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VIOLENCE IN POLITICS AND THE POLITICS OF VIOLENCE :

UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURE OF IMPUNITY IN THE ARMM

**VIOLENCE IN POLITICS AND
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PREFACE

Births come with joy and hope. It signifies renewal. Thus, while the maiden issue of PCID REPORTS focuses on the gruesome mass murders in Ampatuan town last November 23, 2009, it also points the way to a sense of reawakening of the community after the massacre. The participants of the roundtable discussed the need for a community-based social reform initiative, to help Muslims find their way back to the right path. A sense of hope or “amal”, as the participants of that roundtable discussion called it, could direct a social reform movement that could be launched using the public outpouring of grief and anger as an impetus for reforms.

For us at the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy (www.pcid.org.ph), this maiden issue is part of our continuing effort to give a platform for the voice of the Muslims in the Philippines. PCID’s own birth was conceived out of the concern that the voices of the majority of Muslims had been silenced. Since 2002, PCID’s mission has always been to help Muslim communities in the country find their voice.

Our editorial team did not even debate the content of the first issue. We had no escaping it for out of the list of themes that we were nurturing for the first run, of what we hope would be a long string of policy reports, the gruesome massacre that killed 57 innocent civilians, was like trapped gas constantly rising up to the surface of a cesspool of corruption, armed conflict, ignorance and poverty that seem to drown the citizens of the ARMM. It was just as well, for we believe that policy should dwell first on the abuses and excesses of those in who are expected to govern. One of the functions of grotesquery, is that it leads to catharsis—either to action or at the very least to introspection.

Last December 7, 2009, two weeks after the massacre, that is what we did: introspection. We gathered a handful of independent Muslim leaders - from civil society, religious, government, business, academe - to engage in a roundtable discussion on the theme: Violence in Politics and the Politics of Violence, Understanding the Culture of Impunity in ARMM.

This report is the output of that meeting. A detached, internal evaluation of the culture of impunity in ARMM and the cycle of lawlessness, violence and patronage that feeds on it.

We thank the participants for their candor and insights. We are grateful to The Asia Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for their support.

We hope that this report will help our readers, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, channel their sense of rage at this gruesome murders into something more productive, i.e., working to ensure that the culture of impunity will be arrested and that peace and democracy will take root in Muslim Mindanao.

AMINA RASUL
PCID Lead Convenor

I. Introduction

November 23, 2009 is a day that will live in infamy.

Fifty seven people—22 women, two of whom were pregnant, and 32 media people—were brutally killed on their way to file the certificate of candidacy of Ismael Mangudadatu for governor of Maguindanao. The monstrous manner with which the murders were carried out elicited national anger as well as international condemnation. The summary execution of the media practitioners has made the Philippines the most dangerous country for journalists. It was regarded as a criminal act of the most heinous character.

As an immediate reaction, the government sent four battalions of soldiers to prevent the violence from spilling over and to effect the immediate arrest of the perpetrators of the crime. Then on December 5, the President declared martial law to quell what the Arroyo administration claimed to be a “looming rebellion” allegedly being fomented by the Ampatuans.

The Maguindanao massacre or Ampatuan massacre, as the media has labeled it, was, on the surface, a result of the political confrontation between two powerful political clans—the Ampatuans and the Mangudadatus. However, the roundtable participants believe that it is too simplistic and myopic to see it as an intramural violent confrontation between two local kingpins because the Maguindanao massacre also exposed the pattern of political violence, warlordism, patronage politics, democracy deficits and the wanton disregard of the rule of law. These conditions do not exist in Maguindanao alone as they are also characteristic of Philippine politics as well.

These were the contexts within which a group of Muslim leaders, intellectuals and civil society leaders gathered in a roundtable discussion entitled **VIOLENCE IN POLITICS AND**

THE POLITICS OF VIOLENCE: Understanding the Culture of Politics in ARMM. The forum was organized by the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy (PCID) and the Magbassa Kita Foundation, Inc. (MKFI), supported by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and The Asia Foundation (TAF).

Preliminary Insights and Direction-Setting

Is political violence a part of Mindanaoan culture as widely perceived? Or a phenomenon inherited and nurtured by political clans with the connivance of the national government? Is there a direct correlation between the declaration of martial law in the 1970's and the rise of political warlordism in Mindanao?

Former Senator Santanina Rasul, MKFI Chairperson, compared the governance and quality of life of Muslims in Mindanao before and after the declaration of martial law in 1972. Political killings in Mindanao were unheard of, but existed in other areas in the Philippines. But martial law put a culture of impunity into place, through the tight grip of political warlords coddled by a central government wanting to tighten its grip on power.

It was only after the imposition of martial rule that politically-instigated violence began between and among political actors in Mindanao. This came about, says Rasul, when the martial law regime shared power with a select few among Muslim society. Marcos thought that by entering into a power-sharing agreement with traditional Muslim political clans, selected through their closeness with the martial law regime, he would be able to tighten his grip over Mindanao politics. This backfired eventually because it resulted into what Senator Rasul described as a "culture of impunity" perpetuated by political warlords coddled by the Marcos regime.

The Philippines showed the world in 1986 that it could topple a dictator and restore democracy through peaceful means. It was a democratic transition seen by many as an opportunity to reform the political institutions that were damaged during the martial law years under Marcos. But the promise of EDSA people power did not change the dynamics of warlordism in the different parts of the Philippines. In subsequent years, warlordism and feudalism have become even more entrenched in many provinces, cities and municipalities.

The Maguindanao massacre is a grim testament to this. Dr. Rasul, the last Muslim to occupy a seat in the Senate, also noted that "through all these most of our leaders have remained silent, except for the least rated presidentiable (former Secretary Gilbert Teodoro) who not only renounced the perpetrators of the crime but moved to expel the perpetrators from his party."

Atty. Nasser Marohomsalic, PCID Convenor and former Human Rights Commissioner, warned about the implications of the Maguindanao massacre on the majority's perception of Muslims. Although Muslims in Mindanao disowned the culprits and damned them as a *kaffir* or a *munafique* (the bearer of the highest form of unbelief), detractors can use the incident to further their anti-Muslim agenda and propaganda.

The true culprit is the increasingly undemocratic and feudal political and social systems that prevail in the country today. Marohomsalic quoted Dr. Carol Araullo of BAYAN Movement in describing the country as holding a culture of impunity promoted by the security apparati of the state which itself enforces authority with political violence to curb political dissent and dampen the revolutionary spirit of the people.

Even if the Maguindanao incident involved Muslims killing Muslims, the problem is not a religion-oriented one, as Dr. Steven Rood, Country Director of The Asia Foundation,

pointed out. Dr. Rood agreed that what needs addressing is the prevalent feudalistic political culture.

Article II, Section 6 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution is firm about the separation of Church and State: “The separation of Church and State shall be inviolable.” However, many support the position that this principle might not necessarily be applicable in the context of Muslim Mindanao since there is no separation of church and state in Islam. Thus, Muslims of the Philippines demand their religious leaders to be more active in addressing socio-political issues. The ulama (Muslim theologians and religious leaders) should then be considered a major stakeholder.

Ms. Amina Rasul, PCID Lead Convenor, affirms this insight, noting that in Islam, what is immoral cannot be legal. However, in Philippine law, what is legal may not always be moral or ethical, such as in the case of legalized gambling. Thus, Islamic principles on governance, leadership and accountability, on human rights, can be utilized as foundations of good governance in ARMM.

Further, to effectively implement peace and development programs and better governance in Mindanao, the role and capacities of the Muslim religious must be taken into account. The ulama and imams have a wide network on the ground through the *masjid* and the *Madrasah*, and can contribute to the people’s better understanding of democratic reforms viewed through the Islamic perspectives. The PCID has developed and published its manual, “Islamic Model for Peace Education”, which has modules on governance, leadership and accountability based on the Holy Qur’an and *hadith*.

The Maguindanao Massacre, Political Violence and a Weak State

Scholars generally define political violence as “the commission of violent acts motivated by a desire, conscious or unconscious, to obtain or maintain political power”. Political violence therefore is about the acquisition and maintenance of power through the employment of violence. This phenomenon, by and large, can be seen among guerrillas, paramilitary groups, tyrannical regimes, extremist religious and ethnic groups and, in this particular case, local political warlords aiming to achieve hegemony over a region, state or a group (Moser, C., & Clark, F., 2001a).

Related to the issue of political violence is the persistence of political dynasties and patronage politics. The political clans, motivated by control of power, tend to prioritize hanging on to political posts. And many are willing to use everything at their disposal, including unlawful and undemocratic acts, in order to maintain their hold to power.

Political clans create their own power base in their local area of influence consisting of loyal supporters and armed civilian groups. This power structure is unmatched by any political organization or party in the area. National political parties, in effect, are dependent on these local structures.

The rule of local warlords inevitably leads to the corruption of democratic institutions including electoral processes. In their attempt to perpetuate themselves in power, warlords employ all means to subvert the will of the people. The existence of political dynasties effectively marginalizes political oppositions that do not possess the same power base and firepower as those of the political clans.

Ideally, electoral processes serve as alternative to violence

as a means to achieve political or social objectives. When the electoral process is therefore undermined, violent alternatives become viable to political competitors and the people become disempowered. The cycle is therefore complete: dynasties lead to the emasculation of electoral democracy, which in turn leads to the persistence of political violence.

Factors which shaped the political situation in Maguindanao – the persistence of political clans, proliferation of loose firearms and the perpetuation of a culture of impunity – define the political system not just in ARMM, but also characterize other Philippine local government units dominated by political clans. These are manifestations of what scholars say the weakness of the Philippine political state.

The horrific massacre in Maguindanao puts in the limelight the culture of impunity in Muslim Mindanao, defined by warlordism and political violence. Is this culture of impunity prevalent in all of the ARMM areas? There are other critical issues that exacerbate the violence-prone political situation in ARMM, to include:

1. *Proliferation of loose firearms.* ARMM-wide the national police place the number of loose firearms at more than 150,000. It has been reported that there are underground groups that manufacture guns.
2. *Increasing drug trade.* Drug-dealing is another factor in the prevalence of the culture of impunity. The money derived from the illegal drugs industry fuels politics as it is used by some politicians to fund their machinery. The police and the military are perceived to be part of the operations as well.
3. *Kidnap for Ransom.* Money from kidnap-for-ransom operations also contributes to the election funds.

Addressing the problems on the ground would have to require the following steps: engagement and information exchange among local stakeholders, security dialogue with the military and the PNP, effective law enforcement, strong local media, and strong national coverage on the events in the ARMM provinces.

II. Mapping the Political Terrain in ARMM

The horrific massacre in Maguindanao puts in the limelight the culture of politics and the persistence of warlordism and political violence in Muslim Mindanao. Is this culture of



impunity prevalent in all of the areas in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao? What follows is a brief mapping of the political terrain in the five provinces in Muslim Mindanao.

ARMM	
Capital	Cotabato City
Population (2007)	4,120,795
Poverty Incidence (2006)	61.8%
Simple Literacy Rate (2003)	70.2%
No. of Registered Voters (2009)	1,692,468

The *Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao* (ARMM) was created through Republic Act 6734 or what is popularly known as the *Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao*. Former president Corazon

Aquino initiated the move to grant an autonomous region for Filipino Muslims in Mindanao. On August 1, 1989, a plebiscite

was held among Muslims in at least thirteen provinces and cities in Mindanao. These Muslim-controlled areas were identified as those controlled by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) under the 1976 Tripoli Agreement. From the initial thirteen, only the provinces of Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao voted to be included in the ARMM territory. In 2001, Republic Act 9054 which is an Act to Strengthen and Expand the Organic Act was enacted. RA 9054 repealed RA 6734, and led to the widening of the territorial scope and autonomy powers of the ARMM. Another plebiscite was held and the province of Basilan and the city of Marawi city voted to join the ARMM.

Maguindanao

MAGUINDANAO	
Capital	Shariff Aguak
Population (2007)	710,829
HDI Rank (2000)	5 th lowest in Phil. (HDI = 0.416)
Poverty Incidence (2006)	62%
Simple Literacy Rate (2000)	66.27%
No. of Registered Voters (2009)	334,287

Maguindanao is the biggest province in the ARMM in terms of land area. It has one of the richest and the most vibrant history, culture and Moro identity among other ARMM provinces.

The province was once the seat of the greatest Sultanate to arise out of Mindanao. The Sultanate of Maguindanao was the biggest and the most influential Sultanate in all of South-East Asia in the 14th century. Its political tentacles can be traced as far as Cagayan province in Northern Philippines.

Several clans in Maguindanao trace their lineage to Sharif Kabunsuan Bin Ali Zaynal Abidin, who came to Mindanao around 1515 AD and established the Sultanate of Maguindanao. During the Spanish colonization, Maguindanao had been ruled by royal families under the Kabunsuan line. The Sultanate was

never conquered by the Spaniards. It was only after the arrival of the Americans that Maguindanao became part of Philippine territory.

During the American period, political clans slowly became a dominant fixture in Maguindanaoan politics. The Ampatuans, Sinsuats, Masturas, Mangundadatus, Candaos, Pendatuns and Matalam all had their share of governing the province through alliances and inter-marriages. It was important to note though, that during the American period, these families did not resort to political violence to gain ascendancy or as a means to perpetuate themselves in power. There was a silent understanding between and among these families that power is “shared, not controlled by just one.”

This changed during martial law, as the dictatorial regime chose a select few to dominate, and administer the province during the entire length of martial law. This marginalized other political clans which decided to oppose Marcos.

When martial rule ended, those who benefited from the dictatorship, continued to exert political hegemony over the province. As the peace and order situation worsened and the secessionist movement took a firm hold of some areas of Maguindanao, the new government led by former president Cory Aquino encouraged the creation of armed citizens geographical units or CAFGUs. These CAFGUs were controlled and managed by political clans.

Maguindanao is the current negative rubric of this malaise. Closely associated with President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, for instance, the patriarch Datu Andal Ampatuan has been elected as Governor of Maguindanao for 3 terms. His eldest son, Zaldy Ampatuan, was elected ARMM Regional Governor. As of last count the Datu Andal’s sons, relatives and associates hold mayoral positions in 10 out of the province’s 34 municipalities.

As many have argued in the aftermath of the Maguindanao massacre, national government leaders are complicit in the culture of impunity and patronage politics that has come to characterize Maguindanao. Because most financial resources come from the national government, local officers thrive on a culture of political reciprocity with national officials. Local political leaders choose the national politicians they would support as allies in exchange for favors and resources. Hence, there is no incentive for good governance from the ground.

The current spotlight on Maguindanao has exposed the extent of one family's rule over a provincial fiefdom.

Matrix showing the control of the Ampatuan clan over Maguindanao:

Name	Municipality / Position	Relation to Gov. Andal Ampatuan Sr.
1. Sajid Ampatuan	Vice Governor	Son
2. Mayor Andal Ampatuan Jr.	Datu Unsay	Son
3. Mayor Anwar Ampatuan	Sharif Aguak	Son
4. Mayor Saudi Ampatuan, Jr.	Datu Saudi Ampatuan	Son
5. Mayor Hadji Samer Uy	Datu Piang	Brother in law
6. Mayor Akmad Ampatuan	Mamasapano	Son in law
7. Mayor Yacob Ampatuan	Rajah Buayan	Son in law
8. Mayor Zacaria Sangki	Ampatuan	Nephew
9. Mayor Akmad Sangki	Datu Abdullah Sangki	Nephew
10. Mayor Nathaniel Midtimbang	Datu Anggal Midtimbang	Brother in law
11. Mayor Antao Midtimbang	Guindulungan	Uncle in law
12. Mayor Ali Midtimbang	Talayan	Father in law
13. Mayor Alindatu Angas	Sultan sa Baronquis	Political ally
14. Mayor Hadki Abdullah Campong	South Upi	Political ally
15. Mayor Alexander Tomawis	Barira	Political ally
16. Mayor Ruth Fatima Tomawis	Buldon	Political ally
17. Mayor Ramil Dilangalen	Northern Kabuntulan	Political ally

Name	Municipality / Position	Relation to Gov. Andal Ampatuan Sr.
18. Mayor Norodin Matalam	Pagalungan	Political ally
19. Mayor Bai Annie Montawal	Pagagawan	Political ally
20. Mayor Hadji Bonnie Kali	Gen. S.K. Pendatuan	Political ally
21. Mayor Norodin Langkuno	Paglat	Political ally
22. Mayor Cabili Sumgaka	Talitay	Political ally
23. Mayor Hadji Nasser Imam	Matanog	Political ally
24. Mayor Hadji Talib Abo	Parang	Political ally
25. Mayor Umbra Sinsuat	Datu Odin Sinsuat	Political ally
26. Mayor Ibrahim Sinsuat Jr.	Datu Blah Sinsuat	Political ally
27. Mayor Ramon Piang	Upi	Political ally

The matrix shows that out of 34 municipalities comprising the Maguindanao province, 27 of these local government units (LGUs) are directly controlled by the governor of the province. The remaining municipalities are apportionments between other traditional political leaders in Maguindanao, namely: the Mangundadatu clan which controls the municipalities of Buluan under Mayor Ibrahim Mangundadatu; Mangundadatu under Mayor Freddie Mangundadatu, brother of Ibrahim; Pandag under Mayor Zajid Mangundadatu and the town of Datu Paglas under Mayor Mohammad Paglas, cousin of Mayor Ibrahim Mangundadatu.

Meanwhile, Sultan Kudarat and Sultan Masturas are all under the control of the family of former Congressman Michael Mastura. The mayor of Sultan Kudarat, Bae Shayedah is the daughter of former Mayor Tocado Mastura, brother of the former Congressman. The mayor of Sultan Mastura is the brother of Michael, Mayor Mando. The mayor of Kabuntalan Salaban, meanwhile, is a strong political ally of Cotabato City Mayor Muslimin Sema.

Some hold the view that the “show of force” by the national government—declaring martial law and sending battalions of

soldiers in the area – was, on the contrary, a manifestation of its weakness. Imagine the full force of the state being employed to neutralize a family of warlords from one province. The national government must also be held accountable because it has allowed the problem in Mindanao to prosper.

State Security Forces in Maguindanao

Technically, there has been sufficient number of troops (military and police) based in Maguindanao and nearby provinces to secure peace and order in Maguindanao against insurgents, criminals or terrorists. Investigations and reviews of the culpability of the military and the police in the massacre requires transparency, so as to bring credibility back to Philippine government law enforcers.

The 6th Infantry Division (Army) is based at Camp Siongco, Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao, under Major General Anthony Alcantara. It has four brigades and 13 battalions with more than 8,000 troops. The 6th ID is under the Eastern Mindanao Command (EASTMINCOM) of Lt. Gen. Raymundo Ferrer and is headquartered at Camp Panacan, Davao City.

The 601st Infantry Brigade (Army) controls the battalions in Maguindanao. Due to the massacre, Colonel Leo Ferrer has replaced Colonel Medardo Geslani as head of the brigade.

The Maguindanao Police (over 1000 policemen) is now under Sr. Superintendent Alex Lineses, after Sr. Superintendent Abusama Maguid, was replaced after the massacre.

Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) supervised by the military and armed members of Civilian Volunteer Organizations (CVOs) under the LGUs provide additional forces. Executive Order 546 armed the CVOs, providing local warlords with more armed men. Allegedly, Ampatuan

supporters who are members of CVOs and Cagfus have been linked to the Maguindanao massacre.

Lanao del Sur

The political situation in Lanao del Sur is different from other ARMM provinces because of the absence of a powerful local hegemon. Unlike Maguindanao, it has no dominant political or warlord clan.

LANAO DEL SUR	
Capital	Marawi City
Population (2007)	1.14M
HDI Rank (2000)	6 th lowest in Phil. (HDI = 0.464)
Poverty Incidence (2006)	52.5%
Simple Literacy Rate (2000)	80.12%
No. of Registered Voters (2009)	275,572

The once dominant families of the Alontos, Lucmans and even that of Ali Dimaporo had since faded from the political scene. Instead of one clan, the political landscape can be described by shifting alliances among the remaining traditional leaders.

Currently there are two political blocs in Lanao del Sur: the Adiong-Balindong-Alonto bloc and the Solitario-Dumarpa-Macarambon triumvirate. Between the two political blocs, the Adiong-Balindong-Alonto bloc is perceived to be more powerful than the Solitario-Dumarpa-Macarambon group since most of its members control the gubernatorial and local government units. Most of the mayors comprising the towns and cities of Lanao del Sur are members of the Adiong-Balindong-Alonto bloc. Thirty four out of the 40 municipalities and towns of Lanao del Sur are directly connected with the bloc, with five mayors having direct blood relations to the clan.

The provincial government is controlled by Governor Mamintal “Bombit” Adiong Jr, son of former government

Mamintal Adiong and grandson of the late senator Domocao Alonto. The governor is the brother of newly appointed ARMM governor Ansaruddin Adiong, who is a strong political ally of the Ampatuans in Maguindanao.

The Adions came to power due to their strong relationships and ties with the Alontos and Balindongs. Incumbent second district Rep. Ali Balindong's wife, who is an Alonto, is the aunt of the governor.

Matrix of Control of the Adiong-Balindong-Alonto clans in Lanao del Sur:

Name	Municipality	Relation to Incumbents
Mayor Anuar Balindong	Malabang	Brother of Cong. Balindong
Mayor Alinader Balindong	Sultan Gumander	Brother of Cong. Balindong
Mayor Cabib Tanog	Pualas	Member of Alonto clan, Political ally
Mayor Rasmia Macabago	Saguiran	Member of Alonto clan, Political ally
Nasser Pangandaman Jr	Masui	Son of DAR Sec. Nasser Pangandaman and political ally of Adiong-Balindong clan
Mayor Diarangan Jaffar Ddipatuan	Bacolod-Kalawi	Political Ally of Adiong-Balindong
Mayor Ragodotan Sampiano	Balabagan	Political ally of Adiong-Balindong clan
Mayor Lampa Pandi	Poona-Bayabao	Former in-law of Gov. Andal Ampatuan
Amer Radodotan Sampiano	Balabagan	Political Ally
Mayor Mohammad Aquil Mamainte	Bayang	Member of the Balt clan, political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Mojib Moti Mariano	Budipuso Buntong	Political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Usop Munder	Bubong	Political ally of Gov. Adiong

Name	Municipality	Relation to Incumbents
Mayor Dimnatang Pansar	Butig	Member of the Adiong-Alonto clan, political ally of the Pangan-damans and Gov. Adiong
Mayor Macapado Benito	Calanoga	Member of Benito clan, political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Actar Marmar	Ditsaan-ramain	Belongs to the Adiong-Alonto clan
Mayor Baguio Macapodi	Ganassi	Belongs to the Benito clan, political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Raida Maglangit	Kapatagan	Political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Azis Aloyodan	Lumbaca-unayan	Political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Mamintal Razuman	Lumbatan	Political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Jamal Asum	Lumbayanague	Political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Hakim Abinal	Maguing	Political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Amron Tampugao Maruhom	Marogong	Belongs to the Dimaporo clan, political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Hasim Abdul	Mulondo	Political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Khalid Diamel	Pagayawan	Political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Amroussi Macat-anong	Piagapo	Political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Lumna Kurangking	Sultan Dumalondong	Political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Cosain Capal	Togoloan	Political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Amenodin Sumagayan	Togolan	Political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Mauag Papan-dayan Jr.	Tubaran	Member of the Balt clan, political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Alimatar Gurolaim	Tugaya	Member of the Benito clan, political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Elvino Balicao Jr.	Wao	Political ally of Adiong (the only Christian mayor in Lanao Sur)
Mayor Usman Sarangani	Madalum	Political ally of Adiong-Balindong
Mayor Dagoroan Mindalano	Madamba	Cousin of vice gubernatorial candidate Sarangani, political ally of Gov. Adiong

Name	Municipality	Relation to Incumbents
Mayor Janaree Disomimba	Tamparan	Niece-in-law of former vice governor Disomimba, member of the Alonto clan
Mayor Benjamin Bagul	Balindong	Kin of Cong. Macarambon, political ally of Gov. Adiong
Mayor Mastura Manabilang	Bumbaran	Relative of Cong. Dumarpa
Mayor Minda Dagalangit	Lumba-Bayabao	Sister in law of former Mayor Solitario
Mayor Aman Marohom-salic Datumolok	Binidayan	Member of the Dimaporo clan, political ally of Gov. Adiong

The Solitario-Dumarpa-Macarambon group is a grouping between former Marawi City Mayor Omar “Solitario” Ali, a former MNLF commander, whose brother, Fahad “Pre” Salic, now serves as the mayor of Marawi City and the Macarambon-Dumarpa group headed by Former Congressman Benasing Macarambon and incumbent First District Representative Faysah Dumarpa.

Mayor Benjamin Bagul of the municipality of Balindong supports the Solitario-Dumarpa-Macarambon triumvirate being a cousin of Congressman Macarambon. What makes the triumvirate a force to contend with is the active role played by Marawi City mayor Fahad “Pre” Salic and that of his brother former mayor Omar Solitario in Lanao del Sur politics.

Hussein Pangandaman, son of former Agriculture secretary Nasser Pangandaman and brother to Masiu Mayor Nasser Pangandaman Jr. will run against Salic Dumarpa, husband of out-going Second District Representative Faysah Dumarpa. Congressman Ali Balindong will face former Congressman Macarambon in the congressional fight.

Historically, these contending political blocs rarely engage in armed conflicts. In previous electoral contests, there were very

low incidences of political violence in the area. What concerns participants are the proliferation of loose firearms and the use of drug money in funding electoral campaigns.

Based on PNP reports, sixty five percent (65%) of firearms in Lanao del Sur are unregistered. These firearms are locally manufactured by underground groups and are also being supplied to secessionist groups which operate in the area.

Narcopolitics also play a big part in Lanao del Sur politics. Sources say drug money is being used to fund grassroots campaigns. There are reports indicating that members of the PNP and the AFP connive with local government officials in the illicit drug trade. Kidnap for ransom (KFR) groups are also reported to have been used in previous elections to generate campaign funds.

To address these problems in the ground, the following steps are recommended: conduct security briefings and dialogue with the military and the local PNP, implement effective law enforcement, establish strong local media and encourage national media networks to cover major events in the ARMM provinces.

Sulu

Sulu¹ has no clear dominant political clan. Sulu's politics in recent years has been characterized by relative parity, i.e. a number of political families openly contest the different political posts in the province. In addition, a distinguishing characteristic of the ruling political aggrupation in the province is how one clan splits to establish alliances with opposing contenders, like those of the Osmenas of Cebu.

¹ Sulu is an island province of the Philippines located in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Its capital is Jolo and occupies the middle group of islands of the Sulu Archipelago, between Basilan and Tawi-Tawi. It is home to the historical Sultanate of Sulu.

SULU	
Capital	Jolo
Population (2007)	562,886
HDI Rank (2000)	Lowest in the Phil. (HDI = 0.351)
Poverty Incidence (2006)	46.5%
Simple Literacy Rate (2000)	58.29%
No. of Registered Voters (2009)	209,677

The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) still exerts a significant presence in the province. Four mayors of the province's 18 municipalities are members of the MNLF "Magic-8", its original

group of secessionist commanders, these are Munib Estino of Panglima; Najeed Maldisa, of Maimbung; Kabir Hayudini, of Patikul, and Ahmad Omar of Luuk.

Over half of the remaining municipalities of Sulu are under the control of members of a handful of families, which include the Sahidullas, Burahans, Loongs, Tulawies, Tingkahans, Muksans, Amins and the Tans.

Matrix of Clan-controlled Municipalities in Sulu:

Name	Municipality	Relations to Incumbents
Mayor Abdulwahid Sahidulla	Tongkil	Husband of Vice Gov. Nur Anna "Lady Ann" Sahidulla
Mayor Nedra Burahan	Panglima	Wife of former ARMM Assemblyman Jess Burahan
Mayor Rizal Tingkahan	Parang	Cousin of former Gov. Tupay Loong father of RLA Assemblyman Tingkahan
Mayor Rayah Tulawie	Talipao	Brother of former Cong. Tulawie
Mayor Nasser Daud	Tapul	Son-in-law of Assemblyman Abdel Anni
Mayor Nurmina Burahan	Pata	In-law of former Assemblyman Jess Burahan
Mayor Arthur Muksan	Siasi	Cousin of Assemblyman Abdel Anni and former Mayor Wilson Anni
Vice Mayor Edsir Tan	Jolo	Cousin of Gov. Sakur Tan
Hussin Amin	Jolo	Relative of former Gov. Tupay Loong

The 2010 gubernatorial elections features former MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari, who launched a political comeback last 2008, and Congressman Munir Arbison of Sulu's second district which will both be running against incumbent Governor Abdusakur Tan. Arbison, together with Sulu Vice Governor Nur Anna "Lady Ann" Sahidulla and a group of Sulu local government officials led by First District Congressman Yusop Jiriki just bolted the administration party Lakas-NUCD-CMD to join Eduardo Cojuangco's Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC). Sahidulla is eye-ing the second congressional district seat to be vacated by Arbison.

The Loong clan, led by former governor Tupay Loong, has split into two groups, with Loong running for congressman with the Tan group; while his brother, Benjamin Loong, will run as Sulu vice governor allied with the Arbison group.

Sulu's political landscape plays out amidst conflict and criminality. Known as the roving ground of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Sulu has one of the highest levels of lawlessness and banditry in the ARMM, not to mention persistent conflict that has continued to drive down the province's human development indices, undermined the human rights of the marginalized, increased the number of refugees and threaten its democratic institutions. Many of those from Sulu trace the problem of lawlessness, violence and the culture of impunity to how Muslims forget or take for granted Islamic values.

Analysts attribute these problems in Sulu by creating a conflict model comprising of three (3) P's: political warlordism, patronage politics and proliferation of loose firearms. These problems are rooted in the history of the province. Sulu's peace and order situation began to deteriorate shortly after former president Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in 1972.

Prior to martial rule, political warlord clans were non-

existent in Sulu. The province was administered by competent public servants such as the Rasuls. When Martial law was declared, the dictatorial regime replaced Sulu's officials with its own cronies composed mainly of members of political clans. The move led to the corruption of the political system and eventually paved the way for the reign of powerful political families whose claim to power was their closeness with the Marcoses. Sulu was never the same again. Part of the problem, says analysts, was the inability of the Aquino administration to neutralize and disarm these Marcos-era warlords.

Compounding the problem of peace and order, is related to the appointments of military and police officials in the province. Military officials in Sulu are frequently replaced and re-assigned, therefore, affecting their learning curve and assimilation to the situation on the ground is very short. Since officials only stay for a short period, these officers tend to "play the political game" and even perpetuate the activities of these Marcosian warlords.

Corruption has not spared the Philippine National Police (PNP). This is true with respect to the issue of buying of positions in the police force. Some reports² indicate that several aspiring police officers would have to pay at least P400,000 to be "recruited (or approved)". This practice, if true, has repercussions on the level of commitment of the police to protect the community, such that, policemen are not likely to risk their lives in the resolution of conflict because they paid so much just to have that position.

Many do not contemplate a declaration of martial rule to rid the province of its problems but rather a serious and sustained implementation of a total gun ban in the conflict-affected areas. What makes this difficult is the feeling of insecurity among the people where they will no longer feel secure if government takes

² See <http://businessmirror.com.ph/home/nation/19380-irregular-procedures-in-cop-recruitment-in-armmnoted.html>

away their arms.

A number of other possible interventions have been suggested, among those: advocacy work, influencing other key actors to form a larger group pursuing peace, improving confidence on the justice and security systems, and strengthening faith and values.

Basilan

BASILAN	
Capital	Isabela City
Population (2007)	408,520
HDI Rank (2000)	3 RD lowest in the Phil. (HDI = 0.425)
Poverty Incidence	31.7%
Simple Literacy Rate (2000)	72.23%
No. of Registered Voters (2009)	117,467

The security situation in the island province of Basilan³ share some similarities with Sulu. The two island provinces share some similarities in the areas of conflict and lawlessness. Both are roving grounds

of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)⁴ and the staging ground for recurrent banditry and kidnap for ransom activities. However, one glaring difference is that Basilan’s politics currently has more in common with Maguindanao, where one family dominates the political landscape, rather than Sulu and Lanao where there is diversification of the local elites.

The Akbar political clan is the dominant political force in

³ Basilan is an island province of the Philippines located just off the southern coast of Zamboanga Peninsula, and is the biggest and northernmost among the major islands of the Sulu Archipelago.

⁴ Abu Sayyaf, whose name means “bearer of the sword” in Arabic, is a militant organization based in the southern Philippines. It seeks a separate Islamic state for the country’s Muslim minority. The U.S. State Department designates Abu Sayyaf as a terrorist organization that boasts of ties to Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda network, as well as the Indonesian network of Jemaah Islamiyah.

Basilan. Despite the assassination of former Congressman Wahab Akbar, the clan patriarch, the Akbar family continues to control most of the province through Akbar's wives, sons, relatives and close associates. Basilan governor Jum Akbar is the wife of the late congressman while the mayor of the capital town Isabela is Mayor Sheryl Akbar, Wahab's third wife.

Akbar's family directly controls five of the province's 12 municipalities including its capital city and four other municipalities through political allies. The remaining three municipalities are allies of the Hatamans or of former Cong. Gerry Salapuddin (see table below).

The Dominance of the Akbar Clan in Basilan:

Name	Municipal/City	Relation to Dominant Clan
Mayor Sheryl Akbar	Isabela	Third wife of former Rep. Wahab Akbar
Mayor Alih Salih	Akbar	Nephew of former Rep. Wahab Akbar
Mayor Tahira Ismael	Lantawan	Niece of former Rep. Wahab Akbar
Mayor Sakib Salajin	Maluso	Nephew of former Rep. Wahab Akbar
Mayor Anwar Abdulmajid	Muhtamad	Cousin of former Rep. Wahab Akbar
Mayor Talib Pawaki	Mohammad Ajul	Political ally of former Rep. Wahab Akbar
Mayor Habir Asanul	Sumisip	Political ally of former Rep. Wahab Akbar
Mayor Joel Maturan	Ungkaya_Pukan	Cousin of former Rep. Wahab Akbar
Mayor Durie Kalahal	Tuburan	Political ally of former Rep. Wahab Akbar
Mayor Ingatun Istanul	Tipo-Tipo	Political ally of former Rep. Gerry Salapuddin

Name	Municipal/City	Relation to Dominant Clan
Mayor Roderick Furigay	Lamitan	Political ally of former Rep. Gerry Salapuddin
Mayor Mohammad Ka-bukisan	Albarka	Political ally of former Rep. Gerry Salapuddin

Some observers view the present culture of impunity and the persistence of violence in Basilan, and in ARMM in general, as a reflection of the weakness of understanding of Islamic values, political immaturity, and low level of awareness of Islamic law. This is reflected in the general sentiment towards the automation of elections in 2010. In the context of Basilan, for instance, the automated election during the ARMM regional elections in 2008 did not stop the vote-buying practice as well as the use of violence during elections. Thus the view remain that no modernization program can replace values formation as an effective tool against fraud.

But some sectors express high hopes as far as the automation for the 2010 elections hoping that it can at least minimize the usual problems encountered during elections--slow counting of votes that lead to tensions, *dagdag-bawas*⁵, and the like. The inefficiency of the manual count has also led to allegations in the past that certain officials of the Commission on Elections have been bribed in return for the victory of particular candidates.

In addition, kidnappings seem to increase as elections near. Many suspect that this is part of the fundraising activities of local politicians to fuel their own campaigns.

With the current turmoil in Maguindanao, some civil society leaders have expressed apprehension about the possibility that the Maguindanao situation (the political unrest) may spread to

⁵ Dagdag-bawas or addition-subtraction is the Pilipino term for the fraudulent tampering of vote by shaving votes from one candidate and adding it to another.

other provinces like Basilan. This given the fact that there is a clear similarity in the political landscape of Maguindanao and Basilan: both have political clans commanding private armies. Many fear that should there be an escalation of violence either because of the upcoming electoral contest or the rise in criminal activities, the government may use such instability to declare martial rule.

Making matters worse is what many perceived to be the military's inability to control these private armies that is exacerbated by the proliferation of loose firearms. This highly volatile situation takes on a higher level when the military and the private armies are drawn into clan conflicts or "rido".

Electoral violence directly affects the legitimacy of electoral outcomes. Under a climate of fear, election results cannot reflect the will of the majority. Voters can be easily cowed, thus voters will be unable to exercise their right to suffrage. In addition to problems in elections and political violence other factors also complicate the situation in the province of Basilan including: ignorance, poverty, and conflict.

Addressing these seemingly gargantuan concerns require an equally herculean effort on the part of the people including encouraging people not to submit to fear and to participate in cleansing the system. Participants noted that civic and Islamic values education play an important role. The citizenry, especially the youth, can transform the culture on violence and impunity in their communities through education.

Tawi-Tawi

TAWI-TAWI	
Capital	Bongao
Population (2007)	849,670
HDI Rank (2000)	2 nd lowest in Phil. (HDI = 0.39)
Poverty Incidence (2006)	78.9%
Simple Literacy Rate (2000)	73.48%
No. of Registered Voters (2009)	120,455

T a w i - Tawi is generally considered as the most peaceful province in ARMM. Its idyllic beaches and communities are testimony to the relative peace in the province compared with the maelstrom

brewing in neighboring Sulu and Basilan. Basilan, however, also resembles Maguindanao, in terms of its body politik.

Incumbent Governor Sadikul Sahali is the patriarch of the reigning political family. He has two daughters with top positions in both the provincial and regional governments, while a son and son-in-law are mayors in two of the province's 11 municipalities.

Matrix of Gov. Sahali's political control of Tawi-tawi:

Name	Municipalities / Position	Relation to Gov. Sahali
Ruby Sahali	Vice Governor	Daughter of Gov. Sahali
Reggie Sahali	Speaker, ARMM Regional Legislative Assembly	Daughter of Gov. Sahali
Mayor Nurbert Sahali	Panglima-Sugala	Son of Gov. Sahali
Mayor Nickerson Tan	Mapun	Ruby's husband; son-in-law of Gov. Sahali
Mayor Benzar Tambut	Simunul	Political ally of Gov. Sahali
Mayor Serbin Ahaja	Sitangkay	Political ally of Gov. Sahali
Mayor Salma Omar	South Ubian	Political ally of Gov. Sahali
Mayor Rahima Salih	Tandubas	Political ally of Gov. Sahali
Mayor Omar Aripin	Turtle Islands	Political ally of former Gov. Rashidin Matba
Mayor Moh'd Ali	Sapa-Sapa	Political ally of Gov. Sahali

Name	Municipalities / Position	Relation to Gov. Sahali
Mayor Kuyo Pajiji	Sibutu	Cousin of Rep. Jaafar

Only Mayor Kuyoh Pajiji of Sibutu town is a political ally of Representative Nur Jaafar. Jaafar and Pajiji are cousins. The lone Congressional district being held by Jaafar will be contested by former vice-governor and Congressman, Anwar Abubakar, a close political ally of the Sahalis. If Abubakar defeats Jaafar, the entire province will be effectively controlled by the Sahali political family.

According to participants, the rise of political families in Tawi-Tawi, similar to other ARMM provinces is best understood in the context of a weak Philippine state where a family's hold to power is ensured by leaders who have armed militias. This in turn undermines good governance as well as prevent the rise of progressive politicians and groups. The weak state thesis is supported by the belief that private armies seem to be better equipped than the military. The militias have more sophisticated weapons.

Contributing to the problem of warlordism⁶ is the policy whereby local government officials receive resources from the national government to keep the peace in their respective areas for CVOs and CAFGUs which end up as private armies.

Many observers note that the rise of political clans in Tawi-Tawi with their armed followers and armed groups may inevitably lead to electoral violence. This might threaten the claim of Tawi-Tawi of being the most peaceful province in

⁶ Warlordism appears in so-called weak or failed states: states in which central government have collapsed or with very limited control over the state territory. A warlord is a person with power who has both military and civil control over an area due to armed followers loyal to the warlord and usually with the acquiescence of the weak central government.

the ARMM. Just recently, reports⁷ indicate the incidence of conflict between the governor and one of the mayors resulting to the internal displacement of civilians in Turtle Islands.

Many people believe that the emerging political turmoil robs the people of Tawi-Tawi of quality leadership, leadership that is progressive and that will lead to the development of the province's potentials. However, it must be noted that under Governor Sahali and Congressman Jaafar, national government has provided substantial funding for the development of agriculture and aquaculture.

II. Related Issues

Aside from what has been discussed in the context-particular experiences of the culture of impunity and lawlessness in ARMM, there are also other issues that must be addressed:

Civilian Volunteers or Private Armies?

Executive Order 546, issued by President Arroyo, allows local officials to convert and fund their private armed groups as legal entities with a tame and even altruistic sounding name: civilian volunteer organizations (CVO). CVO is a sugarcoated term for private militias. In effect, the national government has caused the empowerment of the CVOs. CVOs should be under the supervision of the PNP, but still have their umbilical cords tied with the military. The PNP treats the CVOs as the name suggests, as "civilian volunteers", but in practice the private militia receive directives from the local government officials. The military, on the other hand, have been involved in supplying CVOs with arms.

⁷ See <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/175652/marines-sent-in-to-stop-fighting-in-tawi-tawi>

Media reports⁸ indicate that then-Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro attended the oath taking of 2,000 CVOs recently, which has caused a growing concern in the provinces of Sulu, Basilan, and Tawi-Tawi. Although the news did not indicate that government had provided arms to these CVOs, the people think that because of the alignment of the traditional military forces with the private militia, they are no longer safe. Participants point to the utilization of CVOs and CAFGUs in the Ampatuan massacre. Are the CVOs therefore a source of security or insecurity?

By the time martial law was declared in Maguindanao, the national government had deployed four battalions of the Armed Forces in Mindanao, which when added with the existing police force in the areas, would account for around 75,000 people. But beyond this, the registered firearms in the area are up to 150,000, that is, not including the loose, unregistered firearms. Fifty percent of the loose firearms are in the custody of CVOs and private armies, according to the estimate of a participant. What is required therefore is a review of EO 546 as well as congressional oversight on the regulation of these private militias.

ARMM and the Upcoming 2010 Elections

The Maguindanao massacre and the declaration of martial law have heightened concerns about the potential for confusion and violence in lieu of the automation of the 2010 elections. Even after COMELEC published the instructions for the automation system, most lawyers and projected users of the machine are still in the dark. There are immediate problems that have to be addressed: the smallest inkblot outside of the

⁸ See <http://www.mb.com.ph/articles/228401/civilian-volunteers-help-authorities-thwart-rebel-attacks-sulu-villages>, and <http://www.manilatimes.net/index.php/news/regions/5447-civilians-join-new-police-unit-to-help-fight-terrorism-in-sulu-province>

designated shading area could render the ballot void; and, logistical and transmission problems in setting up the system. All these can cause confusion and undermine the legitimacy of the electoral process.

There are also rules to be put up to address potential political tensions. This involves the vote audit procedure (wherein the precinct that can be audited by the system is very limited; pre-proclamation cases (since contesting candidates may no longer question the validity of ballots because they are no longer handwritten); and filing election protests. All these are not yet formulated by the COMELEC.

Given the instability and uncertainty that resulted from the Maguindanao massacre, there have been calls for the de-synchronization of the elections in ARMM from the national elections. While Atty. Marohomsalic and Atty. Mehol Sadain recognize the legal question that such a proposal might entail (given the Constitutional provision synchronizing local and national elections), the holding of separate elections in ARMM will enable the Commission on Elections and its deputies, the media, the civic-minded citizenry, and poll watchers to marshal focus all their strengths and resources needed to safeguard the integrity of the electoral process.

Another important focus is to look out for clear indicators of political violence, among them are: existing political rivalries, capacity for violence of the candidates, presence of armed groups, weakness of peace implementers and judicial institutions, and proliferation of firearms.

Martial Law: Threat for Democracy or Opportunity for Reforms?

Although now moot and academic the declaration of martial law, through Proclamation 1959, ignited a heated

debate not just among constitutional experts but also among Muslims themselves. While many are, in principle, opposed to the idea of martial rule, especially with reference to their experience with Marcos' martial law, they look at the imposition of martial law in Maguindanaoas both a threat and an opportunity.

On the one hand, martial law is considered as a threat to democracy as it is traditionally accompanied by the suppression of civil rights. With the expanded role of the military and its unregulated movements in the area, they may also be used as instruments of persecution. Others also argue that the declaration sends the wrong message to the people that while the national government is responsible for the emergence of warlords like the Ampatuans, it takes the imposition of martial rule to neutralize them. They ask: is the government so weak it takes the entire arsenal of government forces to fight a local clan?

On the other hand, a more pragmatic view is held by some who argue that martial law also offers an opportunity to cleanse the culture of impunity in ARMM. Like a cancer that needs to be excised, martial law can provide a surgical cure to the vicious cycle of violence and patronage in ARMM. This pragmatic view also contends that legal or constitutional arguments against martial law do not understand the conditions on the ground. While martial law may have some negative implications, they asked: is the pre-martial law condition of the Moros better than when martial law was imposed? Many claim that the people on the ground are "silently happy" about the conditions obtaining as a result of martial rule. Both views however agree that the imposition of martial law should compel the people to be more vigilant in ensuring that the rights of the people must be protected.

The recommendations of the group included the following:

1. Martial law in Maguindanao must be limited to Maguindanao (Martial law was lifted after a week, on December 12)
2. Martial law must be time-bound and for a short term.
3. The military administrator and troops must be professional, credible and respectful of human rights. Lt. General Raymundo Ferrer has been acknowledged by the participants as a professional, credible military officer capable of implementing Proclamation 1959 in Maguindanao.
4. The civilian elected officials, duly elected and not implicated in the massacre, must function to ensure that public service does not ground to a halt.
5. Human rights watch must be supported by the state to ensure no violation of human rights by any group

Return to Islam: The question of Maratabat

An overwhelming concession among the participants was that better governance could be achieved through strengthening Islamic values among politicians and the citizenry. However, questions were raised if the value of *maratabat* is still relevant in achieving peace.

Maratabat is akin to the Tagalog's or the Spanish concept of *amor propio*, and the Japanese' bushido or the warrior's code of honor. The value system of *maratabat* relates to the rido or clan feud, particularly as a kind of justice mechanism that justifies a draconian system based on "a tooth for a tooth, eye for an eye principle", and makes retaliation expedient, if justice is not attained. No one is exempt, even the elite.

Atty. Nasser Marohomsalic, however, presented a nuanced

view of *maratabat* as a social system that defines individual and social responsibility and the place of people in the hierarchy of traditional authority and relation. He argued, however, that it is biased in favor of the elite, the moneyed and the politically powerful. The present *maratabat* and *rido* system, traditionally centered on the values of honor and pride, have been weakened and corrupted by greed and the quest for power.

While there is general agreement that *maratabat* is a major culprit in clan conflicts, others point out that “a society’s sense and concepts of honor, self-esteem, and dignity also ensure the integrity and survival of communities” (Torres, 2007).

Former Senator Rasul explained that the Tausug term for *maratabat*(Maranao) is *mahaltabbat*, which means self-respect. It used to be ingrained in the personality/psyche of the Tausug, which implies that he internalized it early in life. A Tausug will therefore react immediately to any act of injustice that will dishonor him or his family or his community. Thus Kamlon fought the government, when the courts dealt him an injustice Princess Tarhata and her husband DatuTahil, led a rebellion against the American supported regime when the regime forced the Tausugs to pay *cedula* tax. This, even after Princess Tarhata was educated in the US (University of Illinois) for a year.

The practice of *maratabat* should return to its base in Islamic principles. The participants were unanimous in their recommendation that a community-based political and social reform movement should be initiated, based on Islamic values.

IV. From Crisis to Opportunity: What Can Be Done

The declaration placing the entire province of Maguindanao under Martial Law was presented as the

necessary surgical initiative to reestablish the rule of law in the province by strengthening institutions through good, accountable and responsive governance. Based on the short time period of implementation, the declaration of martial law did not intend to place civilian institutions of governance under military supervision. However, Maguindanao is still under a State of Emergency. In any manner the Philippine Government will deem proper, legal and effective the filling up of the vacuum in the leadership and administration of the provincial government must mobilize the authority, personnel and funds of the provincial, municipal and barangay governments for the general welfare of people of the province.

In theory, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) was established in pursuit of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, while the amendment of Republic Act No. 6734 through Republic Act No. 9054 was in compliance with the 1996 Final Peace Accord. Has the ARMM lived up to the expectations of its citizens, with regards to the implementation of both the 1976 and the 1996 Peace Agreements? The participants were unanimous in their belief that the ARMM has failed to serve its constituents.

The President has delegated her supervisory function to the Department of the Interior and Local Government to monitor and audit the performance and personnel of ARMM and Maguindanao. These will measure the efficiency of the administration of the autonomous regional government. The effectiveness – fidelity to the mandates of the 1987 Constitution and compliance with the 1996 Final Peace Agreement and the 1976 Tripoli Agreement – could be best pursued by engaging the Moro National Liberation Front in the establishment and exercise of an oversight over the autonomous region and its regional and local governments.

Based on the input and preliminary discussions, the

RTD participants decided to come up with action points that they can pursue, all directed toward minimizing election-related violence and its subsequent socio-political effects. Apart from the recommendations with regard to martial law in Maguindanao (now moot and academic), the participants suggested that all concerned stakeholders come together to initiate a grassroots political movement to reform their communities' socio-political systems. The movement is to be called "AMAL," which is an Arabic word that can mean hope or action. The movement would undertake initiatives, such as the suggestions below:

Education and Strengthening Islamic Values

1. Conduct civic and voters' education focusing on human rights and Islamic principles.
2. Relate with education officials in the selection of members of Board of Election Inspectors (BEIs).
3. Mobilize Muslim religious leaders and scholars for Islamic leadership and values campaign.
4. Propose that the ulama organizations such as National Ulama Conference of the Philippines develop khutba or sermons common to all that will focus on strengthening Islamic values
5. Establish usrah groups or family/couples-based strategy of teaching Islamic values and principles.
6. After election, conduct orientation seminars on Islamic leadership for newly elected officials focusing on good governance and ethics based on Islamic teachings.
7. Conduct candidate's forum with ulama and other sectors
8. Strategize to internalize Islamic values of peace (JIHAD: Justice, Integrity, Human Rights, Harmony, Honesty,

Accountability, Dignity, Development, Democracy)

Response to Affected Sectors

1. Provide outreach programs to internally displaced peoples (IDPs).
2. Create special IDP precincts for elections.
3. Set up systems for community dialog and engagement.

Establishing Linkages

1. Muslim civil society and ulama organizations such as the NUCP should be encouraged to work closely with the Commission on Elections and other election watchdogs.
2. Explore and identify legal remedies/reliefs (i.e., election audit) through partnerships with civil society organizations, and national election-related programs initiated by the media (such as Boto Mo, Ipatrol Mo).
3. Circulate and discuss assessment reports on automation with the communities.
4. Create alternative and more creative ways of poll watching. In other words, make poll-watching fun to encourage people—especially the youth—and other sectors to guard their votes.
5. Promote direct partnership of Mindanao and Muslim-based civil society organizations with developmental partners
6. Coordinate closely with Commission on Human Rights to record and report human rights violations.
7. Establish partnership for transformation with PPCRV, National Ulama Conference of the Philippines, media, and local government units.

Creating and Directing a Movement

1. Prepare and lobby for a political security and electoral reform agenda.
2. Create a political reform movement (AMAL).
3. Encourage peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).
4. Support constitutional change that pushes for a parliamentary-federal form of government.
5. Establish a movement for peace, justice and human rights.
6. Draft a position on human rights, demand justice for Maguindanao massacre victims.

After the group outlined their action plans, they proposed that the best way to pursue their goals of reform is to create a political movement (AMAL Movement) , of which they would be the coordinating committee. The participants would confer with their organizations as to the viability of such a movement and how to effectively mobilize.

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