

Philippines: An elitist, 'trapo' ARMM concern

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The two main contending sides on the issue of postponing the elections in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) are only motivated by their own, selfish agenda rather than by the desire to advance the paramount right to self-determination of an oppressed nation, the Bangsamoro people.

ARMM is a political structure that has failed to address the problems of poverty, war and oppression of the Bangsamoro people. In fact, despite ARMM's creation in 1990, poverty and war have escalated and continue without letup in many parts of Mindanao, especially in the ARMM areas.

The postponement of the ARMM elections will only serve the interests of President Aquino's political party, which aims to establish a base in the ARMM areas. On the other hand, those for the holding of the ARMM elections as scheduled this coming August have the same aim—to maintain and strengthen their stranglehold of the ARMM areas to maximize their electoral gains.

The issues of poverty and war in Mindanao cannot be resolved by a political structure that has become a bastion of traditional politicians (trapo) from both the national and the local governments.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which is fighting for self-determination in Mindanao, has stated that the ARMM structure is not acceptable to the Bangsamoro as it has not provided real autonomy. It supports the postponement, but only in the hope that it might give way to the prioritization of the peace process.

The Partido Lakas ng Masa (PLM) has chosen not to take sides. We believe that the issue only underscores the infighting among trapo forces claiming to represent the oppressed Bangsamoro people. The argument that the postponement will allow time to reform the ARMM begs the question. The ARMM itself is an imposition by the Philippines' trapo elite and does not reflect the Bangsamoro people's demand for genuine autonomy. PLM does not believe that genuine autonomy can be gained through reforms in the ARMM.

PLM supports the continuation of the peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF and any group fighting for self-determination in Mindanao. We believe that only by giving the Bangsamoro people genuine autonomy can prosperity and peace be attained in Mindanao.

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P.S.

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<http://opinion.inquirer.net/5997/an-elitist-%E2%80%99trapo%E2%80%99-armm-concern>