

# The Moro Times

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## Dispel clouds of war: pursue peace process

THE volatile peace situation in Muslim Mindanao has been aggravated by the military offensive in Basilan as an offshoot of the gruesome beheadings of ten Marines. Public anxiety has increased with the implementation of the Human Security Act (HSA) which some claim might open the floodgates for more human rights violations.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff General Hermogenes Esperon Jr. gave the order to prepare for the assault shortly before the Sunday deadline for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to yield the persons responsible for the July 10 attack on a Marine convoy. Fourteen soldiers were killed, ten of them beheaded and mutilated. The MILF, while admitting to the ambush, has denied involvement in the beheading. The MILF has vowed to repel the military operations, warning that the military operations could scuttle the peace talks and trigger a spillover of violence outside Basilan.

However, according to MILF sources, "The fighting was directly initiated and provoked by the Philippine Marines. There was no ambush. What took place was a legitimate face-to-face 8-hour encounter. Marines killed on the spot based on body count were not just 14 but 23.

"With the ceasefire back in place, the MILF fighters were ordered to disengage and leave the battle scene completely. But before they left they conducted a clearing operation and they found and body-counted 23 Marines dead and not one was beheaded or mutilated."

Further, reports indicate that the bloody encounter could have been triggered by the murder of an MILF imam, Hadji Hakim Hakanul, who was mutilated allegedly by soldiers. The Mus-

lim community has demanded that the imam's murder be investigated.

### Muslim leaders condemn beheading

Muslim leaders in solidarity with the families of the dead Marines in Basilan, condemned the beheadings. Sheikh Abdulbayan Laguialam, chairman of the CARAGA-based Muslim Supreme Council for Religious Affairs, said, "Beheading dead enemies is indeed gruesome and inhumane." He quoted a Hadith (saying of the Holy Prophet) which states, "Fight and do not exceed the limit and be not unfaithful and do not mutilate dead bodies nor kill children."

It will be recalled that Fr. Giancarlo Bossi, the Italian priest kidnapped last June 10 by armed men in Payao, Zamboanga Sibugay, was freed last week after 40 days in captivity. The military conducted a pursuit operation, after early reports identified a certain "Kumander Khidi", allegedly with the MILF, as the mastermind in Fr. Bossi's abduction. The 14 Marines who were killed were part of a team searching for the priest in Basilan. Fr. Bossi was later released in Karumatan, Lanao del Norte.

### Civil society calls for sobriety and peace processes

Peace advocates and civil society organizations are worried

that another "all out war" strategy will be implemented by the Arroyo administration. The Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy strongly supports a sober and impartial investigation of the Basilan encounter, the suspension of military operations in Basilan and other parts of Mindanao, and a return to the negotiating table. "Allow the CCCH to do its job and prevent an escalation of the armed hostilities", said Amina Rasul, PCID lead convenor.

Fr. Ramon Ma. Bernabe, OMI Provincial, prays for sobriety and restraint. "Our concern now is that an impartial investigation of the most recent violence in Basilan be given a chance to work, according to the mechanisms of the prevailing ceasefire agreement. We enjoin all parties to the conflict to exercise restraint and patience, while searching for a just resolution, not only to this specific instance of violence, but to the larger issue of conflict in Mindanao. The primacy of the peace process should be held paramount. We cannot risk a bigger conflagration coming from rash judgments and indiscriminate action. We will only be multiplying victims and perpetuating the war", reads the OMI statement.

Fr. Bernabe's statement has been reiterated by Moro groups such as the United Youth for Peace and Development (UNYPAD). UNYPAD calls for an immediate investigation of the Basilan incident, including the murder of Imam Hakim. UNYPAD demands for justice for the bereaved families of the soldiers and the imam as well as for the affected communities.

The Consortium of Bang-



Rebels on patrol in a village break their routine for a rest under a nipa lean-to.

PHOTO COURTESY AL JACINTO/LAZT

samoro Civil Society (CBCS), in calling for peace, appeals to the nation to "understand the Basilan Crisis and the kidnapping of Fr. Bossi. Let us not be derailed or unduly influenced by the unnecessary "sensationalization" of this issue by some parties with questionable interests".

In response, the Coordinating Committee for the Cessation of Hostilities of the GRP and the MILF jointly agreed to "observe maximum restraint while the incident is being resolved peacefully in accordance with the General Ceasefire Agreement and its implementing mechanisms" as well as organize a Joint Fact-Finding Committee to investigate the Basilan incident, pinpoint persons responsible for acts of atrocities, and recommend preventive measures. The agreement was signed on July 23 in Cotabato City.

A Mobile Joint Monitoring and Assistance Team (Mobile JMAT) will be organized to respond to crisis situations in Basilan, in support of existing ceasefire mechanisms.

### Summit on Extra-Judicial Killings

In the meantime, a landmark Supreme Court-led initiative to advocate a resolution of extra-judicial killings (EJK) may benefit the Mindanao peace process.

Since 2004, at least 290 anti-government personalities, political activists and human rights advocates have been assassi-

nated. UN special rapporteur Philip Alston has accused the army in the Philippines of being "in a state of almost total denial" about a wave of political killings. Many of these killings have been "convincingly attributed to them", he said in his report after a ten-day visit.

The recent summit on EJK and Forced Disappearances at the Manila Hotel came in the wake of the implementation of the controversial Human Security Act, turning the spotlight on state institutions and their seeming inaction to redress what one Justice describes as an "abominable" situation. Workshop participants included members of the judiciary, military, academe, civil society, and one lone Muslim representative, former Human Rights Commissioner Nasser Marohomsalic.

Marohomsalic has cautioned against rash implementation of the HSA in militarized Muslim Mindanao, where the Philippine armed forces are mistrusted. "We are especially fearful of the impact of this act in terms of the prejudice and discrimination that our Muslim brothers and sisters suffer each day. Even without the law, Muslims have been subjected to harassment and unreasonable searches and arrests," stated the former Human Rights Commissioner.

"Ofentimes, human rights cases are low profile especially when they affect the margina-

lized, or people whose existence some would hardly recognize or worse, people dismissed as the invisibles of society" said Chief Justice Reynato Puno in his speech.

Some of the justices supported the dialogue, peace processes, and renounced armed struggle. "Let us respect each other regardless of creed, and avoid labeling", said Justice Consuelo Ynares-Santiago. Many workshop outputs also called for the reexamination of the concept of command responsibility.

Lawyer Soliman Santos fears the classification of legitimate liberation movements as terrorist organizations. He explains: "As a rule, no national liberation movement or rebel group should be *a priori* exempted or condemned for culpability for terrorism by mere reason of its status as national liberation movement or rebel group. Each and every act in question of the organization must be examined on a case to case basis whether it qualifies as a terrorist act."

Summit proposals included the ratification of international documents such as Protocol I of the Geneva Convention on Protection of Victims of Armed Conflict, International Criminal Court and Convention against Torture. These treaties, when ratified, will provide additional protection of human rights.

Moro Times Staff

## Maharlika Village woes

BY HARIJA RIZA U. KHAMAL

FEAR is mounting in Maharlika Village. Maharlika used to be home to prominent Moro professionals and families. It was the first Muslim settlement in Metro Manila, created in 1972 under Proclamation No. 1217 by then President Ferdinand E. Marcos to provide housing for Moros who escaped from the wars in the South. It was one of the most prosperous areas of Taguig. Time was when Muslim Ambassadors and dignitaries would go regularly to the Blue Mosque at the village for Friday prayers.

Those days are gone. According to residents, they have suffered from raids by the military in the war against terror and police abuse through trumped-up charges. Illegal searches are not rare.

"Five policemen went into my house, ransacked my house and threatened my family," cried Alvin Bantuas, a Moro businessman from Maharlika Village in Taguig City. Maharlika Village is the first Muslim subdivision established in Metro Manila.

According to Bantuas, on the night of July 16, five policemen looking for a person named Gigi illegally entered his house. Bantuas was out of the

house at the time. A suitcase full of second-hand cellphones and a canon digital camera, worth around P50,000, were confiscated. The personal cellular phones owned by his cousin and a sister in law were also taken, after the two attempted to call Bantuas about the raid.

Zorayda Pandaag, 18, Umayrah Amembering, 17, two children aged 3 and 4 years old; and his 65 year old father, were the only people in Bantuas's residence when the incident happened.

Bantuas is adamant with his claim that policemen victimized him. Witnesses saw the suspects flee in a police patrol. However, the Taguig City Police denied the allegations. In a telephone interview, Major Celso Rodriguez, Investigation Department Chief, denied the accusation. "Hindi pa confirmed na police. Hindi pa identified," says Rodriguez. He stressed that victims can file any necessary action and takes the case to the proper authority. Rodriguez says that as long as the victims will be able to identify the suspects, the

city police will investigate the case.

Maharlika Village today is a poor shadow of its former glory. As conflict in Mindanao worsened, migrants poured in, straining the capacity of the village to support an ever increasing population. According to Maharlika Barangay Chairwoman Erlinda G. Pangandaman, the demolition of the Quiapo squatter settlement by Mayor Alfredo Lim in 1996 worsened the situation.

At that time, the residents protested the use of Maharlika as a dumping site because it was a private subdivision. The residents had paid for their lots. She noted that the resettlement of the Quiapo squatters added to the deterioration of Maharlika.

Pangandaman stated, "Officially there should have been only 350 families from Quiapo". However, the demolitions continued. "So

these people had no choice but to build their shanties around the village," she continued.

The low cost condominium housing in Maharlika is congested. A project of the National Housing Authority, there are seven five-storey buildings with 60 units each building, constructed during the time of Pres. Fidel V. Ramos. The rental for the low-cost housing with an average 20-24 sq. ranges from P700 to P1,400 with a five percent increase per annum. NHA lamented the low collection rates. The tenants believe the project was awarded to them for free.

"They (the squatters) do not have any immediate means of living, di alam kung paano magsimula ulit, kaya hanggang ngayon mayroong illegal settlers dito," adds the chairwoman. "There was no assistance from the government too." According to her, there is a memorandum of agreement between the Manila and Taguig social welfare offices but it has not been implemented.

Pangandaman shared with the Moro Times a major challenge faced by Moros: difficulty in getting a job due to discrimination. Unemployment and poverty have forced these people to resort to illegal activities. "Walang makain ang mga taong ito," says Pangandaman.

But Pangandaman assured that the

peace and order situation here is better. She said that it is safe to go Maharlika.

"Kaya lang naman pangit ang tingin ng mga tao sa Maharlika dahil naging tapunan ito ng mga bangkay noon, may mga hinoholdap na dito dinadala, pero hindi na ganito ang sitwasyon ngayon," she says. "In Maharlika, although a home to most Muslims, Christians are welcome to mingle with us as well," added Pangandaman, a convert from Ilocos.

Meanwhile, in an effort to help regain the old glory of Maharlika, the Taguig City government is planning a housing project in Maharlika, according to April Rashid of the Mayor's office. The city government government will also operationalize the Maharlika Trading Center, which will give jobs and business opportunities to the residents here, many of whom are traders. The trading center is expected to be in full operation by September.

The residents are also taking steps to improve Maharlika. Maintaining peace and order and cleanliness in the vicinity are among the programs that the newly installed administration of Maharlika Condominium Unit Awardees Islamic Association, Inc., propose to implement. Mohammad Elias Abdullah, head of the MCAIAI, called for unity among the officials and tenants of the seven-building condominium units in his acceptance speech during the turn over ceremony at the Maharlika Condominium Car Park on July 15, 2007. The officers plan to give residents livelihood training programs such as dressmaking and cosmetology, since it's difficult for Muslims to get jobs due to discrimination. Education for the young and adults is a priority.

"Magkaisa po tayo, para sa ikaaayos ng ating lugar," says Abdullah.

This Blue Mosque on a hilltop in Maharlika Village, Taguig City may look idyllic against a blue sky but illegal searches by men in uniform and the ransacking of condominiums and private properties around the village create fear and tension among Muslim residents in the area.

PHOTO: COSAIN NAGA, JR.





## Where's the Moro money?

WHILE Malacanang celebrates a robust economic growth, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) economy remains at subsistence. The single biggest challenge for a Bangsa Moro economy is how to harness a local economy for productive gain. But I don't see this happening until a comprehensive political settlement of the secessionist problem in Mindanao is achieved between the Moro rebel groups and the Philippine government.

Three factors are crucial in development success: practical sovereignty (real decision-making power in the hands of indigenous nations), capable governing institutions (an institutional environment that encourages tribal citizens and others to invest time, ideas, energy, and money in the nation's future), and cultural match (a fit between those governing institutions and indigenous political culture).

Some companies registered in the ARMM, which enjoy tax holiday and other tax incentives probably are benefiting from transfer pricing so that they can actually use their registered companies in the ARMM to launder their profits from operations in other parts of the country so that in the end they are not paying any taxes at all.

Is the Moro economy ready for a Bangsamoro state? The Moro economy is composed of external sources of funding, particularly the internal revenue allotment, and largely - the underground retail trade. These are a sign not of strong state control but rather of the weakness of the government in imposing the state's instrumentalities in the Bangsa Moro areas. The ARMM's local economies are basically agricultural, providers of raw materials, such as in mining towns.

The visible private economy in the ARMM and other areas of weak state control is driven by the incentive of tax loopholes with national incentives such as tax holidays if you locate in remote areas or those with high rates of poverty. In the ARMM, companies like La Frutera, a multi-national banana plantation company that exports its products all over the world, are paying no Income Taxes because they got these incentives from the Regional Board of Investments. Some companies registered in the ARMM, which enjoy tax holiday and other tax incentives probably are benefiting from transfer pricing so that they can actually use their registered companies in the ARMM to launder their profits from operations in other parts of the country so that in the end they are not paying any taxes at all.

Even the subsistence econo-

### The Jihadist Atty. Ishak Mastura

my that our residents have can probably be categorized as falling under the informal economy because the government does not require those below the threshold of poverty rate to register their business or pay any income taxes or any taxes for that matter. Informal economies are driven usually by single proprietorships or partnerships or private joint ventures without any formal registration of its existence.

With these realities, can we proceed to work for the right to self-determination? Contrary to popular imagination that economic development comes before a political solution to the Bangsa Moro Question, the Bangsa Moro economy can only take-off once there is a just peace agreement that will respect and enshrine the right to

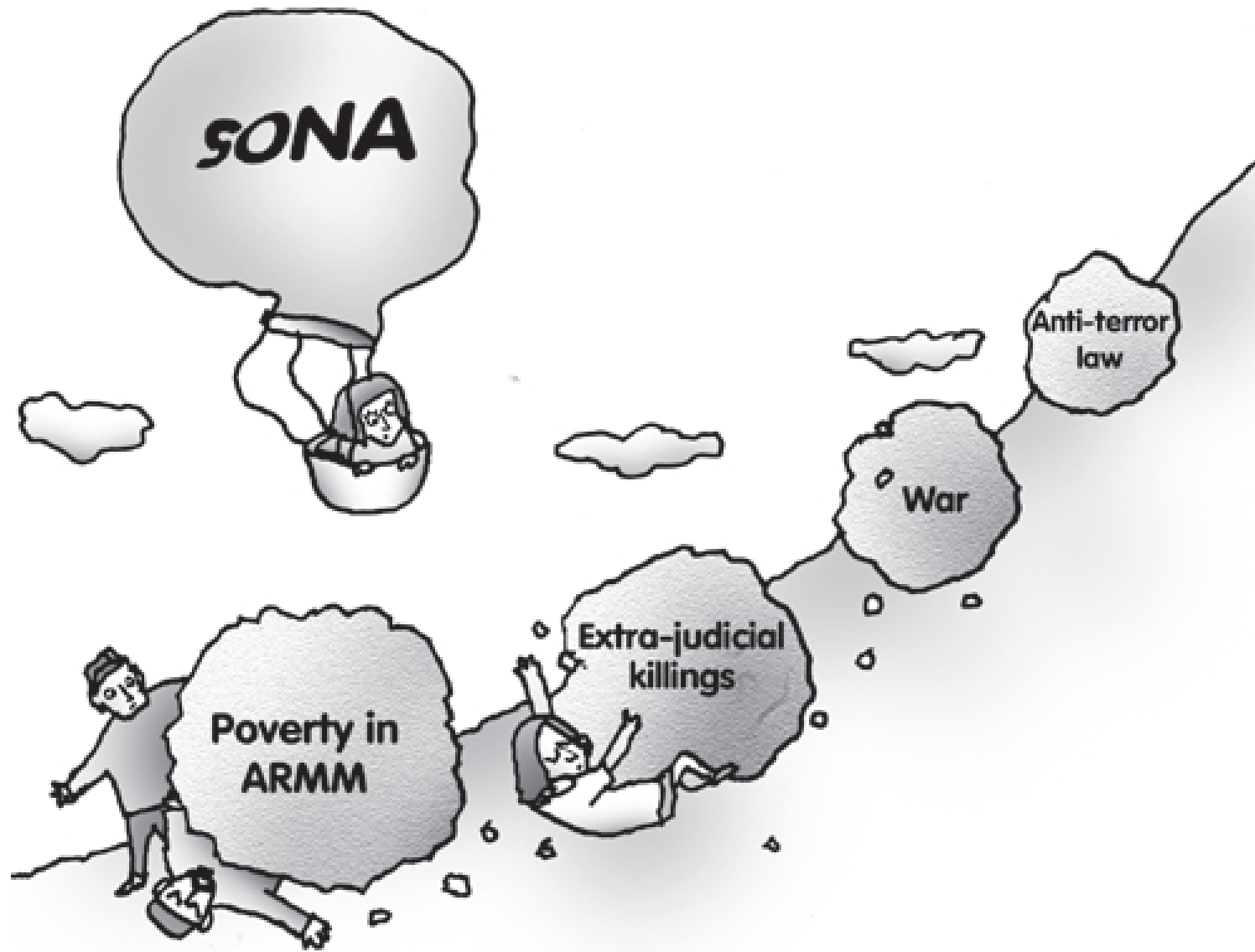
self-determination of the Bangsa Moro.

What to do in the meantime?

We should have one country, two systems similar to the Hong Kong formula. Hong Kong despite its Communist masters in China is consistently rated as one of the world's freest if not the freest economy in the world today. I have consistently advocated for the establishment of the ARMM as a Special Economic Zone similar to the wide-area Special Economic Zones of China in Shenzhen and Shanghai.

I have laid the foundations for such a fact on the ground even before any political settlement through the current peace process with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front by having the Regional Economic Zone Law or the ARMM Special Economic Zone Act of 2003 (Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No. 154) passed by the ARMM Regional Assembly way back 2003. The irony is that this law was mandated by the 1996 GRP-MNLF Peace Agreement and the ARMM Organic Act (R.A. No. 9054). The ARMM constituents thru their representatives the Assemblymen did their part by passing the law but it is the commitment of the government that is lacking. Up to now, it has not funded the implementation of the law.

(Atty. Mastura is Secretary of the Department of Trade and Industry-ARMM)



## Preservation and protection of human life and the wisdom of Qisas

**MUSLIMS!** Fear Allah, the Exalted, and obey Him and you will earn success and happiness in this life and the Hereafter. Know, may Allah grant you His Mercy, that the greatest requirement and duty on the followers of Islam is to acquire knowledge of his Lord, religion and the Prophet Muhammad.

Believers in Allah, there are numerous explanations made by Muslim scholars concerning preservation and protection of human life with a wisdom of Qisas. For this topic, Islam emphasizes worth in valuing one another.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: "On that account: We ordained for the children of Israel that if any one slew a person, unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land, it would be as if he slew the whole humanity: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the entire humanity. Then although there came to them our Messengers with clear signs, yet, even after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land." (5:32)

The above verse explained that man is obliged to preserve and protect the human life and being protector of one another. Allah forbids murder and spreading of mischief in the land. Islam prefers that the people should restrain themselves from bad deeds, such as murder, mischief, such as kidnapping sowing of fear or terror; rumor-mongering and stirring conflicts in the society.

### Khutba

Whoever causes the development and economic security of the society, it would be as if he saved the lives of the entire people. This refers to justice, equality, cooperation: like the supports of the rich to the poor sector of the society.

There are many other passages in the Holy Qur'an concerning doing mischief, spreading chaos, robberies, etc. wherein Allah declares grave penalty upon the perpetrators.

Allah said: "The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is execution, or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land: That is their disgrace in this World, and a grievous punishment is theirs in the Hereafter." (5:33)

It is very clear that grievous punishments are forewarned of those who are doing mischief. Moreover murderers, robbers, adulterers and the like are the people who dare to wage war against Allah and His Messenger. They are the people, who, while still alive, are forewarned of execution, or crucifixion, or of cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile to isolated places; and that, if they did not change, hellfire is their permanent abode on resurrection af-

ter death.

The preservation and protection of human life is the wisdom of qisas. In qisas the life of each individual is sanctified and is inviolable. If one kills another person, he must pay by giving his life as a sentence for his wrong doing, except when the close kin of the victim, pardoned him.

Allah stated in the Holy Qur'an: "We ordained therein for them: Life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, and wounds equal for equal. But if any one remits the retaliation by way of diat (blood money), it is an act of atonement for himself. And if any fail to judge by what Allah hath Revealed, they are wrong-doers." (5:45)

We can deduce from the above verses that there is in qisas the realm for preservation and protection of human life by the stern warning of life-for-life, an-eye-for-an-eye... These may greatly deter man from committing crimes for fear of harsh consequences on them. This is only possible in an environment in which the Shari'ah is in place as the law of the land.

Allah ordained us to establish the law of equality (Qisas)—the concept of free-for-the-free, the slave-for-the-slave, and the-woman-for-the-woman. A law which none may question the principle upon which equality is founded.

Allah (SWT) in the Qur'an provides: "O ye who believe! The law of equality is prescribed

to you in cases of murder:

*The free for the free; the slave for the slave; the woman for the woman. But if any remission is made by the brother of the slain, then grant any reasonable demand, and compensate him with handsome gratitude. This is a consideration and a Mercy from your Lord. After this, whoever exceeds the limits shall be dealt with in grave chastisement.*" (2:178)

Dear Brothers and sisters in faith: Islam is a religion of equality; no one is above the other on the basis of color, race and wealth. The only basis where one is better than the other, is piety or taqwa. If you are indeed a Muslim, you must always treat your brothers and sisters equally under the principle of qisas and above all, you must follow what Allah said in the Holy Qur'an.

Allah said in the Qur'an: "In the law of equality there is (saving of) life to you. O ye men of understanding; That ye may restrain yourselves." (2:179)

In conclusion, in qisas there is indeed preservation and protection of human life. Qisas is a deterrent.

May Allah direct me and you to the blessings of the Glorious Qur'an and benefit me and you in whatever is in it of the Ayat and Wise Dhikr. I say this and ask Allah the Great and the Most Honored for forgiveness for me, you and all Muslims for every sin. Invoke Him for forgiveness, for He is Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

## Stories from the Islands

### Nana was my first murid

#### LUMAH MA DILAUT

*Alungay bissala, alanyap na bangsa* (Lost language, banished people)

NANA must have been in her mid or late-sixties then. She was unschooled, was not home-educated on the Qur'an but she knew how to read the Jawi, indigenous script of Sulu, an Arabic script derivative. I was nine and just about to finish fourth grade in a barangay school when the war broke out in Jolo on February 7, 1974. That horrible occasion brought us, murid and guru—student and teacher—together.

After Jolo burned to the ground, my father had his hands full with eight children, the eldest barely 20 and the youngest only 2 years old. His lowly teacher's salary of two hundred pesos per month could not possibly provide us with decent meals and clothes, much less ensure our schooling. Being girls and the middle children, I and my elder sister, Nur, were "loaned-out" to relatives, so we could continue with our studies in Jolo. Sister was taken in by my cousin to be yaya to her toddler son, while I was to stay with an aunt to help

in her store.

I met Nana at the store. A distant relative of my aunt's husband with no family of her own, she too was on a 'placement', just like me. This arrangement was usual with families who had been pulakanat, disenfranchised and 'disembled' by the conflict. Our main duties were to tend to the store, although on some occasions we were also cooks, laundry-women and errand-girls. During school days, I attended elementary school, walking some two kilometers each day. On weekends I would spend an hour in the morning sitting-in at the local Masjid (mosque) where a madrasa (Islamic instruction) had just started. But of course the store was to be my priority such that my attendance at the madrasa had to be regulated, much to my dismay.

There were times, especially at dusk, when I would watch forlornly from the store, and envy children of my age who could freely play siyatung (stick-relay), magbalatin (patintero) or tapuk-tapuk (hide-and-seek); and on Ramadhan nights, proudly accompany their elders to Tarawee

prayers. I did not have such privileges. On some nights, Nana, seeing my predicament would give me a pat at the back and command me to run off and play a turn each of tapuk-tapuk or magbalatin before maghrib (evening prayer). I felt like Cinderella, but those were some of the best treats I got.

Come weekends, there were perpetual debates whether I could go to madrasa or not. My aunt's advice would almost always prevail: the store was to be my priority. But whenever she could have her way, Nana would help me out. As soon as she had finished her morning ritual of washing her hair with coconut milk, she would breeze into the store and shoo me away to quickly grab my turong and speed off to the madrasa, which gave me much delight as I love to learn new songs in Arabic. One particular piece still lingers in my head to this day, it was to welcome the Hijrah new year, called Mauludin Jadid, that we heartily sang to the tune of President Marcos's "Ang Bagong Lipunan" hymn. Because those opportunities were rare, I relished my les-

sons. In only one sitting, I memorized the song of praise for the Nabi Muhammad - God's peace and blessings on him - in Arabic and Tausug, that we had sang on the occasion of the Ascension of the Prophet to Heaven, Isra wal Mihraj. My enthusiasm impressed my lady mentor, so much so that, in a month, I was given the most coveted task of writing the Bismillahi rahman irahim (In the Name of God, Most Beneficent, Most Merciful), in my cursive Arabic. How I went home beaming with pride on the day I was finally able to recite the Al fatihah and a du'a (grace) before meals.

I suspect kind-hearted Nana had her own personal motives for sending me off to madrasa. She knew the basic obligatory procedures or rukun of Islamic shalat (prayer), but she was not very confident with her Arabic incantations. Each night, before we retired to bed, she would ask me to write the dua' sambahayang in Jawi. I would first read the prayer in its English transliteration from a battered prayer book. Mustering my newly acquired writing skill from my sporadic training, I would then translate it as best as I could, roughly writing the prayers as pronounced and syllabicated, in Arabic-lettered Jawi. Its thick chalky curls seemed to pop-out and float in

contrast to the dark mahogany grain of the back of an old wooden chest that separated our sleeping quarter to that of the main store area.

Each summer break, I went home to my family who had evacuated and 'temporarily settled' in Christian-populated Zamboanga City, and so I missed much of the madrasa classes. I spent two more years with my aunt in Jolo, graduating from elementary school. Sadly, I did not get to finish my 1st grade in the madrasa. When time came to leave Jolo, Nana and my madrasa, I was already skilled in writing the Jawi and could read passages from the Qur'an, slowly, by merely looking at familiar words and symbols, as though looking at visuals and images rather than at letters or syllables. This enabled me to remember the ayahs by heart. For her part, I knew Nana had prospered from that little literacy class at the back of my aunt's aparador. She memorized some of the lengthy but important verses and prayers: the Tashahuuds, Ishtigfaar, Qunut and Ayatul Qursi. More than three decades had passed, and, today, I am still practicing my jawi, for my unlettered friends. I write of their longings and dreams to their loved ones overseas—to Saudi, the UAE, Malaysia—as I did, for Nana.

### The Manila Times The Moro Times

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■ TODAY From page D4

## Moro Times is 1 year old today

portunities, arts and culture, religion, and history of the Muslims of the Philippines and of Mindanao. It serves as the voice of Muslims, those living in Mindanao and the more than 1 million Filipinos of Islamic faith residing in Luzon and the Visayas. A select group of Muslim writers and leaders here and abroad have shared their views on issues of the day, from terrorism to women's rights, from cartoons to Pope Benedict's controversial speech. The monthly supplement aims to create greater national awareness of Filipinos of all faiths living in Mindanao—their political, social, and business concerns, their role in the national life, and their vision of the future.

Quoted by some international publications, The Moro Times is slowly making a dent and creating a niche in the market of ideas.

Moro and national leaders have congratulated the Manila Times and PCID for this historic publication.

Former President Fidel V. Ramos, in congratulating The Moro Times, stressed that "it is important to eliminate the prejudice of non-Muslims towards Filipino Muslims and all others who are law-abiding citizens. It is in this very important sector where the Moro Times has made significant advances. In projecting the views of our Muslim brothers and sisters into civil public discourse, the Moro Times has done much to bridge the gaps between Muslims and non-Muslims."

Senator Loren Legarda said, "I commend the persons behind the publication, Amina Rasul Bernardo and Samira Gutoc for pioneering a paper that will feature news, views, and features on Muslim business ventures, trading opportunities, arts and culture, religion, and history."

Senator Francis 'Chiz' G. Escudero said, "The Moro Times plays a vital role in lives of not only our Muslim brethren, but in all of us in general, for it delivers relevant news and information that directly concerns the Muslim community and it also gives them the means to express their views and concerns so that the rest of us can better understand and appreciate them, as we all strive to live harmoniously with one another as one people under one flag and one country."

Senator Manuel 'Mar' Roxas II added that "By bringing news and updates on the situation in Muslim Mindanao, including the moving forward of the peace process, the Moro Times shows that we can achieve unity in our diversity."

According to MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari, "It is indeed a milestone to have a newspaper supplement specifically catered to showcase the Moro way of life."

Congressman Yusop Jikiri of Sulu said: "We are proud that intra-Filipino, intra-Moro and international solidarity is finally being led by a few communi-

tors who value the Islamic saying that 'The ink of a scholar is mightier than the blood of a martyr.'"

The Chairman of the Bangsamoro Development Agency, Dr. Abas Candao, wished "the MORO TIMES continue to be an effective advocate of truth, peace and goodwill and may the MORO TIMES significantly contribute to the reading public's understanding of the historical struggle for self-determination."

Fr. Eliseo Mercado, OMI, Lead Convenor of the National Peace Council, echoed Misuari's sentiment: "The Moro Times, in many ways, does the bridging not only between the South and the National Capital Region but also between and among the diverse peoples and communities that compose the Philippines. I believe that you are shaping a niche for the Moro people in the mainstream media."

Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza commended Moro Times: "As a monthly newspaper supplement focusing on Mindanao, the Moro Times plays an important role in communicating information that is grounded on the real context of rich Muslim culture and notable aspirations. ... I therefore trust that Moro Times will be able to fulfill its goals of helping build an enlightened and empowered Mindanao constituency."

Sultan Yahya 'Jerry' Tomawis, Executive Director/Undersecretary, Office on Muslim Affairs, said that "the publication has become an effective tool to further enhance dissemination of information and broaden understanding of events and developments obtaining in our midst which affect the Muslim ummah (community). More than ever, the Muslims deserve more involvement in the media to enable them to articulate their sentiments and provide them opportunity to present events, circumstances and developments, based on Muslim perspective and appreciation."

Dr. Mahar Mangahas of the SWS pointed out, "Drawing national awareness to the Muslim community's sentiments, problems and general state of well-being is a fine, democratic means of social advocacy".

Media colleagues also sent in their well wishes. Ms. Cheche Lazaro, award winning journalist, said "Knowing how difficult it is to run a media concern, one year is indeed a landmark and you merit well-deserved congratulations for that feat!"

From New York, Shamil Edriss, the Executive Director of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (AOC) wrote: "The Moro Times' commitment to play these roles professionally and consistently provides a model for media everywhere."

US Ambassador Christie Kenney commended the contribution Moro Times has made to interfaith dialogue. She said, "I personally enjoy reading it, and find it a valuable source of information and insight on the Muslim community of the Philippines."



Republic of the Philippines  
Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao  
Office of the Regional Governor  
Cotabato City

Mabruk! Congratulations on the first year anniversary of very own **THE MORO TIMES!**

The ARMM Regional Government is one with you in the quest for development, prosperity and peace in Mindanao and the country. We, in striving to uplift the plight of marginalized Moro aim to promote a positive image of the region so that investments may come in. We need the information sector to help us tell the world of many productive initiatives happening in the region such as industry-formation, social rehabilitation, conflict prevention and grassroots participation.

The ARMM is also grateful to the international community for its unwavering support in infusing funds for agriculture, environment, infrastructure and local government support. This is despite the many challenges to peace and even to the security of their nationals. We salute you for extending your aid at a critical juncture in our nation-building, at a time of post-conflict reconstruction in the South.

In building a more informed and vigilant citizenry, we are optimistic that our dream for genuine peace and development in ARMM may bear fruition in our lifetime.

**DATU ZALDI UY AMPATUAN**  
Regional Governor



Republic of the Philippines  
**SENATE**

*Manny Villar*  
Senate President

### MESSAGE

Let me extend my warmest greetings and sincerest congratulations to the editorial management and staff of the *Moro Times* on the occasion of its First Anniversary.



It is truly inspiring and heartening to know that there is a publication dedicated to the issues and concerns of our Muslim brothers. The *Moro Times* exemplifies the potential and capability to put into proper perspective the hopes and aspirations of the Filipino Muslims and their role in national development.

As a medium of public information and communication, the *Moro Times* certainly reinforces the positive perceptions about our Muslim brothers and creates a deeper understanding of their culture and their religion. It ardently promotes Mindanao as a linchpin to further attain progress for our country.

With "Liberation" as its anniversary theme, I firmly believe that the *Moro Times* will be a great contributing factor to the peace and sustainable development in Mindanao as it significantly highlights the stories about the works of local and national leaders in further solidifying the fragile peace and the flourishing economy now thriving there.

Thus, I fervently encourage the *Moro Times* to continue to be the medium of constructive and valuable information by providing in-depth news and feature stories which will ably help policymakers, entrepreneurs, businessmen and even foreigners to gain more insight about Mindanao and its people. I am certain that this will be amply realized since *The Manila Times* carries the *Moro Times* as its monthly special section.

On this note, let me then also congratulate *The Times'* publisher and editorial staff for the dedicated pursuit of its vision and commitment to an informed and learned Filipino. I am therefore truly honored to be part of this special first anniversary issue of the *Moro Times*.

Rest assured that the Senate, under my leadership through "*sipag and tiyaga*", will always be supportive of your noble vision and undertakings. Happy first Anniversary and more power!

*Manny Villar*  
**MANNY VILLAR**



6/F SENATE OF THE PHILIPPINES, GSIS BUILDING, FINANCIAL CENTER, PASAY CITY, PHILIPPINES  
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**RFM Corp. congratulates  
Moro Times on their  
first year of  
enlightening the people,  
breaking the cultural  
divide between our  
Muslim and  
Christian brothers.**







# Khalid Q. Dimaporo: Breaking the cycle?

BY AMINA RASUL and NASSER SHARIEF

AT 27, Mohamad Khalid Q. Dimaporo may be the youngest governor in the Philippines today. Belonging to Muslim and Christian political families in Lanao del Norte, Khalid has no memories of the nightmarish 70s when Christian Ilagas allegedly cropped Moro ears and used them for necklaces while Moro marauders flaunted Ilaga heads on bamboo poles along the roads. While their elders play power politics, will the new generation of leaders change the paradigm?

The young governor agreed to meet with *The Moro Times* for an exclusive interview inside Starbucks at the Theater Mall in Greenhills, on his way to Friday prayers. The handsome young man was apologetic for wearing slippers saying he had to perform his ablutions. As penance, he himself queued at the counter to get us brewed coffee.

**Governor, you're very young. What prompted you to run?**

Actually my parents had been courting me the last 3 years or so to run for public office. I was studying in the US. I was onto a doctoral program in Agricultural Economics at the Texas A&M University, the finest there is in that continent. I'm not the type who goes to town fiestas, trying to wow the locality, see. My forte is business. I'm a number cruncher. My core strength is in finance, multivariate data analysis, research, economic modeling and more on the agricultural side given my background.

In the province, we have lots of things going on—ranches for cattle, carabaos, herds of goats, fruit trees. I was naïve though. The things I took for granted as given were not there in the interior of Lanao del Norte. When it's rainy season, *sira ang mga daan, problema sa tubig, koryente wala*. It's okay with the coastal towns. More or less they have the basic necessities. But since I have to work on the farms in the interior, I got a bit frustrated.

I realized that to bring about the needed improvements in the interior municipalities, I have to run for office. When my father finally tapped me on the shoulder and asked me if I've changed my mind, I said I was ready to run.

**You didn't apprentice first as mayor in one of your towns. Was this sheer confidence?**

Oh yes, actually my original intention was to run as congressman for the 2nd District. *Medyo mahina pa ako sa lingguhaing Maranao at Bisaya*, so I was thinking that starting out in congress will nudge me into a gentle take off. But my dad's style is one of baptism by fire.

We're into the final years of the Arroyo administration and my dad felt that with his working relationship with the President he could be of better service to our people there in congress.

I've already been through a lot of challenges. I have been chairman of the GSIS/Family Bank. When I was given the job, the company was expecting a loss of 56 million pesos in 2005, but we delivered a net income of almost 11 million. And in 2006 we projected a profit of 31 million, but we doubled it to 68 million. We restructured the accounts and revamped the bank's image and now we are expecting a capital infusion of 2 billion pesos, and that's no small feat.

**How would you sell the province to the world to get the necessary funding, aid and draw in investments?**

Essentially, we're packaging the province to make it attractive for foreign investment. But we have to do a lot of road works first. The Balabagan-Tukuran road is Saudi funded. It's now faster to get to Cotabato from Cagayan de Oro through this new road than through Lanao del Sur via the Ramos Highway. Another key road that will open the interior towns and Lanao Sur is the Ganassi-Tubod road which is also Saudi funded. These new roads will open up the lake to a lot of possibilities and in improving the peace in the area. We're also into constructing a lot roads cutting through the coastal towns. These projects have all been started in the term of (former Governor) Angging Dimaporo.

**Do you have a blueprint for your development program?**

I have *Vision 2020* for Lanao del Norte: "A globally competitive agri-industrial community of God-loving, ecology conscious, culturally diverse people working together in peace and harmony to achieve equity and prosperity." *Vision 2020* is based on a tripod agenda: social programs, rural livelihood, and infrastructure.

The social program is catchall for maintaining the peace, the youth, women, and the old and the disabled.

Although social endeavors are very hard to quantify, this is most important because it touches on cultural awareness, interfaith dialogues, a physically and mentally sound youth, and health care services for the aged, and protecting women and orphans.

The rural livelihood agenda is based on livestock, crops, fruit trees, timber and non-timber, and handicrafts. This includes dairies, cattle upgrading and livestock dispersals, tractor service, farm-to-market transport, watershed agri-economy and many others.

The infrastructure programs consist of water, electrification, and farm-to-market roads. In addition we will have the coastal-interior highways. We are connecting all municipalities. We have the Panguil bridge which will connect Tanggub City and Tubod. And with the Tubod-Ganassi road in the works, we will truly open up the Panguil Bay for everyone. We are also constructing the Bacolod Mini Hydro Electric power plant. With these projects, our tourist hot spot development projects will gain momentum also.

**Your mother came from a Christian family and your father is a Muslim. How were you raised?**

(Laughs) I spent my childhood in Manila. From what I heard, when my Dad and Mom first got married, the tensions between the Visayan and the Maranao were high. If I was raised as a Visayan speaker, I would be seen as leaning towards my Christian family. If I was raised solely as a Maranao, I would be seen as a hardcore Muslim. My parents found Manila to be neutral enough for my environment. So they sent me to study in Brent International School. Incidentally, this arrangement made me independent early in life, even in childhood because I see my parents less often. It's a bit lonely though. And when later I was transferred to Brent in Baguio, I really had to figure things on my own.

**How do you apply what you learned abroad now that you will be running a province in the Philippines?**

The management style that I was exposed to is thoroughly American without doubt and it is quite difficult to apply here. But at least I had been forewarned of the pitfalls. The key is meeting situations halfway by adapting to the local ways. You would only be stressed to impose things textbook-fashion. You have to be

flexible. One thing should be clear though: we have to jumpstart our technology especially the net. Internet is very important. My forte is in statistical packages.

**The Dimaporos and the Quibranzas have a long traditional in politics. You are a third generation Dimaporo. How would it be different this time?**

The future is bright. My generation doesn't have any memory of the wars. We didn't grow up during the rebellion. With this, Muslim and Christian youth can truly start fresh. I don't have memory of the Barracudas (Moro private army in the 70s—editor). Many Maranao youth are moving into urban areas taking high-tech courses. Our generation—Muslims and Christians—are more educated and understanding, thanks to information technology. I worked with Romina Rasul Bernardo as part of a Probe Team in 2003 under the auspices of the US Institute for Peace and what we discovered was that the reason children join rebellions is because *yun ang kani-lang kinagis-nan* rather than beliefs and ideals. We are breaking the cycle.

A self-confessed workaholic like his father, Khalid relaxes like most young men of his generation: with video games. While he confesses to addiction to his Playstation, he also goes scuba diving. "When I learned that I won the election, one of the first decisions I made was to ship my toys—



my two jet skis. I love the coastline and Lanao del Norte runs along a very long coastline."

*Lanao del Norte, welcome to the 21st century! Governor Khalid will be your guide.*

## Moro Times is 1 year old today

CALLING it a "crazy venture", Senator Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel and Mindanews Editor Carol Arguillas praised the Manila Times and the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy for investing in *The Moro Times*, a monthly supplement about the Muslims and Mindanao. In a celebration held at Club Filipino, Senators Loren Legarda and Mar Roxas joined Pimentel, diplomats, government officials and leaders of business and civil society to celebrate the first year anniversary of the groundbreaking *Moro Times*.

Pimentel said the world needs its "crazy fools" to show the truth no one can or wants to see.

According to Senator Legarda, "Filipinos have much to learn from the firm resolve of Muslims to preserve their culture and heritage and practice their beliefs and customs despite the complexities of modern times" and reminds media that "as long as we have individuals, organizations and media who never cease in their efforts to highlight the true teachings of Islam and therefore achieve a better understanding of Muslim Filipinos in the Philippines, the road to national healing and peaceful solution to the conflict affecting the Muslim communities of Mindanao is no longer be a dream, but a reality that is just waiting to happen."

Senator Roxas commended the pioneers behind *Moro Times*, stating "Publications like

these bring greater awareness and recognition of Muslim Filipinos' achievements and culture. *Moro Times* also highlights our combined heritage full of richness and fascination. By bringing news and updates on the situation in Muslim Mindanao, including the moving forward of the peace process, the *Moro Times* shows that we can achieve unity in our diversity."

Australian Ambassador Tony Hely, calling *The Moro Times* a "pioneering trailblazing" initiative, cited Australia's full support for the fledgling publication.

Launched on July 28, 2006, the *Moro Times* showcases stories that celebrate Moro contribution to national life. For the first time in the history of Philippine journalism, a national newspaper has devoted space for 7 million Muslims in the country.

*Moro Times* Editor Ms. Amina Rasul, PCID Lead Convenor and former Presidential Adviser on Youth Affairs, said, "One of the major problems we have identified in our advocacy work has been ignorance and our lack of a vehicle to access the majority. We have dreamed of having our own paper." Thanks to Manila Times, we are on our way."

Why *Moro Times*? The word Moro, originally a derogatory term used by the Spanish colonizers, has become the political identity of the Muslims of Mindanao. Increasingly, members of Mindanao's indigenous peoples have adopted the term.

Managed by the PCID, *The Moro Times* features news, views, and special reports on business ventures, trading op-

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■ Senators Loren Legarda, Nene Pimentel and former senator Santanina Rasul view the editorial cartoons of the *Moro Times* during the anniversary exhibit on July 25 at the Club Filipino in Greenhills, San Juan.



■ *Moro Times* Anniversary: Amina Rasul, Santanina Rasul, Ambassador John Hely, Senator Loren Legarda, Senator Aquilino Pimentel, Jr., Klaus Presche, Max Jundam and Dante 'Klink' Ang II.

Magandang araw mula sa San Miguel

Sa pagsikap, natulap ang maraming pangarap. Alam ng San Miguel ito. Kaya namon sinasikap ilos sa gaing mas masarap, mas nagmimawala ang kayang araw. rinataguyod ang mga programang yokatu (ulon) sa pagpapunta ng buhay at kabuhayan. Tulad ng "Operation Imis Taal" sa Batangas na nangangitaga sa kalusugan ng mga isda doon. At ang "Tulong-tulong sa Tullahan" na muling binubuhay ang Tullahan River para sa kapakanan ng mga taga-Malabon at Valenzuela. At siyempre, mahusay na gumagawa ang San Miguel Corporation ng mga de-kalidad at abot-kayang mga produkto para sa bawat Pilipino.

SAN MIGUEL CORPORATION