

Philippines

# **The Unfortunate Collateral Damage in the name of Peace - An appeal for the Mindanao evacuees**

Monday 27 October 2008, by [Tripod](#) (Date first published: 15 September 2008).

We appeal for your kind assistance to help meet the most urgent needs of the affected populations for food, medicines, potable water and containers, used clothing and books for children, sleeping mats and plastic sheets for temporary shelter.

## **Brief Background.....**

In 2001, the peace talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) came out with a Tripoli Agreement that defined the guiding principles of the peace negotiation including its mechanisms and talking points. These have become the bases in the coming out of a Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD).

Since the last quarter of 2007, there already had been sporadic attacks in several parts in Mindanao by some impatient MILF ground commanders purposely to put pressure for the immediate signing of the MOA-AD which was obviously being delayed by the unpopular Arroyo government.

To the surprise of everyone, the MOA-AD document, was hastily initialed by both the GRP and MILF peace panels on the eve (July 27, 2008) of the State of the Nation Address (SONA) of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (PGMA) given at the opening of the joint session of the Congress on 28 July 2008. Critics said that the initialing was just to show that her administration's peace program has successful despite of successive scandals and low popularity ratings.

The MOA-AD was supposedly be signed on August 5, 2008 in Kuala Lumpur but was aborted by a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) from the Supreme Court. It was due to a petition filed by some local government officials who reacted to the document after having known that their areas are to be covered by the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity, a territorial boundaries claimed by the MILF as Bangsamoro territory defined in the MOA-AD.

In reaction to the Temporary Restraining Order:

- MILF Brigade Commanders Ameril Umbra Kato and Abdullah Macapaar a.k.a. Commander Bravo launched separate attacks to the civilians in Lanao del Norte, North Cotabato and Sarangani provinces.
- The erring MILF commanders brutally victimized innocent civilians in four (4) municipalities in Lanao del Norte leaving 41 persons dead including children, women, farmers, vendors, bus passengers among others on August 18 attacks alone.

The atrocities done by the rogue MILF commanders encouraged the arming of civilians particularly

in Christian populated communities paving the way to an intensive militarization led by the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The indiscriminate howitzer bombing and air strikes resulted to nothing but more human rights violations, destructions and internal displacements.

### **Half a million people are displaced – physically and economically**

As of this writing, military attacks in pursuit of the renegade MILF commanders continue to take place in Lanao, North Cotabato, Sariff Kabunsuan and Maguindanao provinces with out let up despite the observance of the Holy month of Ramadhan in September by Islam believers in Mindanao.

These military offensives are reportedly doing indiscriminate shelling of mortars, howitzers bombs and other heavy artilleries marking the civilian death toll to over 200 persons while many are either injured or sick inside evacuation centers; 297 villages affected, 212 houses burned and a half a million populations are displaced and now languishing in evacuation.

### **Our Appeal....**

We appeal for your kind assistance to help meet the most urgent needs of the affected populations for food, medicines, potable water and containers, used clothing and books for children, sleeping mats and plastic sheets for temporary shelter.

We also ask you to send an appeal to our President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo along with her Generals at the Armed Forces of the Philippines, to the Philippine Congress and to the leadership of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to immediately stop the war and go back to the peace negotiating table with mutually agreed framework.

### ***For financial and material relief assistance, kindly channel them to:***

Tri-People Organization Against Disasters (TRIPOD) Foundation, Inc.

38 Tulingan Street, Usman Subdivision, Bagua 2

9600 Cotabato City, Mindanao, PHILIPPINES

Telephone/fax No. +63 64 421 1369

Email: [tripodcc yahoo.com.ph](mailto:tripodcc@yahoo.com.ph)

Bank Account Number : 370-700931-3

Bank Account Name : Tri-People organization Against Disasters (TRIPOD)

Bank Name & Address : Philippine National Bank (PNB) Makakua Street, Cotabato City Mindanao, Philippines

SWIFT/Bank Code : BRSTN 27008-001-2