

# Finding Peace

Sunday 9 July 2006, by [TURABIN-HATAMAN Sitti Djalila](#) (Date first published: 16 February 2005).

Valentine's Day will never be the same. As the day of hearts was marred with the blood of innocent civilians, the bridge we all so painstakingly built to bring Muslims and Christians together is again on the verge of a collapse. The other night, as we were watching Strictly Politics over the ANC where some Muslim leaders were interviewed about the hostilities in Sulu and the February 14 bombings, a viewer sent a message, asking what could undoubtedly be a question asked by many non-Muslims. "*Bakit kung saan may mga Muslim laging may gulo?*" (How come where there Muslims, there is always violence?)

No one, not even a Muslim perhaps, can give a definite answer. *Bakit nga ba?* (Why?) Is it mere coincidence? Is it by choice? Are Muslims really the war-freak, blood-thirsty barbarians they are often pictured to be? This, despite Islam being a religion of peace?

But then again, this is not about religion. It may appear to be such, it may involve issues of religion, the freedom and rights to freely practice one's faith, but this is not about Islam versus Christianity.

In countless situations like this, where Muslims are time and again the cause of terror, it is usual, almost always predictable, for a Muslim to find defense in the age-old history of the Moro struggle, in an effort to portray him/herself as the victim, and not the terrorist he/she is depicted to be. True, the history of the Moro people, the centuries and decades of deception, oppression, political alienation, economic marginalization, social discrimination, cultural assimilation, wars, deaths, displacements, and all other grievances and clamors, may justify the cause of the Moro people's fight for their right to self-determination. But it will never justify the killing of innocent people.

The confusion must be made clear. Yes, there is a Moro struggle.. a revolution even. But it is not against Christianity. The Moro National Liberation Front and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, recognized bearers of the Bangsa Moro struggle, have fought, for decades, against the government, its agents, the AFP and the PNP (who have Muslims in their ranks), but never against Christianity. It is therefore wrong and unfair to blame the legitimate Moro struggle for Self-Determination as the cause of Muslim-Christian animosity.

More so with the Abu Sayyaf! When a man who identified himself as Abu Sulaiman claimed responsibility for the Valentine's Day bombings, he said they (the abu sayyaf) do not make distinctions between soldiers and civilians. He failed to say one important fact: they also do not make distinctions between Muslims and Christians. They may be geniuses in explosives and ammunitions, but they have yet to invent a bomb or a bullet that will only kill the Christians, and not the Muslims. When the bomb was placed aboard the bus that exploded in Makati, the terrorists did not ask if there was a Muslim among the passengers. The bomb in Davao exploded near a Muslim Halal eatery! The 2002 Shop-o-Rama and Shopper's Central explosion in Zamboanga City claimed the lives and injured both Muslims and Christians.

We may find it hard to answer the viewer's question. But it is our responsibility to make it clear that whatever "gulo" (violence/chaos) some Muslims may always find themselves in, it is not a reflection of all Muslims in general. And most importantly, it is not directed against Christianity. We may have our differences, but we have more in common, on top of which, is the clamor for peace.

---

**P.S.**

\* Sitti Djalila Turabin-Hataman is from the Moro Human Rights Center.