



Linking the Moro People with the rest of the World

THE BANGSAMORO JOURNAL

A Quarterly Publication of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society

Cotabato City, Philippines

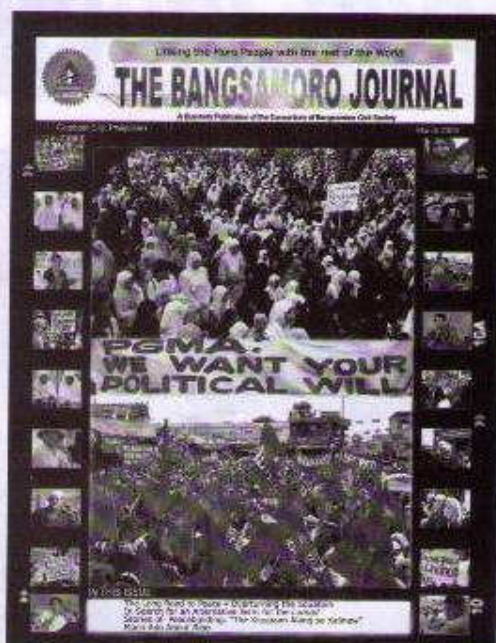
March 2008



IN THIS ISSUE:

The Long Road to Peace • Overturning the Equation
In Search for an Alternative Term for the Lumad
Stories of Peacebuilding: "The Kisupaan Alang sa Kalinaw"
Much Ado About Rido

OUR COVER



Anxious over possible ramifications of the de-railed peace talks between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, tens of thousands of people poured onto the streets in the cities of Cotabato, Marawi, General Santos, Iligan, Lamitan, Jolo and Pagadian in January and February this year to press the two parties to return to the negotiation table.

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial	3
Break the stumbling block that derails the way to peace	4-5
Overturing the Equation	6-8
A call for sincerity & Political will	8-9
In Search for an Alternative Term	10-12
Communiqué of 2nd MNLF-DIC-GRP Meeting	13
Bangsamoro CSOs Meet MILF Panel	14
Declaration of Rights and Purposes	15-16
Rebuild the Government	17-18
Peace-keeping Convergence	19
A Call for Peace and Development	20-21
An Analysis on the failure of the GRP-MILF Exploratory talks ..	22
Moros Converge in Basilan calling for a Just Peace	23
CBCS holds Forum for Peace in Davao	24
Stories of Peacebuilding	25-26
A Statement	27
Much Ado About "RIDO"	28-29
Two books from Moro authors launched	29
KFI, CBCS conduct relief	30-31
Chronology of Events	31
Tiyakap Kalilintad Report	32-33
From the Human Rights & Justice Desk	34-35

The Editorial Board

Guiamel M. Alim
Sammy P. Maulana
Mike G. Kulat
Editors

Noraida C. Abo
Jaihun Dalandas
Norodin M. Makalay
Hannan M. Masdoc
Danilo T. Mocsin
Mohamad . Omar
Ahmed Harris R. Pangcoga
Tarhata A. Sambutan
Jocelyn C. Tamon
Lolita U. Tiin
Staff

Daniel B. Ong
Pressia J. Arifin - Cabo
Consultants

The Bangsamoro Journal is the official quarterly publication of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society and funded by the **Stiftung für Kinder (SFK)**.

It aims to mirror the present situation of the Bangsamoro in the country and links them with the rest of the world.

The Bangsamoro Journal welcomes article contributions and/or comments. The editorial board reserves the right to edit all submitted articles for clarity and space consideration. All entries must include sender's name, address and contact numbers. Send your entry/ies to:

The Editorial Board
The Bangsamoro Journal
Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society
KFI Compound, Dofia Pilar Street,
Poblacion 4, Cotabato City
9600 Philippines

Or e-mail: cbcs_04@yahoo.com
Visit the CBCS at: www.cbcsi.org

Statements and opinions reflected in the articles are those of the writer/s and do not necessarily reflect those of the CBCS.

EDITORIAL

The Long Road to Peace

Salah Jubair knows too well how long, tortuous, and full of surprises the road is. Reading his second book "The Long Road to Peace: Inside the GRP-MILF Peace Process," which was launched on November 28, 2007, should have been a good exercise to prepare one for the most serious crisis which hit the 11-year old peace process before the year-end.

What happened during the opening of the 15th Exploratory Talks between the two peace panels in Kuala Lumpur on December 15, 2007 came as a total shock to the majority of the MILF supporters and sympathizers. Before the aborted talks, a feeling of optimism pervaded the Bangsamoro communities and civil society, and even most of the members of the MILF panel themselves who already were imagining some 'light at end of the tunnel' scenario. Everybody was hoping that an agreement on Ancestral Domain will be signed, especially after the two sides successfully broke the impasse on the Territory strand during their KL meeting a month before.

The news from KL shattered that short-lived 'jubilation.'

But if there is something which the dramatic walk-out of the MILF panel during the opening day of the Talks has significantly brought out into the open, it is no other than the great divide between the consistency of MILF's position on the Right to Self-Determination issue and the GRP's dilemma on how to sell its peace agenda with the Bangsamoro to the Filipino people without using the alibi of "violating its own Constitution" or the 1996 'Final' Peace Agreement it earlier signed with the MNLF.

The growing impatience and anxiety in the South over the final outcome of the peace process is understandable. The war has been costly — especially on the social side — and the people are tired of it. Negotiating for peace is also being seen as the most viable way of non-violently ending the conflict to correct the historical injustices committed against the Bangsamoro people. But negotiating for peace usually takes a long process. It needs consensus, lot of creativity and patience, and a strong political will which the MILF demands from its negotiating partner.

The CBCS-spearheaded series of mass mobilizations in key cities of Mindanao to dramatize the people's desire for peace and an end to violence did not only manifest the growing organizational strength of the Consortium's network-organizations in the regions. More importantly, it demonstrated the important role a Bangsamoro civil society organization could and should play in the ongoing peace process: to raise public awareness, strengthen popular participation, and to pressure the negotiating parties to continue pursuing the negotiated path to an enduring peace despite all the humps and mud holes along the way.

An Appeal

Break the Stumbling Block that Derails the way to Peace

The peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have been going on-and-off for the past 10 years.

In its start, the government wanted the peace negotiations not to go out from the sphere of the Philippine Constitution. As a revolutionary organization that doesn't recognize the Philippine Constitution, the MILF made it clear to the government that unless the negotiation is brought outside the parameter of the constitution, the peace negotiation would be meaningless and not worth pursuing.

Under a so-called "gentlemen's agreement," for the sake of peace that has long been dreamt of, the MILF agreed not to talk about "independence" as a demand in the negotiations though not necessarily abandoning it. The GRP, then, agreed not to use its constitution as a parameter in dealing with issues in the negotiating table.

In retrospect, during the negotiation between the GRP and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the government was actually trying to influence the MILF to sit with them and be part of the process. But the MILF registered its "wait-and-see" position instead. After the signing of the Final Peace Accord (FPA) of 1996, the MILF proceeded walking down the street to continue its search for a just, viable and acceptable solution to the Bangsamoro problem as it has seen the FPA being clothed by the constitution.

When impasse took place (that has shaken the entire peace process) in the peace negotiation between the GRP and MILF last September 2006 because of the issue of the constitution, the MILF again issued an official statement informing the government that "the GRP-MILF

peace process is passing through a turbulent area." It was an expression of strong protest against the use of the constitution as bound of the process.

These MILF gestures are already enough information for the government to get "out of the room" if it is really negotiating the MILF with candor aiming at finding a lasting political solution to the Mindanao conflict.

The Bangsamoro people and other stakeholders of Mindanao believe that if only the government is having political will and sincere enough in its deal with the revolutionary fronts in Mindanao, it can really find ways to once and for all address the problem not necessarily violating the constitution taking into consideration the MILF has already practically reduced its territorial demand and it is now open for new formula.

In this case, there must be an agreement that will make some changes in the constitution not the constitution that is going to shape the agreement because the MILF, as revolutionary, is operating outside the Philippine laws. We hope that the two parties now in talk would never place in oblivion that any political settlement that may be arrived at will affect the future of more than 10-million Bangsamoro people and native inhabitants.

After the signing of the Final Peace Accord..., the MILF proceeded to continue its search for a just, viable and acceptable solution to the Bangsamoro problem as it has seen the FPA being clothed by the constitution.



CBCS Kutawato RMC Chairman and UNYPAD Executive Director Rahib Kudto speaks at the CBCS-led peace rally calling for the resumption of the government-MILF talks.

Numerous interim peace agreements, since 1997 to date, were painstakingly entered into by and between the GRP and MILF which offered bright hope to the impoverished and oppressed BM people. However it somehow turns to a bitter frustration if the government continues to be heartless, deaf and blind.

The Bangsamoro people can't be blamed if they resort to other means as they find themselves hopeless under this government and they never felt secured.

The MILF peace panel did not attend the 15th exploratory talks scheduled from December 15- 17, 2007 after knowing the government is going to present a totally unacceptable draft on Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) as it reneges from the consensus points on the four strands of ancestral domain. It is also in the government proposal that the "constitutional process" shall be the mode for the implementation of the agreement.

This again gives frustrating information and adds dim hope to the BM people and other peace advocates and perhaps even to the third party facilitator.

The United Youth for Peace and Development, Inc. (UNYPAD) has been worried by the statement issued by MILF peace panel chair Mohagher

Iqbal that "this ugly turn of event in the peace process is taxing the patience of the MILF and the Bangsamoro people." The UNYPAD thinks of the possibility of war that may be resorted to and break out anytime if this baneful attitude of the government that continuously negates the BM's Right to Self Determination remains unabated.

The UNYPAD is appealing to President GMA to respect, recognize and abide by the interim agreements entered into by and between the peace negotiating panels of the GRP and the MILF as withdrawal from it will sink further the government spitefully into the degradation of its moral image and political credibility.

The UNYPAD believes that this is now the time that the government "being democratic state" will decide and use its political will by proposing a political solution based on what the BM people want in order to demonstrate to the world its sincerity and seriousness in the peace process.

The government, being responsible to her people, should always look into and consider the plight of the people who are continuously languishing in the evacuation centers as well as those not dislocated but impoverished due to government negligence to provide basic services.

These people are awaiting the peace panels of both the GRP and MILF to bring back to them good news that will transform their woeful state of life they have been living in for long time into socially, economically and politically progressive and prosperous life free from oppression and injustices.

RAHIB L. KUDTO

National President

United Youth for Peace and Development, Inc
(UNYPAD)

Cotabato City

Overturning the Equation

By IBRAHIM CANANA

In the cosmology of exact science such as mathematics and physics, an equation constitutes two statements of the same value separated by the equal sign. The mathematical rule on basic equation states that when addition, subtraction, multiplication or division of variables take place on one side of the equation, the same process of addition, subtraction, multiplication or division of variables of equal amount should be applied on the other side. This is to maintain the equation, the balance. Otherwise when one process is applied on one side without applying the corresponding process on the other, the equation is overturned; hence, it is no longer an equation. The formula it produces is wrong.

In the peace negotiation between the MILF and the GRP, this rule on equation applies. Negotiation to resolve conflicts, such as that between the MILF (Bangsamoro) and the GRP (Filipino), basically involves 'balancing compromise' by both sides. It is in this mutually agreed compromise that the rule on equation is applied and followed. The 'give-and-take' dynamics of the peace negotiation is an application of the rule of equation. And when this rule is broken by either side, the equation is overturned and the negotiation inexorably ends in failure.

Let me cite an example. This rule was applied at the very beginning of the MILF's entry into peace talks in 1997 and again in 2001 with the GRP. When both parties decided to sit at the negotiating table, there was a compromise. On one side of the 'equation' was the MILF which agreed not to raise the issue of Moro independence in the negotiation; on the other side was the GRP which, to balance the MILF's concession, agreed not to invoke the Philippine Constitution as framework for negotiation.

To illustrate this point further, there was another compromise by both sides in the course of the peace talks. While the Bangsamoro people have valid historical sovereign claims to their usurped ancestral domain and homeland comprising the whole of Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan which, albeit grudgingly, even the GRP acknowledged, the

MILF, for the sake of 'balanced compromise' and practicality, has substantially reduced the scope of this claim to areas, territories and provinces where the Bangsamoro people are in the majority.

The larger part of Mindanao stays with the Filipino colons (settlers). On the other side of the equation, the GRP agreed and conceded to hand control over these remaining Moro territories to the MILF and the Bangsamoro people without much ado. Balance in the equation is thus maintained. The Bangsamoro people will get back what is left of their ancestral domain and will be able to reconstitute, reconstruct and govern their national homeland while the GRP retains a large swathe of Mindanao and Palawan for its colons. Fair enough.



The GRP and MILF negotiating teams sign a communique at the conclusion of the 7th Exploratory Talk on April 2005. (File photo)

Another example is the matter of Bangsamoro right of self-determination. Much can be said about this matter but suffice to say that the right of self-determination is a legitimate right accorded to all peoples and nations under international law. It is, in fact, a human right which the GRP, or the MILF for that matter, cannot deny and suppress.

In the negotiations, both MILF and the GRP in principle have taken on the obligation to honor the right of the Bangsamoro people to self-determination. This is the meaning of the phrase in the MILF-GRP

Tripoli Agreement on Peace 2001 which states that the Bangsamoro people will "determine their future and political status" thus qualifying the word "freedom" cited in the same document.

That both parties, therefore, have accepted the fact that the issue of Moro right of self-determination has to be eventually addressed by the peace negotiation whether now or in the future is quite explicit and unequivocal not only in the Tripoli Agreement on Peace 2001 but more so in the official communication of then GRP Peace Panel chair, Secretary Silvestre Afable, Jr., to Mohaghir Iqbal, MILF Peace Panel chairman, on November 9, 2006 reaffirming the GRP's recognition of Moro right of self-determination.

Notwithstanding, following the rule of equation governing the negotiation, even the issue of right of self-determination had to undergo the process of give-and-take.

The principle of right of self-determination cannot be subjected to compromise; but, the time frame and modality for the exercise thereof can be formulated to conform to the mutual liking of both parties. It is in the time frame and modality that a compromise between the MILF and the GRP was reached. The GRP proposed a transition period before the "determination of future and political status" is implemented to which the MILF agreed in principle; the MILF, on the other hand, presented the idea of a plebiscite as a modality for determining political status, to which the GRP agreed also in principle. Though the political options attendant to the right of self-determination have not been openly and officially defined and discussed by both parties, nonetheless there was consensus – an agreement in principle - as to time and manner by which this right is to be exercised by the Bangsamoro people.

Lest it be misconstrued, the right of self-determination is understood by both parties to the negotiation as a right that does not automatically grant political independence to the Bangsamoro people. What this right implies is the collective right of choice by the Bangsamoro people; that is, to freely choose their preference in the wide spectrum of political options that includes but not limited to independence. The transition period gives the Philippine nation-state the appropriate length of time to rectify all past and

present injustices committed on the Moro and thus prove itself worthy of the loyalty of the Bangsamoro people. On the other hand, the plebiscite is a democratic exercise of right of self-determination at the end of the transition period which would determine whether the Bangsamoro people want to remain as citizens of the Philippine Republic (and if so, under what political arrangement?) or to be an independent state.

In both propositions, the GRP's and the MILF's interests are equally at stake. But this is where the sincerity of both sides is ultimately tested. If the transition period fails due to the GRP's fault, the Bangsamoro people might vote for independence in the plebiscite. If, however, the Bangsamoro people vote to stay within the national and territorial sovereignty of the Philippine nation-state, then the MILF loses its *raison d'être* as a revolutionary movement and has to accept the will of the people.

This is the equation in what is supposed to be the peace process. All things being equal, it is a workable formula – in fact, the only viable formula – given the sovereignty-based character of the conflict we are now in.

Negotiation to resolve conflicts, such as that between the MILF (Bangsamoro) and the GRP (Filipino), basically involves 'balancing compromise' by both sides. It is in this mutually agreed compromise that the rule on equation is applied and followed. The 'give-and-take' dynamics of the peace negotiation is

In any case, the point here is that for as long as both parties follow the rule of equation, the correct political formula is within reach. The peace process moves forward nearer its objective: the resolution of the Bangsamoro Problem and the conflict it has spawned.

A serious problem, however, arose when the GRP deviated from the rule of equation. In the dynamics of balanced give-and-take, it wants something more than what the MILF can concede on the negotiating table. Worse, the GRP is retrieving what it has already conceded to the MILF pursuant to the rule of equation in the negotiation.

Firstly, the GRP now wants to re-examine the agreements and consensus points crafted and signed with the MILF on the negotiating table in the light of the Philippine Constitution. This is a departure from the first compromise.

Secondly, it demands that the territories, areas and provinces already conceded to the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (Bangsamoro state) be subjected to congressional approval and/or constitutional processes. This is likewise a violation of the first compromise.

Thirdly, it refuses to include the strand on governance in the proposed Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain. The strand on governance is one

of the four mutually approved strands on Ancestral Domain that went through intensive discussion at the Technical Working Group (TWG) level, the result of which were the twenty-nine TWG consensus points on Ancestral Domain subsequently approved by both parties at the panel level. The act of excluding the strand on governance in the MOA on Ancestral Domain is plain and simple sabotage.

And fourthly and finally, it wants Bangsamoro right of self-determination taken out of the agenda of the peace process. This is not only reneging on the previously agreed principles but a wanton renunciation of, and manifestation of contempt for, international law which the Philippine nation-state constitution claims to be a part of the law of the land. This is not addressing the root cause of the Bangsamoro problem but prolonging the conflict in Mindanao for the incoming generations to inherit.

When the GRP resorted to these measures, the rule of equation has been violated. The equation no longer exists. The balance ceases to function.

OFFICIAL STATEMENT

A Call for Sincerity and Political Will

The pull-out of the International Monitoring Team (IMT) led by the Malaysian Government has created several reactions or statements from various sectors.

The Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) has declared it was surprised of the pronouncement by Malaysia regarding IMT's "phased pull-out" but it "respects and accepts their latest decision." The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has asserted that Kuala Lumpur "is doing the right thing".

Let it noted however that said pull-out is not at all a surprise. The Malaysian Government has been sincere and honest in mediating the GRP-MILF Peace Talks. And we value and treasure this very much. Nevertheless it must have already been fed up by the way the Philippine Government has been "playing around" with the peace talks.

Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno has said

government should not give in to MILF's demand for a Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE) without a plebiscite, and Armed Forces Vice Chief Lt. Gen. Antonio Romero said peace talks would not continue without disarming the MILF.

Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte has said in his television program "Gikan sa Masa, Para sa Masa" (From the masses, For the masses) that he thinks the government is just playing around in the talks with the MILF.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita had once told a group of non-government workers from Mindanao that the Arroyo administration policy vis-à-vis the GRP-MILF Peace Talks is 'paikutin lang' (to play around)."

Secretary Jesus Dureza, the presidential adviser on the peace process, assessed the impasse as "among the most serious to stall the rocky talks, a big hump" upon which the Philippine government has

no "magic formula" while "looking for a way out".

To recall, when GRP-MILF Peace Talks was in full swing, the Bangsamoro was so hopeful that finally a just and lasting peace will shine again in their homeland. United States Ambassador to the Philippines Kristie Kenney even visited the MILF camp and expressed support to the peace process.

However, the IMT pull-out has again pushed the prospects of restoring peace in Mindanao—which has been a long yearning of both the native inhabitants and migrants in this land—to uncertainty.

This is not amazing because the government's record or performance in peace talks is not fulfilling. GRP forged a peace accord with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1996 but a decade later the MNLF has not been satisfied with the implementation and cried for tripartite review of said accord. GRP also engaged peace talks with the National Democratic Front (NDF) but the latter withdrew because while the peace talks was ongoing, military offensives were launched by the GRP against the New People's Army (NPA). And now the MILF suffers the same situation.

Ahead of Malaysia's pull-out from IMT, GRP has now been busy in flexing its arms: spreading propaganda and boosting its military capacity. The military wanted an "emergency procurement" for nearly 1.6 billion pesos worth of artillery and explosives; procurement of thousands of rockets, howitzers and mortars as part of its "regular build-up". Furthermore, the Department of Defense has been asked to scrap bidding procedure for said weapons in favor of an "emergency procurement." What GRP has been doing sends a strong message of preparation for large-scale war— an undisputed threat to national security! God forbid!

Given all these scenarios, the Bangsamoro people could only hope that— if only Manila has the strong political will and creativity to pursue peace talks and implement agreement, it can adopt the experience of other countries without invoking constitutional process. For at the onset of the GRP-MILF peace talks, the consensus between the two parties was clear: GRP will not refer to Constitution and MILF will not demand for independence.

We therefore urge Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to exercise her full power both as President of the Republic of the Philippines and

as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to uphold the primacy of the peace talks over military solution to address the centuries-old Mindanao problem!

The civilian is at all times superior over the military as demonstrated by her positions. Military actions and circumventing peace talks are inutile as proven in history. They can only produce superficial peace because they are not based on justice. Justice delayed is justice denied.

Let neither the forthcoming ARMM elections nor the pushing for Constitutional Change impede the resumption of GRP-MILF the talks and signing of a peace agreement, or be a stumbling block in honest review of the government-MNLF final peace accord.

We appeal to the MILF and MNLF to exercise extra patience in dealing with the GRP in peace talks.

Likewise, we call on both the local and international community to help us Mindanaoans to attain the kind of peace that we want, not what others want for us! Be with us in pushing the talks forward!

(Sgd.) TIMOGEN TULAWIE
Chairperson, CBCS Sulu Region

(Sgd.) MAGUID MARUHOM
Chairperson, CBCS Sibugay Region

(Sgd.) NATHAN INSUNG
Chairperson, CBCS Basilan Region

(Sgd.) MUNIB KAHAL
Chairperson, CBCS Zamboanga Region

(Sgd.) RAHIB KUDTO
Chairperson, CBCS Kutawato Region

(Sgd.) SALIC IBRAHIM
Chairperson, CBCS Ranaw Region

(Sgd.) OSCAR SULAIMAN
Chairperson, CBCS Rajah Buayan Region

(Sgd.) SAMIE BUAT
Chairperson, CBCS Dabaw Region

(Sgd.) SAMMY P. MAULANA
Secretary General, CBCS

IN SEARCH FOR AN ALTERNATIVE TERM FOR THE LUMAD (*TALAINGED*)

By **SAMUEL M. BRIONES**

[The author is a Professor at the Mindanao State University (MSU) Main Campus in Marawi City.]

Collectively, the term *Lumad* as the identity of the almost a million non-Muslim, non-Christian cultural communities in Mindanao, is more like food pushed down the throat rather than it being swallowed freely or enjoyably. While Lumad may have been the chosen term among representatives of fifteen (15) out of eighteen (18) ethnic groups during a Tribal Congress in Kidapawan, (North) Cotabato in June 1986 (Magdalena Manuscript, 1996) it is not altogether a favorable action and at present causing irritation and friction and therefore deserves a reconsideration. At best, it could have been stated or agreed upon as a temporary or ad hoc identity until the future can discover the right. As it is, it has been ten (10) years since its adoption. There are other groups who feel rather betrayed by such an externally imposed label. They may not be overt in their distaste for the term but if one were to ask some other 'Lumad' what they feel and think about the term, almost immediately, they would react with their self a scripted identity and insist that they are what they believe they are.

Citing Rodil (1994) Magdalena explains that the term Lumad is derived from a Visayan (Cebuano) word which means 'indigenous'. It is therefore a generic term. Indigenety as a reason should not be the gauge for labeling a cultural aggrupation as such knowing that these 18-old groups have different degrees of indigenous traits, beliefs, values and systems. Nevertheless, the term Lumad is an alien coinage which deviates from what ought to be an acceptable norm of usage, which is self-ascription. Adopting a foreign term is anathema to the avowed self-determination they are wont to espouse. Magdalena refers to the term Lumad as awkward. He also refers to the Lumad as the "othered other."

In any encounters with various Mindanao indigenes, I have noted some terms, which they allude separately to themselves, and not how others refer to themselves.

A Sample Checklist of Surrogate Terms

1. TUMA-O, a generic term among the Manobo and other splinter groups of the Bukidnon-Agusan del Sur rainforest borders, to mean "guardian" or "protector" of their habitat. Any group can claim to be a TUMA-O as long as they believe themselves to be the 'true resident guardian' of their own forestalls territories. To me, this term has its advantage because at least it has the phonological usage of TAO (from TUMA-O or person or human. In a sense, he is the Lumad personified. In the usage of the term, the people feel a tinge of pride when they emphasize, "We are the rightful TUMA-O in this place." By the term they feel the obligation to defend and protect their habitat, including a responsibility and accountability to neglect and destruction of their immediate ecological niche. Thus, when we say TUMA-O, it alludes to the original persons who people these vast terrains in Mindanao. As mentioned earlier, it also refers to people who "guard" their habitat; the "resident" of their abodes, and "protectors" and "defenders" of their respective landscapes. The term TUMA-O may mean many things. While the term Lumad may have been used for sometime now, it has not been well defined and it seems its meaning is very limited.

Collectively, the term *Lumad* as the identity of the almost a million non-Muslim, non-Christian cultural communities in Mindanao, is more like food pushed down the throat rather than it being swallowed freely or enjoyably.

Ethnicity Problems

2. Mahinged (Matigsalog of Sinuda, Kitaotao, Bukidnon) and Mag-inged (Maranao of Lanao. Note the very close similarity of the use of the suffix *inged* to mean "native" of a community. This is understandable knowing the geographic proximity of these two provinces.
3. Manuna (Tala-andig of Bukidnon and Higa-onon of Misamis Oriental). This is a term that means "first." This is also the name of a character in one of their folk tales. They believe that they were the first or the original inhabitants in the areas and that they never saw or encountered other types of people in their mountain boundaries.
4. Tagakalasan (among the tribes of Agusan del Sur and Bukidnon) and Kalasanon (among the Manobo of Sultan Kudarat and Agusan del Sur). Note again the term Kalasan in both terms. It means "wild", "feral" or "primitive." These are the characteristic traits among those who are still in the interior mountain recesses and who have not yet been in contact with other groups other than their kind.
5. Umayamnon, Pulangion, Tigwahanon, Subanon. These are placement names which refer to those who inhabit the watershed of Umayam River; Pulangi River and Tigwa River. These natives refer to themselves with these terms as a distinction from those who reside in other river basins. The term Subanon refers to another ethnic group sparsely found in Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur and Misamis Occidental. It also refers to people who live by the Suba (river). The suffix on or non-adjectives the proper noun. Nevertheless, these are the examples of self-ascription where groups refer to themselves as they see themselves not what or how others would call them.

It is perhaps more respectable if they chose their own term and not to use a suggested nomenclature like LUMAD. These terms, as mentioned earlier are a few of the possible many more. There may be others later to be discovered. These are merely alternative sobriquets.

These IP women take comfort from the shades as some of their local leaders performs a peace pact with Maguindanaon tribal leaders Carmen, North Cotabato in the presence of CBCS.

Firstly, ethnologists, anthropologists, historians and other concerned fieldworkers are faced with the difficulty of formulating a comprehensive classification of neatly delineating ethnic groups (in Mindanao alone) due to distinct cultural traits of each group. There is the prevalent problem of proper cultural identification where ethnic labels are not what they seem. There still exists confusion in the usages on who the different **Obo** groups are (i.e. Manobo, Bagobo) and who the different man natives are (i.e. Mandaya, Mansaka, Manguangan, Manobo). Even the term Bukidnon is a misnomer due to the denotation and connotation attached to the term.

Secondly, there are shifts in ethnic category by virtue of their economic and political statuses, preferences and alignments. This can be exemplified when a certain area is declared as "Calamity area" and therefore is entitled to relief goods and financial assistance. These so-called Lumads normally shift to being identified as "victims of calamity" (Even if they are very distant from the declared zone) in order to partake of the boon and goods intended for the area. Politically, their allegiance and ethnic identity may shift to the politician who can deliver the needed projects for the, or employment or cash as the case maybe. In both cases, ethnic labels are flexible.

Thirdly, ethnic boundaries are not clear-cut and multiple criteria are frequently used in native classification. This perspective does not prejudice which criteria are likely to be significant in ethnic identification. In truth and in fact, ethnic identities change and people become something else and



cross boundaries. This can be seen in an example of a male Cebuano lowlander who married a female native Manobo (Lumad) in order to avail himself of the privileges of owning or to be part owner of ancestral lands and/or be a recipient of ancestral land certificates. It becomes more difficult for government agencies to decide who the "real natives" are and so the process of distribution of CAD-C is fraught with discrepancies and dishonesty due to misconceived identities.

Lastly, there are really sharp disjunctures between ethnic groupings. In their language as case in point, each group's vernacular (dialect) are so intelligible so much so that they can move to and fro or linguistically commute across ethnic boundaries with a measure of ease. And this is partly due to their ecologically propinquity with one another.

There maybe other problems I cannot include now and perhaps other scholars could add to it for a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

As intermarriages occur,
the genetic strains
become chaotic and
irreversible. This will have
a ripple effect on their
identities and ethnicity.

Ways of Foreign Researchers

This confusion on ethnic identities may have stemmed from earlier researchers who came to conduct fieldwork in Mindanao. Founded by grants from their respective Colleges, Universities and Science Foundations, they came to gather data upon mineful of data for their Masteral (MA) or Doctoral (Ph. D) degrees. They hired local students as Research Assistants on the pretext of learning from them. The local was minimally paid in pesos even if the budget was computed in dollars; the actual difference was diverted to what they then called "booze, belles and bed." They made a lot of assumptions that were misconstrued to be facts. And we, the native Pinoy tended to believe their brand of scholarship to the point of accepting and never questioning their mythology. Because we were paid, we acquiesced. Not anymore.

Filipino researchers have matured for such undertakings. We need not depend or rely on the foreigner anymore to do things for us. By our own initiative, crude it maybe, we can be certain that the information generated will be much more widely available to us than being used outside by foreigners. I believe we can still remedy the situation by conducting our own in depth research on the generational composition and degree of intermarriages among these groups. This has to be done soon before more admixtures; accretions and dilutions are introduced into the already mixed stock.

There has to be a solution to these confusing labels. As intermarriages occur, the genetic strains become chaotic and irreversible. This will have a ripple effect on their identities and ethnicity.

Recommendations

In addition to what I have already cited as immediate need for in-depth research, perhaps the following suggestions may be considered.

If and when Mindanao tribes gather again for a Congress, Festival or Anniversaries, this issue on an alternative name be done so that new terms maybe added, with the end-in-view that a common name be adopted that would typically describe and identify them as a distinctive collectivity.

The Offices of the Southern Cultural Communities can convene leaders and members of these groups and come up with their suggested and preferred names. It is also herein proposes that members involved in this search exercise must be 50 years old or older. Furthermore, no meztizo will be allowed to participate in order that the group would not have any admixtures and to maintain the 'purity' of native bloodline. It is also perhaps high time that the use of the term Lumad be gradually discouraged from our language habits, cultural expressions and mindsets. Unlearn the term or at least control, curb and curtail the usage of such until a proper substitute or a more appropriate replacement has been decided. Reactions are also solicited from scholars to contribute to this search or express opinions for or against, in order to enrich the dearth in knowledge this subject matter.

Communiqué of 2nd MNLF-OIC-GRP Meeting

Communiqué of the Second Session of the Tripartite Meeting among the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, the Moro National Liberation Front and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

Istanbul, 14-16 February 2008 (7-9 Safer 1429)

Introduction

In the implementation of agreements reached during First Session of the Tripartite Meeting among the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP), the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) convened in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on 10-12 November 2007, the Second Session of the Tripartite Meeting was held in Istanbul, Turkey on 14-16 February 2008.

In accordance with the Communiqué of the Jeddah Meeting, the Second Session of the Tripartite Meeting was held to consider the Reports of the five (5) Joint Working Groups (JWGs) meetings, held in Manila on 3-7 January 2008. The OIC reaffirmed the need for the Tripartite Meeting to preserve the gains in the implementation of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement (FPA).

In his opening remarks, the Secretary-General of the OIC stated that he, on behalf of the OIC, expects that the two sides would submit a consolidated, unified report which would include consensual solutions for existing problems.

The Meeting was presided over by H.E. Ambassador Rezman I. Jenie, Director-General for Multilateral Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, in his capacity as the Chairman of the OIC-Peace Committee for the Southern Philippines (OIC-PCSP), with the attendance of the following Members: Brunei Darussalam, Republic of Egypt, Republic of Indonesia, the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, the Republic of Turkey, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of Senegal and the OIC Peace Envoy for Southern Philippines.

The Delegation of the GRP was headed by Undersecretary Nabil A. Tan, Deputy Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and the Delegation of the MNLF was headed by MNLF Vice Chairman Jimmy L. Labawan (also known as Samir Abdul Nasir) with Chief Negotiator Attorney Randolph Parcasio.

The Meeting adopted its agenda composed of one item, namely the Consideration of the Reports of the five (5) Joint Working Groups and Further Actions.

The Meeting welcomed the holding of the five (5) JWGs Meetings as called for by the First Tripartite Meeting and expressed its appreciation to all the representatives of OIC-PCSP Member Countries in Manila for facilitating the JWGs on 3-7 January 2008.

The Meeting commended the GRP and the MNLF for the timely implementation of the outcomes of the First Tripartite Meeting.

Outcomes of the Second Tripartite Meeting

The Meeting considered the Reports of the JWGs and noted that the GRP and the MNLF have presented their positions clearly in separate reports. The Meeting instructed the JWGs to examine further the positions of the two sides in order to arrive at commonalities by examining those provisions of the 1996 FPA which were not fully implemented and come up with mutually acceptable solutions.

The Second Tripartite Meeting agreed on the following:

1. The GRP and the MNLF reaffirmed their commitment to the primacy of the 1996 FPA in order to provide a congenial environment for its unhampered implementation.
2. The five (5) JWGs are given expanded mandates to work at formulating possible proposals to amend the RA 9054 to ensure the full implementation of the 1996 FPA. Experts may be invited to assist in the exercise of their mandates.
3. The Meeting underscored the cardinal importance of social economic development but outlined that such development is conditional on the creation of a climate of peace and security through confidence building measures that include rehabilitation, relief, and reconstruction and attending to the problems of internally displaced people. Both parties should jointly undertake these exercises under the framework of the JWGs.
4. A progress report on the work of the JWGs would be submitted by May 1st 2008 so that it can be considered by the 3rd Session of the Tripartite Meeting scheduled to be held on 12-15 May 2008, for the consideration of the subsequent transmittal to the 35th Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Kampala, Uganda.

Closing

At the conclusion of the Meeting the delegates of the GRP and the MNLF expressed their thanks to the OIC for convening this Tripartite Meeting and to its Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA) for the excellent arrangements. They reconfirmed their full commitment for the success of the peace process in the Southern Philippines.

BANGSAMORO CSOs MEET MILF PANEL

By MIKE G. KULAT

The author is Peace Program Coordinator of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society and presently the Coordinator for the CBCS Central Mindanao Cluster.

Nearly a hundred leaders and representatives of Bangsamoro Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and some heads of government agencies recently attended a consultation meeting last January with the members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Panel negotiating with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP).

The MILF Panel was composed of Mohagher Iqbal (Chairman), Attys. Michael Mastura, Musib Buat and Lanang Ali. Al Camlian and Jun Mantawil, heads of the MILF Panel Secretariat and of the MILF Technical Committee respectively, were also present at the consultation. Prof. Abhoud Syed Lingga of the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies (IBS) moderated the activity.

The consultation meeting was part of the advocacy and information campaign of the GRP-MILF Panels to raise public awareness on the status of the current peace negotiations. The activity was initiated by Guiamel Alim, Chairperson of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) and Executive Director of Kadtuntaya Foundation Inc. (KFI) in cooperation with the Cotabato City-based CBCS Kutawato Regional Management Committee network member organizations.



MILF Vice-Chairman for Political Affairs Ghadzali Jaapar updates the CSO representatives on the current status of the GRP-MILF negotiation in this another meeting with the CSOs held in Simuay, Sultan, Kudarat, Maguindanao.

Triggering the initiative was the recent positive development in the GRP-MILF Peace Talks after its 14-month 'impasse' starting in September last year due to disagreement over the contentious issue on territory of the proposed Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE). During the October 24-25, 2007 'exploratory talks' by the two panels in Malaysia, they were able to iron out major variances in their respective positions and eventually scheduled their next exploratory talks on middle of November 2007.

Mohagher Iqbal, Chairman of the MILF Panel and concurrent Chief Information Officer of the MILF Central Committee, updated the participating CSOs and government leaders on the current status of the peace talks. He started from a brief background, the present status and the upcoming re-opening of the exploratory talks.

Iqbal expressed optimism that something positive will be reached in the next round of talks. He emphasized that the other three strands of the Ancestral Domain Aspect — concept, resources, and governance — have already been "70 percent agreed" in principle by the two panels. Nevertheless, he said: "We still need to put a finishing touch to the remaining unresolved issues on the above three strands including the issue of territory."

Only after resolving the above remaining issues that both panels will be able to dovetail the outcome of the current Ancestral Domain Aspect with the past interim agreements (on Security; Humanitarian and Rehabilitation; and Development) in a Memorandum of Understanding that will be signed in the future, i.e. shall the talks go smoothly.

Iqbal, however, cautioned that it is not yet "the end of the tunnel" or seeing "light at the end of a tunnel". The negotiations still have to go on, he said, for a "comprehensive peace compact agreement" which will serve as a political solution to the age-old Bangsamoro problem.

DECLARATION OF RIGHTS AND PURPOSES

[Addressed to the
Congress of the United
States of America]

Zamboanga, P.I.
February 1, 1924

Whereas a group of politicians, leading blindly certain elements of the population who have a faith and culture different from our own, as well as widely different political aspirations, have raised a clamor and outcry against the continuation of American sovereignty in the Philippine Islands, thereby jeopardizing our hope of prosperity, liberty, and economic security, through the possibility that the Congress of the United States of America might in opportunely withdraw its sovereignty from these Islands, permitting thereby to be created an independent government under which the Mohammedan or Moro Nation would be destroyed or placed under galling yoke, we, the following representatives of the Moro Nation, do, in the same Creator, worshipped by Christian and Mohammedan alike, set forth the following solemn declaration of our rights, principles and intention for which we pledge our lives and fortunes:

Assuming that in the course of time the United States of America will grant complete independence, or a larger measure to the Philippine islands, and due to the fact that insecurity of political tenure of the United States and the threat of political domination of our people by the Christian Filipino majority in the islands of Luzon and Visayas is holding back the economic development of our country, and causing no little unrest and unhappiness to our people, we hereby submit the following suggestion for the solution of our present difficulties to the consideration of the Congress of the United States of America.

First. We are not seeking temporary or palliative measures. We ask for a solution which will be permanent and lasting in its effect. Therefore, we propose that the Islands of Mindanao and Sulu, and the Island of Palawan be made an unorganized territory of the United States of America.

In order that we may be fair to the Filipinos and in order that they may not arise on outcry to the effect that we wish to dismember the Philippine islands, we proposed that 50 years after independence may have been granted the rest of the Philippine Islands, a plebiscite be held in the proposed territory will be incorporated in the government of the Islands of Luzon and Visayas, remain a territory, or become independent.

This would apply the principles of justice and equity to all elements of the population and imply a government through the consent of the governed.

Second. That a simple form of government be designed for the new territory, taking into consideration that through lack of education in English or Spanish our people can not hope to exercise suffrage for at least two generations, and with the following objects in view:

(1) Justice and equity for Christian, Mohammedan, pagan, and foreigners alike. In order to attain this we must have Americans in high places to act as referees between our tribal and religious demarcations.

(2) No dominations of one element over another.

(3) Freedom of speech and religion.

(4) Every opportunity for American capital to develop the natural resources of our country, thereby affording our people the opportunity to progress in the arts and sciences and in agriculture, as well as to use the lessons of the schoolroom after leaving school. At present, there is no outlet for the talents and energies of our youths, owing to the economic prostration of our country.

(5) That the school system be reformed under American

teachers and made suitable to the needs and prejudices of the Mohammedan population.

Whereas we enjoy none of the above benefits in their fullest measure, and

Whereas we do not even enjoy the right of petition and redress of wrongs which the Constitutions of the United States insures to its citizens, owing to the fact that we have addressed petitions without number to the Governor General even when he has been disposed to grant our desires he has found himself helpless to aid us, owing to the provisions of organic act known as the Jones Law:

Therefore we, in representation of nearly half a million Mohammedan residents of Mindanao and Sulu, do solemnly affirm and declare-

That we are loyal unto death to the United States.

That in proof of this loyalty we have pledge ourselves by the most solemn oath known to Mohammedans, to die rather than submit to domination by Christian Filipinos from the north, and, if necessary, to die in order that the United States Congress, which therefore has lent a deaf ear to our petitions, may now hear us.

That in the event that to the United States grants independence to the Philippine Islands without provision for our retention under the American flag, it is our firm intention and resolve to declare ourselves an independent constitutional sultanate to be known to the world as the Moro Nation. It is the duty of the Congress of the United States to make provision at once for the security and protection promised to us when we surrendered our arms to the United States Army. This promise is just as sacred as any alleged promises you may have made to the Christian Filipinos. You have left us defenseless, and it is your duty to protect us to return to us our weapons you took from us which we freely gave you, relying on your promises.

That while it is not our desire to do so, by disregarding our rights and wishes while at the same time conceding political and economic favors to the Christian Filipinos, favors which are in turn used against us, you are forcing us surely and steadily

to recourse to desperate and bloody measures, which are abhorrent to us, in view of our loyalty to the American Flag, our Governor General, and our gratitude to the United States for the liberty and security of life which we enjoyed until you delegate your power and authority to the Christian Filipinos.

We complain that we have not one representative in the Philippine legislative elected by direct vote of the people. Our meager representation is through representatives appointed by the Governor General, who must have the approval of a Senate controlled by Filipinos. Hence such representation is a farce.

We complain that the Philippine Legislature appropriates 1,000,000 pesos per annum for pro-independence propaganda, thereby forcing us to contribute through taxation without representation to the efforts of certain Christian Filipinos to sever the bonds between us and the United States, all of which is not in accordance with our wishes.

We complain that when our people, including women and children, have been shot down by the constabulary or otherwise maltreated investigations have been conducted in such manner as to gloss over the truth.

We complain that in spite of the large volume of evidence of misgovernment of our people presented to the Wood-Forbes Commission and subsequently to the Governor General, nothing whatever has been done to assure our people that reforms meeting without approval would be undertaken, for the reason that the power to institute reforms lies in yourselves and not in the Governor General, the hands of the latter being tied by the provisions of the Jones law.

Among the Signatories:

1. Sultan Mangigin of Maguindanao
2. Hadji Panglima Nuño
3. Datu Sacaluran
4. Maharaja Habing
5. Datu Abdula Piang
6. Datu Benito of Lanao

(Ref.: Salah Jubair, "Bangsamoro: A Nation Under Endless Tyranny," 3rd Edition, October 1999, pp 298-303).

REBUILD THE GOVERNMENT

With Genuine and Meaningful Peoples' Participation

By SAMMY P. MAULANA

The motive of the allies of the president must be thoroughly studied in relation to the question of legitimacy and moral bankruptcy hounding the present administration.

Amidst the continuous doubts over the legitimacy of her presidency, the president is hell-bent on maneuvering everything to perpetuate herself in power.

Unmindful of the shaky legal and moral foundation of her government, she made self-serving issuances, like the Calibrated Preventive Response (CPR), the declaration of State of Emergency, the No Permit-No-Rally Policy and the Non-Attendance of Cabinet Members needed for Senate Inquiries for Aid of Legislation.

In a display of independence and professionalism, the Supreme Court had ruled all these presidential issuances unconstitutional.

Another attempt to subvert the will of the people to press for charter change (CHA-CHA) through the so-called people's initiative was also repudiated by the High Court.

And now, we have the most controversial Anti-Terror Law or the Human Security Act of 2007 which met stiff opposition from various sectors even from the time it was still a bill.

In its Declaration of Principles, our constitution declares that sovereignty resides in the people and all government authorities emanate from them. This is a clear recognition and appreciation of people's participation in nation-building and affirmed by their right to form association and to peaceably assemble to petition the redress of their grievances against the government.



The author is the Secretary - General of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society and presently the Coordinator for the CBCS Western Mindanao Cluster.

It is also in this Declaration that our constitution had guaranteed the right to suffrage to enable us to freely exercise our will to choose a leader whom we think can lead the country towards progress and prosperity.

To uphold the primacy or sanctity of these rights, various laws were enacted to ensure the conduct of clean, honest, accurate, meaningful and peaceful elections to protect the electorates and the sanctity of their ballots.

However, despite all these constitutional enshrinements and guarantees, a clean, honest, credible and peaceful election is yet to happen while the electorates are yet to experience being truly free to exercise their right to suffrage.

For so many years, elections in this country continue to be marred with fraud, terrorism, coercion,

... despite all these constitutional enshrinements and guarantees, a clean, honest, credible and peaceful election is yet to happen while the electorates are yet to experience being truly free to exercise their right to suffrage.

intimidation, vote-buying and the now popular "dagdag-bawas" (vote padding) scheme. Instead of being platform oriented, the election campaign becomes an arena for grandstanding, political bickering, character assassination, mudslinging and name-calling which often end up in violence, political killing, and destruction of properties. In some instances, the winners are already determined even before the election has officially started.

Aside from these election irregularities, the people are not at all free from persecution and arbitrary acts of the state. Those who stood pat in their duty to articulate and assert good governance are branded as enemy of the state and have become vulnerable to abduction, illegal arrest and detention, salvaging or disappearances.

Some people argue that the problem is not in the political system. What we need, they say, are honest, responsible, patriotic and committed leaders.

We may have leaders of this kind at the helm of our national leadership but they failed to institute systemic reforms because their power and authority were influenced and nurtured by the traditional system they represented.

Let us revisit the Edsa 1 and Edsa 2.

The most heralded Edsa 1 had overthrown the 13 year-dictatorial regime of the late President Marcos and installed the Aquino government into power. But what President Aquino and her government had only achieved is the restoration of elitist electoral democracy.

Edsa 2 had ended the abusive and corrupt administration of President Estrada and we had another fresh start with the Arroyo administration. But what President Arroyo and her government did was to only continue the policies of her predecessors. Worse, as President Arroyo becomes insecure and beleaguered during her second term in office, her regime also became more repressive and vindictive to protect and preserve her position and questionable hold on power.

To date, political and economic power still remains in the hands of the few ruling elites in the country while the vast majority continues to wallow in extreme poverty and suffer from social injustice and inequities. The recent Lozada expose' on the high-level corruption in the Arroyo government and the government's hard-handed reaction to it, is but a testimony to how bad governance has been associated to in this country.



Aside from the dilly-dallying tactic of the government in the peace negotiations, the Bangsamoro has always been the target for Human Rights violations such as the warrantless arrests, summary executions and abductions.

There is a need to break away from the vicious cycle of deficit in good governance. There is a need for a government that has the capacity and a political will to assert itself in its mission to build a just and humane society.

The key to its attainment is genuine and meaningful people's participation. It is the very foundation of the kind of government which many of us too envision.

Peace-keeping Convergence

THE NP AND CBCS' TIYAKAP KALILINTAD

Nonviolent Peace Force (NP) is an international organization dealing with civilian unarmed peacekeeping work in conflict-affected regions all over the world. The International Governing Council (IGC) is NP's governing body that conducts regular annual assembly to determine its strategic direction for the coming years.

The assembly was held in Nairobi City, Kenya in North Eastern Africa on September 24 to October 1, 2007. It was attended by one hundred eighty (180) delegates representing NP member-organizations from 48 countries all over the world. The Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) sent its Peace Program Coordinator Mike Kulat to observe in the said international conference.

On top of IGC Conference agenda this year were the following: (1) Updates and sharing of Regional Programs on unarmed civilian peacekeeping, (2) Discussion and Approval of the "Five Year Strategic Plan", and (3) Election of the new set of IGC Officers with two representatives per region.



In this IGC Conference held in Kenya, the CBCS was officially invited as a partner-organization of the NP. The peacekeeping teams of CBCS and NP has been working together in the areas of Maguindanao, Basilan and Sulu.

The Asian region, due to its relatively wider scope, got three representatives (coming from Japan, India and Korea) in the IGC. Among the major thrust of the NPF for the next three years are the recruitment and training of more civilian peacekeepers for possible large scale deployment in armed-conflict affected regions of the world.

CBCS, despite being a non-member organization, has been officially invited to the conference on the basis of its active cooperation with NP's 7-member Civilian Peacekeeping Team now deployed in different "flash-points" of encounters between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Moro resistance forces in the provinces of Maguindanao, Basilan and Sulu. The group is headed by Atif Hamid from Pakistan.

In all these deployments, NP Peacekeeping Teams have been augmented by the CBCS' Civilian Local Peacekeeping Team called Tiyakap Kalilintad (a Maguindanao phrase which means Care for Peace).

Tiyakap Kalilintad had been organized by CBCS in the coverage areas of its seven Regional Management Committees all over Mindanao since late 2003 shortly after the "2003 Buliok War". Its primary task is to help in monitoring and documentation of the implementation as well as violations of the Agreement on the General Cessation of Hostilities or Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) signed on July 18, 1997 in Cagayan de Oro City.

CBCS' Tiyakap Kalilintad is composed of community-based individuals recruited and trained for civilian peacekeeping and peacebuilding work on voluntary basis. Among the trainings and skills given to them were Basic Human Rights Orientation; Para-Legal Work; Monitoring and Documentation Process; Fact-Finding Investigation; and Conflict Management and Resolution.

It should be noted that Tiyakap Kalilintad has a strong presence in Kutawato, Rajah Buayan and Sibugay-Zamboanga Regions and varies in name in other CBCS Regional Management Committee coverage. For instance, it is called "Inengka Kalilintad" in Ranaw Region, "Bantey Basilan" in the province of Basilan, and "Jaga Lupah Sug" in Sulu.

However, NP's Atif Hamid said "it doesn't matter whether CBCS Tiyakap Kalilintad becomes a member-organization or remains as 'partner-organization'. What matters is that we are compatible working with them on the ground as we already had been in the past years up to now."

A Call For Peace and Development

By ABDUL K. SILONGAN

Overtly, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had eternally obliged us, Muslims, to seek Islamic knowledge as part of our individual obligations.

In Islam, non-act on education is like missing the mandatory prayers five times daily. It is, therefore, tantamount to committing sins. Islam cannot be best achieved by means of practicality or by piece of excellent beautiful recitation of litany of words. Instead it always sets matchless but clear-cut paradigms.

To put it clearly, whether we like it or not, in no way that religion should follow us. Otherwise, all of us ought to interminably debate with our own unparalleled senses and non-stop opinions. Nobody would let his or her arguments fail lest others defeat them.

Hence, education is first of it. Without education we may perpetually misconstrue our cultures, religions and the society where we belong, and our obligations as well. Educating ourselves implies perfectly building peace and development, imploring justice and inspiring more people.

Though many of the Muslims today have been ignoring the Madrasah (Islamic school of learning) as primary school of knowledge as being enjoined to every Muslim, they cannot abscond from the realities that of all the studies and knowledge they acquired, the Arabic language is integral to their religion.

Peace education and development may only be best represented if you know exactly yourself, your religion, your cultures, and not setting aside their ideals and aspirations. Otherwise, there would be no authentic peace and development.

But even then, everyone must work hard to achieve peace and justice, for no religion teaches ill acts of terrorism. Islam enjoins perfection, peace, love, care, and respect to humanity and creatures, humility

Peace education and development may only be best represented if you know exactly yourself, your religion, your cultures, and not setting aside their ideals and aspirations.

to Allah (the most perfect), and living according to what the Qur-an and Hadeeth (the tradition of the prophet) promote. Islam keeps you away from eating or acquiring haram (unlawful) earnings, such as from gambling, illegal activities, or even from the interest of money you lent to others. It edifies extreme sincerity, self-discipline and patience in all endeavours.

Through education we are enlightened that the meaning of Islam is sincere, complete submission to only one God (Allah), not worshipping others, and adherence to all His commands and orders, without innovations.

Imagining others and myself without education, where could we be? We might be among the illiterate, closed-minded individuals, or culprits of the society. Education teaches us open-mindedness and opportunities to grow, to be more skilled, able, knowledgeable, trustworthy and "open to change" (SAKTO) fellows, in order to interactively mingle with people from different walks of life, specially when we talk about peace and development.

With many challenges and roles being played, we may not be able to dutifully and adeptly indulge with them without the knowledge. How can we compete with people around us? How can we exactly say our feelings, our senses if without the wisdom and skill? How can we lead and be rightly guided in order to inspire and motivate others? Can we deliver our lectures and speeches in front of hundreds or thousands of people?

Education opens the reality of our belief in Bible, Torah, Zabour, Psalm and Injeel (Gospel) as other books sent down by Allah before the Qur'an. Hence, we need to follow their teachings and respect them.

In Mindanao, if all the people here are erudite, have civilly studied the literature of each ethnic group, and have respected them, lasting peace may no longer be elusive. We must accept life's verity that all of us are inimitable creations of one God. We have our basic needs and demands like the others. God created us with common purpose and individual roles to be played. We may have unique roles to carry out just to achieve the long dreamed peace and development. Attached to our roles are the obligations to properly define our education, vision and mission. It is perhaps imperative for us to ask these questions: Who are we? What roles we want to beseech? To what direction we wish to land. How can we fulfill all of our dreams and aspirations here on earth and in the hereafter?

When we talk about problems in Mindanao, we are all affected. However, it makes us distraught to know that when our dear people in the Congress talk about education, they deviate from the realities. They have considerably assumed that our schools and budget in education are enough. Why don't they visit the grassroots and directly assess the problems? What makes them "very busy" in the Congress? Is it the Country Development Fund? Is it the kickbacks or ZTE commission and the like? Government plays

the very big role to identify problems and to lead! Likewise, the path to peace has become a long and winding road for us. Because of war, many lives have already been lost; money and properties damaged. But still, where are we now? Did we arrive at our target? How hopeful our advocacies and struggles are? Does it imply more hopes have to be kept within us?

We may be with different views but through education we could spark off holistic tranquility, development and love—care for our community. Mindanao is just but a part of this world.

Mahatma Gandhi once said we must be the change we hope to see in this world, and it would always be through deepest education and understanding of What, Where, When, Who, How and Why of our lives? Let us be responsible, accountable, objective, and fair in dealing with what God has bestowed us, and our roles—towards ultimate culture of peace and development.

Mindanao's problem is a matter of common action, same feelings, respect and first-rated TEAMWORK! For God is there, untiringly watching us. So let us keep professional yet the best approach.

If you want to change the world, Mindanao or the Philippines, let us start it from ourselves—with education, good attitudes and enhancing our capabilities. We cannot live without peace and say, "Bahala na si Batman" (Leave all to Batman).

Also read
the

Bangsamoro Updates

The Bangsamoro Updates is the official monthly newsletter of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society.

The Bangsamoro Updates features articles on the recent activities of the CBCS and its members and partners in relevance to the pursuance of Peace, Human Rights and Good Governance.

AN ANALYSIS

On the Failure of the GRP-MILF 15th Exploratory Talks

By RAHIB KUDTO

Did the Philippine Government ever dream of resolving the Bangsamoro problem? Is it the Bangsamoro people the problem? Is the government really true in its efforts in doing some development activities in the Bangsamoro Homeland?

These questions have to be answered in the hope that they will in turn be found to be the answers to the question, "What prompted the government to renege from the consensus points in the four strands of Ancestral Domain Aspect which led to the failure of 15th Exploratory Talks."

Mindanao is explicitly understood to be one of the richest islands in the South East Asia. Undeniably, the Philippine government is getting from Mindanao 50 to 70 percent of its resources and bringing it to Luzon. Yet, in fairness, these resources are also being brought back to Mindanao but already converted into bullets.

Being a weak and corrupt government, it has never dreamt of providing a just political solution that finally addresses the structural cause of the problem. Instead, it really does its best to find ways that the Bangsamoro people's right to self determination will be denied as it, perhaps, believes that the Philippines be reduced to a barren country should it lose Mindanao. This belief is wrong as the Philippines is going to be continuously brought down if intermittent wars remain unabated.

I strongly believe that there are two problems in Mindanao. First, the government problem: It is the struggle of the Bangsamoro people for self determination. The government knows only one solution to it — to offer a political solution within the bounds of the Philippine constitution. Once the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) concurs, the government shall have already touched the finishing line. This has been successfully done to the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Second, the Bangsamoro problem: usurpation of their freedom and right to self determination. This problem requires a single solution — to restore everything usurped.

It is wrong to believe that the Bangsamoro people are the problem of the government. Surely, since the immoral annexation of the Bangsamoro Homeland to the Philippine colonial government, the Bangsamoro people started see the government as their problem. Thus, the Bangsamoro struggle for liberty.

It is again wrong to believe that war ends if the MILF agrees to a solution short of total freedom. It can't control the groups that will come to existence to continue the wrestle till the final political settlement of the problem will be achieved.

Looking at this situation, there is no room to believe that the effort of the government to put up development projects through the Bangsamoro

It is again wrong to believe that war ends if the MILF agrees to a solution short of total freedom. It can't control the groups that will come to existence to continue the wrestle till the final political settlement of the problem will be achieved.

Development Agency is true. Rather, it is an effort to entangle the Bangsamoro freedom fighters and disunite them. This is being advanced with the hope that those who had not been captured in the battle ground will be captured by development activities that will lead to their neutralization.

Having said all these things, it is not a surprise to me that in the course of the ongoing peace negotiations, the Philippine government will renege from its previous commitments as expressed in the consensus points it crafted earlier with the MILF. Never mind if it can put at stake its honor and dignity. Reneging from a previous commitment by an individual is bad enough. But for a state like the Philippines not to be true to its commitments — as it always does — is worse.

Moros Converge in Basilan Calling for Just Peace

About 5,000 men, women, and youth from the different predominantly Moro municipalities of the province of Basilan converged at the Datu Dimala Cultural Center in Lamitan City on February 7, 2008 to call on the government to give back to the Bangsamoro people what was unjustly taken away from them and to protest the continued militarization of their communities here.

This peace and prayer rally was organized by the Basilan Regional Committee of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS-BRMC) led by its Regional Chairperson Nathan Insung, the Executive Director of the Yakan Integrated Resources Development Foundation, Inc., in partnership with the Bantay Basilan Civilian Local Peacekeeping Force and the Inter-CSO Care for Basilan Task Force.

Hon. Al Rashid Sakkalahul, Vice Governor of Basilan, Hon. Tahira Ismael, Mayor of the Municipality of Lantawan and concurrent President of the League of Municipal Mayors of Basilan, Mr. John Ausal, MILF Basilan Spokesperson, Cmdr. Hamid Salahuddin, MNLF Basilan Chairperson, Rev. Maximo Antonio, CAMACOP Minister, Hon. Jubaira Said, Lamitan City Councilor and CBCS Regional Vice Chairperson, Annabelle Lasal, Tipo-Tipo DepEd District Supervisor and IDP leader, and Sammy Maulana, Secretary-General of CBCS, were present in this event.

Rev. Antonio said that "We are all brothers and sisters in the eyes of God. We all come from one Creator. But he admonished the people by saying that, "we should follow the law and the government because the voice of the government can be considered as the voice of God."



Basilan Vice-Governor Al-Rashid Sakkalahul gives a speech during the peace rally in Basilan.

CBCS Secretary-General Sammy Maulana made a counter statement saying that, "while the voice of the government may be considered as the voice of God, it can only hold true if that government is pro-people. However, from the way it is treating the Bangsamoro people in all these years, this government is anti-people. Therefore, the Bangsamoro people should let their voices be heard and be listened to because it is more true that the voice of the people is the voice of God."

"If the peace talks will be broken, and the negotiations will stop, I am 99.9% sure that war will start again," stated John Ausal of the MILF. "The Bangsamoro is [merely] asserting its rights because of the injustice [it has experienced]," he added.

Emphasizing that the peace problem in Mindanao does not only affect the people of Mindanao but the entire Philippines, Cmdr. Hamid Salahuddin of the MNLF said, "if there is no peace in Mindanao, then there will be no peace also in Visayas and Luzon."

Though both the MNLF and the MILF are committed to their respective peace processes with the government, Salahuddin, however, put little stock on their progress, saying in the vernacular that, "I doubt if the government is sincere in negotiating on ancestral domain. Even during our time (MNLF), we were just fooled by the GRP."

Vice-Governor Sakkalahul said, "the people of Basilan want peace and they are united enough to attain this peace. But it can only be attained if no politics is mixed into the effort."

Mayor Ismael believes that, "it is high time for the greater majority of the general public should be aware of the two peace processes because, whether they like it or not, they are affected by it and they will eventually be the end beneficiaries."

The Basilan prayer and peace rally is the second to the last leg of the series of massive peace rallies and public gatherings initiated by the CBCS and its partner Moro CSOs to educate the general public on the progress of the peace process and its relevance to Philippine society, to generate public support, and to build the critical mass to pressure the government to be sincere in its separate peace talks with the MNLF and MILF.

CBCS holds Forum for Peace in Davao

By HANNAN MASDOC

Davao City- January 16, 2008. The series of rallies in Mindanao initiated by the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) was carried out in this city today in a peace forum with the theme "Upholding the Gains of the Peace Processes."

Representatives from the youth, women, religious, student, professionals, academe, provincial and city local government units, and the media from all over Davao Region participated in the forum.

"Being aware" is the key to pursuing the peace processes, said Sammy Buat, CBCS Dabaw Regional Management Committee Chairman. "Recognizing the legitimacy of the Bangsamoro people's struggle in their quest for a just and lasting peace and freedom is among the hurdles of the peace processes since most people do not have a clear understanding of the root cause of the struggle," he explained.

Highlighted in the event were the overview of the present political situation affecting the peace process and the review of the key points in the Joint Working Group's (JWG) findings on the implementation of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement between the MNLF and the GRP.

The key points, according to Mohamad Omar of the CBCS National Office — refer to the summary records of the discussion on the JWG Meetings between the GRP, MNLF and OIC Peace Committee for the Southern Philippines held at the Indonesian Embassy in Makati City.

These points focus specifically on Sharia'h and Judiciary, Special Regional Security Force and Unified Command for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Natural Resources and Economic Development, Political System and Representation, and on Education.

Based on the minutes of the meetings, most of the reviews on the five points did not reach consensus, according to Omar. Instead, the JWG agreed to submit the views and positions from both the GRP and MNLF to the OIC secretariat to be conveyed to the next tripartite meeting.

The aborted meeting on December 2007 between the GRP and MILF peace panels in Malaysia, which shattered hopes for the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on the ancestral domain issue, was also discussed in the forum. The MOA would have paved the way for the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement between the two parties.



Dabaw RMC Chairman Samie Buat is being interviewed by a reporter from a local radio station in Davao City in a presscon succeeding the peace forum.

This scenario is not understood by many, according to Buat, referring to the Christian majority. Rather, they regard Bangsamoro as "antagonistic to the society, either as trouble makers, traitors or terrorists," he lamented.

Balik-Islam (Islam convert) William Banzali pointed out the importance of building solidarity with other members of the civil society, especially the non-Moros, to find a genuine solution to the decade-long Mindanao dilemma.

Meanwhile, Ligaya Abubakar, a representative from the women sector, was concerned about the women and children being the ones bearing "the ugly consequences of war."

By the end of the forum, the participants adopted a statement calling for the negotiating parties "to take the necessary sacrifices in favor of peace and muster enough courage to bring about the long awaited peaceful settlement, for the Government to have a heart to carry out its political will in the realization of the peace processes and for the parties to stretch their patience further to return to the negotiating table and sign an agreement eventually."

Stories of PEACEBUILDING

Its Contextual Application Based on Experiences

By MIKE G. KULAT

The Kisupa-an “Kasabutan Alang sa Kalinaw”

Barangay Kisupa-an is the last Barangay in the municipality of President Roxas in North Cotabato bordering the municipality of Damulog in Bukidnon. It has a population of 2,465 composed of 64% Menuvo, 20% Maguindanaon and 16% Bisayan settlers. Its land area is 3,710 hectares, mainly mountainous with hilly plain valleys. At the time of peace intervention, 22.55% of its inhabitants were considered IDPs, most of them belonging to the Maguindanaon and Menuvo tribes.

Community Peace Dialogues

The peace intervention as an attempt to resolve the conflict in Kisupa-an started in the year 2003. The activity was undertaken by the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) and the NATABUK Federation, an alliance of indigenous people's (IPs) organizations. The peace dialogues were conducted by CBCS for the Maguindanaon IDPs and by the NATABUK Federation for the Menuvo IDPs. During

that time, merging the conflicting tribes into one activity was not possible due to the seriousness of the dispute. The activity was financially supported by the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) under its Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation Program.

Root Causes and Effects of the Conflict

The community peace dialogues were conducted purposely to trace the root causes of the conflict from both stakeholders of the conflict as well as to find out their respective recommendations in resolving the conflict. These dialogues were followed by an in-depth study to validate the issues, and further consolidated in a summit for confidence-building among conflicting parties coming from different tribal areas.

The outcome of the activities revealed that the root causes of the conflict between the two tribes can be traced back to the so-called ILAGA syndrome of the 70's, followed by the Pentagon Gang destabilization attacks on Menuvo communities in 2001. Eventually, the tribal conflict was dragged on to an ideological one due to the AFP-MILF wars.

As an immediate effect of the continuing conflict between the two tribes, at least 700 individuals coming from the villages of Lawitan, Simbahan, Agong, Basag and Turunan were displaced. There were also recorded burning of houses, school building, mosques, and lost of lives on both sides. There were also shared experiences of hunger and poverty due to abandonment of farming fields.



The signing of the Kisupa-an "Kasabutan Alang sa Kalinaw"

After more than a year of continuous dialogues between the Menuvo and Maguindanaon leaders, and community focus group discussions that ended in a summit, they finally decided to seal the resolution of their conflict through the signing of a peace covenant that will embody their principles and commitment for a peaceful co-existence as well as for the mending of the shattered relations between the Menuvos and Maguindanaons.

Compared to other sustaining mechanisms



An AFP Element signs witness to the Kisupa-an Peace Agreement in the presence of other covenant stakeholders.

Thus, on January 20, 2005 the Kisupa-an "Kasabutan Alang sa Kalinaw", a Bisayan vernacular meaning "Agreement for Peace", was signed by the principal signatories coming from leaders of the conflicting parties. Representatives from the LGU of the municipality of President Roxas and national line agencies, timuays and datus from different areas, NGO and PO leaders, AFP representatives from the 40th IB PA, and representatives from the MILF and MNLF also signed as witnesses and as a manifestation of their commitment to support the agreement.

Establishment of a sustaining Peace Mechanism

Shortly after the signing of the peace agreement, the principal signatories were convened to establish a sustaining mechanism that will oversee the implementation of the agreement. This led to the creation of "Task Force Kalinaw" (TFK) composed of key leaders from the conflicting parties.

established in other areas, the TFK's membership is larger and composed not only of those coming from Kisupa-an but even those from outside and adjacent villages or Barangays of Salat, Tankulan and Angga-an in Damulog in Bukidnon. Its primary task is to supervise, monitor and document the implementation of the agreement's provisions. The main function of TFK members coming from adjacent and outside Barangays is to serve as a communication link to other areas during emergency situations.

Significant Impact

The immediate result of the agreement was the return of around 700 IDPs in five villages of Agong, Simbahan, Lawitan, Turunan and Basag who were then able to start a new life.

On the relational aspect, those who cannot see face-to-face before are now together in remolding their shattered relations. They have started to share in the traditional special occasions like "kanduli" and "samayaan" celebrations as manifestation of the revival of their friendship and renewal of their cultures.

Structurally, the barangay officials had become partners in the resolution of tribal conflicts; the peace agreement is supported by LGU Officials and some heads of national line agencies.

On the economic level, the former IDPs are now engaged in a more stable farming and livelihood activities with less fear of being displaced again due to the existence of their peace agreement.

The author is the Peace Program Coordinator of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society and presently the Coordinator for the CBCS Central Mindanao Cluster.

A STATEMENT

CBCS Condemns the Slaying of Fr. Reynaldo Roda, OMI

Abductions, illegal arrests, detentions and extra-judicial killings are not issues of whether such are the evil - doing of a Muslim, a Christian or someone from any religious denomination for that matter. Such actions are barbaric, not tolerable and even condemnable under democratic and civilized societies.

The unlawful death of Fr. Jesus Reynaldo A. Roda, OMI in Tabawan Island, South Ubian, Tawi-Tawi on January 14, 2008 whether by an individual, a group or an organization is a barbaric act that deserves hell and should be met with vehement condemnation.

Father Rey worked in Tabawan for almost ten (10) arduous years as the director of the Notre Dame of Tabawan and as the head of the mission station in the province. People remember him to be a warm-hearted priest dedicated in working for the social and spiritual upliftment of the rural folks in the area. Fr. Rey's ultimate mission in life is to liberate the world from sin.

Reports stated that Father Roda was praying at the chapel when armed men barged in and tried to take him. The priest struggled, resisted, and explicitly told his kidnappers, according to a witness, that he'd rather die than be kidnapped. The fierce statement led to the brutal killing of Father Rey in front of his students and some teachers.

The death of Father Rey is another collateral damage to the decade - long conflict in Mindanao that came at a time when the Government of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) peace talks is hovering. We now have stronger reasons to call and appear to the GRP-MILF Peace Panel and the other "gate keepers" of the peace processes to persist in finding a just and sustainable solution to the Mindanao conflict.

In solidarity with the relatives, congregation, friends of Fr. Rey Roda and the people of Tabawan Island, the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS), along with its over hundred-sixty strong network-member organizations in Mindanao and the Autonomous Region, is joining the universal call for the condemnation of the violent killings and the prompt apprehension of those responsible for this ruthless act.

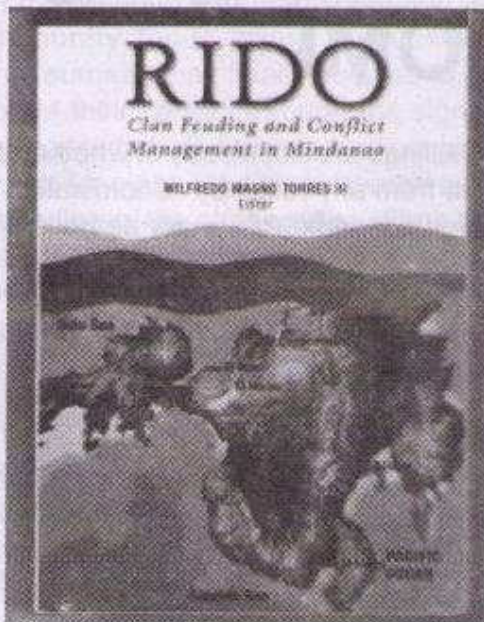
While appreciating AFP's efforts, the CBCS is also cautioning the AFP to be more professional in carrying out their mission, and not to commit acts that are beyond the sheen of the law, and to avoid at all costs the perpetration of human rights violations against those who are innocent.

Issued at Cotabato City, this 17th day of January 2008.

SAMMY P. MAULANA

Secretary-General /
Human Rights Desk Officer
Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society
Cotabato City

MUCH ADO ABOUT "RIDO"



The Asia Foundation (TAF) recently launched a book on Rido entitled "RIDO: Clan Feuding and Conflict Management in Mindanao" which consolidates the output of a research conducted by ten civil society organizations and academe mostly based in Mindanao, among them the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS).

The TAF-funded research on rido and interethnic conflicts was conducted during the year 2004 -2005. Its results were put together in the said book which is authored by Mr. Wilfredo M. Torres III, who also acted as the over-all coordinator of the research project.

The book launching was held at Intercontinental Hotel in Makati City last October 24, 2007 where all the head of organizations which conducted the research were regarded as authors. Four of the organizations' head like Dr. Ofelia Durante of the Notre Dame University Peace Center, Professor Abhoud Syed Lingga of the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies (IBS), Dr. Moctar Matuan of the Mindanao State University (MSU) Marawi City, and Guamel M. Alim of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) were given the opportunity to give their respective remarks during the activity.

A 'social menace'

According to the book's introduction, the research was inspired by the increasing notions that rido is becoming a "social menace" in Moro areas that lasts from generation to generation. In fact, even the International Monitoring Team and the GRP Coordinating Committee on Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) both came up with the results of their studies about rido cases in Mindanao. They concluded that next to the destruction and damages to civilians brought about by the wars between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front is the destabilization brought about by rido.

Source of Conflict or Tool for Conflict Resolution

CBCS Chairperson Guamel Alim, half-jokingly, started his remarks by posing a question to the participants: "Will this book be source of more conflict, or a tool for conflict resolution?"

Later, he quipped that the main reason why conflict of the so called 'rido' in nature is being sustained in Moro areas is that they have their "suppressed unique justice systems". The other reason, he said, is simply the utter failure of the government's justice system to resolve the conflicts involving the Bangsamoro People at individual, group or clan level. And once this takes place, he added, "people will always resort to other justice system or take the law into their own hands."

He ended his message in saying: "If we are to make this book a source of conflict resolution, we should look at its link towards resolution of the age-old Bangsamoro problem." By this, he meant that if the intention is to resolve rido, then there is a need to strengthen the indigenous justice system of the Bangsamoro; for this is the link, he said, towards Bangsamoro's quest for their right to self-determination.

A new ploy?

Notwithstanding the good intentions behind the book's publications, some analysts—including this author—have raised apprehension on the popularization of "rido" as another ploy to attach derogatory words to the Bangsamoro and the Muslims of Mindanao. They based their analysis on historical facts that the Moros and Muslims of Mindanao had already been featured by the colonizers like the Spaniards and the Americans as "barbaric, pirates and traitors". This labeling of negative words had been continued by the colonial government of the Philippines. A typical example

of these is the negative presentation by Philippine media of Moro or Muslims as "Muslim kidnappers, Moro cattle rustlers or Moro cannibals, and many more. Lately, Moros or Muslims have become automatic subject of manhunt operations every time a bomb explodes in any part of the country based simply on their alleged links to "terrorists."

Thus, some critical quarters have raised the question: Is the trend towards popularization of "rido", which is attached only to the Moro and Muslims of Mindanao's diverse ethnical groupings, just another tactic to attach a new derogatory word to Bangsamoro?

Two books from Moro authors launched

Two books written by Moro authors were launched on November 28 and 29, 2007 in Sharif Kabunsuan province and Davao City, respectively.

"The Long Road to Peace: Inside the GRP-MILF Peace Process," written by Salah Jubair, believed to be the pseudonym of Mohagher Iqbal, chair of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) peace panel was launched at Camp Darapanan in Sultan Kudarat town, Shariff Kabunsuan while "Children of the Ever-Changing Moon," an anthology of essays written by young Moro writers, was launched at the National Bookstore in SM, Davao City.

Jubair is also the author of "Bangsamoro: A nation under endless tyranny."

Former government peace panel chair Silvestre Afafe wrote the foreword while MILF peace panel member, Datu Michael Mastura, wrote the afterword of the book published by the Institute for Bangsamoro Studies (IBS).

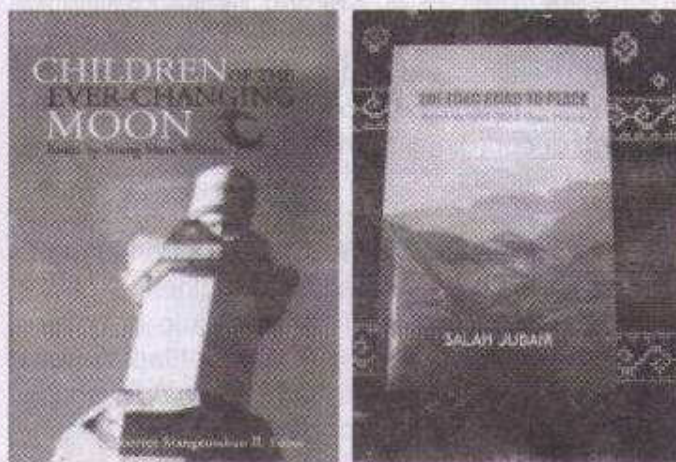
The "Children" book, published by Anvil, is edited by Maguindanaon filmmaker and writer Gutierrez "Teng" Mangansakan II.

The book is the first ever anthology of essays written by young Moro writers.

The book's authors, aside from Mangansakan, are Ayesah Abubakar, Pearlsha Abubakar, Sarah Matalam-Alvarez, Mucha-Shim Quiling Arquiza,

Nefertari Al-Raschid-Arsad, Allyson Banga-an, Ayesha Merdeka Alonto-Datu Ramos, Sittie Jamairah Disomimba, Samira Ali Gutoc, Sitti Djalia Turabin-Hataman, Loren Hallilah Lao, Zainudin Malang, Farida D. Mending, Gonarano B. Musor, and Sahara Alia Jauhali Silongan.

Writers Mangansakan, Ayesah Abubakar, Gutoc and Malang, write columns for MindaNews.



"The milestone book features writers who reflect on issues of identity, religion, relationships, loss, tradition, and change. This anthology presents new voices that offer a glimpse into the life of a people whose opinion, history, and circumstance have somehow been stifled, giving them an important, distinct place in our national imagination," the press statement said. (source:MindaNews)

KFI, CBCS conduct relief operations for IDPs in Datu Piang

By DANIEL B. ONG

DATU PIANG, MAGUINDANAO. (27 January, 2008) — More than a month after the renewed armed clashes between government militias and armed groups allegedly identified with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) that displaced more than 2,000 residents in Datu Piang, Maguindanao, a relief operation was conducted here today by the Kadtuntaya Foundation, Inc. (KFI) and the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS) for the IDPs coming from this town's conflict-affected areas.

A total of more than 100 sacks of relief goods coming from Cotabato City were distributed to about 600 IDP representatives, most of them have been waiting since early morning in front of the KFI's Extension Office (formerly Reconciliation Center), which is located beside the Pulangi River and a walking distance to the red-painted municipal hall of this oldest town in Maguindanao.

Volunteers from CBCS, KFI and Tiyakap Kalilintad (a local peace volunteer group) assisted in the packing, hauling and distribution of relief goods. Members of the Non-Violent Peace Force (NP) assisted in coordinating the activity with the police and local officials.

A bag of KFI-distributed relief goods contains 10 kilos of Kawilan rice, 5 cans of sardines, 5 packs of noodles, 500 grams of coffee, 1 kilo of coffee, and 250 grams of pinangus (dried tilapia) from Ligawasan Marsh, said Norman Abbas, Coordinator of KFI's peacebuilding program in the area.

Identifying real IDPs

Donnah Dalandas, another KFI staff for the CORDAID-assisted peacebuilding program in the municipalities of Datu Piang and Datu Saudi Uy Ampatuan (DSUA), said that most of the recipients of the relief assistance were from Reina Regente and Pandi, two communities heavily affected by the clashes.

A group of women, who claimed they come from Barangay Damabalas, which was also affected by the fighting, complained that they were not given claim stubs though their names were on the IDP list. "They burned our houses; we have lost everything," said one of them who requested anonymity.

"Identifying who the real IDPs are is always a common problem here," KFI's Abbas said. He explained that the unending cycle of violence has produced a lot of 'permanent IDPs', most of them have long settled down in the Poblacion.

A week before, the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) also facilitated the distribution of relief goods to the IDPs at the municipal plaza. Members of the ICRC were around during today's KFI-CBCS relief mission.



ATA LOST. Excitement and confusion grip this woman IDP in the scramble for relief goods under the noon-day sun.

Land Dispute

Contrary to published reports that fighting started only on December 20 in Barangay Pandi, Abbas Pidotukasan, a KFI program staff based in Reina Regente, said that armed clashes actually broke out on December 19 in Reina Regente when alleged MILF-allied troops under Tata Uy clashed with the armed group of Damabalas-based local Commander

Diang over a land dispute and a long-standing rido (family or clan feud). The conflict soon escalated to Barangays Damabalas, Pandi, Dasawao, Magaslong, and Balinakan, added Pitudukan.

On December 25, 2007, members of the Coordinating Committee on Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH), International Monitoring Team (IMT) and CBCS-Tiyakap Kalilintad successfully mediated the conflict during a dialogue with the conflict parties and the local government officials. The said dialogue resulted in a ceasefire and the withdrawal of both parties from the conflict zone.

Security guarantee

Meanwhile, the barangay captains of the 7 affected barangays made a stand during a consultation-dialogue held on January 22 in Datu Piang that they and their dislocated residents will not return to

their respective communities unless their security is guaranteed. The LGU of Datu Piang proposed during the said consultation the return of the dislocated residents to their respective communities accompanied by a Peace Keeping Force which includes members of the CVOs.

This proposal was, however, opposed by the representatives of the MILF, according to Noraida Abo, CBCS Documentation Officer who acted as the head of the KFI-CBCS relief mission. Abo, who was also present during the consultation, said that the MILF suggested instead that the proposal be discussed first within the CCCH as it is related to the ceasefire issue which is covered under the GRP-MILF peace talks.

^{*} Daniel Ong is seconded personnel of the Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED) at KFI and is responsible for the documenting the organization's peacebuilding experiences including that of its new peacebuilding program in Datu Piang, DSUA and Mamasapano.

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

December 19, 2007 - Intense fighting broke out between members of the CVOs of the LGU of Datu Piang and armed groups allied with the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) of the MILF. The clashes started at around 8:30 in the morning after the prayer of Eid'l Adha in Barangay Reina Regente and soon escalated to 2 adjacent barangays of Datu Piang, namely Damabalas and Dasawao.

While fighting rages in Barangay Reina Regente, a certain local Cmdr. Duma and his armed followers assaulted at 9:30 in the morning of this same day the Barangay captains and CVOs of Pandi and Magaslong. The sporadic exchanges of gunfire immediately resulted to the displacement of hundreds of families and the burning of 21 houses in the said 2 barangays.

December 22, 2007 - A team of CBCS and Tiyakap Kalilintad visited Barangay Damabalas and had a dialogue with local Cmdr. Diang to discuss ways of preventing possible escalation of the conflict.



Alarmed by the situation, the CBCS made an effort to contact the Coordinating Committee on Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH). MILF-CCCH Chairman Von Al-Haq responded and made an assurance that they will look into the matter as soon as possible.

December 24, 2007 - At 1:30 in the afternoon, the Joint GRP-MILF CCCH, the IMT, and CBCS team had a consultation-dialogue with the LGU officials of Datu Piang represented by their Municipal Administrator and Chairman of the Peace and Order Council, Mohammad "Benjie" Carandang. Present during the dialogue were Capt. Carlos Sol Jr., Head of the GRP-CCCH Secretariat; Chairman of the CBCS Guiamel M. Alim; Lt. Col. Badrul, Chief of Staff of the IMT 4; representative from the Brunei Darussalam IMT Team Site 1; Capt. Somera of the 64th IB, Philippine Army; Barangay Chairmen of Datu Piang, and Vice Mayor Genuine Kamaong.

The dialogue ended up in an agreement between the two parties to immediately declare a ceasefire while discussing further details of the incident. Minutes after declaring a ceasefire, the MILF CCCH Chairman relayed the following message to their ground commanders: "Hold on fire, no firing stay put, and hold on to your positions!"

After a dialogue with the LGU, the group (IMT, JCCCH and CBCS) immediately proceeded to the area of encounter to defuse/disengage the two warring forces and facilitate their repositioning back to their respective barracks.

At 6:42 in the evening, no more firing of guns can be heard in the surroundings, signaling that the warring forces have complied with the ceasefire declaration.

Source: CBCS Documentation Report on the Incident

TIYAKAP KALILINTAD REPORT

Monitoring in Conflict-Affected Barangays (Balanaken, Alonganen and Liong, Datu Piang, Maguindanao) on April 4-6, 2008

Sporadic fighting erupts between two (2) commanders of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) of the MILF at Barangay Alonganen in Datu Piang, Maguindanao on April 3, 2008 at around 6:13 in the evening.

These commanders were identified as Commander Talio and Ustadz Abunawas from the 101st and 104th Based Commands of the MILF, respectively.

The intense fighting has caused displacement of the residents of Barangay Alunganen and Liong as exchange of heavy fire fights continues. Affected residents of the said barangays seek refuge at Datu Gumbay Elementary School in Barangay Buayan and Masigay Elementary School in Barangay Masigay, Datu Piang, Maguindanao.



The group also had an ocular inspection in the areas where the armed conflicts occur.

During the monitoring on the situation by the CBCS Staff, Tiyakap Kalilintad, Non-Violent Peace Force and Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Post (JCMP) in Barangay Balanaken, it was learned from the IDPs that there were some 70 families who were trapped inside the swampy area of Barangay Alonganen. The groups tried to facilitate to get the IDPs out of that area but failed to do so as the group of Ustadz Abunawas did not give assurance to the safety of the group.



CBCS, Tiyakap Kalilintad, NP, IMT, GRP and MILF CCCH met at the IMAT Post in Rangeban, Midsayap, Cotabato on March 4, 2008 monitor the recent ground developments.

Also, in an interviews conducted by Tiyakap Kalilintad, it was learned that the tension started on April 1, 2008 when Ustadz Abunawas and his armed men entered Brgy. Alonganen at around 5:00pm with out prior coordination with Cmdr. Talio which is a distance away from their blocking area. The two groups had a previous conflict over a land in said barangay that caused the recent conflict between the two groups.

Accordingly, the presence of Ustadz Abunawas' group in the area has no prior coordination to the latter's group which is a violation to the agreement made between the two groups. It was stipulated in the agreement that both sides shall make proper coordination when entering in the controlled area of each group.

This incident triggered the massing up of troops by both sides from April 2 to 3, 2008. Who fired first on the evening of April 3 is still unknown.

On the same night of April 3, 2008 at around 6:45 in the evening, elements of Civilian Volunteers Organization (CVO) under the command of the newly installed Barangay Chairman Datu Sa Langon Paglas of Barangay Balanaken stationed in Sitio Kinudal assaulted the positioned of MILF

elements headed by Liking Mama, field commander of Commander Adzmi of MILF's 106th Based Command at Sitio Nimao, Balanaken, Datu Piang, Maguindanao that also caused panic to the civilians in the said area.

Report from Nasrudin Kamensa, area coordinator of Tyakap Kalilintad based in the JCMP at Balanaken says that, it was the group of CVOs who fired first against the position of BIAF. This provocative action had resulted to the retaliation of the BIAF elements in the area. Exchange of heavy fire fights ensued and it continues until dawn of April 4, 2008 the civilians moved out from their houses and spent their night at the JCMP compound and others opted to stay at their relatives houses that are distance away from the JCMP post.

As exchange of fires continues on the next day April 5, 2008 at around 10:00 o'clock in the morning, a



Members of the Tiyakap Kalilintad assigned in Datu Piang, Maguindanao receives an orientation from CBCS Secretary - General Sammy Maulana. Updates on the status of the government-MILF negotiations were also presented by Capt. Carlos Sol and by Rashid Ladiasan of GRP and MILF CCCH respectively.

company size of BIAF elements in a full battle gears from Sitio Nimao arrived in Barangay Balanaken proper and positioned themselves some 10 meters away from the JCMP post.

This again caused panic to the civilians as the two armed group, the BIAF-MILF and the CVOs is

just a kilometer away from each position. Civilians started to pack up their things again and moved out from their place using their farm animals, tricycles and tricycads moving towards Datu Gumbay Elementary School in Barangay Buayan, Datu Piang, Maguindanao.

Alarmed by the ongoing situation, the CBCS made an effort to contact the MILF-CCCH, and CBCS was informed that a negotiation is being initiated at the ground level. It was starting to get dark and the sound of the series of sporadic firing was quite audible at the JCMP post.

Upon reaching Cotabato City, the CBCS staff decided to talk personally to the newly installed MILF-CCCH Chairman Toks Ebrahim at his office in Crossing Simuay, Sultan Kudarat, Shariff Kabunsuan. The CBCS narrated what has been transpired in the area and asked the Chairman on the development of the negotiation in the field. He said that the negotiation on that day was not fruitful as the two warring groups refused to halt the fighting.

In response to this short conversation, the MILF-CCCH Chairman committed to personally visit the area with his group on the next day, April 6, 2007.

On April 6, 2008, fierce fighting continues despite efforts made by various groups MILF local commanders, CBCS, NP, Tiyakap Kalilintad and JCMP to declare temporary ceasefire.

At 1:00 pm in the afternoon the group of CCCH-MILF lead by its chairman Toks Ibrahim arrived and made an effort to pursue the dialogue between the two conflicting parties. Through a cordial dialogue and with the cooperation of the local commanders the two had reached an agreement to seize the fire, they temporarily declared ceasefire while discussing the detailed of the incident. After declaring the ceasefire two commanders were asked by the CCCH-MILF to custody Cmdr. Talio and Uzt. Abunawas.

At 7:00 in the evening no more firing of guns can be heard in the surroundings it signaled that the two groups complied to the ceasefire agreements.

FROM THE HUMAN RIGHTS and JUSTICE DESK

By SAMMY P. MAULANA

The Bangsamoro Right to Self-Determination OUR ASPIRATION, OUR STRUGGLE

Historians had noted that before the coming of foreign colonizers, the Bangsamoro had been freely exercising and enjoying their right to self-determination (RSD) and peacefully co-existed with other people in and outside of their homeland.

With this natural traits or character, the Bangsamoro had been known to be a peace-loving people.

However, with the incursion of foreign colonialism, the Bangsamoro had been pushed against the wall to defend their identity and homeland; they had become freedom fighters. Their struggle has been carried on to our present generation.

This struggle rooted way back in the mid-16th century when the Spanish colonizers came with their Filipino subjects, brandishing sword and cross, to conquer the Bangsamoro and occupy their homeland.

These colonial wars waged by the Spanish, the U.S., and the Philippine government against the Bangsamoro had paved the way for the illegal and immoral annexation of our ancestral homeland to the Philippine territory by virtue of the Treaty of Paris signed between Spain and the U.S. in December 1898.

Disgusted over this development, our forefathers assailed the Treaty of Paris as an immoral, illegal and treacherous act. In repudiating the treaty, they issued —in two separate occasions— the Zamboanga Declaration of Rights and Purposes in Zamboanga City on February 1, 1924 (see Document on p.8) and the Dansalan Declaration on March 18, 1935.

These two documents had manifested not only the total rejection by our forefathers of the Treaty of Paris; they also contained their complaints against the injustice perpetrated against them by the Spanish, the U.S. and the Philippine governments. Moreover, they vowed to high heavens to resort to whatever available means to carry on the struggle down to the next generation until final victory shall have been achieved.

These wars had taken their heavy toll, not only in the reduction of our ancestral domain which resulted in the dislocation and marginalization of our people; it has also transgressed on and usurped the social, cultural, economic, political and spiritual being of our society.



The author speaks before thousands of Maranao peace rallyists in Marawi City last January stressing that the Bangsamoro struggle is about taking back what was forcefully taken to them -- the Bangsamoro Homeland.

The unbroken chain of our struggle is recorded in our history, equally written by precious sweat and blood of our martyred forefathers and our great mujahideen to correct or rectify the injustices perpetrated against us.

We have journeyed through a torturous but fulfilling path towards liberation. Let us recall the series of armed resistance that sprung up as manifestation of our protests:

We have the Jikiri uprising in 1900, the Kamlon and Tantawanan Rebellions in Sulu in the early 50s, the MIM Manifesto in 1968, and the Manifesto of the Mindanao Independent Movement signed on May 1, 1968.



These Bangsamoro women who joined the peace rally in Cotabato City also expressed what they want the government and the MILF leaders to do in a simple rally placard --- "Urgently resolve [the] Bangsamoro Problem."

This chain of events precipitated the rekindling of our revolutionary resistance and led to the formation of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the early 70s. Due to tremendous pressures from both internal and external forces, the MNLF had settled for autonomy in 1996.

Discontented with the 1996 GOP-MNLF Final Peace Accord, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) came into the forefront and vowed to carry forward our struggle.

With clear mandate from some five (5) million Bangsamoro in a General Consultative Assembly called for the purpose, the MILF had since 1997 engaged into a peace negotiation with the Philippine government.

However, while the peace talks is in progress and had already attained some substantial gains, the government again invoked "constitutional process" on the demand of the MILF to include some 1,000 additional villages for the envisioned Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE). This led to the impasse in the peace talks.

The struggle of the Bangsamoro is not a mere rebellion, nor a separation or secession. The Bangsamoro struggle is a struggle of a colonized people to free themselves from the yoke of neo-colonial and colonial oppression and exploitation.

The struggle of the Bangsamoro ... is a struggle of a colonized people to free themselves from the yoke of neo-colonial and colonial oppression and exploitation.

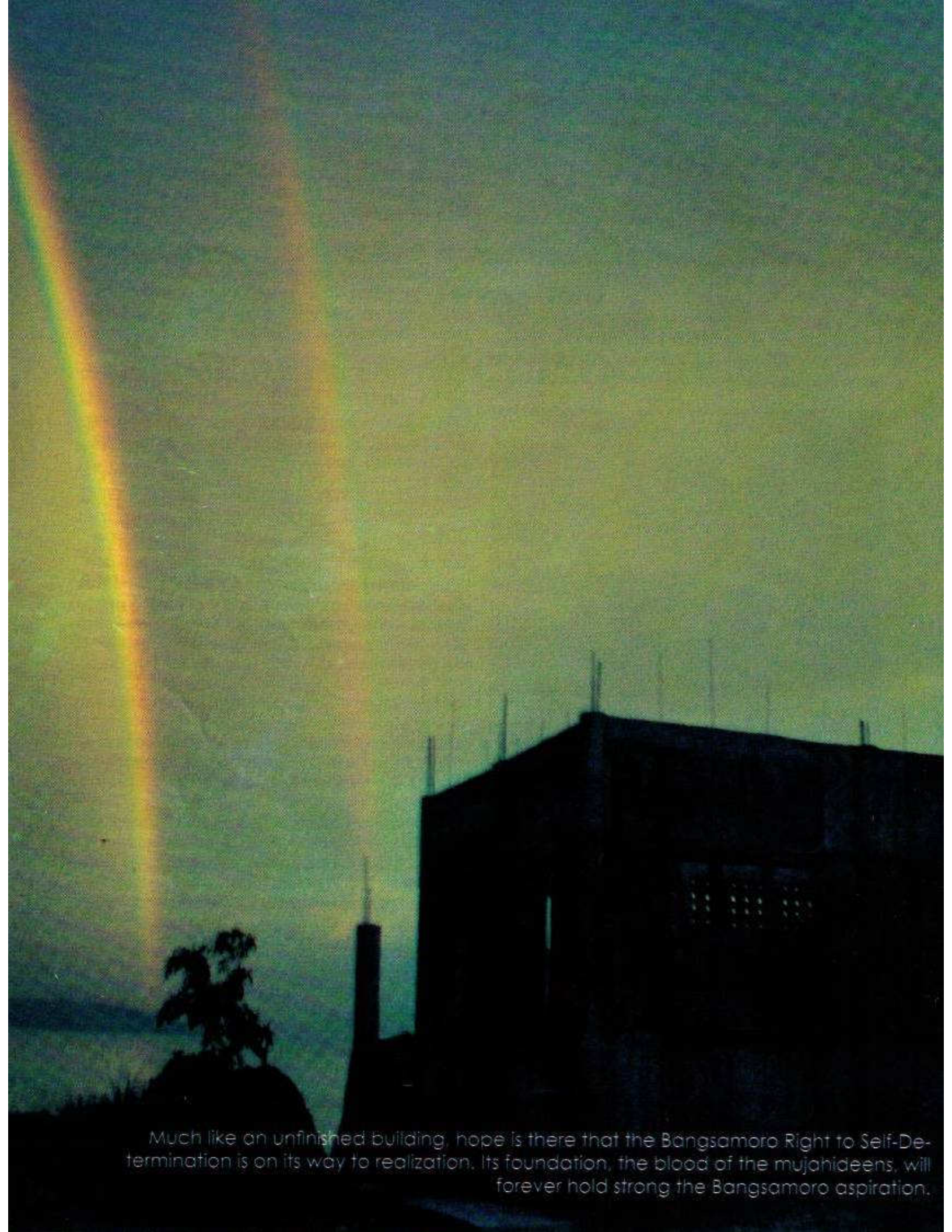
Let us always be reminded and bear in mind that when we entertained the thought of having peace talks with the government, our premise was **"not what the government can give to us but what the government can return to us."**

We have taken a long thorny path, yet it is a fulfilling journey towards liberation. The souls of our martyred forefathers and mujahideen are whispering on us not to forget the cause for which they have fought and died for. We must not fail them.

Let us listen to the words of our Great Imam and late Amerol Mujahiden MILF Chairman Salamat Hashim who said, "I am growing old and soon I will pass, but I am happy to go because I have successfully planted the seed of jihad in the hearts and minds of the Bangsamoro."

The author is a Human Rights educator- and activist; a veteran community organizer, NGO worker, and 'parliamentarian of the street'. He is also one of the claimants of the Class Suit Case against the Marcos Estate filed in the Honolulu Court, Hawaii, U.S.A. which convicted the late dictator of a Crime Against Humanity.

The author is also the Secretary - General and Western Mindanao Cluster Coordinator of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS).



Much like an unfinished building, hope is there that the Bangsamoro Right to Self-Determination is on its way to realization. Its foundation, the blood of the mujahideens, will forever hold strong the Bangsamoro aspiration.