

# 2014 ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY FORUM

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FEATURING:

'STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY IN THE BANGSAMORO'  
'HUMAN RIGHTS IN ISLAM'  
'BREAK NOT THE PEACE'





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## The Islam and Democracy Forum

The **Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy (PCID)**, supported by **Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS)**, has launched its **Islam and Democracy Forum (IDF)**, on March 31, 2014. The IDF is a series of dialogues among scholars and stakeholders interested in understanding and resolving critical issues related to democracy, participation, development and the Muslim communities.

By enabling the articulation and assertion of the concerns of the Bangsamoro and Muslims of this country, PCID facilitates their meaningful participation in the global discourse on Islam and democracy, as well as their self determination and sustainable development. This lecture series affords stakeholders from the Muslim Mindanao, the opportunity to engage representatives of the public and private sector, as well as multilateral agencies and international organizations, in discourse on key issues that impact democratic political thought.

### **'Strengthening Democracy in the Bangsamoro'**

**H.E. Asif Ahmad**

*Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary*

*Embassy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*

March 31, 2014

National College for Public Administration and Governance  
UP-Diliman, Quezon City



### **'Human Rights in Islam'**

**Hon. Loretta Ann Rosales**

*Chairperson*

*Commission on Human Rights*

August 13, 2014

Commission on Human Rights  
SAAC Building, Commonwealth Ave. Quezon City



### **'Break Not the Peace'**

**H. E. Fidel V. Ramos**

*Former President of the Republic of the Philippines*

October 14, 2014

National College for Public Administration and Governance  
UP-Diliman, Quezon City



## **'Strengthening Democracy in the Bangsamoro'**

**H.E. Asif Ahmad**

*Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary  
Embassy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain  
and Northern Ireland*

**March 31, 2014**



*His Excellency Asif Ahmad addresses the audience, as UP President Alfred Pascual, NCPAG Dean Fe Mendoza and PCID President Amina Rasul-Bernardo listen*

PCID partners with the National College for Public Administration and Governance (NCPAG) for the first Islam and Democracy Forum.

In her welcome remarks, PCID President Amina Rasul-Bernardo emphasizes the significance of the Islam and Democracy forum in view of the recent signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Acknowledging the difficulty in ensuring the CAB's successful implementation, she presents the forum as venue where people can "gain ideas and encouragement from distinguished speakers".

The Ambassador of the United Kingdom, H. E. Asif Ahmad, the first Muslim envoy assigned to the Philippines from a developed country, is the keynote speaker for the inaugural lecture. The United Kingdom (UK) is one of the countries involved in the GPH-MILF peace process as part of the International Contact Group. Ambassador Ahmad relates how Muslim minority groups in the UK have successfully engaged their government on policy-making. He proceeds to reflect on the GPH-MILF peace process and strengthening democracy at the local and regional levels.

Ambassador Ahmad, no stranger to the Philippines, points to the positive and constructive engagement of the British Muslim community with the government. He discloses his observations on the challenges of the Muslim minority communities. He notes: "I don't claim to be a Muslim ambassador. I'm an ambassador for Britain who happens to be Muslim."

Influential British Muslims have not played on their faith or ethnicity but have succeeded as British citizens. Naseem Hamed is Britain's Manny Pacquiao, one of UK's greatest talents. Sir Anwar Pervez, Britain's richest Muslim, started life in Britain as a bus conductor. He has launched Bestway Holdings, a cash-and-carry firm, now worth £227 million. Sarwar Ahmed, an influential newspaper publisher, launched Eastern Eye, a tabloid which has become the fastest-growing Asian newspaper in Britain. Shami Ahmed is a savvy businessman who developed the Manchester-based Joe Bloggs fashion empire. The "world's most expensive pair of jeans" is a pair of diamond-encrusted Joe Bloggs jeans worth £100,000.

In the House of Lords sit Baron Nazir Ahmed, Baron Khalid Hameed and Baroness Sayeeda Warsi. The Baroness is a lawyer, a businesswoman, and the first Muslim to serve in a British cabinet as Senior Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Minister for Faith and Communities. She is also Co-Chairman of the Conservative Party -- the first Asian to chair a major British political party.

While believing that Muslims must engage the majority and not wait for development to be handed on a silver platter, Mr. Ahmad stresses that the majority and the administration do have the bigger share of responsibility to make the Bangsamoro peace process a success. This observation is widely concurred by most. After all, the Bangsamoro is the least served region, the poorest of the poor with the lowest human development indicators. A situation that has become the reality after martial law had destroyed the region's infrastructure -- physical, legal, and social.

Mr. Ahmad states that "for Muslims of Philippines, Bangsamoro is only part of the solution. There should be a national change in policies and that begins in Manila."

In this aspect, the Bangsamoro diaspora in Imperial Manila can play, and should play, a crucial role. Engage with the policy makers and big business to change the national policies and give the Bangsamoro what they are owed as citizens of the Philippines: public services, security, equal opportunities.



*Ambassador Ahmad delivering his message before his audience during the forum*



*Dean Fe Mendoza welcomes Ambassador Ahmad to NCPAG*





*Ambassador Ahmad with Senator Santanina Rasul, UP NCPAG Dean Fe Mendoza, PCID President Amina Rasul and PCID Convenors*



*Meeting with Senator Rasul, PCID Convenors, some of the Muslim Community Leaders at PCID Office*

## **Keynote Speech of H.E. Asif Ahmad**

I urge the Filipinos to acquire a sense of unity of purpose and set aside historical differences following the signing on March 27 of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro. There is a need for a national change in hearts, minds, and policies.

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), which will be replaced by the new political entity of the Bangsamoro once the Bangsamoro Basic Law is approved, has one of the highest poverty rates in the country at 45.4 percent.

The region needs to have a better police force. The ARMM has the most number of private armed groups among the provinces with 2,586 active members as of 2010. The issues are the lack of good governance and intolerance (toward) minority communities, minority opinions and threat to those holding power.

Improving transportation facilities and infrastructure are vital for development. While 77 percent of the national roads in ARMM are paved, accessibility to the region is still affected by the lack of direct connectivity through air and sea transport and the inadequate facilities in airports and seaports.

A better police force, improved infrastructure and transportation facilities, and opening up business opportunities are urgently needed in areas that will comprise the new Bangsamoro political entity. Shari'a banking and finance and the Halal business offer new opportunities for Muslims in the country. The reason why they invest in Shari'a funds is because it is ethical, probably safer, and probably better grounded.

It is the responsibility of the administration and the majority to make the peace process a success. People who will be elected to the position of responsibility and authority need to act with humility and not see this as a seat of power. The focus should be on the actual achievements of the officials and not their winning the elections. I believe in the inclusivity of the Islamic faith. As long as the policies and the practices of the individual sitting in that office is inclusive, then there is no harm in publicly manifesting that the regional government represents the Muslim minority. It is wrong if it signals that the place does not belong to the minorities community.

The national government needs to be more aware of the issues these communities have faced. It must look at the assertions of inclusion and exclusion. Moreover, it needs to design government policies, allocate resources and funding that support the agreement.

I don't claim to be a Muslim ambassador. I'm an ambassador for Britain who happens to be Muslim. Discrimination is not tolerated in our country and Muslims have an easy access to Halal food and the services of imams. The U.K. also has a public transport system that reaches the poor areas, some of which are Muslim communities. No longer do we want to hear the excuses that because there are terrorists down there, you can't do business there.

I hope there will come a time when all Filipinos will regard Muslims as people who make contributions to the government, that these are people who have faith and values.

For Muslims of Philippines, Bangsamoro is only part of the solution. There has to be a national change in policies and that begins in Manila.

**'Human Rights in Islam'**  
**Hon. Loretta Ann Rosales**  
*Chairperson*  
*Commission on Human Rights*

**August 13, 2014**



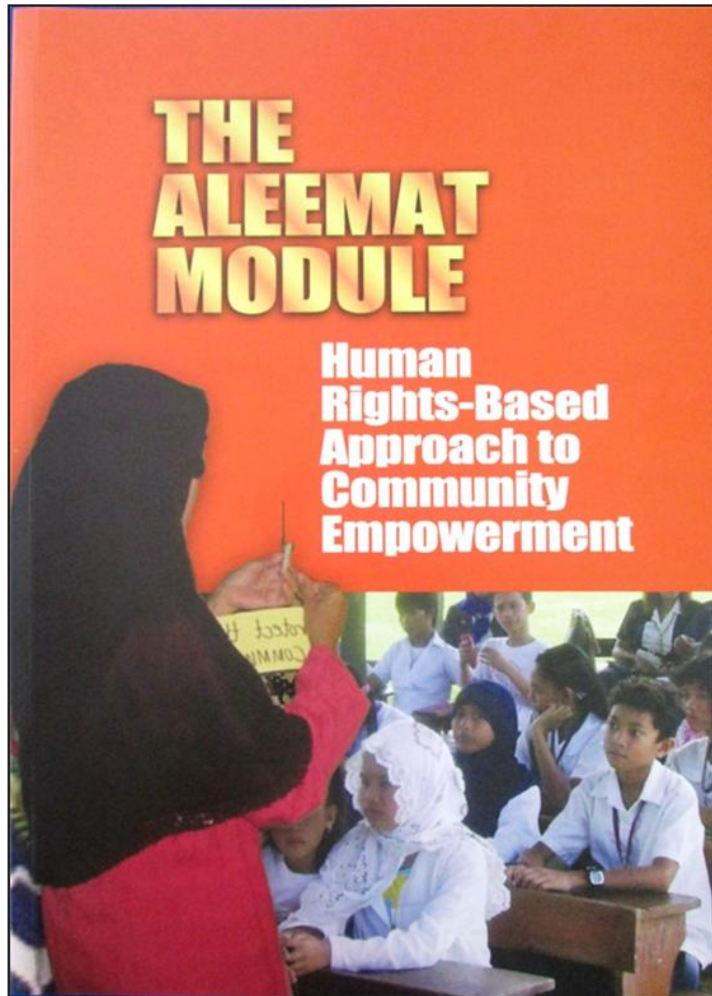
*CHR Chairperson, Hon. Loretta Ann Rosales, delivering her speech with PCID President Amina Rasul, Konrad Adenauer Resident Representative, Benedikt Seemann and NCMF Commissioner Ustadz Esmael Ebrahim*

The second Islam and Democracy Forum has the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHR) as PCID's partner. This forum is held on August 13, 2014 from 8:30AM to 11:30AM at the Central Office of the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines.

CHR Chair Loretta Ann Rosales, the keynote speaker, enlightens the audience with a discourse on human rights, both under Islamic law and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. She proceeds to underscore the importance of the promotion and protection of human rights in the envisioned Bangsamoro.

She quotes Muslim scholar Abul Ala Maududi, who argues that Allah "has given each man human dignity and honor, it follows that apart from their other human attributes, men are substantially the same and no tangible and actual distinctions can be made among them, on account of their accidental differences such as nationality, color or race."

The training manual “*The Aleemat Module: Human Rights-Based Approach to Community Empowerment*” is launched during the forum. The manual has been developed for more than a year, with the active participation of Muslim religious leaders and scholars, community leaders, HR advocates and other stakeholders.



*Book launching of The Aleemat Module: Human Rights-based Approach to Community Empowerment*

The manual is an output of the project that PCID and CHR implemented, funded by the KaSaMa (Karapatan sa Malikhaing Paraan, an inter-embassy and multi-stakeholder human rights initiative), in 2012-2013, entitled Mobilizing the Aleemat as Human Rights Educators or MAHRE.

The project aims to capacitate the Muslim religious women who taught in Islamic schools (Madrasah) to teach their communities about human rights, situating these rights within the context of Islam.

Intended for use in Muslim communities as a first set of standard modules in the advocacy for human rights, the *Aleemat modules* are tailor-made to empower the Aleemat and other Muslim women, civil society and community leaders as human rights defenders, monitors and reporters of human rights violations and situations in their communities, thereby making human rights their way of life.

The CHR and PCID initiative of empowering our Muslim women in the communities through the use of these modules is also expected to boost the ongoing peace process in Bangsamoro. When used by the Muslim religious leaders, these modules will encourage community-based dialogues on peace and human rights.



*Inspirational Message from Konrad Adenauer Resident Representative, Benedikt Seemann*



*Audience from different sectors of government, embassies, Muslim organizations listen to CHR Chairperson Rosales' Keynote Message*



*The audience keenly following the discussions at the forum*



*Chair Rosales and KAS Resident Representative Seemann  
with PCID President Bernardo and guests*

## **Keynote Speech of CHR Chairperson Loretta Ann Rosales**

I thank the Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy for choosing me to deliver the keynote speech for today's second Islam and Democracy Forum. I am happy that the CHR-PCID partnership that began in 2010 continues to foster the promotion of human rights among Filipino Muslims and people participation towards peace and development, more so now that the Government of the Philippines and Moro Islamic Liberation Front are in the process of crafting a Basic Law for the Bangsamoro, where widespread collaboration and consultation are all the more imperative to ensure a governing law acceptable to all.

Today, I am invited to talk about human rights in Islam. Human rights and Islam are two seemingly disparate subjects especially to those exposed to ongoing news reports of violence and gross human rights violations in the Middle East and Africa involving Muslims and non-Muslims, and the political maneuverings of western democratic powers in Islamic countries and organizations associated with the Islamic faith. This limited view of the relationship between human rights and Islam is an unfortunate reality that CHR and PCID aims to turn around through advocacy and education work as both our organizations believe that a deeper understanding of the basic principles espoused by Islam would clearly show that human rights are not at all alien to nor incompatible with Islam.

He also wrote that "Islam has laid down some universal fundamental rights for humanity as a whole, which are to be observed and respected under all circumstances." It is quite clear that human rights are deeply enshrined in Islamic law and, as it is considered divinely sourced, cannot be denied to anyone. The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights, which was adopted by the then members states of the Organization of Islamic Countries in 1990, lends further strength to the connection of human rights to Islam, when the member states expressed the principle that "fundamental rights and universal freedoms in Islam are an integral part of the Islamic religion and that no one as a matter of principle has the right to suspend them in whole or in part or violate or ignore them in as much as they are binding divine commandments...".

The Declaration goes further by articulating the equality of all men in terms of basic human dignity, obligations and responsibilities without any discrimination based on race, color, language, sex, religious belief, political affiliation, social status or other considerations in its Article 1.

The Cairo Declaration provides an overview of human rights from the point of view of Islam. It contains human rights and concomitant obligations similarly recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

These include, among others, the right to life and obligation to protect this right from any violation; the right to be safe from physical harm; the obligation to protect non-belligerents such as the elderly, women and children, and other rights and obligations in times of conflict; the entitlement to inviolability of one's good name and honor; the right to marry and found a family; certain rights enjoyed by women as members of society and as mothers; rights of every child to proper care and education; parental rights in relation to their children; the obligation of the state and society to provide education to their people; the right to be free from compulsion to convert one's religion; the right to be free from slavery and oppression, and to self-determination; the freedom of abode; the right to work and social security; the right to privacy; assurances of equal protection of the law and right to due process; freedom of expression; and the freedom to participate in public affairs.

While the similarities of the mainstream notion of human rights and the Islamic perspective on human rights in the Cairo Declaration are clear, it must be noted that all the rights and freedoms in the Declaration are subject to the Islamic Shariah. This has been criticized by some as having the effect of whittling away the universal nature of human rights, resulting in the restricted enjoyment of rights for some sectors or the allowance of certain actions that usually would be considered as human rights violations but is justified under Shariah.

Of more direct impact to us Filipinos is the incorporation in the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro of basic rights to be enjoyed by all citizens residing in the Bangsamoro, in addition to basic rights already enjoyed. These mainly include civil and political rights already enshrined in our Constitution and some economic, social and cultural rights, such as the right to life; freedom of religion; right to privacy; freedom of speech; right of women to participate in meaningful political life and protection from violence; right to equal opportunity and non-discrimination in social and economic activity and public service; and indigenous peoples' rights. Note, however, that these rights are not expressly made subject by the Framework Agreement to Shariah law, which in a way conveys assurances of their full enjoyment by all without the strictures that may come with traditional appreciation and application of Shariah law in everyday life.

Coupled with the Filipinos' strong inclination towards community peace and solidarity, friendship and respect for fellow men, I believe the express incorporation of human rights principles in all aspects of governance and society in the soon-to-rise Bangsamoro along with the strong tradition of human rights in Islam make a perfect recipe for the further inculcation and propagation of a culture of human rights among Filipino Muslims. We must therefore continue our eager participation in the processes for the establishment of the Bangsamoro to ensure human rights remain an important part of a peaceful and prosperous Bangsamoro.



## **'Break Not the Peace'**

**H. E. Fidel V. Ramos**

*Former President of the Republic of the Philippines*

**October 14, 2014**



*His Excellency Former President, Fidel V. Ramos  
delivering his keynote speech*

Last September 10, the draft Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) has been submitted to the leadership of the Philippine Congress. The draft measure seeks to establish a political entity, replacing the Autonomous Region on Muslim Mindanao, that would accord genuine autonomy and meaningful self-governance reflective of the aspirations of the Bangsamoro people. The draft BBL is more than a legislative measure – it represents the aspirations of a region and its people, a transformative document derived from over 17 years of negotiations between the government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), as well as the 1996 Final Peace Agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

The third Islam and Democracy Forum focuses on the impact of the draft BBL on the peace processes with these two liberation fronts. The University of the Philippines National College for Public Administration and Governance (UP-NCPAG) is the PCID's partner in initiating an incisive discourse on this assessment among stakeholders, policy makers and the academe. The forum, set on October 14, 2014, has the Assembly Hall of the UP-NCPAG as its venue.

For his keynote speech "Break Not The Peace", His Excellency, Former President Fidel Valdez Ramos focuses on both the 1996 Final Peace Agreement and the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), offering an objective assessment of these historic documents.

UP President Alfredo Pascual welcomes the former president to the University, declaring FVR's commentary as timely and valuable, with Congress embarking on consultations on the BBL. Echoing this observation, UP Diliman Chancellor Michael Tan stresses the significance of the UP community's involvement in the discussions on peace and the Bangsamoro. NCPAG Dean Fe Mendoza likewise cites the importance of engagement, based on full understanding of the BBL.

President Ramos asserts that there are no easy choices for peace in Mindanao: "war is not an option and neither is a peace agreement that does violence to the Constitution".

The drafting of the BBL has not been smooth sailing. Accusations of constitutional violations, lack of transparency, insincerity as well as incompetence have hounded it. Unfortunately, the BBL will face rough seas ahead. The constitutionality of key BBL provisions will be challenged, as FVR has noted. Oppositors will decry the creation of the Bangsamoro as unconstitutional, as it adopts a different structure – that of a ministerial form of government.. Further, the BBL affords an "opt-in" option for predominantly Muslim municipalities and barangays outside the ARMM which had previously voted to join the autonomy. This is a sore point for the non-Bangsamoro local government executives, another issue for a challenge in the Supreme Court.

Reminding the audience that the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) is a key stakeholder, a party to the peace agreements that gave birth to Bangsamoro autonomy, Ramos has been critical of their exclusion from the peace process – clearly not aligned with the spirit of Unity, Solidarity and Teamwork (UST). Noting the successes of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement with the MNLF, he recounted the measures that his administration had undertaken to reintegrate the MNLF troops, clearly the most successful program implemented for the 1996 Final Peace Agreement. The MNLF integrees have been loyal to the state, even fighting their comrades who fought against the state in the 2001 and 2013 Zamboanga rebellion. One of the issues he discussed was the normalization process for the MILF troops, noting that they were certainly not "abnormal".

FVR worries about the lack of time. As he told reporters, "Just because expert panels from Malaysia and the Philippines put it together does not mean that everybody will accept it automatically within the time frame established by the government". He added that while he has concerns about some provisions of the draft Bangsamoro Basic Law, "it doesn't mean that I do not approve".

Cautioning against haste in approving the legislation, he reminds the audience that this was our last chance for peace in the South. "There just haven't been enough public discussions on salient points," he said. "I hope there will be more public debates."

A young man asks if the current conflict in Mindanao is one of the major contributors in the "stagnant economic situation of the Philippines". FVR replies that there is no economic stagnation, that the economy is growing. However, the economic growth is not inclusive, resulting to frustration and bad politics and rebellion, affecting the economic momentum. With peace comes the stability that the country needs to sustain its economic growth (Note: 6% growth of GDP in the first semester of 2014).

FVR also speaks of the need to prepare the leadership of the soon to be created Bangsamoro, that those who would be elected to the Bangsamoro parliament should be imbued with patriotism and the spirit of “caring, sharing and daring” for their constituents, especially our youth, as well as for the entire nation.

Addressing the young, he points to of the high priority placed on securing a better future for them by making the peace formula work. He exhorts all, especially the more than hundred students who participated, to be guided by Unity, Solidarity and Teamwork (UST), if we are to compete on the world’s economic ocean.

Even as the mood has been lightened by FVR’s engaging (and often humorous) responses, the message remains resounding: break not the peace – this is our last chance.



*FVR clarifying a point during IDF’s Open Forum*



*Media interviews FVR during the forum*



*FVR with Senator Rasul and PCID guests after the meeting at the PCID Office*

## **Keynote Speech of Former President Fidel V. Ramos**

### **Introductory**

The Mindanao conflicts that flared into open war beginning in 1969 were stirred up by rival claims over domains, lands and livelihoods, complicated by older ethnic, religious and cultural cleavages in Mindanao-Sulu society. For far-off Manila – focused on its own political conflicts that were to result in martial law in 1972 – sending the military to Mindanao seemed to be the easy option. Only in the early 1990s did we begin to realize that we could not keep using force to suppress our internal rebellions. Only then did we begin to understand how far these outbreaks were motivated by ordinary people’s frustrations over their lack of autonomy: their inability to break through the murky social forces controlling their lives; and their powerlessness under the elites and dynasties.

### **Peace and Development Go Together**

When I came to the Presidency in June 1992, the Philippines seemed to deserve the title, “The Sick Man of Southeast Asia.” Our country had just survived several coup attempts by mutinous young officers. Secession seethed in the Muslim South; and Maoist guerrillas prowled portions of our countryside. Worst of all, the economy was at a standstill. Factories were idled and homes darkened by a nationwide power shortage. Meanwhile the bilateral alliance on which national security had depended was winding down. The U.S. Pacific Fleet had sailed out of Subic Bay – folding the American umbrella that had kept our archipelago secure from external threats for nine decades. We gave restoring stability our highest priority – because we realized that without it businesses could not run; work-people could not create social wealth; reform could not flourish; and progress could not begin. Indeed – even before the Presidential election in 1992 – I had traveled to Tripoli, to touch base with the eccentric Libyan strongman, Muammar Gaddafi (who was the MNLF’s patron in the Arab world) to get his support for our peace process. We feared “separatism” in Mindanao – less for its practical threat to our country’s territorial integrity than for its implied rebuke of Manila’s historical neglect of our Muslim South.

### **Stumbling Blocks on The Road To Peace**

The Mindanao conflict has cost our nation dearly in blood and treasure. From 1969 until the Ramos Government signed the Final Peace Agreement with the MNLF in September 1996 – a span of 27 years – the conflict exacted casualties estimated authoritatively at 120,000 people dead and P270 billion in national economic losses (not counting local/family costs). The fighting – much of which took place in isolated barangays, mountain hideouts, farming villages, and coastal communities – also generated a million “internal refugees.” The Mindanao separatist conflict had been so bitter that even making peace was a tortuous and protracted process. Extremists on both sides – such as the Islamist Abu Sayyaf and the notorious “Christian Ilaga” – tried repeatedly to break up the peace process. In April 1995, the terrorist Abu Sayyaf led a raid by some 200 diehards from “lost commands” and Abu Sayyaf on Ipil town, in Zamboanga del Sur, deliberately to provoke a breach between Government and the MNLF. The raiders’ looted seven banks located in the town center – then burned it to the ground. In the process, they killed more than fifty people – soldiers, policemen, and civilians alike. As Commander-in-Chief, I ordered our troops to pursue the Ipil raiders up and down Zamboanga peninsula all the

way to the hinterlands. There, we eventually eliminated 90% of them, in the S-triangle of Siocon, Siraway, and Sibuco in Zamboanga del Norte. But I did not allow the violence in Ipil to break up our peace negotiations with the MNLF. I personally ensured that all our people involved in the negotiations held on to our strategic vision of peace as the precondition for sustainable development in Mindanao. As part of that peace agreement, we were able to integrate 7,500 ex-mujahideens (rebel fighters) from the MNLF into the Armed Forces and the National Police. I remember vividly the public criticism I received about those MNLF integrees. People said I had “naïvely” brought an MNLF “Trojan horse” into the Armed Forces and the National Police. But, do you know that those units stayed loyal to the Government side through all the ups-and-downs of the peace process – including during the second “war” with the MILF starting in April 2000 – and that the bulk of them serve the military loyally until now?

### **President Estrada’s War Policy, April 2000**

Meanwhile, by 1993, the Mindanao situation had so stabilized that I easily obtained the agreement of Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia to an East ASEAN Growth Area (**BIMP-EAGA**) that would have made Mindanao and Sulu the center of a sub-regional growth quadrangle encompassing Borneo, Sulawesi, the Moluccas, and Brunei as a whole. Immediately after signing the peace agreement with the secularist MNLF, our Government began negotiating with the Islamist MILF (which had splintered from the mainstream MNLF in 1994) by the appointment of a new Peace Panel headed by General (ret.) Fortunato Abat by mid-September 1996. By the middle of July 1997, we had concluded a “ceasefire” with the MILF that lasted 30 months – until my successor – President Joseph Estrada – unleashed his own “all-out war” policy in Mindanao against the MILF in April 2000. While the ceasefire lasted, our Government was able (at the MILF’s own request) to build a potable water system for 5,000 families by Christmas of 1997, an irrigation network for 2,500 hectares of farmland, and most of a concrete barangay road 15 kilometers long – all the way from the Cotabato City-Malabang highway to the MILF’s Camp Abubakar on the Maguindanao-Lanao del Sur-Cotabato tri-border. That expanded environment of peace we had nurtured so delicately was tragically shattered by Estrada’s ill-conceived order for the military to assault Camp Abubakar (the MILF stronghold) in late April 2000. That ill-conceived decision was triggered by the kidnapping of tourists of various nationalities from the Sabah island of Sipadan by Abu Syyaf units from Sulu and Basilan. The renewed fighting that ensued destroyed mosques; dispersed mujahideen bands to strongholds in other parts of Mindanao Island; and drove thousands of Muslim families from their homes. The fighting also destroyed the water system and the irrigation network our Government and the MILF had erected together – in our effort to foster trust and confidence between the rebels and the Government of the Philippines. What was worse, Mr. Estrada, with crass cultural insensitivity, celebrated the fall of Camp Abubakar by feasting on pork (*“lechon”*) and beer (alcohol) with his “victorious” soldiers on the ruins of Camp Abubakar.

## **Comprehensive Peace and the Concept of Bangsamoro Identity**

After the fall of President Estrada in a “people-power” revolution in January 2001, the successor-government of Gloria Arroyo and the MILF easily agreed on a new cease-fire arrangement. Their negotiators set up a truce-monitoring team composed of Malaysia, Japan, and Brunei. They also agreed on protocols for delivering humanitarian aid; building rehabilitation projects; and carrying out capacity-building activities to train potential leaders of the Muslim communities. And, quickly, a post-conflict reconstruction and development program started up – supported by the World Bank, the European Union, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden and the United States. Government and the MILF returned to the negotiating table in middle 2001 and soon agreed on a new “Tripoli Agreement on Peace.”

That agreement had three main aspects:

- To secure agreements on cessation of hostilities, it created a Monitoring Team of observers – from Malaysia, Brunei, and Japan – to monitor day-to-day adherence to the ceasefire agreements and a Joint Action Group to deal with potential disturbers of the ceasefire.
- To deliver humanitarian, rehabilitation and development assistance, the two sides also agreed on procedures, practices and mutual obligations.
- Most important, the negotiators also agreed on the concept of “ancestral domain” to encompass critical issues other than land. These issues include a “Bangsamoro” identity with its own human rights and distinctive culture.

But just before the signing of a peace pact, scheduled in Kuala Lumpur in August 2008, our Supreme Court declared the MOA unconstitutional – for conceding too much in concepts and territory to the MILF panel. In reaction, then President Arroyo not only suspended the negotiations. She also disbanded her government’s negotiating panel. All of a sudden, backsliding into war became a grim possibility. On 30 June 2010, a new Government – that of President Benigno Aquino III – had taken over management of the negotiations – through the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process. OPAPP’s basic task today is both to resume the protracted negotiations with the MILF and to continue a review of how our 1996 Final Peace Agreement with the MNLF is being carried out – a process restarted in November 2007.

## **We All Have a Stake in the Outcome of the GPH-MILF Negotiations**

Last October 2012, Government and the MILF concluded a “Framework Agreement” that the two sides are now detailing, with annexes on revenue generation, the sharing of wealth from natural resources and other basic concerns. The two sides have apparently agreed to declare the ARMM in its present form as “an alleged failed experiment that has fallen short of fulfilling the aspirations for peace and development of the Bangsamoro people.” The basic law for a new autonomous region has been submitted to Congress for approval and to be ratified by a plebiscite – so that a new Bangsamoro autonomous region can replace the ARMM by 2015. In Mindanao, we have no easy choices. If war is not an option – and, of course it isn’t – neither is a peace agreement that does violence to the Constitution. The

only certainty is that all Filipinos have a stake in the outcome of the negotiations between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Forces. And the outcome should be not just a Mindanao free of conflict but a peaceful Mindanao healed of its anxieties and put back on the road to sustainable development – a progressive Mindanao ready to face the future unafraid.

### **Bringing Up the Poorest Administrative Regions**

I believe that now is a good time to start up longer-term programs to raise the poorest communities in our nation closer to the level of the national average. Historically, the Philippines has been one of East Asia's most unequal countries. By now, standard practices have been developed in many countries to give preferential treatment to groups or regions that have been disadvantaged either by government neglect or political prejudice. Surely Muslim Mindanao, our ethnic groupings in the Cordilleras, and our poorest regions – Bicol and Caraga, Western and Central Mindanao, and Eastern Visayas – can reasonably claim preferential treatment in national budget allocations for infrastructure, primary health care and basic education. Such an “affirmative action” program should not be difficult to measure, not difficult to manage, and not difficult to oversee. We need to build centrist, inclusive politics – the politics of the middle forces – by developing points of convergence on which our political groupings can meet. We must search for common ground neither in political compromises nor in horse-trading but in the highest demands of the national interest. We need politicians who can navigate the middle ground, yet embrace the virtues of independent thought. We must also open up the regulated economy that continues to multiply the opportunities for earning wealth without effort on the part of political entrepreneurs and other people of influence. And we must incorporate all our people – rich and poor – in a caring and sharing national community that is daring enough to pursue all the possibilities and full potential of their lives.

### **We Cannot Develop Separately**

Not just in Mindanao but in our entire national society, land hunger, joblessness, and a persistent type of poverty have been the main sources of civil disorder and social violence in the Philippines. Over these past 60 years alone, agrarian dissidence has generated two radical insurgencies – both of which still linger in parts of our archipelago. The best cure for poverty is still growth that generates jobs that pay decent wages and livelihood opportunities for common people. By now we Filipinos must realize that we cannot develop separately – as geographic regions, social classes, ethnic enclaves, religious groupings, or elite families isolated from one another.

Our basic strength must come from our unity. We can develop only as one country, as one nation. We must all get involved. We cannot be passive spectators to government's efforts. For if government fails, then we all fail – for we will have frittered away the years we need to put our house in order. This is also a time for us to ask ourselves what we have done – and what we can now do – for our common enterprise of a better future for all Filipinos.



## Biography of H. E. Asif Ahmad

### *Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Embassy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*

Ambassador Asif Ahmad was appointed as Ambassador to the Philippines in July 2013. He has visited Manila a number of times in the last 10 years in his role as Director Asia for UK Trade and Investment and later as the head of the team covering Britain's foreign policy interests in ASEAN countries, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. Just after his ambassadorial posting in Thailand and Laos, 2010-2012, Asif prepared for his move to the Philippines by learning a bit of the Filipino language in London.

During the presentation of his credentials to President Aquino, Ambassador Ahmad said, "With the Philippines as a valued partner, our aim is to build on the broad relationships we have established. *Nais kong pagtibayin ang ugnayan ng ating dalawang bansa. Ako ay makikibahagi upang mapahusay ang relasyon ng ating mga ekonomiya, at ng ating mga mamamayan. Ang Maynila ay isang mahalaga at lumalagong sentro ng operasyon ng mga embahada sa rehiyon, at ito rin ang natatanging BPO sa labas ng UK ng aming Kagawaran.*"

Ambassador Ahmad joined the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in 1999, after an 18 year banking career with NatWest which covered international corporate finance, head office functions as well as periods in private banking, Coutts, and running a network of retail banking branches in South London. Just before becoming a diplomat, he worked with Business Link in London as an adviser to small and medium sized companies.

The FCO used his financial expertise in his first assignment in Resources Directorate and he then moved into foreign policy work on Commonwealth issues. He was assigned to work for the Prime Minister's Office for six months in 2002 heading the Communications and Information Centre.

Ambassador Ahmad's early years were spent in London where he was born and his father's career gave him the opportunity to live in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, Japan, China, Poland and the former Soviet Union. He returned to take his A levels in Carlisle, Cumbria in 1973 and went on to study Economics at Durham University.

## **Biography of Hon. Loretta Ann Rosales**

*Chairperson, Commission on Human Rights of the Republic of the Philippines*

Loretta Ann P. Rosales is a Filipino activist, teacher and politician who has served three terms as the party-list representative of the Akbayan Citizens' Action Party to the Philippines' House of Representatives from the 11th-14th Congress (1998-2007). She is currently the Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights of the Republic of the Philippines.

She is a well-known defender of human rights and was instrumental in instituting a class action suit in the Hawaii District Court which resulted in the only judgment holding the former dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos liable for gross human rights violations committed during his incumbency, which judgment was partially executed in 2011. She herself is a victim of human rights violations by the Marcos regime.

As an activist, she founded the party-list Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT). She was also the chairperson of Partido ng Bayan.

Rosales left ACT sometime before 1998. After her departure from ACT, she joined Akbayan. She was elected as a congresswoman for that party list from 1998-2007.

After serving in Congress for three terms, she served as Co-Chairperson of the Philippine Coalition for the International Criminal Court and founded Building Bridges for Peace, a multi-sectoral initiative to secure land rights and security for agrarian reform and indigenous communities through dialogue.

She was appointed Commission on Human Rights Chairperson on September 1, 2010. As CHR Chairperson, she also serves as Chairperson of the Southeast Asia National Human Rights Institutions Forum, the regional network of national human rights institutions in ASEAN.

## **Biography of H. E. Fidel V. Ramos**

*Former President of the Philippines (1992-1998)*

At Present: Private Citizen; Chairman, Ramos Peace and Development (RPDEV) Foundation; former Chairman, Boao Forum for Asia (1502-2010), now Senior Advisor, BFA; Member, Advisory Group, UN University for Peace; Honorary Director, General Douglas MacArthur Foundation; Founding Member, Policy Advisory Commission, World Intellectual Property Organization (PAC-WIPO); Chairman Emeritus, Maritime League; Member, Global Leadership Forum; Member, Club of Madrid; Global Advisor, University of Winnipeg; Patron, Asia Tour (Golf); Honorary Chairman, Yuchengco Center for East Asia, De La Salle University; Eminent Person, The Forum for Family Planning and Development; Senior Advisor, Metro Bank Group; Honorary President, Human Development Network (HDN) Philippines; Chairman Emeritus, Federation of Golf Clubs Phils., Inc.; Lifetime Honorary President, Centrist Democrats International (CDI); Chairman Emeritus, Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats (CMD) Party

FIDEL V. RAMOS, THE 12TH PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES, is remembered for his ability to lead and his willingness to be led not by astute advisors and political strategists, but by the people whom he served, and served well. Steadfastly and faithfully, he promoted the principles of people empowerment and a culture of excellence that both led to global competitiveness during his term as President from 30 June 1992 to 30 June 1998. He is appreciated as the leader who quickly led the nation out of darkness, putting an end to the power crisis that crippled our homes and industries. He exemplified the leader who always looked toward the strategic future and whose thumbs-up optimism captured in descriptive phrases like “Caring, Sharing and Daring,” “Philippines 2000” and “Pole-vaulting” propelled the economy and social welfare. He is remembered for his positive energy that seemed to burst from his cool and at times steely demeanor. He pursued, focused and converged programs to fight poverty in accordance with the will of the Filipino people expressed by 229 structural/reform laws enacted by Congress from 1992 to 1998.

He also served as Secretary of National Defense (1988-1991) and Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (1986-1988) with the rank of General (4 Stars). His military/law enforcement service of more than 40 years was capped by the peaceful, non-violent People Power Revolution at EDSA in February 1986 which threw out a dictatorial regime.

In retirement, he seems to be always on the go throughout the Philippines, mobilizing the citizenry and pushing the “best practices” of Unity of Purpose, Solidarity in Values and Teamwork in Nation-building at every opportunity. Ever the international diplomat and Philippine cheerleader, he personally interacts with many leaders in various strategic and intellectual fora around the world.



### **About Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy (PCID)**

PCID is a non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to the study of Islamic and democratic political thought and the search for peace, democracy, and development in Muslim communities.

First established as a Council in 2002, PCID was formed amid global and domestic challenges confronting Islam and Muslims. The PCID seeks to articulate the voice of the Bangsamoro and Muslims in the Philippines, enabling their meaningful participation in both the global discourse on Islam and democracy and the struggle for self-determination and development.

Through the years, PCID has become an important platform for the articulation of the Moro voices through its various publications and forums, focusing on the issues of peace and development, Islam and democracy, human rights, genuine autonomy, among others.

PCID has been working with Muslim religious leaders since 2004 on peaceful resolution of conflict and human rights advocacy. Currently, PCID is working on community based ideas to counter violent extremism. It is piloting the Action for Madrasah-based Advocacies and Learnings (AMAL) project, which seeks to enable the madrasah to act as a center for community outreach for peacebuilding, democracy and human rights promotion, and other advocacies.

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