 48-member 1986 Con Com finished its work in about four-and-a-half months, compared to the 320-member 1971 Con Con which finished its work in one-and-a-half years.

sectoral representation. Territorial representation may be by province (one per province) rather than the usual congressional district. The former is a territorial and political subdivision, the latter is not. One advantage of the province as a local government unit is its having an existing provincial assembly in the provincial development council (PDC), which includes all component city and town mayors and also NGO representatives constituting not less than one-fourth of its total membership. The PDC might be mandated by the law calling for a Con Com to be the electoral college, as it were, for electing provincial representatives, and thus avoid the expenses and pitfalls of popular elections. Even better, territorial representation may be by region and similarly processed through the regional development councils – and this would have the advantage of pre-configuring a federal set-up.

As for sectoral representation, we can consider the sectors covered in the accepted operational definition of civil society: people's organization (especially of the basic sectors), NGOs, academe, religious institutions, business, media, political and social movements and

"...both a Con Ass and a Con Con are objectionable in that they would be dominated by traditional politicians like the current composition of Congress."

We can look at the relevant experiences of not only the Philippines but also other countries. One particularly good contemporary example, both in terms of process and outcome, is Thailand's 1997 Constitution Drafting Assembly (CDA) which arose out of a strongly felt need for political reform. The CDA was composed of 99 members, with 76 provincial representatives (one per province) and 23 eminent academics. The provincial representatives were chosen through a two-stage process of initial election among candidates in the province, and then final selection by the Parliament. The eminent academics were nominated by universities from fields of Law, Political Science and Public Administration and then also finally selected by the Parliament. To make the long story short, the CDA produced what is considered in Thailand as the "People's Constitution" with three new constitutional safeguards for the Thai people: increase in their rights, liberties and participation in national administration; increase of their rights to inspect the state's power; and making the state's power more legitimate, stable and efficient. One lesson here is that the *quality of a constitution is a function of the quality of its drafting assembly*.

If we were to fashion a Con Com, a major consideration would be having at least territorial and

parties. Sectoral delegates might be determined through a process of caucuses among representatives of the organizations per sector. The sectors concerned include the labor, peasant, fisherfolk, urban poor, indigenous cultural communities, elderly, handicapped, women, youth, veterans, overseas workers, professionals and other marginalized and underrepresented sectors. Some sectors (and for that matter regions) may be represented by party-list groups. Political parties may or may not be represented on the basis of their strength (seats) in Congress. Political and social movements could even include rebel groups, especially those with constitutional reforms in the agenda of their respective peace processes. This kind of inclusion could mirror or pre-figure a government of national unity which everyone (not only De Venecia) seems to espouse.

It would be ideal if the process of constitution-making and the peace process agenda of constitutional reforms could dove-tail. Whether or not the concerned rebel groups are represented in a Con Com, the outcome of their peace negotiations, especially on constitutional reforms, should be brought into the draft of a new constitution so that we may come full circle in the ironic sense that those who (would) make revolution instead (or also) become part of making a new constitution in a non-revolutionary but crisis situation. **END**

Bangsamoro rallies against Pagao abduction

Prior to the abduction of Ustadz Abdulgani Pagao on January 17, 2006 at Crossing Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao by the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) with the participation of a certain US Liaison Officer, several Bangsamoro religious leaders had been abducted while some are in hiding due to fear of abduction or harassment.

Ustadz Abdulgani Esmail Pagao is a graduate of Islamic Theology Call College in Tripoli, Libya in 1990. Later, he became a missionary of Islam to propagate Islam as a way of life. He had been teaching in various Madaris [Arabic schools] in Mindanao and once a head of Al-Ihsan Foundation, a Muslim charitable institution based in Cotabato City. With his credentials and credibility, he is known to many and admired by the Bangsamoro both as a fearless, tireless and dedicated preacher and propagator of peace.

With Ustadz Pagao's abduction, the Bangsamoro reacted sharply as it had bled their hearts. With the

Ulama group as spearheader, a United Bangsamoro Action to Free Ustadz Pagao was organized and held a big march rally at the Cotabato City plaza on January 30, 2006. It was participated in by an estimated crowd of 50,000 rallyists. In the manifesto and statement of support released, they vehemently condemned the abduction of Ustadz Pagao and strongly demanded for his immediate and unconditional release including all other Moro political detainees who had been in jails for several years. They also seek justice for all the Bangsamoro victims of Human Rights violations and the Bangsamoro.

In solidarity with the Ulama groups, the Moro civil society organizations with the leadership of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) had joined the rally and call for the end of harassments and political repressions perpetrated against the Bangsamoro Religious Leaders. They viewed the abduction of Ustadz Pagao as part of the Anti-Global Terrorism Campaign by the United States as well as State Terrorism inflicted by the Arroyo government. After the speech of Ustadz Pagao's wife, they pledged to remain vigilant to protect their ulama whom they considered guardian of their well-being. As manifestation of their concern for Ustadz Pagao, a monetary contribution devoured from them in support of Ustadz Pagao's family.

Aside from the live coverage from the radio station RMN-DXMY in Cotabato City, the rally was culminated by a press conference to project the issue before the media. Among those present were the ABS-CBN, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Mindanao Cross, Mindanao Express and Ang Periodiko ng Bayan.

The rally was managed by the steering committee headed by Sheikh Jaafar Ali and seven working committees with multi-sectoral compositions. **SPN**



An estimate of 50,000 Bangsamoro coming from the city and its neighboring towns show sympathy for the family of the abducted religious leader and for the Bangsamoro in general.

Call for the immediate release of Ustadz Abdulgani Pagao

We, the Ulama and Mufti of Muslim Philippines, now gathered in the ULAMA FORUM FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY organized by the PHILIPPINE COUNCIL FOR ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY condemn the tragic and unfounded abduction and continuing illegal detention of Ustadz Abdulgani Pagao, who was unlawfully taken on his way to the wedding of his daughter last January 2006 and who is now being illegally detained in Camp Crame.

Ustadz Pagao is a religious teacher and a well-respected leader of his community. The accusation raised against him is both unfounded and baseless. The complete absence of procedural and substantive due process in his arrest and in the accusation raised against him has both violated his

fundamental human and constitutional rights that are enshrined and protected not only in the Philippine Constitution but also in the International Declaration of Human Rights and other International Conventions.

We therefore demand, in the name of the required respect for freedom and liberty and in consonance with law and justice, the immediate release and compensation of Ustadz Pagao. While Ustadz Pagao is given his liberty, and while his case is being litigated in Court, whenever and if ever his presence will be required, the Ulama gathered in this FORUM assure authorities that they will facilitate the appearance of Ustadz Pagao.

Done at Linden Suites, Ortigas Center, Pasig City, February 8, 2006.

CBCS holds its 1st Leaders' General Summing-Up

The First 3-Day CBCS Leaders Summing-Up was held at the Farmland, Isabela City, Basilan on January 17 to 19, 2006.

As per designed, the primary purpose of the general summing-up is to synthesize and consolidate the 3 years accomplishments of CBCS and relate them to its vision, mission and goals which will be attended by the 15 Members of the Council of Leaders, 3 Executive Officers per regional management committee and the 6 staff of the CBCS Head Secretariat. While the participants from Regional Management Committee and the CBCS Head Secretariat are all in attendance in the actual summing-up, only 9 Council Members were presents while the other six (6) had begged-off due emergency appointments. The main highlights of the 3-day general summing-up are the CBCS year-end report rendered by Secretary-General Musa "Mowkong" Sanguila, the program report of CBCS Coordinator Sammy P. Maulana and the reports of the 7 CBCS-RMC Chairmen. Included also in the discussion are the updates of the on-going GRP-MILF, the prospect for ARMM good governance with the new set officials and the challenges and opportunities of the civil society organizations to engage active role in the face of national and global development. This was culminated by a series of workshop to assess and analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to the CBCS situation. Included also for discussion are the 4



During the opening rites of the Summing-up, Vice-Chair for External Affairs Nathan Insung said that it is timely to look back at what the CBCS has done so far to make up for the weaknesses and to sustain the strengths on the next year of operation.



In his speech, Basilan Vice-Governor Sakkalahul commends the CBCS and its members for the endeavors exerted to advance the welfare of the Bangsamoro as he said not much of the existing organizations put their hearts on this matter.



In one of the workshops, the CBCS leaders were divided into groups to discuss the strong and weak points of the region and of the Head Secretariat.

drafted resolutions setting the standard job description and qualification of Program Specialists, CBCS Council members, CBCS network-members and the conceptual

and theoretical frameworks of the CBCS programs on human rights, peace building and good governance.

As per updated, the GRP-MILF Peace Talks is gaining a ground. Although unilaterally declared, the document leaked by the GRP peace panel reflects some of the basic agreements forged by the GRP-MILF peace panel. Part of the contentious issues which had been resolved are related to security, rehabilitation and nationality. What left at hand to be resolved are the issues on ancestral domain and the system of governance.

There are 3 perceptions on ARMM. Considering its structure and policy, it cannot deliver its mandate as it

KUTAWATO

KRMC completes all its major projects

The CBCS Kutawato Regional Management Committee (KRMC) had implemented its projects on human rights, peacebuilding and good governance following the release of its allotted budget for the year 2005.

Among the activities undertaken were:

A. Basic News Writing and Documentation

It was a 3-day training which was conducted in an aim to develop the knowledge and skills of the heads of the network-members in news writing and documentation. This was attended by some 25 participants.

The training is deemed necessary for these leaders for a more effective and systematic documentation of important events and incidents happened in the region.

B. Gender Sensitivity Orientation

An orientation on Gender Sensitivity was conducted to deepen the knowledge and awareness of the leaders of network-members on gender issue in Islam and gender issue in development. This was attended by some 28 participants. This corrected the notion and understanding on the roles of men and women in the society as not equal but rather equitable.

C. Forum on GRP-MILF Peace Talks

This 1-day forum was held to provide updates on the current status of the GRP-MILF Peace Talks and know the pulse of the civil society in relation to the issue. About 30 leaders and representatives of CBCS network-members attended the activity. An information drive regarding the present status of the GRP-MILF Peace Talks was then conducted at the community level.

D. Participation in ARMM Elections

The Kutawato RMC had joined the CBCS Head Secretariat in the voters' education to raise people's awareness about the ARMM and their right to suffrage and the responsibilities of their leaders. This was attended by 75 leaders and representatives of the CBCS regional network-members.

Although the election did not turn out as honest, more voters went to the polling precincts to cast their votes compared to the previous elections.

E. Commemoration of International Human Rights Day

The Regional Management Committee of Kutawato had joined the CBCS Head Secretariat to participate in the commemoration of the International Human Rights Day and assumed major roles in some preliminary activities in coordination with some other participating organizations in the area.

This was culminated by a march rally held at the Cotabato City Plaza which the RMC mobilized 300 members from the different network-members to join the 3000 commemorators.

Trainors' Training on Humanitarian Protection

Recognizing the necessity for the leaders of the network-members to be more effective in addressing the issues and problems affecting the internally displaced persons (IDP), the three-day training on humanitarian protection was conducted.

F. Seminar-Workshop on Good Governance and Islamic Leadership

A 3-day seminar-workshop on Good Governance and Islamic Leadership was conducted to acquaint the heads or leaders of the network-members in the region in the concept and meaning of good governance both in Islamic and secular perspectives. This was attended by some 25 participants.

The 3-day seminar-workshop was deemed necessary to have a correct understanding on good governance and people's participation in the sphere of decision-making and implementation aspect **END**

CSOs in Sulu undergo seminar-workshop on Islamic Perspectives of Leadership

Some civil society leaders and local government representatives from Sulu were in attendance during the two-day seminar-workshop on Leadership conducted by the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) Sulu Regional Management Committee. The activity was held at the Municipal Hall of Jolo, Sulu on December 24 to 25, 2005.

The seminar-workshop was carried out with an intention of improving the skills of the peace volunteers on community-based organization management. Also tackled were the principle of leadership on Islamic perspective and the conduct of parliamentary procedure.

Three resource persons were commissioned to discuss on three topics. Dr. Hannibal Bara lectured on

Organization and Management on Islamic Perspective. An open forum ensued. Second lecturer was Dr. Sahie Udjah who gave details on the Principle of Leadership in Islamic Perspective. Here, the participants were given the chance to interact during the workshop. The last topic was Basic Parliamentary Procedure where the lecturer, Prof. Adzfar Usman made the participants team-up in a role-playing after he gave an input.

At the end of the seminar, the participants were able to understand and appreciate the nature and true meaning of leadership.

CBCS Sulu heads gender sensitivity orientation

The CBCS Sulu RMC held its Gender Sensitivity Orientation (GSO) on October 29, 2005 at the Sulu Islamic Library in Jolo, Sulu following the conduct of the two-day seminar workshop on documentation held last October 12.

At least 175 youth and representatives from CBCS Sulu network-members, both men and women, attended the said orientation.

The GSO was aimed at making it clear to everyone that the role of men and women in the society must be equitable and that none of them is superior over the other.

"Men and women does not necessarily be equal, rather their roles must be viewed with in the context of complementation and supplementation as partner in accordance with their respective knowledge, skills and capabilities," emphasized the Resource Person Ustadz Jackaria Alhari.

Further, gender was discussed both as an issue in development as well as a development issue.



The participants to the Gender Sensitivity Orientation were enlightened about the complementing roles of men and women in nation-building.

In the end, the participants were also able to realize that gender sensitivity is not only a "women's issue". Contrary to the common notion gender sensitivity means putting the women on a higher footing than the men, gender sensitivity denotes the impartiality between and among men and women.

SIBUGAY

Sibugay RMC conducts Good Governance, Advocacy workshops

Good Governance is a right for citizens. But the reality is, with the awful state of governance today, it is clear, this right is not served by those in power. Citizens have to struggle for good governance to get it.

What is good governance and how can this be realized? This was among the essential awareness learned during the two-day workshop given by Sibugay Regional Management Committee (RMC) of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) to some 30 heads and leaders of CBCS network member-organizations on December 24-25, 2005 at Springland Resort in Pagadian City.

Sammy Maulana, CBCS program coordinator, and Edgar Baling, a specialist from the Alliance for Mindanao Off-Grid Renewable Energy Program (AMORE) took turns in portraying the present situation of the Bangsamoro and the challenges they are facing in relation to governance. Aside from

defining good governance, they expounded on the basic and key elements that make for "good" governance such as: accountability, transparency, participation and predictability of government. The aspects and facets of leadership for good governance were also dealt with in depth, in comparison with Islamic insights and values of leadership.

For his part, Ummah Fi Salam executive Director Maguid Maruhom sought to explain the importance of advocacy for good governance by first defining what is citizenship, their rights and responsibilities as well as the changing meaning of democracy including its concept and essential forms, in workshop and sharing sessions.

He also dealt with the broader understanding of the dynamics of politics and power and introduced some important ideas on the development of people's empowering strategies. The meaning and purpose of citizen base and people-centered advocacy for change including its processes and strategies had been easily appreciated by the participants after understanding the different aspects and factors that affect advocacy. **(Ferrer Marcaban)**

UFS commences Human Rights Education

Ummah Fi Salam (UFS) launches its more intensive Human Rights Education Program for 10 municipalities in Zamboanga del Sur including Pagadian City through organizing and media campaign which started on November 2005.

This project is considered essential part of UFS mission for its vision of peace and development. Muslims in Zamboanga del Sur is one of the minority groups, consisting only of about 15 percent of the population and is faced with different kinds of human rights violations. Discrimination and the lack of awareness among the Muslims on human rights are blamed as the leading factors that spawn human rights violations for them.

Illegal searches and arrests, disappearances and torture, abuse of children's rights, insufficient legal assistance and summary executions are among the important problems affecting the Moro in Zamboanga del Sur. Only two years ago, several Ulama's were reported to have been murdered for their political belief. Lots of illegal searches and arrests were also committed against innocent Muslim civilians during the height of the bombing incidents in Mindanao last year.

With the continuing insurgency problems, rising criminality, and the anticipated passage of the Anti-Terrorism Bill, Moro civil society groups fear that more Human Rights violations will be committed against the Muslims. Educating the people and organizing them to stand and advocate for their rights are seen as the only effective responses to this problem.

UFS have tapped the services of its committed members led by Ferrer Marcaban to implement this project. **(Maguid Maruhom) END**



The participants to the seminar-workshops on Peacebuilding, Good Governance, Human Rights and Gender sensitivity paid much attention to the inputs believing fully that their learning from these undertakings are of significance to their regional programs and to the struggle of the Bangsamoro.

Dabaw RMC implements Human Rights, Good Governance, Gender Sensitivity seminars

Shortly after the release of its fund allocation for 2005, the recently formed Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) Dabaw Regional Management Committee (RMC) packaged in a three-day-activity the seminar-workshops for Human Rights Advocacy, Good Governance and Gender Sensitivity Orientation. It was held at the Alano Regional Training Center in Toril, Davao City on December 22-24, 2005.

The seminar-workshop on Human Rights Advocacy transpired on the first day where the participants were convinced that all cases involving the Moro is to be among the prime concern of their respective organizations.

The Local Government Code and the Role of CSOs were tackled on the second day of the activity. Here, the resource person emphasized that the CSOs must engage with their respective local governments through the local special bodies to have a fair opportunity to advance the issues and the interest of the common majority. This will deter other local government officials who take advantage of their position to pursue their self-interest.


It was further stressed that peace process does not only come in the form of peace talks, but also by

development works hence the need for engagement with the government is necessary. However, this engagement must be a critical and constructive collaboration and not just a symbolic involvement.

Gender sensitivity orientation ensued on the third day of the activity.

The resource person, Sammy Buat, tried to hook up the topic with the more general topic of peace. The discussion rolled down to the identification of the issues concerning women and how this sector is perceived in the society.

During the open forum, the participants pointed out that these days, women are not being treated as equals to the men. But the resource person was quick enough to made it clear that gender sensitivity is not about equality, but rather it concentrates on how the roles of women and men complement.

Subsequently, the CBCS Dabaw RMC gathered and had drawn their plan of activities for the 2006 operation. 

Ranaw

Ranaw conducts its key activities

With the aggregates of 30 CBCS network-member, the region was formed on May 15, 2005. From the original rolls of 25 members, it was increased to 31 to include the civil society organizations from Lanao del Sur.

Shortly after the release of its funding allocation, the CBCS Ranaw RMC had undertaken the following key activities:

1. Basic Orientation on Human Rights / Para-Legal Training

This three-day training was intended to raise the awareness of the participants on the general principles of human rights and some international declarations and protocols on human rights. This also includes the basic orientation on para-legal works.

Its conduct is deemed imperative to enable the heads or leaders of the network-members to be more effective in the pursuit of human rights and para-legal undertakings in their area. As an outcome, various cases of human rights violations were systematically documented and which were then used for human rights advocacy.

2. Peace Building and Conflict Management seminar

Some 30 participants attended in the 3-day seminar workshop on peace building which was conducted to develop the knowledge and capability of the heads or leaders of the network-member in peace building and conflict management.

The objective of this undertaking is to hone the leaders of the network-members in mediating and arbitration in the settling of conflicts. The seminar also provided the participants with adequate knowledge in peace-making and peace-keeping.

Inengka (Care for Peace) was formed at the end of the seminar to serve as local peace body to monitor RP-MILF Peace Talks

in their province and to document other related human rights violations.

3. Good Governance and Responsible Leadership

This has deepened the understanding of the heads or leaders of the network-members on in the concept and meaning of good governance and responsible leadership. The 3-day seminar-workshop is meant to identify the level of engagement to be made with the government, other civil society groupings and non state actors based principled partnership, constructive cooperation and critical collaboration. After the 3-day seminar-workshop, the leaders of the network-members had started their own engagement undertakings.

4. Gender Sensitivity Orientation

This training was conducted to correct the understanding on gender issue both in Islam and development. It also includes the understanding of the roles of men and women in society or nation-building. This was attended by some 35 participants composed of men, women and youth.

5. Celebration of the Mindanao Week of Peace

The Ranaw RMC had joined the sectoral organizations in the celebration of the Mindanao Week of Peace and assumed some key posts in the different working committees.

The participation in the celebration of the Mindanao Week of Peace showed unity and solidarity with other people in the quest for a just and lasting peace in Mindanao.

6. Commemoration of Human Rights

The Ranaw RMC joined the sectoral organizations in the commemoration of International Human Rights Day. It also assumed key post in the different working committees and mobilized some 200 members of the network to join in the rally.

The participation in the International Commemoration of human Rights is deemed imperative to advocate the Bangsamoro aspiration for the Right to Self-Determination (RSD). **END**

Zambas accomplishes major programs

Following its formation on the 24th of May 2005 and increasing the number of its members from 23 to 28, the Zamboanga-Basilan Regional Management Committee (ZamBas RMC) had undertaken its major activities.

An action plan to undertake human rights advocacy and para-legal works in the region had been adopted by the leaders of the ZamBas network-members who were the participants of the three-day orientation on Human Rights and Para-legal training.

A seminar-workshop on Good Governance and Responsible Leadership was conducted to equip the participants with correct understanding on the meaning and concept of good governance both in the context of Islam and secular perspectives. This was participated in by some 28 heads or leaders of the network members in the region.

The conduct of the seminar-workshop on Good Governance and Responsible Leadership is deemed

imperative to enable the participants to more effective in advocacy undertaking for good governance and identify their level of engagement with the government, other civil society groupings and the non-state state actors.

At the end of the seminar-workshop, an action plan for an engagement with the government based on principled partnership, constructive cooperation and critical collaboration was also adopted.

Lastly, a one-day orientation on gender sensitivity was conducted to correct the notion that women are subordinates to men and that they should be treated equal. Rather, their roles must be viewed in the context of Islam. The participants are expected to re-echo their learning to their respective members. **END**

Rajah Buayan

CBCS forms Rajah Buayan RMC

With the aggregates of 26 CBCS network-members, the Rajah Buayan region was formed on December 10, 2005. Upon formation, the region was not yet able to expand its membership but had however undertaken its major activities.

1. Peace Forum

This one-day activity was conducted to study and analyze the culture of peace in Mindanao. The conduct of this forum is imperative to enable the participants have a correct understanding of the perspectives of the tri-people of Mindanao as part of their peace advocacy.

The participants had then resolved to conduct a 3-day seminar-workshop on Peace Building and Conflict Management and to form a local peace body to pursue peace making, peace keeping and conflict resolution.

2. Federal Consultation

This was conducted to provide the participants with accurate knowledge about federal system of governance and its applicability in the Bangsamoro governance as this enable the participants include federal system as

part of their advocacy on good governance. At the end, the participants had resolved to conduct a seminar-workshop on Federalism.

3. Policy Advocacy on Human Rights

The objective of the training was to build the awareness of the participants on the general principles of human rights and other international human rights declaration and protocols

4. Fact-Finding Mission

This was a one-day activity. It was held to study and analyze the real cause of the armed-confrontations between the AFP and MILF in Palimbang and document the human rights violations committed and the extent of damage to the lives and properties. Here, the CBCS was able to understand the real cause of the armed-confrontation. This was done as part of their unconditional support to the GRP-MILF Peace Talks. **END**

A Rehabilitation Program for the Families of Philippine Desaparecidos

By Edwin T. Decenteceo

A disappearance victimizes the entire family. It is not only that a spouse, a parent, a sibling, or son or daughter disappears. An entire family is torn apart. Each surviving member of the family suffers from the trauma of the sudden loss. But on top of this, their relationships with each other break down. The first is a saddening but not surprising effect of a disappearance. The second is chilling, particularly among a people who value family ties more than individual identity.

There are seven reasons for the breakdown of the family of the disappeared. The first is the impact of the trauma of the disappearance. It is so strong that it depletes the individual family member's capacity to deal with the trauma of the other members of the family. Each individual member is afraid that the others will be overwhelmed by his or her reactions or that he or she will be overwhelmed by the emotional reactions of the others. It is so unique an experience that each individual member feels that his or her suffering cannot be understood by the others. As a result, each individual withdraws inwardly instead of seeking help from the family.

Secondly, the very nature of a disappearance allows no clear answer to the question: Is he still alive? Even when days have turned into weeks, weeks into months and months into years, it is hard to arbitrarily declare that the individual is dead or alive. To declare him dead is too painful and disloyal. To declare that he is still alive emphasizes the emptiness of living without him. But for as long as this question is unanswered the family has a difficult time making the adjustments that are necessary to survive without him.

Thirdly, there are individual reasons. The surviving spouse or parent must fulfill the roles now emptied by the enforced disappearance. One major role is that of wage earner. But since almost all of the families of the disappeared come from the poor, it means that the remaining parent must make the painful choice to neglect her other roles. The major role that is neglected is that of nurturer and family anchor. In families that live a hand-to-mouth existence (their own phrase is "one day - one eat") physical sustenance takes precedence

over emotional sustenance.

First-born children have problems unique to their position as eldest children. The culture dictates that they take on the role of the missing parent. Or if their mother fills in for the missing parent, they must take over their mother's roles. None, however, are ready. First, they are still young. Most were in their pre-teens when the disappearance occurred. Secondly, the disappearance occurs without warning, giving no one a chance to prepare for the adjustments. Moreover, most would rather continue with their schooling, at least until they finish high school. They know that by that time their chances of getting job are better, although these days their chances of continuing in school are poorer because



When either of the parents are absent, the family is the direct victim and that one of the children has to take on the part of the absent parent thus taking away from them the opportunity to enjoy their youth.

there is less money.

The mothers, too, have their difficulties. They are lonely. They are unable to rest when they come home from work because they must deal with their children. The money they earn is not enough. As a result, they may look for or enter relationships with other men. With usually negative effects, mostly on their children.

See **FIND**...Page 26

[Note: Lifted from **Children - War and Prosecution**, a compilation of the proceedings during the international congress "Children - War and Prosecution" held on September 1993 organized by the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry of the Hamburg University Clinic.]

SAKAPA thrives in advancing *Indigenous People's welfare*

The members of the Samahang ng mga Katutubo sa Pandan (SAKAPA) who have undergone the Stiftung fuer Kinder - funded Organic Diversified Integrated Farming System (ODIFS) in Davao City last year each have adopted their respective model - farm which eventually served as their coping mechanism to the economic crisis that the community has been facing for years now.

Ariel de Asis, who once did a research for the Stiftung fuer Kinder in Barangay Pandan where the SAKAPA is based, informed the *Bangsamoro Journal* that at present the farmer-members of SAKAPA consider venturing into vegetable gardening. To recall, the

adoption of strategies to sustainable agriculture was given weight during the ODIFS training. Thus, their eagerness to take on further attempts to give their income a lift thru having a supplementary enterprise. Further, de Asis learned from SAKAPA Chairman Dulay Suenan that the members aspire to be as successful, if not more, as that of the farmers to which they had the chance to visit during their excursion following their ODIFS training. What motivate them more is the thought that the SAKAPA has gone as far as being looked up by the community as a body that brought about change on outlook in life of the Indigenous People.

Moreover, stationary health workers were assigned in the SAKAPA pre-school, which has been producing good graduates for about 6 years now, to check on the pupils every so often. Pleased by this deed are the parents of the pupils and the SAKAPA as they are self-assured of their children's physical condition will not be intermittent to their learning process.

The SAKAPA is serving as the facilitating or linking entity of the community to the outside community. Evidently, SAKAPA has influenced the




Ekkehard Arnsperger (extreme left), Director of Stiftung Fuer Kinder (SFK), a Germany-based Foundation working for the welfare of children in the world and his staff getting hints from the Chairman of the MILF Peace Panel Mohager Igbal on the status of the on-going peace talks.

social development of the community in Pandan, South Upi in the province of Maguindanao. It is also plays part in the policy-making in the Barangay level.

In terms of alliance-building, the SAKAPA, having a legal personality had linked with, among other bodies, the Magsasaka at Siyentipiko Para sa Pag-unlad ng Agrikultura (MASIPAG) which is a congregation of farmers and scientists setting sights on the advancement of agriculture. These links are growing and has provided the SAKAPA and its members a wider horizon.

SAKAPA also understands that in order to have a sustainable living, the poverty must be viewed not merely on its superficial aspect but on a deeper side. This entails strengthening the promotion of the right to self-determination of the Indigenous Peoples and address the impact of globalization in their respective lives.

In turn, it is the young generation of the Indigenous Peoples who will benefit from the fruits of these undertakings parallel to the Stiftung fuer Kinder's vision of having the children in poor countries experience life that is experienced by those in the First World. 



The entire Bangsamoro hopes that the MILF learns from the experience of the MNLF. Seen here is the Amirul Mujahidin Hashim Salamat (left) and MNLF Chair Nur Misuari (Right).

THE GRP-MILF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS: 1997-2004

(Part 2 of 3)

The GRP-MILF Formal Peace Talks:

On 25th October 1999, the opening ceremony of the GRP-MILF Peace Talks was held at Da'wah Center, Simuay, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao as agreed in the previous agreements. Foreign dignitaries were invited to witness the ceremony wherein many had come. After the ceremony, the two panels issued a joint press statement namely, Joint Press Statement Formal Opening of Peace Talks. Therein, both panels' chairmen express their acknowledgment of key personalities and institutions in the peace talks. The Chairmen also announced the optimism and renewed hope from both sides for the attainment of a just and lasting peace in Mindanao.

In preparation for the next round of talk, the two panels forged an "Agreement on the Rules and Procedures on

the Conduct of the formal Peace Talks between the GRP and MILF Panels" on 17 December at Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao. The document outlines the guidelines for the conduct of the Formal GRP-MILF Peace Talks as follows: 1) the composition of the panels, 2) guiding principles and mandate, 3) details as regards the formal peace negotiations proper, e.g. agenda, venue, schedule, presiding officers, other participants, procedure, format and meeting flow; 4) agreements on media coverage; and 5) general provisions covering clause on confidentiality, safety, and security matters, etc. the following day, the two panels issued joint statement, which contains among others, reiteration of the commitment of both panels to attain peace and harmony in Mindanao.

With the escalation of heavy fighting between the GRP and MILF forces along the national highway from Cotabato

City to Isulan, Sultan Kudarat Province, the two panels had convened an urgent meeting at Provincial Capitol of Maguindanao on 12 January 2000. They signed an agreement that contains: 1) stop the fighting by 1800H of 12 January 2000; 2) restore the existing situation Ante Bellum as of 1st December 1999 effective 0600H OF 13 January 1999, and 3) strengthen organizational capabilities of the CCCHs and the IFFC. In line with these, the CCCHs have been tasked to investigate said incidents not later than 14 January 2000 and include in their investigation the reported tension along the highway in Lanao Del Sur. The same day, the two panels also issued a joint communiqué, which includes a report on the highlights of the First Round of Talks to be held on 19-20 January 2000 at Da'wah Center. In particular, the following are mentioned: 1) tasking of Technical Committees to cluster the approved nine (9) talking points of the formal talks agenda; 2) presentation of MILF drafts on Security and Immunity Guarantees and a Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect of Human Rights and Humanitarian Laws; and 3) hastening the implementation of the 2nd September 1999 and 12th January 2000 Agreements.

With the conclusion of the GRP and MILF 20th Technical Committee Meeting held on 14-15 February 2000 at the Estosan Garden Hotel, Cotabato City. Brosas and Bajunaid, acting Chairpersons of GRP and MILF Technical Committee, respectively, issued a joint press statement. This document is a report on the highlight of the above-mentioned two-day meeting. It features: 1) welcoming of the new GRP Panel Chairman, Lt. Gen. Edgardo Batenga, Jr. 2) MILF Committee on Information Chairman, Mohagher Iqbal reiterating the sincerity and commitment of the MILF to the negotiations; and 3) agreements to (a) task the QRT, IFFC and CCCHs to look into reported incidents in identified areas in North Cotabato and Maguindanao, (b) cluster the agenda of the formal peace talk into six (6) aggrupations and the creation of technical working groups (TWG); (c) elevation to panels of MILF-proposed drafts on immunity and security arrangements as well as the comprehensive agreements on human rights and humanitarian laws, and (d) the proposed agenda for the next round of Formal Peace Talk.

Due to the continued hostilities on the ground, the 21-22 February 2000 Peace Talks, as scheduled, was postponed. However, both panels agreed to hold an "Informal Meeting" in Cagayan de Oro City on 22-23 February 2000. In their joint communiqué, Gen. Batenga and Mimbantas, Chairmen of the GRP and MILF Peace Panels, respectively, have reaffirmed their sincerity in pursuing the peace talks to end the armed conflict in Mindanao. Points of agreement are as follows: 1) to start talks on the substantive issues soon; 2) to resolutely continue in identified areas effective 28 February 2000 in accordance with the AGCH; 3) CCCHs to be more effective in the AGCH implementation by giving more effort

and strengthening its organizational capabilities; 4) to resume the 2nd Round of Talks on 1-2 March 2000 at Estosan Garden Hotel, Cotabato City; and 5) to give meaning and impetus to the 6 October 1999 Agreement.

On 2 March 2000, the GRP and MILF panels held the 2nd Round of Formal Peace Talks at Estosan Hotel in Cotabato. The heads of the peace panels signed a joint communiqué, which served as a report on the highlights of the said talks. It notes the reports of the QRT, IFFC, and CCCHs on the skirmishes in identified areas, and status of implementation of the 2 September 1999 and 12 January 2000 agreements. Points of agreements are: 1) the adoption of the nine (9) Agenda items submitted by the MILF and its clustered (6) aggrupations; 2) for the Technical Committees of both sides to discuss, for submission to the peace panels, the issues on proposed modification of Technical Working Group (TWG) headings of TWG doable, and MILF proposed Immunity and Security Guarantee, and Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Laws (CARHRIHL); and 3) to meet again on March 6-7, 2000 for the 21st Technical committee Meeting, and on March 8-9, 2000 for the 3rd Round of Peace Talks.

As agreed upon during the previous 2nd Round Formal Talk, the 21st GRP-MILF Technical Committee Meeting was held on 6-7th March 2000 at Estosan Garden Hotel, Cotabato City. The two parties signed a document named, "Highlights of the 21st GRP-MILF Technical Committee Meeting". The document features the following points of agreements: 1) immediate organization of respective six (6) Agenda items; 2) holding of a joint meeting of TWG that shall prepare position papers on the nine (9) specific procedures and a time table in accomplishing its task; 3) inclusion of discussions on the MILF proposed Agreement on Safety and Security Guarantees (SSGA) and Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Laws (CARHRIHL) in the agenda for the 3rd Round of Formal Talks; and 4) on the attendance of CCCH/IFF/QRT members during the Formal Talks proper.

The 3rd Round of Formal Peace Talks was held on 9 March 2000, as scheduled in the last Technical Committee Meeting, at Estosan Garden Hotel, Cotabato City. The signed joint communiqué features the points of agreements which were agreed upon by the two parties, such as: 1) adoption of the Highlights of the 21st Technical Committee Meeting; 2) signing of Resolution No. 1 Series of 2000; the organizing specific tasks, and schedule of meetings of the TWG; 3) signing of the agreement on Security and Safety Guarantees; 4) for GRP to submit a counter proposal on CARHRIHL during the 4th Round of Formal Peace Talks on May 2, 2000; 5) approval of Recommendation No. 4 of the CCCHs/IFFS/QRT joint Resolution No. 01 Series of 2000 dated 2 March 2000

"Never walk in front of me for I may not be able to follow. Never walk at my back for I may not be able to guide you. Instead, walk beside me and let's struggle together."


A QUEST FOR A GENUINE AND
MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIP.

MARTIAL LAW ... from page 37

influence on what policies our government shall adopt both at the domestic and foreign affairs. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank also continue to dictate what project to be implemented and impose the terms and conditions to cater to their interests. Ironically, this includes the conduct of peace negotiation with the revolutionary forces and ominously, the U.S. influence is most decisive factor to "make or unmake a reigning government.

Unfortunately, the U.S. political and military intervention in the Philippines is in fact had been harmful to the immediate and long-term national interest. We can blame this to our colonial mentality and political dynasty of the elite-based politicians that had ruled our country after the establishment of our republic. They never questioned, much less resisted, U.S. interference. Instead, they allowed themselves to be subservient to advance their personal aggrandizement.

We remember as we paid tribute to both the known and unknown martyrs in the struggle against dictatorship who fought through the legal venues and those who opted to take up arms to counter state terrorism that have been wreaking havoc in the lives of the people, especially those at the countryside. We also remember and pay tribute to the scores of courageous men and women who had been summarily executed and those victims of involuntary disappearance.


This gives us a more compelling reason to reaffirm our basic principles to serve the people and unite with them to build a just, free and sovereign society that will free them from the clutch of oppression and exploitation. The realization of this will ultimately restore their honor and dignity and enable them to live decently and humanely with prosperity and peace and harmonious relation with their environment. 

JUSTICE ...from page 32

became a party to the case. It claimed since the Marcos estate constituted-gotten wealth, the state through the government had the right to these assets.


Though the Philippine government was duty-bound to uphold the rights of the victims and their families, including the right to compensation or indemnification, restitution and rehabilitation, it had other ideas in mind.

Both Pres. Ramos and Pres. Estrada government tried to strike up a bargain with the Marcos family to facilitate the release and division of the loot among themselves in exchange for compromising the martial law victims. Similar agreements were entered into by the victims American Lawyer Robert Swift. It was only SELDA through the vigilance of the members that averted the dissipation of the recovered assets and their eventual return the Marcoses.

The situation called upon us to fortify our struggle for social change and embolden our desire for justice with a strength drawn for the peoples aspiration for a just free and sovereign society where the people with dignity, honor and prosperity and in harmony with its environment. 

See LEADERS' ...page 37

was limited by the law which had created it. Some said it fails to function effectively is due to the inability of its leaders to perform their duties and responsibilities while others viewed it as an added problem and burden to the Bangsamoro. With these schools of thought, the prospect for good governance in ARMM with its new set of officials is dim. However, this will greatly depend on how the new ARMM official will function. In challenges and opportunities, most of the CBCS leaders look at GRP-MILF peace talks and the new ARMM government as fertile ground for engagement for principled partnership, constructive cooperation and critical collaboration.

On the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) conducted through workshop, the 4 groups had **resolved to recommend** the following: strengthening of the CBCS RMCs; strengthening of RMC Secretariat; engagement with the government, non-state actors and other CSO groupings; institution and capability building; mass formation of local peace body; sustained program advocacy and campaign; CBCS sustainability of organizational and program operations; ethno-staffing ;and food security empowerment. 

A government that robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend upon Paul.
George Bernard Shaw

SULU ...from page 8

For a year, US soldiers have been seen in Sulu conducting interviews in communities in what they call "needs assessment", constructing mini ports and conducting medical missions and trainings in municipalities known to be the conflict areas and former camps of MNLF. They have distributed sewing machines to the women in the community.

But everyone doubts the real intention behind these socio-civic activities. The Tausugs are not new to the projects of US government in their communities. Ever since MNLF chairman Prof. Nur Misuari signed the 1996 Peace Agreement, Sulu has been one of the largest beneficiaries of USAID and GEM infrastructure projects. Projects with the insignia of LEAP and GEM are still a common sight in Sulu a decade after its implementation.

The Tausugs ask why there is a need for armed men to deliver these aids when all along they have welcomed these so-called socio-civic activities. The incident in Bato-Bato elementary school validated the suspicions of the Tausugs: the Americans are here for war, after all.

The streamers in the February 2 rally in Jolo town hall says it all – "American soldiers are not here for development but for war."

Since the story broke out in November 2005, the 104th Brigade and the US troops denied the allegations, hence the residents and evacuees who witnessed the incident were told to be silent by the mayor of Indanan through their village captains. There were rumors that Governor Loong made all of the mayors of Sulu sign a paper welcoming the US troops, perhaps for a price.

The presence of the US troops in the November offensives is the reason why a congressional inquiry was conducted in Jolo on February 2-3. They visited the area where the US soldiers were seen and interviewed witnesses in an undisclosed area to protect their identities. Col. Pajarito of the 104th Brigade openly denied the allegations and even boldly asked for a copy of the affidavits submitted by Temugen Tulawie for his perusal.

We love Lupah Sug! We love Mindanao! US Troops Out Now!

About five hundred Tausugs marched through the town of Jolo on February 2, 2006. They chanted "We love Lupah Sug! We love Mindanao! US Troops Out Now!"

I responded very enthusiastically to all the shouts of the leaders who spoke at the rally till my voice was hoarse. This was my first time to join a rally in Sulu and I was so elated because the rally ended not with a bang of bullets and bombs, as in the past, but with a burning of a US flag, a sign of the continuing defiance of the

Tausugs against the presence of American soldiers.

This reminded me of the same emotions that I felt when my Maguindanao and Iranon brothers and sisters in Maguindanao burned a US flag the day before the start of Balikatan in Carmen, North Cotabato on January 17. Emotions ran higher when we joined the caravan and marched towards Carmen town hall, notwithstanding the series of delaying tactics employed by the military against the caravan. The Moro people stood side by side with their fellow Mindanaoans that day, the Lumads and the Christians.

The people of Mindanao share the same stand against the presence of US soldiers in our soil and the military exercises that they are conducting in our communities. Mindanao, our island that has been tagged by US embassy officials as "mecca of terrorism" has been peddled by President Arroyo as venue for Balikatan and further witch hunting of terrorists.

Communities become vulnerable as US soldiers comb through looking for Bin Laden look-alikes. And if they mistake a farmer for an Abu Sayyaf and shoots or kills him, as what happened to a Yakan farmer during the Balikatan in Basilan in 2002, the US soldier involved will never be tried nor turned over to the Philippine government for further investigation but whisked away. As what happened to Sgt. Reggie Lane in 2002, US soldiers will be shipped to another US base and the Moro farmer who was victim of the shooting becomes the prisoner.

The people are placed in such a disadvantaged position with the continuing military intervention of the US government in the Philippines. Our country is being peddled by President Arroyo under the Visiting Forces Agreement as the venue for US military's proxy wars, the whole Philippine island as US base where US troops and arsenal can come and go as they please.



The presence of US Troops in Sulu reminds the Tausugs of the century-old massacre in Bud Dahu which gained no justice yet.

See **SULU**...page 27

FIND ...from page 20

For her entering a new relationship with a man is for her children and for her, as well, tantamount to a declaration that her husband is dead. None of the children are open to such statement. Also, they see the new individual as a threat to the already shaky family that they are trying to preserve even though they know their efforts to preserve it are quite unsuccessful. The mothers also feel very strongly that they are being unfaithful even as they see that on their own their family situation will remain desperate.

With these problems, the individual members of the family either withdraw into themselves or get out of the family. The result is the same: the family breaks up. Those who get out find themselves in different set of problems: drugs, teenage marriages, gambling debts, alcoholism, fights and deteriorating health.

Families of involuntary disappearance (FIND)

During the Marcos years, a group of eight families, with the assistance of human rights organization called "Task Force Detainees", began to organize themselves so that they could help each other search for their missing loved ones and to give support to each other. They also wanted to bring their plight to the attention of national and international human rights groups.

Although their initial efforts were towards searching for their missing loved ones and calling for justice for the victims, it became clear that the needs of the members had to be attended to. A rehabilitation program was started. The program was designed for the wives who had lost their husbands, the mothers and fathers who had lost sons and daughters and children.

The rehabilitation program

The rehabilitation program of FIND has two levels: the individual and the family. These two levels have to be dealt with at the same time. That is, there must be separate activities for the individual family member and for the family as a whole. Or, a particular activity must benefit both the individual member and the entire family as well. These levels have to be dealt with simultaneously because the individual members need the family, on the one hand and because traumatized individual members cannot fully participate in family activities, on the other.

But there is a sense in which rehabilitation is meaningful to the work of FIND. The families of the disappeared are broken families. The task of the rehabilitation is to make them whole again.

Let us look at the families of the disappeared again. When the father is removed, his physical absence is felt by each individual family member according to each one's unique experience of their father. But the impact on the family is felt in the roles he had in the family

system. He may have been the bread winner, the disciplinarian, the planner, the morale booster, depending on the family. To the younger children he may have been the source of the additional few centavos over and above what was allowed by their mother. The first-born sons, most in their late teens, added that he might be a "co-conspirator in foolishness". To the mother, he might have been partner, someone to lean on, someone for whom she could care. All of a sudden, all these roles are removed.

It would seem normal to fill these roles naturally and simply. But here lies the unique problem of the families of the disappeared: They do not know, or are not in the position to accept, that the roles are really vacant. To say that they are vacant – and to fill a role is to say that it is vacant – is to declare the father dead. But the absence of any clues after long, desperate and agonized searching blocs a conclusion of finality. The family cannot even begin to help itself.

The specific goal of family rehabilitation became clear: The roles of the missing parent have to be distributed to the other members of the family. Everyone helps in standing in for the father, taking each family member's preparedness, plans and choices into account. The plan for redistribution may include occasions for the shifting of roles when individuals are ready or have reached personal goals that they had set prior to the disappearance. Above all, it includes the understanding that, should the father reappear – "surface" is the local term – he takes over all his roles because they are his to take back, since they have not been usurped in the first place.

The role of FIND becomes clear: to help the family redistribute and fill the father's roles. It creates situations in which the family members will understand each other's difficulties with the task. Since it usually enters the family's life when problems have started to occur, its first task is usually that of reconciliation. It serves as a "tulay", literally a bridge but figuratively, a mediator or liaison. It also assists the individual family members who are taking specific roles.

The basic task is to help the family members to talk to each other, to realize that they can share wit each other, to support each other, to plan together, to see that they are not facing the future alone, because they have each other. When these happen, though other problems may come their way, then the family will have become whole again.

A society that needs to be reconciled to itself places barriers in the path of family rehabilitation. Indeed, as the phenomenon of disappearance shows, that society can itself cause the breakdown of families. The society has to be transformed. Otherwise, disappearances will continue. Part of the task is to FIND, therefore, has to be to call for and to be part of the task of social transformation. **END**

CREED

... To Attain Good and Responsible Governance

We, the stakeholder of Cotabato City, comprising three (3) main sectors of society, the Local Government Unit (LGU), the Business Community, and the Civil Society Organizations, do hereby recognize the roles of each of the abovementioned sectors, in moving forward for a transformational strategy to attain good and responsible governance.

That we are affirming ourselves of abiding to follow the principles and desirable essence of democratic and systematic governance and ought in all possible means the adoption of appropriate norms, decency, and ethical acceptable standards manifesting the observance of respecting the rights of each and everyone, including the cultural beliefs and practices, and above all manifestations for the Will of Almighty God, describable in the realization of the Godly desired attributes.

The spirit of democracy fashioned by transparent and accountable governance with the guidelines provided for us by the Almighty God shall be the primary principle in running our affairs, which we ought to exhibit between and among us our identity, relationship and sacred values, making our mundane life more meaningful and desirable.

We understand that doing the actions for the attainment of the Will of the Almighty God provided us the challenges since it requires the necessary structures and fundamental processes to attend the desired ends as mandated in the pillars of embraced religions either hidden, openly, clearly and impliedly provided for, making us the true vicegerent and representatives in the earthly existence.

We, therefore, the Tripartite sectors of society, being in the local government units, the business sector and the civil society entrusted of the attributes as instruments or tools for the attainment of the desired ends, the complete essence of the Will of the Almighty God are pledging once and for all, the unity, cohesive efforts and working for a desirable direction on the promising good and responsible governance having the spirit of transparency and accountability, once again, the essence of shared ideas, feelings, and actions are our utmost expression of the realization of the pledged attributes, the multifarious essence of the Will of Almighty God.

Finally, here we are, initiating and working for "Transparent and Accountable Governance" (TAG), always adhering to the guidance of the Almighty that the desired relationships between and among the Tripartite sectors for the development of our locality, especially the City of Cotabato.

We are hereby affixing our signatures as manifestation of our support and desire to attain a fast level of development for our society through the Tag Program, particularly Cotabato City, and joining to the journey of the Local Government Unit, the Business Sector and the Civil Society Organizations.

May the Almighty God guide guide and sustain us.

Adopted this 22nd day of March, 2006 at Cotabato City, Philippines.

(SGD) PERFECTO F. MARQUEZ (SGD) DR. PENDATUNA PANGADIL
President, Metro Cotabato Chairman, Cotabato City
Chamber of Commerce and Transparent and Accountable
Industry Foundation Inc. Networks

(SGD) DATU MUSLIMING SEMA
City Mayor, Cotabato City

SULU ...from page 25

The people of Sulu want answers to their questions: What is the real intention of the US government in Sulu? Why are the American soldiers deployed in Sulu despite protests from residents? Why are guidelines or Terms of Reference not made public in Sulu which will be their basis to ascertain what the US troops will be doing in the next succeeding months? If the Balikatan in Sulu is socio-civic in nature, why is it that armed American soldiers are being sent to the area to facilitate it? Why did the four US soldiers participate in the military offensives against the MNLF in November of last year?


Until there are clear explanations on these queries, it is but only right that the Balikatan should be aborted or at most deferred. When it boils down to is that the apprehensions of the Sulu people arise from the fact that the US soldiers are not known to the Muslims as benefactors but soldiers for occupation of Muslim areas. That is what happened in Afghanistan and Iraq and is bound to happen in Muslim countries tagged as terrorist havens.

Fight for Lupah Sug

The journey to Jolo is difficult but being with the Tausugs is exhilarating because you get to see and feel their fierce love for Sulu and their freedom. "Martyrdom or Freedom", this is the famous slogan of the Tausugs, seen in all public walls and houses.

I know that the Tausugs have more protests in store when the formal Balikatan takes place on February 19. On March 6, the Tausugs will commemorate Bud Daho massacre — this is also the time for them to call for justice and end to US military presence in Sulu.

Sulu is filled with memories of violence and injustice, and at present cases of human rights violations are intensifying with the presence of US soldiers in the island. The struggle of the Tausugs for their land has been fought for centuries now. Still they continue to stand up against invaders and foreign occupation in their land.

The Tausugs are a proud people because in the past they have won their struggles. Hence, it is not easy for them to reach out to their fellow Mindanaoan and Filipino people. In solidarity with our fellow Moro people and lovers of land and freedom, the challenge is to stand with them and unite with them in their struggle. 

Stakeholders join hands for peace in Aceh and Mindanao

A five-day peace seminar dubbed as "The Consolidation for Peace Seminar: Peacebuilding and Strategic Planning for Aceh and Mindanao" was held at the Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang State on January 23-27, 2006.

The peace seminar was attended by 44 delegates coming from Southern Thailand, Aceh, Mindanao and Malaysia. The government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) also sent representatives, mostly from members of their respective negotiating panel.

Among the major activities that transpired that was of timely and utmost importance to the delegates are situational sharing as well as peace advocacies being undertaken in Southern Thailand, Aceh and Mindanao in national and local levels. In the sharing process, it surfaced that all three regional areas share some common status of existence of socio-cultural and political unrest due to peoples' quest for their freedom and self-determination. Giving more meaning to the search for peace is the

Malaysian Model of maintaining national unity in Peacebuilding that discusses state mechanism and policies in uniting more or less 127 different ethnical and tribal groupings in Malaysia. The paper was presented by Azman Amin Hassan, Director General of the Department of National Unity and Integration, Office of the Prime Minister.

On the later part of the seminar, a group workshop was conducted where participants were grouped in accordance with countries of origin. Under this grouping, each group now comprises government officials, academe, civil society organizations/non-government

organizations, peace advocates and resistance forces, representatives in their respective countries.

For the Mindanao group, among the major outcome of their group work include among others; the CSO support to the GRP-MILF peace process; appeal to President Gloria Macapagal - Arroyo for the religious implementation of GRP-MILF Interim Agreements especially on the role of Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) in fulfilling its mandate in engaging rehabilitation and development in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao.

Other important issues tackled are the continuance



The participants to the Consolidation for Peace Seminar: Peacebuilding and Strategic Planning for Aceh and Mindanao" was held at the Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang State on January 23-27, 2006.

of exchange programs and exposure trips by the CSO and peace advocates in Mindanao, Aceh and Southern Thailand and intensification of Peace education campaigns on the armed forces, PNP and other armed groups in collaboration with CSOs/NGOs and OPPAP.

The seminar was funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency in partnership with the Research and Education for Peace, Universiti Sains Malaysia and the South Asian Conflict Studies Network. The affair was facilitated by Dr. Kamarulzaman Askandar and Miss Ayesah Abubakar. (mgk)

[*Note: Among the outputs of the Mindanao group during the seminar – workshops was a letter of appeal to the Philippine President Gloria Macapagal - Arroyo for the religious implementation of GRP-MILF Interim Agreements especially on the role of Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) in fulfilling its mandate in engaging rehabilitation and development in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao.]*

January 26, 2006

TO: HER EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT GLORIA MACAPAGAL - ARROYO

Dearest President Arroyo:

Peace Greetings to you!

As civil society organizations and peace workers from Mindanao and other parts of Southeast Asia, we commend both the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) for bringing difficult peace issues to the negotiating table and in finding a non-violent resolution to the age old conflict besetting Mindanao. Both parties are tremendously taking great strides in pushing the ongoing peace process.

As stakeholders of peace, we wish to emphasize our unfailing support to the **GRP-MILF Peace Process** and we look forward to the progressive developments of the upcoming negotiations covering the issue of Bangsamoro ancestral domain. On the other hand, we understand that the interim agreements on the *security aspect* and on the *rehabilitation, reconstruction, and development of conflict-affected areas* are integral parts of the confidence-building mechanism of the over all peace process. Therefore, we wish to express our support for the full implementation of these said agreements.

We acknowledge that the creation of the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) under the *Tripoli Agreement on Peace of June 2001*, is a major gain of the GRP-MILF peace talks and that it allows the MILF to "determine, lead, and manage relief, rehabilitation, and development of conflict affected areas in Mindanao." However, we also understand that the implementing guidelines had been issued on May 7, 2002 for the BDA to fulfill its mandate, but until now, the BDA has yet to become fully functional as an institution.

We, therefore, respectfully call on the Philippine Government to provide its full support to BDA and help accomplish its mandate. With this, the BDA's work should create an even more conducive environment for the peace and development of the peoples of Mindanao.

Sincerely,
(SIGNED:)

Al Ihsan Foundation, Cotabato City
Bangsamoro Youth Ranao Peace and Development Center, Inc., Marawi City
Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society, Cotabato City
Institute of Bangsamoro Studies, Cotabato City
Mindanews.com, Davao City
Notre Dame University Peace Center, Cotabato City
Pigsalabukan Bansa Subanon, Zamboanga City
SALIGAN, Davao City
Timuay Governance Foundation, Cotabato City

International Organizations:
Forum Asia, Thailand
Southeast Asia Conflict Studies Network, Malaysia

Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction or in knowing you did your best to become the best you are capable of becoming.

John R. Wooden

GRP-MILF...from page 23

regarding the attendance of its members in Panel meetings, and 6) acceptance by GRP Panel of the list of the remaining 39 camps submitted by the MILF on 6 November 1998 in Marawi City and its inclusion in the agenda for the 4th Round of Talks.

On the same day, the two parties also signed an Agreement on Safety and Security Guarantees, in which the GRP has agreed to extend safety and security guarantees, in which the GRP has agreed to extend safety and security guarantees given for the duration of the peace talks stipulate that MILF members shall not be restrained, searched, seized and harassed on their persons or property in connection with their participation in the peace talks, except in cases of commission of common crimes. In line with this grant of guarantees, appropriate identification cards shall be jointly issued by GRP and MILF members who would be extended protection under this agreement.

On 27 April 2000, the GRP and MILF panels held a special meeting at Estosan Garden Hotel, Cotabato City to review and assess the status of their ongoing peace negotiations. The chairpersons of GRP and MILF Technical committees signed a document, Aide Memoire: Highlights of the Special Meeting of the GRP and MILF Peace Panels, which features the following: 1) the GRP and the MILF Peace Panels agreed that the GRP shall prepare a paper on the proposed political package to be presented to the MILF, within 72 hours from date of the meeting. The MILF shall be given enough time for consultation and thereafter prepare their position on the package; 2) measures to be studied towards the normalization of the situation in Mindanao, specifically

Central Mindanao; 3) both parties agreed to the rescheduling of activities.

On 1 June 2000, the GRP and the MILF Peace Panels held a meeting at same venue. The joint communiqué signed by the two parties features the following points: 1) the GRP Panel presented its proposal with the commitment that this will be subject to further discussion; 2) both agreed that the MILF shall submit its comments on 21 June 2000; 3) it was agreed upon that TWGs shall meet on June 14-15, 2000 to establish consensus points on the clustered agenda items; and 4) both panels agreed to meet on June 28, 2000 to consider the substance and details of the proposed autonomy.

Finally, on 15 June 2000, the GRP-MILF Technical Committees held a meeting in Estosan Garden Hotel, Cotabato City, in which the two parties issued a memorandum addressed to the GRP and MILF Chairmen of Peace negotiating panels, that includes the following points: 1) the GRP and the MILF Technical Committees discussions on the Clustered Agenda were held; 2) it was agreed that the proposals in the respective TWG and the MILF TCs for consideration; and 3) a meeting of the GRP and the MILF TCs on 20 June was recommended.

The peace negotiation was desperately shattered when the deposed Philippine President, Joseph Ejercito Estrada declared an all-out war against the MILF forces throughout Mindanao on 27 April 2000, and ordered the capture of all MILF leaders, including Salamat Hashim, Al-Haj Murad and others. The MILF Chairman, Salamat Hashim, in response, declared an all-out jihad against the Philippine government in May 2000. Thereafter, the peace talks were suspended and war broke out all over Mindanao.

To be continued next issue...

CBCS joins in condemning the blasphemous cartoons against Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.)

The caricaturing and portraying of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) by the Danish newspaper JYLANDS - POSTEN on September 30, 2005 and circulated recently thru the internet this month is beyond imagination and a handiwork of a person with a satanic thought.

This is an act of blasphemy, a sacrilege, as well as a transgression against Islam and therefore cannot be easily forgotten and forgiven by those who embrace Islam as a way of life and religion. This must be condemned in its highest form.

With this, we, in the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) are calling everybody who has faith in Islam to stand up and be counted. We vehemently condemn the humiliation of the personality of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and portraying him as a terrorist.

This is a mind-setting and a mind-conditioning as well as mind-poisoning to convince the world and make them believe that Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) is just an ordinary mortal and a terrorist himself and that those who believe in his teachings are also terrorists.

We are demanding the Danish government to take appropriate disciplinary action against the JYLANDS - POSTEN and be liable for all the damages inflicted by their publication.

We are also urging the Philippine Government to sever all diplomatic relations with the Danish government and calling all God-fearing people to boycott all Danish products.

Allaho Akhbar... Allaho Akhbar... Allaho Akhbar!!!
Issued in Cotabato City, Philippines, this 6th day of February 2006.

Bangsamoro condemns publication of blasphemous caricatures of Prophet Muhammad

Cotabato City — Thousands of enraged Bangsamoros coming from various sectors in the city and other neighboring towns flocked at the city plaza on February 7, 2006 and staged a protest rally and condemned in its highest form the publication of caricatures depicting Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) in an unpleasant manner by Jyllands Posten — a Danish publication.

The rallyists torched Denmark flags to show dismay on the Danish government. Although the latter has reminded that their government does not publish any newspapers, the Bangsamoro feels the need for the Danish government to at least reprimand or impose disciplinary actions to the newspaper that published the caricatures of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) which was marred with blasphemy and sacrilege.

Despite the excuses made by the Jyllands Posten citing publication of similar cartoons of some divine



The Bangsamoro showed dismay to the Danish government for failure to impose disciplinary actions to the Jyllands Posten which publishes the prophet Muhammad cartoons.



An Islamic leader recites few verses from the Qur'an before the thousand rallyists.




The rallyists torched a Denmark flag during a condemnation rally attended by thousands of Bangsamoro from all walks of life.

characters of that of other religions, it did not pacify the resentment of the Muslims.

Islam religious leaders said that Islam highly forbids the portrayal of the divine characters in any manner as it is synonymous to idolatry. Worse, if one represents these characters with profanity.

Sammy Maulana, the Acting Secretary General the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS), said that this act is provocative and beyond imagination and a handiwork of someone with a satanic mindset.

A representative from the United Youth of the Philippines (UnYPhil) challenged the Bangsamoro Youth to be watchful on issues that concerns the Muslims around the world as the tests to Islamic faith doesn't end here and that "they could come in many evil forms."

Moreover, the Bangsamoro business sector in the city has encouraged the boycott of Danish products and declared patronizing these products is deemed *haraam* (prohibited). 

Caught in dilemma

To give justice or to criminalize political offense

Beneath the purported civility of modern society, injustice and political repression is still thriving. The presence of political prisoners indicates that the so-called democratic government may no longer a democracy in its truest sense. We are continually experiencing the kind of democracy we have which the government is bound to perpetuate and persist the criminalization of political offense.

There are men and women of conviction who defended the oppressed but now suffering in prison is a stark reality of our democracy—that of a systematic treatment of political dissenters as ordinary criminal. The criminalization of political offenses tends to strip the political nature of the crime committed by political dissenters as they continue to charge with common crime, crime against a person or property but not the state power that oppressed and exploit the people. More than this, the criminalization of political offenses completely denies justness and legitimacy of the grievances of political dissenters.

Under the Hernandez Doctrine which applied to subversion, the Supreme Court had established the distinction between political crimes and those common crimes.



Political crimes according to the Supreme Court are those directly aimed against political order. Common Crime as may be committed to achieve political purpose.

There are men and women of conviction put behind bars by a government that has chose to repress and answer the growing people's discontent with force instead of addressing the root causes that makes the lives of peoples miserable.

They fought martial rule risking life and limb, acting with the purest of hearts and without prospect of rewards. They fought and their case against the ousted dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos in a foreign court when no court in the Philippines would hear their case.

When Dictator Marcos airlifted to Hawaii due to the Peoples Power in February 1986, the SELDA, an organization of victims of state terrorism under the US-back dictatorship invoked the Alien Tort Act and filed a class suit against the deposed president in the Federal District Court of Honolulu, Hawaii, USA on April 7, 1986.

The case involving some 10,000 victims of the Marcos regime dragged on for 6 years until 1992 when the Honolulu Court rendered its decision and found Marcos guilty of "crime against humanity". The victims were awarded an exemplary damage of US \$ 2 Billion. Three years later, compensatory damages were also granted amounting to US \$ 776 Million.

The class suit entitled "MDL 840" (Multi-District Litigation) otherwise known as Hilao vs. Marcos Litigation Suit was a landmark case in international jurispondence and international human rights law. It was a case a case involving 10,000 victims of crime against humanity obtained a favorable judgment against a dictator and notorious human rights violator.

Thirteen years had passed yet justice continues to elude the victors in the case who are being denied indemnification for the crime committed against them.

The class action suit paved the way for the recovery of US\$ 356 milion of Marcos ill;-gotten wealth stashed in Swiss Bank deposit. The court immediately froze the assets in order for it to be a source for indemnification of the martial law victims.

Indemnification is a necessary component of justice. The court orders the perpetrators to pay exemplary damages to serve as a warning to anyone committing the same case. Compensatory damage is but a small amount to help rehabilitate the victims.

The Philippine government which had never lifted a hand to help the martial law victims seek justice suddenly

See **JUSTICE** ...page 24

Updates on the Status of the GRP – MILF Peace Talks

I. Resumption of the Talks

The 9th Round of Exploratory Talks between the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) was conducted last September 15-16, 2005 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia where both sides discussed the most difficult hurdle in the ancestral domain agenda. Both Panels then went on to adopt the consensus points on the strand on governance.

Both sides likewise recognized the efforts of the Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG) relative to the operations against criminal groups in Gawang and Guindulungan in Maguindanao province.

The parties further agreed to work on strengthening the socio-economic monitoring function of the international Monitoring Team (IMT). Other countries will be invited to participate in the monitoring process.

II. On the implementation of the GRP-MILF Agreement on the General Cessation of Hostilities (Security Aspect)

A. The Joint GRP-MILF Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH)

1. Creation of the Joint Monitoring Assistance Center (JMAC)

- The Chairmen of the GRP-MILF CCCH and AHJAG formed the JMAC on 18 July 2005 to coordinate disposition and movements of both AFP and MILF forces in connection with efforts to pursue elements of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and other high-value targets seeking refuge in the areas of Talayan-Guindulungan in Maguindanao
- JMAC was also created to avoid any incidents of misencounters between the GRP and MILF forces; displacements of civilian communities and damages to properties; and

misunderstanding and unwarranted incidents that could derail and undermine the gains and momentum of the GRP-MILF peace process

2. Conduct of Joint CCCH Meetings

- The 30th Joint CCCH meeting was held in Cotabato City last November 9, 2005 in conjunction with the 9th Tripartite meeting among Joint CCCH and the International Monitoring Team. Both Committees gave updates on the continuing peace advocacy drives conducted in the provinces of Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga Sibugay, and Zamboanga del Norte
- The ceasefire committees also noted a tremendous reduction of incidents of alleged ceasefire violations since the deployment of the IMT in October 2004. From 2002 to 2004, the Joint CCCH reported some 500 alleged ceasefire violations. This figure drastically dwindled to a sheer 37 alleged ceasefire violations in 2005

3. Establishment of Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Posts

- Three (3) existing ceasefire monitoring posts in: Barangay Bagoinged, Pikit, N. Cot., Buliok (Islamic Center), Pagalungan, Maguindanao; and in Barangay Kitango, Datu Saudi Ampatuan. The posts are jointly manned by GRP and MILF members, with the active participation of an NGO, The Bantay Ceasefire
- In addition, similar monitoring centers are proposed to be set up in the provinces of Lanao and zamboanga del Norte and in the following seven (7) sites:
 - Brgy. Ahan, Talayan, Maguindanao
 - Midpandakan, Sultan Kudarat
 - Gawang, Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Maguindanao
 - Pansao, Mamasapano, Maguindanao
 - Damablak, Talayan, Maguindanao
 - Butig, Lanao del Sur
 - Munai, Lanao del Sur

4. Local Monitoring Teams (LMTs)

- Established as mechanisms to monitor the ceasefire agreement on the ground, the LMTs were reactivated on October 6, 2003, and are presently operational in thirteen (13) conflict-affected provinces in Mindanao
- Capabilitybuilding & strengthening program for LMTs have been continuously pursued to strengthen the LMTs as a support mechanism to the CCCHs

B. The International Monitoring Team (IMT)

The IMT has been accompanying the GRP and the MILF CCCHs in several fact-finding missions and has proved to be instrumental in addressing reported ceasefire violations from both sides. So far, the IMT has conducted eight (8) tri-partite meetings with the GRP and MILF CCCHs.

The IMT has also been very much involved in the creation and operation of the Joint Monitoring and Assistance Center (JMAC) in connection with the ongoing pursuit of ASG in Guindulungan, Maguindanao.

During the 7th Round of Exploratory Talks in Port Dickson, Malaysia last April 18-20, 2005, both the GRP and MILF sides expressed hope for the continued presence of the IMT in Mindanao.

On August 11, 2005, the seven-man IMT Malaysian Assessment Team (IMT-AMT) arrived in the Philippines. The team left for Cotabato on August 13, 2005 and started doing the audit rounds on IMT offices and selected MILF areas with the Joint GRP-MILF CCCH on August 14, 2005. On August 16, 2005, the first set (composed of 13 Malaysians) of the second batch of the IMT members of the first batch left Mindanao for their return to Malaysia. The next set of change-over was on August 24, 2005. The third set of the IMT-Malaysian Contingent Batch 2 arrived from Malaysia on September 5, 2005.

The IMT outgoing Head of Mission, MGen Dato Zulkifeli (who left for Malaysia on September 16, 2005, duty duly accomplished) was conferred two major distinctions, the Order of the Golden Heart Award and the Philippine Legion of Honor, presented by HE President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in an awarding ceremony in Malacañang Palace on September 7, 2005. The occasion was attended by, among others, the incoming Head of Mission and Head of the IMT Malaysian contingent Major Attaché, the GRP Panel, the respective chairs of the GRP and MILF CCCH and AHJAG, and the Head of the GRP Panel Secretariat.

The changeover of the IMT Brunei contingent followed suit in a changeover ceremony in Cotabato City last September 15, 2005 upon arrival of the incoming IMT Brunei contingent escorted by the Brunei Deputy Defense Minister, Yang Berhormat Pehin Datu

Singamanteri Kolonel (B) Datu Paduka Haji Mohannad Yasmin bin Haji Umar aboard a Brunei airforce craft.

C. The Ad Hoc Joint Action Group (AHJAG)

The AHJAG serves as focal mechanism in the interdiction and isolation of criminal elements situated within, or near, MILF communities.

1. **AHJAG Teams.** There are five (5) joint GRP-MILF teams organized to share information and intelligence at the field level under a common order of battle. The teams cover the following areas/provinces:

Team 1: Maguindanao, North Cotabato, Bukidnon

Team 2: Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte

Team 3: Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay

Team 4: Sultan Kudarat, South Cotabato, Sarangani

Team 5: Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Oriental, Compostela Valley

2. **List of wanted persons.** As earlier agreed, the list of wanted persons was formally endorsed by the GRP AHJAG to its counterpart during the 3rd Joint GRP-MILF AHJAG meeting in Davao City last April 23, 2005. The document contains a declassified list of 21 wanted personalities with standing warrants of arrest and a classified list of 33 Jamaah Islamiyah elements operating in Mindanao. This was then validated by the MILF.
3. **Resolved cases.** To date, the AHJAG took stock of four (4) cases in the Lanao provinces and one (1) recent case in Davao Oriental resolved through the efforts of both sides, which is indicative of AHJAG's effectiveness as a joint GRP-MILF mechanism. With the extension of the mandate of the AHJAG for another year, both sides look forward into more criminals interdicted through joint cooperation.

III. On the Rehabilitation and Development Aspect

1. Continuing workshops are being conducted by the Associated Resources for Management and Development, Inc. (ARMDEV) under the auspices of the World Bank to identify capability-building needs of the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA).
2. The BDA, as the project implementing body identified by the MILF to determine, lead and manage rehabilitation and development projects in conflict-affect areas have targeted six (6) barangays as initial areas for Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Development projects: (1) Sapad, Matanog, Maguindanao; (2) Malisbong,

Do no mischief (moral or material) on the earth, after it hath been set in order, but call on Him of fear and hope: for mercy of Allah is always near to those who practice virtue.

Qur'an 7:56

Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat; (3) Lucatan, Tarragona, Davao Oriental; (4) Silangkom, Tipo-tipo, Basilan; (5) Sungayan, Dinas, Zamboanga del Sur; and (6) Momongan, Balo-i, Lanao del Norte.

3. Relief assistance relative to the conducted military operations in Gawang and Guindulungan were provided by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) with the help, facilitation and cooperation of the Mindanao Emergency Response Network (MERN), the Organization of Mindanao for Peace and Development (COMPAD), Bantay Ceasefire, the local government units of Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Guindulungan and Talayan, and the Joint CCCH.

The relief operation at the 5 evacuation centers in the Guindulungan and Talayan areas commenced in the afternoon of 09 September 2005. The 5 evacuation center served in these municipalities were Sitio Tdtib in Brgy. Ahjan, Sitio Bliss Project, Sitio Sumangkong, Sition Malampay and Sition Matumbi in Brgy. Tamar. Meanwhile, relief distribution at Brgy. Kitango in Datu Saudi Ampatuan was done in the afternoon of 29 September 2005. a total of 605 families were given relief goods during these operatives.

VI. On the negotiations for the Agreement on the Ancestral Domain Aspect

The 7th Exploratory Talks was hailed as a breakthrough for both sides because of the substantive discussions outside made on Ancestral Domain. It is the first time that the negotiating Panels took up discussions outside the cessation of hostilities. Both sides agreed to exhaust all possible consensus points on the strands of concept, territory and resources before the start of formal negotiations.

During the recent 8th Round of Exploratory Talks, both sides agreed to forge clear parameters and principles to be pursued on the strand on governance of the Ancestral Domain Agenda.

The consensus points on the strand on governance were adopted during the 9th Exploratory Talks held in Kuala Lumpur last September 15-16, 2005.

V. General Direction of the Peace Talks

The GRP Panel, in coordination with its MILF counterpart, is currently pursuing the following efforts towards the resumption of the formal negotiations:

- a. Undertake continuing preparations for the administrative and technical requirements for the resumption of formal talks;
- b. Continuous monitoring of the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and the strengthening of the ceasefire mechanisms towards the sustained ceasefire on the ground to provide an environment conducive to the resumption of the formal talks;
- c. Monitor and fast-track the implementation of government response to the issues raised by the MILF, as well as look into the ongoing implementation of rehabilitation and development projects and programs for IDPs in conflict-affected areas;
- d. Undertake continuing studies and consultations with stakeholders on the issue of ancestral domain, the remaining substantive agenda item of the negotiations.

With the sustained and effective implementation of the GRP-MILF ceasefire agreement, alongside the strong cooperation and open communication between the GRP and the MILF through the existing ceasefire mechanisms, coupled by the Malaysian government's active participation and support to the GRP-MILF peace process, the GRP Panel is assured that the Mindanao peace process is "moving forward at an urgent and deliberate pace" towards attaining a negotiated settlement with the MILF. **END**

The click!



The Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society gladly announces the you may now log on to www.bangsamoroconsortium.org for access to CBCS program thrusts and updates.

An **ULTIMATE WEAPON** of an **Insecure and Beleaguered government**

Martial Rule and Political Detention are forms of state repression. They are manifestations of an insecure government. As such, it will desperately take all means to preserve itself just to maintain the status quo. It will suppress dissent to rid the dissenters, silence the opposition and curtail human rights and civil liberties.

It is the people who constituted the government through which they look for security and welfare. If the government deceived this aspiration, the people who constituted that government have the right to change it to a responsible one. Why then should a government be insecure when it had fulfilled its mandate and covenant with the people?

A government that has no legitimacy and moral authority to govern has all the reasons to be insecure. It will always manifest a repressive tendencies and strong temptation to declare Martial Law institutionalize Martial Rule just to stay in power.

What do we mean by Martial Law and Martial Rule? Can there be Martial Rule without declaring Martial Law? Will political detention persist even without Martial Law?

In Tagalog, Martial Law is "*Batas Militar*". In its literal meaning, it means martial rule. In military, we are familiar with the phrases "Obey First Before You Complain"; "Follow the Chain of Command" and "That's an Order!" In military, there is less democracy of at all. Martial Law is a military rule itself. With its dictatorial character, it is diametrically opposed to democracy. But while martial rule is a dictatorship and supposedly has no place in a democratic society, the constitution nonetheless permits it as one of the powers of the president to exercise in case of "invasion or rebellion and when public safety requires it".

Having been riddled with the questions of legitimacy and moral authority to govern, the Arroyo government is beleaguered

and become an "insecure government". It can even institutionalize Martial rule without necessarily declaring Martial Law as indicated by her issuance of the Calibrated Preventive Response (CPR) and a declaration of National State of Emergency. Furthermore is the passage of the Anti-Terrorism Bill now due for legislation by Congress that even the GMA allies admitted that the definition of Terrorism" under the bill is very broad and vague that even a protest rally can construe an act of terrorism. Another more is the planned Charter Change which can result to the watering down of the provisions of the Bill of Rights. Institutionalization of Martial Rule through a new constitution and the passage of the Anti-Terror Bill are worse scenarios than a mere declaration of Martial Law by President Gloria M. Arroyo.

A political detention, on the other hand, is a case where a person is being held or detained due to political reasons. This holds true in the case of political dissenters and those tagged by the government as rebels, subversives and enemy of the states are as vulnerable for incarceration due to their political beliefs.

As long as there is a contradiction between the government and the governed; as long as the government remained under the control of few ruling elite and as long as the government is haunted by insecurity due to the questions of legitimacy and moral authority to govern, the government will always be insecure and manifest its repressive character to preserve itself to the detriment of the governed.

Whatever, the struggle for democratic rights and genuine change must go!

Having been riddled with the questions of legitimacy and moral authority to govern, the Arroyo government is beleaguered and has become an "insecure government". It can even institutionalize Martial rule without necessarily declaring Martial Law as indicated by her issuance of the Calibrated Preventive Response (CPR) and the declaration of a National State of Emergency.

From the Desk of the Human Rights and Justice Program

SAMMY P. MAULANA

The Lessons from Martial Law

and the Continuing **STRUGGLE** for Human Rights and Democracy

(The author is a former Political Detainee during the Martial Law and became a Human Rights Educator and a Veteran Parliamentarian of the Street.)

Our condition today reminds us of the dark days of martial law and continuing violation of human rights and wanton destruction of lives and properties which are still taking place after the downfall of the fascist dictator and continuously committed even after the formal trapping and restoration of democracy.

As generation of those dark days, we have a rich lessons in our life-and-death arduous struggle to assert and uphold our civil, cultural, economic and political rights under the dictatorial regime. These served both as an inspiration as well as a moving spirit to strengthen our rank as we continue to move on to defend our hard-won rights and freedom which are under systematic and widespread attacked today.

Repression
and
suppression
by the
government
is meant to
cow the
people into
surrender
and total
submission.

The armed-conflicts, mass protests, dissent and general instability that have characterized our political life which continue to threaten every reigning government are result of a decade-old social injustice and discrimination, the continuing deterioration of our economic conditions and the unrelieved impoverishment of the long suffering people. Knowing the semi-colonial character of our society, the government is subservient

and beholden to foreign interest which is detrimental to well-being of its populations.

Dictator Marcos had promised a "New Society" under the discipline of "Martial Law". Despite of using his fascist rule to maintain the unjust status quo to perpetuate himself into power and amass wealth and privilege to maneuver everything to win over, neutralize or destroy his opponents, this had ended into a dismal failure.

Again, President Gloria M Arroyo had peddled a concept of "Strong Republic" backed-up by her reactionary-machineries in the disguise of eliminating terrorism, criminality and economic recovery only to end with the curtailment of peoples democratic rights, stifling of legitimate and political dissents and mass human rights violations. The militarist block inside and outside the government had tried every inch to revive, replicate and recycle the strongman rule. They are advocating a civilian-military concept of governance as the ultimate solution to the country's worsening economic and political crises.

Repression and suppression by the government is meant to cow the people into surrender and total submission. The only way to beat this is by broadening and heightening resistance to show that repression and suppression are ineffective and counter-productive and have no place under a civilized and democratic society. This had underscored by the vigilant and militant peoples collective action in breaking the "terror effects" of martial law. Being conditioned by widespread corruption and nepotism in government, brutalities of the anti-insurgency campaign, bogus and token snap elections and the Ninoy assassination, mass action had grew in number and widen the opposition to dictatorship.

Culling from this experience, we can surmise that there is no substitute to people's unity and collective action is among the decisive factors in the struggle and fight for democratic rights and freedom. It is also among the best weapon to resist each government attempt to impose a *de facto*-piecemeal martial law and thwart all schemes to cripple and stifle legitimate and political dissents and opposition especially by state terror in form of harassment, torture, abduction and forced disappearances.

There are powerful foreign interests which are intervening actively in the conduct of our government affairs. The U.S. continues to exercise a dominant

See **MARTIAL LAW** ...page 24

The Lesser Debate on Cha Cha **CON ASS, CON CON, OR CON COM**

By: Soliman M. Santos, Jr.

The "Great Debate" is on charter change (Cha Cha), its merits and proposed content. We deal here only with the lesser debate of mode or process of constitution-making; whether by the Congress as constituent assembly (Con Ass) or by a constitutional convention (Con Con). The debate about this usually presupposes that a constitutional convention is specially elected assembly like the 1934 and 1971 Con Cons. But the term "constitutional convention" is a generic term not limited to such specially elected assemblies. It has been defined by Philippine political law authority Vicente G. Sinco, a former President of the University of the Philippines as "a body assembled for the express purpose of framing a constitution, or revising the existing constitution, or formulating amendments to it." While usually composed solely of delegates elected by congressional districts, the plain meaning as well as the political law definition of constitutional convention" does not necessarily indicate, much less mandate, such a composition.

Though our constitutional history points to the 1934 and 1971 Con Cons, it also points to the 1986 Constitutional Commission (Con Com) which was appointed by then President Corazon Aquino and to the 1898 Malolos Congress (which drafted the 1899 Malolos Constitution) which was appointed by then President Emilio Aguinaldo. Of course, the 1986 Con Com and the 1898 Malolos Congress took place under revolutionary situations. But this does not preclude specially appointed assembly like the Con Com to be resorted to *even in a non-revolutionary situation*, especially one characterized by political and economic crisis. A Con Com is also a constitutional convention in its generic sense. But since Con Con connotes specially elected assemblies, it may be best to state the option as: **Con Ass, Con Con and Con Com.**

Relatedly, constitutional law expert and 1986 Con Com member Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J. has written that "Constituent power (the power to formulate a Constitution or to propose amendments to or revision of the Constitution and to ratify such proposal) is exercised by Congress (by *special* constitutional conferment), by a Constitutional Convention or

Commission, by the people through initiative and referendum, and ultimately by the sovereign electorate." Direct proposal by the people through initiative, however, still needs an implementing law and even then would be limited to amendments, not including revision. As explained by Bernas, amendment pertains to a change of one or a few specific and isolated provisions of the Constitution, while revision pertains to a re-examination of the entire Constitution or important clusters of provisions, usually resulting in an important structural change in the government or a change which affects several provisions. A Con Ass, a Con Con or a Con Com



A number of organizations express opposition on charter change in any form.

can each undertake revision of, not just amendments to, the Constitution.

But both a Con Ass and a Con Con are objectionable in that they would be dominated by traditional politicians like the current composition of Congress. The election of delegates to a Con Con would result in a composition similar to Congress because of the current politico-electoral system which makes elections a popularity and money contest. This would defeat the "politically correct" notion that a Con Con is more democratic and non-elitist because people directly elect their delegates (but so with their Congressmen). Besides, there would be the huge additional expense for the election, salaries and operational needs of the delegates. Why go through

see **DEBATE**...page 11

SOLIMAN M. SANTOS, JR. is a Bicolano human rights lawyer, legislative consultant and legal scholar. He is the author of *The Moro Islamic Challenge: Constitutional Rethinking for the Mindanao Peace Process* (UP Press, 2001); *Peace Advocate* (DLSU Press, 2002); *Peace Zones and Dynamics and Directions of the GRP-MILF Peace Negotiations* (Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao, 2005).

The Bangsamoro & Human Rights

Sammy P. Maulana

Human Rights is a requirement to attain a dignified society and human existence. The Islamic Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the People's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had a converging view that Human Rights is inherent, inalienable, interdependent, indivisible and non-abrogable.

With these declarations, the United Nations mandated the state especially the signatories to promote, to protect and fulfill Human Rights. As duty-holder, they are obliged to provide a fertile ground for the full realization of Human Rights. It also enjoin the people not just to enjoy their Human Rights but take a pro-active move to assert the full realization of their Human Rights as right-holders.

During the commemoration of the International Human Rights Day held at the Cotabato City Plaza a batteries of speakers had assailed the sad state of Human rights situation. At the global scene, the big countries were in rivalry in world power and dominate the small countries and crippled their economic growth and development. At the local scene, the few ruling elites continue to dominate the government to protect and advance their personal interests. This is a Human Rights Violation with impunity.

The expression of Human Rights violations committed against the Bangsamoro is distinct from the rest of the country. The Bangsamoro is struggling for the restoration of their homeland and regain their freedom

“ ...the highest form of Human Rights violation committed against the Bangsamoro is the continuing denial of their right to self-determination to freely decide their social, cultural, economic and political destinies. ”

and independence which was usurped by the colonial power and turned it over to the Philippine government who continue their new colonialization over the Bangsamoro. Thus, the highest form of Human Rights violation committed against the Bangsamoro is the continuing denial of their right to self-determination to freely decide their social, cultural, economic and political destinies. This is what the Bangsamoro is struggling for. They cannot and never be a separatist, a cessationist and a rebel in their homeland.

The Bangsamoro struggle had won recognition and legitimate status before the eyes of the world. With the Moro National Liberation Front, a peace talk was held in Tripoli, Libya. Not contented with the GOP-MILF Final Peace Accord, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) took the cudgel to continue the struggle. Like the MNLF, they also ended with a peace talk now going on in Malaysia.

While the Bangsamoro pin hope that they can gain big concession on the peace talks, it's only the GRP, the MILF and Allah know when to end and what to end. However, come what may the Bangsamoro committed for the unconditional support of the peace talks. In fact, in the three-day general consultation called by the MILF in Camp Darapanan, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao on May 29 to 31, 2005, a five million Bangsamoro in attendance gave a fresh mandate to the MILF to spearhead the Bangsamoro to deal with the government for the settlement of the Mindanao problem especially in the Bangsamoro homeland.

Let it be known therefore that the struggle is not for the MILF alone. The struggle belongs to the Bangsamoro, from the Bangsamoro and for the Bangsamoro.



The Charge of the Wood Brigade

Or, What the Heathen Call
the Massacre of Mount Dajo

By Rep. John Sharp Williams

Read in the U.S. House of Representatives,
15 March 1906

Chased them from everywhere,
Chased them all onward
Into the crater of death
Drove them - six hundred!
"Forward, the Wood Brigade,
Spare not a one," he said.
"Shoot all six hundred!"
"Forward the Wood Brigade!"
Was there a man afraid?
Not tho' a soldier knew
Heathen had blundered.
Savages can't reply,
Heathen can't reason why
Women and children die,
Forced in the crater of death,
Forced with six hundred;
Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them,
Volleyed and thundered.
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Women and children fell
Into the jaws of death,
Into the mouth of Hell;
All told, six hundred
Flashed all the sabers there,
Flashed as they turned in air,
Sabring the women there,
Charging the children, while
All the world wondered.
Stifled by cannon smoke,
Men, women, children choke;
Women and children
Reeled from the bayonet stroke
In death not surrendered;
Families slaughtered there.



Stormed at with shot and shell.
While child and mother
That they had loved so well.
Thrust into jaws of death,
Trapped into mouth of Hell,
Not a babe left of them,
Left of six hundred!
What shall such bloodthirst slake?
Go, ask Hell-Roaring Jake
Whether Wood blundered.
Honor the charge they made?
Honor the Wood Brigade
For that six hundred?

Gen. Leonard Wood was Governor of the Moro province.
He ordered the attack in March 1906 against the Tausug
Moros who put up a resistance in Bud Dahu.

Rep. John Sharp Williams was a Democratic member of
the US House of Representative from Mississippi.