

On Recent Armed Conflict in Mindanao, Philippines

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Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement (MPPM) on the recent armed conflict in Maguindanao between the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and troops of the AFP.

Uphold Civilian Supremacy! A Call for Maximum Understanding, Sobriety and Tolerance!

August 7, 2012

More than a thousand families are once again displaced from their homes and villages as a result of the armed conflict between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in Sharif Aguak, Talayan, Datu Saudi and Datu Unsay in the province of Maguindanao on August 5, 2012.

The same communities have constantly experienced massive displacements every time armed conflicts occur between the AFP and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Three years after the armed conflict resulting from the non-signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD), the people from the affected communities have gradually regained their lives but are now faced with the same grave situation of being caught in the crossfire of armed fighting between the warring groups and displacement; leaving their homes, properties and livelihood behind and to live in uncertainty and insecurity in the evacuation centers.

This is history repeating history. History tells us that because of unaddressed root causes of conflict, the recurrence of armed conflict and violence is inevitable and always displaces thousands of the civilian population; greatly affecting the women, children, and the elderly and subjecting them to severe insecurity. This cycle of violence will keep on turning unless a genuine resolution to the conflict in Mindanao will be arrived at.

Thus, the Mindanao Peoples Peace Movement in its principle of upholding human rights and civilian supremacy in times of conflict calls:

- For the BIFF-BIFM (Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement) and AFP to immediately pull-out their troops from the affected civilian communities and go back to their respective camps;
- For the BIFF-BIFM to hold their ranks and to communicate their political demands in an open manner that involves dialogue, thus, avoiding violence and bloodshed and civilian communities from being collateral damage;
- For other revolutionary and non-state armed groups to hold their ranks and refrain from any military activities that would complicate the situation;

- For the government to order the military to stop its offensives and the government agencies to immediately act in response to the needs of the affected civilians;
- For humanitarian and development organizations to provide complementary assistance and support to the evacuees;
- For the media to be objective in giving reports to avoid misinformation that will build biases and prejudices that fan animosity among peoples;
- For the civil society to fairly and critically analyze the situation and to encourage vigilance among the public;

Furthermore, we express our concern on the implications of these recent events to the on-going GPH-MILF peace talks which both panels are optimistic to conclude within the year or next year. We hope that these will not derail the peace process but will open up the space for the discussion of other pertinent issues evolving from it that should be considered in crafting a comprehensive peace agreement.

We stand by our belief that in the search for a viable solution to the Mindanao problem, the rights of the civilians to live free from fear, terror, atrocities and injustices shouldn't be sacrificed but should be considered and respected at all times.

Let the holy month of RAMADHAN be a period of discernment, enlightenment, understanding and respect for all parties involved.

In this critical time, we MUST call for everyone to have maximum understanding, sobriety and tolerance.

SIGNED:

Rodelio Ambangan, Chairperson

Janel E. Pesons, Secretary General
