

# Clan feuds in Bangsamoroland

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THE people in southern Philippines have grown wary of the political conflicts between the government and the various rebel groups because these have devastated the economy and hampered the region's development.

The Mindanao conflict has become increasingly complicated because some armed encounters among the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the Moro National Liberation Front and the military were triggered by rido, or clan conflicts.

## Fellow Muslims

Rido occurs among fellow Muslims and feuding families that start fighting over a property dispute, a dishonor inflicted on a family, or a crime committed against a member of another family. Some feuds among families and clans have forced families and even whole villages to evacuate.

Family and clan feuds are well-known in Mindanao. Rido is a conflict that escalates from individuals to kin members through retaliation. It may also affect non-kin allies or friends and may last a lifetime or continue from one generation to another.

Feuds among families and clans have existed in varying degrees of severity in the Bangsamoroland (Muslim Mindanao).

These feuds lead to killings and open hostilities that result in unnecessary loss of lives, destruction of properties, transfer of residences, among other things.

Rido is also called pagdumot among the Subanon, pagbanta and pagkontara among the Tausug, Sama and Yakan. Others call it pangayaw, pagsamok, pagbunuh, pagjangki, paglungkop and other terms.

## Social honor

Rido cases are usually rooted in traditional values like the maratabat, which pertains to social honor or pride of an individual, family or clan that can lead to "extreme sensitivity" once violated. A violation of this deep sense of personal honor rationalizes revenge and will legitimize killing someone—regardless of whether the person is good or bad, or whether the cause of conflict is legal or illegal.

Research suggests that the Mindanao conflict is aggravated by an escalation of rido and this finding could provide a new approach to resolving the Mindanao conflict.

## Baseline data

This survey of rido cases provides baseline data on where and how these occurred and who became directly involved. The study looked into family and clan feuds, including the following: a) the incidence of a clan conflict—where, when and why it happened, how it escalated to become rido and who was involved; b) the period of conflict; c) conflict management and efforts made to resolve the

conflict; and d) the current status of the conflict.

The study was conducted in nine selected provinces in Mindanao. The provinces covered were Basilan, Lanao del Norte, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga Sibugay. Multilevel key informant interviews were done, using an interview guide, in the nine selected provinces where rido incidents were reportedly occurring.

Survey results show that a total of 671 rido cases happened in the 9 selected provinces. The highest number (164) was recorded in Lanao del Norte, followed by Sulu (145), while Sultan Kudarat had the lowest rido cases (18). Of the three Zamboanga provinces, Zamboanga del Sur had the highest (91) followed by Zamboanga Sibugay (75) and Zamboanga del Norte (62). North Cotabato recorded 31 cases, while Basilan had 60 cases and Tawi-Tawi, 25.

[A related study by Abhoud Syed Lingga found 218 rido cases in Maguindanao (1970-2004), while a study by Moctar Matuan found 377 cases in Lanao del Sur (1994-2004), bringing the total number of documented rido cases in the 11 provinces to 1,266. More than 5,500 people were killed and thousands were displaced.]

The rido cases in Mindanao documented in this study have been occurring since the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These cases may either be a clan against another clan, a family vs another family within the same clan, or a family against a family in another clan.

The oldest of the rido cases surveyed in the 9 provinces started in 1930 in Lanao del Norte. The second oldest case emerged in Sulu between 1936 and 1940, but early cases in other provinces existed even before the 1950s.

About 45 percent of the clan conflicts surveyed started only recently between 2001 and 2005. Of feuds covered in the survey, 389 remain unresolved and can be considered ongoing. Only 275 cases have been resolved while 7 are recurrent cases (i.e. cases that were once resolved but recurred when triggered anew by recent misunderstandings).

The most common cause of rido was property dispute (e.g. land), which accounted for 234 cases, while 136 cases were caused by political rivalry. Gender-related offenses were the initial causes of 73 rido cases, while 64 were caused by a violation of pride and dignity.

Only 45 were triggered by physical injury inflicted on a member of another party. The other 109 cases were said to be caused by business rivalry, debt, robbery, murder attempts and drug-related offenses.

## **Casualties**

The number of casualties that resulted from these family feuds totaled 3,895 deaths, 3,637 wounded, 2,143 cases of transfer of residence and 59 people imprisoned. The highest estimated number of deaths was recorded in Sulu at 1,519.

On the other hand, the highest number of wounded was noted in the province of Sultan Kudarat at 1,882. Transfer of residence was highest in Lanao del Norte at 870, followed closely by Sultan Kudarat with 859.

In terms of ethnicity, Tausug-vs-Tausug conflicts were highest in Sulu with 132 and Tawi-Tawi with 16 cases. In the province of Basilan, 22 cases were Yakan-versus-Yakan.

Maguindanao-against-Maguindanao feuds constituted the majority of the cases in Zamboanga

Sibugay and Zamboanga del Sur with 26 and 93 cases, respectively. In Zamboanga del Norte, however, Tausug-versus-Tausug conflict was the most common, with 21 cases.

In Sultan Kudarat and North Cotabato, Maguindanao-against-Maguindanao feud was the dominant case with 15 and 17 cases, respectively. The number of feuds between Maranao and Maranao families in Lanao del Norte was 91.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that further in-depth research on the roots of family and clan feuds be undertaken to serve as basis for strategies on peace and development in Mindanao that would include the creation of a situation to minimize rido.

Additionally, the government should provide mechanisms for the effective resolution of land disputes, which have been identified as the major cause of conflicts among families and clans in southern Philippines.

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## **P.S.**

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