

AMIN: Mainstream Politics or Politics of the Marginalized Peoples of Mindanao?

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The recent crisis that rocks ANAK MINDANAO (AMIN) Partylist is a shocking revelation to its members, supporters, and the general public. It started when one absentee 3rd Congress AMIN President, Prof. Mahmor “Moy” Edding claimed that the 4th AMIN National Congress which was held last February 28-March 1 of 2007 was “bogus, illegitimate, illegal, and unconstitutional” just because he was not the one who called for the said activity. When did this happen? On August 3, 2007 AMIN was proclaimed as one of the seventeen (out of ninety-five) Partylist winners of the 2007 National Election. Just two weeks after the proclamation of AMIN and 169 days or barely 6 months after the 4th National Congress was held, Prof. Mahmor Edding initiated the so-called 5th Council Meeting of the 3rd Congress last August 16-17, 2007. This alone is very questionable, why in wink of an eye, Prof. Edding has awoken from a long slumber of being an absentee president to an active one claiming that he is still the president of Anak Mindanao after he accepted his position as the President Emeritus/Honorary President which was offered to him by the National Council of the 4th Congress?

Records show that under the leadership of Prof. Edding, as the National President of Anak Mindanao, there were only three (3) National Council meetings held during the term of the 3rd Congress from 2004-2007 and all these were held only in the year 2004. The first National Council meeting of the 3rd Congress was held on March 8, 2004 in Cotabato City. The second was held last July 23, 2004 also in Cotabato City which was not attended by the president himself, and the last National Council meeting was during the Strategic Planning Workshop which was held in November 5-7, 2004 at Adasa Beach Resort in Dapitan City. If there are other meetings held without the knowledge of the other members of the Council, then it must be questionable. After then, for the last two years, there was no Council meeting or even any implementation of the results of the strategic planning workshop.

LEADERSHIP IN VACUUM FROM 2004 -2007

Since 2004, there was a long and unexplained vacuum of AMIN leadership - the non-functioning president, the non implementation of its plans and programs, and the non-existence of mechanisms

for checks and balances in the operations of AMIN.

Looking back to the 3rd Congress which was held in Iligan City last February 21-23, 2003, it was the statement of Congressman Mujiv Hataman who said that “the nominees/representatives must be subservient to the Council and to the Congress and not the other way around”, thus, the need to strengthen the National Council. However, the strengthening of the National Council never happened instead majority of the Council members just looked- up upon the representative and waited for any projects or activities to be called by him. Then Secretary General, Mr. Rafael Nabre who had served until January 2006, could have helped in the strengthening of the Council or even just the Executive Committee, so that plans and programs could have been implemented. But Mr. Nabre didn’t do his tasks as expected of an elected Secretary General of AMIN until his voluntary resignation on January 2006. He resigned, through a text message to Congressman Mujiv Hataman, because he thought of being questioned or being distrusted when he was just asked regarding the CDF allocations. After that, he already refused to do his duties anymore and transferred his responsibilities through text messages to Engr. Victor Layasan, the latter then served as the Acting Secretary General from February 2006 until February 28, 2007 when the new Secretary General was elected during the 4th Congress.

Despite the absence of the National Council of the 3rd Congress who was supposed to guide the membership in the direction of the party, AMIN’s operation continued without its elected leaders. Since Prof. Edding was not functional and the Secretary General resigned, AMIN’s operation and activities was sustained by the appointed Secretary General, Engr. Victor Layasan together with some members of the founding civil society groups and grassroots peoples’ organizations who are also members of the Political Council, and of course Congressman Mujiv Hataman who has the final say in the finances of the organization.

It was also during the 3rd Congress where the Political Council was institutionalized as per suggestion of Congressman Mujiv Hataman “to help analyze the situation when the need arises, especially when it affects the position of the party in the House of Congress, there is a need to create a body called the Political Council”. This Political Council was then organized, composed of the Honorable Congressman and representatives of AMIN founding civil society groups and grassroots peoples’ organizations of Tri-people in composition.

Excerpts from the deliberation during the 3rd Congress:

Congressman Mujiv Hataman: “kasi partylist to, eh, hindi pwedeng magpasya ang Nominee dahil subservient sya sa Kongreso, subservient sya sa Council, dahil andon tayo..representative lang ng partido, ang position namin hindi pwedeng pomosisyon ang mga individuals, kundi ang dapat poposisyon ang partido..kaya ang tanong ko sa inyo..sino ang mag-aanalisa? Sino ang poposisyon para ipa-approve ng Council sa absence sa Kongreso? Merong mga usapin pumuposisyon ako as individual, meron nalang akong tini-text na iba, mabuti nalang ang ibang kapartido natin hindi ganon ka-istrikto sa mga usapin, pero dapat matuto tayo sa mga usapin lalong-lalo na sa usaping politika na may kaugnayan sa ating partido! Halimbawa sa usaping Federalismo? Kaya yan ang dahilan kung bakit minumungkahi ko sa Kongreso na dapat magkaroon ng Political Council not necessarily iyong buong myembro ng Konseho ang ating i-convene, para mag-analisa sa mainit na mga usapin...”

THE 4TH CONGRESS

The 4th Congress was conducted pursuant to Article IV, Section 2 of AMIN Constitution and By-Laws which stipulated that the Congress shall meet once in every three years and it was the only venue where the Nominees are elected. Aside from AMIN Constitutional provision, conducting the 4th Congress was an urgent necessity with the forthcoming May 14 elections. The preparation for the 4th Congress was made possible through the leadership of Congressman Hataman and some members of the Political Council who convened and facilitated a Pre-Congress preparatory meeting last February 18, 2007. The said meeting was attended by some members of the Political Council, some members of the Execom, Council members, area coordinators of AMIN, and some frontrunners of the NGO-PO community which composed Anak Mindanao. It was decided during this time that the 4th Congress be called on February 28-March 1, 2007 at Naawan Beach Resort, Naawan, Misamis Oriental. Even though there were constraints of time and finances, the Congress was successful because of the concerted efforts of the preparatory committees who were tasked to invite and prepare the necessary arrangements for the 4th Congress. Congressman Mujiv Hataman was the one who volunteered to inform the 3rd Congress President Prof. Mahmor Edding, since he was in Zamboanga City and more accessible to the Congressman. The 4th Congress was overwhelmingly attended by majority of the delegates of the 3rd Congress, majority of the Council Members of the 3rd Congress, Congressman Mujiv Hataman and the second Nominee, Mr. Ariel Hernandez who stayed overnight just to finish the sessions. Five Nominees were unanimously endorsed by the Congress, namely: 1) the sitting Congressman Mujiv S. Hataman (Moro); 2) Mr. Ariel Hernandez (Migrant Settler); 3) Arnel Arbison (Moro); 4) Dra. Erlinda Senturias (Migrant Settler); and 5) Quini Gene Areola (Lumad). It was then culminated by a Caravan from Naawan to Cagayan de Oro City. It was also on the same day that Congressman Hataman proclaimed and officially introduced the newly elected nominees and officers at the Balay Mindanao Foundation Peace Center during the AMIN proclamation rally, and during the press conference with the media outlets in the said city.

THE FIRST NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING OF THE 4TH CONGRESS

It was decided during the National Council caucus which was held in Cagayan de Oro City last March 1, 2007 that the 1st National Council Meeting was to be conducted to discuss the election campaign and some basic documents as mandated by the 4th Congress. Thus, the first National Council Meeting was conducted on April 2-3, 2007 at Crystal Inn, Iligan City which was attended by a majority of the 4th Congress National Council Members, some Council Members of the 3rd Congress and the three (3) AMIN nominees, namely: Congressman Mujiv Hataman, Mr. Ariel Hernandez and Mr. Arnel Arbison.

The agenda which had been tackled by the Council Meeting were on the following: Basic Party Documents such as the Constitution and Platform of Governance; Sharing of the Political and Electoral Situations; Campaign Strategies; and Organizational Resolutions. One of the major organizational resolutions passed by the National Council which was sponsored by Council Member Boy Garde was the institutionalization of mechanisms pertaining to transparency on the appropriations/allocations of AMIN funds. In layman's term, the installation mechanisms for checks and balances within the organization.

THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Since AMIN is a Partylist founded by the grassroots peoples organizations and civil society groups, thus, its main electoral machineries are coming from these groups who have been supporting AMIN, offered their time, skills, financial as well as logistical support ever since it participated the National Elections. These ordinary members and supporters of AMIN labored day and night just to campaign for AMIN. These people were not paid any single cent by the Partylist to campaign around the communities, the barangays, the far flung mountains and even the critical conflict areas have been traversed by these ordinary AMIN members just to get clean votes needed for the Partylist whom they believed as the one who will represent them in the House of Congress. These people who have given their tremendous trust to their representatives, without any questioning, have continued to work from the beginning of the campaign even until the closing of the canvassing just to deliver and protect AMIN's valuable votes. But what is the prize of their labor? Being divided and be ruled? To hear about malversation of campaign funds and other character assassinations from the leaders whom they thought have represented them?

THE AMIN PROCLAMATION AND AFTERWARDS

On August 3 of this year, Anak Mindanao was proclaimed by the COMELEC as one of the elected winners in Congress. Thousands of AMIN members and supporters jumped for joy. Most of the members did not know that just days after the proclamation they would be confronted with various issues they never dreamt of.

Days after the proclamation, news broke out about confusing things the members could only think as incomprehensible. Issues like malversation of campaign funds; the supposed petition for recall of the newly proclaimed Congressman Hataman as spread by a former AMIN secretary general; the deliberate moves to divide the Teduray-Lambangian Tribe in Upi; the conduct of the so-called 5th Council Meeting of the 3rd Congress who declared that the 4th Congress was bogus and illegal; the deliberate by-passing of AMIN structures in the municipal/city/provincial chapters by building new networks among non-AMIN members and supporters of other party-lists, the character assassination of AMIN members using the website; using the old redscare campaign just to endanger the lives of AMIN members; and pointing to outside entities just to divert internal issues which could have been resolved within AMIN structures.

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED?

The National Council and its National Executive Committee of the 4th Congress had tried hard to connect all the dots and analyze what is happening. It was then discovered that behind the backs of the newly elected National Council Members, a long term plan was systematically laid down to manipulate the members and the organization in general to cover-up the irregularities that happened throughout AMIN's operation since 2003. This manipulation is believed to be perpetuated by our Honorable Congressman and his allies.

First, the sowing of intrigues outside and inside the organization was to confuse the membership which then later will be asked to decide to whose group they will side, the 3rd Congress led by Prof. Edding, Raffy, et.al. or the 4th Congress whose newly elected President is Timuay Alim Bandara, the chieftain of the Teduray-Lambangian Tribe of Upi, Maguindanao.

Second, the divide and rule tactics applied to the Teduray-Lambangian Tribe was to deliberately

destroy its structures of justice and governance, hence, debasing Timuay Alim and destroying his credibility as the chieftain of the Tribe and at the same time his being the president of AMIN. At the height of the campaign period, Timuay Alim, being the current President, was requested by Congressman Hataman to investigate the disbursements of the so-called 5 Million pesos campaign funds. To find out later that there was no P5M campaign funds given by Congressman Mujiv Hataman. However, the issue on the P5M campaign funds could have been resolved earlier if Congressman Hataman appeared on the scheduled meeting which purposely called to clear out those questions on the P5M campaign funds. Only to find out later, that instead of the P5M there was only P2M campaign funds which was used to operate during the whole campaign period covering the nine (9) provinces and five (5) cities. The other P1M was given by Congressman Hataman to a municipality in Misamis Oriental and the last P2 Million to complete the so-called P5 Million campaign fund, only Congressman Hataman knows where he had disposed it. After President Alim found out about "the questioned campaign fund", that indeed there was no such amount, he was asked by some leaders of his tribe (who are believed to be used by the Honorable Congressman and his allies) to stop the investigation since "there's no more aggrieved party" and the Honorable Congressman wanted to stop the on-going investigation. This, however, raised more questions. Why stop the investigation when it's not yet concluded? Was the 5M so-called campaign funds raised and spread around by Honorable Hataman just a joke?...

Third, on the declaration of Professor Moy Edding, Rafael Nabre, Cong, Mujiv Hataman, et.al. that the 4th National Congress was bogus, illegal, and unconstitutional. What are the motives behind this declaration? The National Executive Committee and the National Council of the 4th Congress tried to comprehend such declaration. And if someone has to analyze the situation of an organization, one has to look back to its past and examine its organizational set-up. In gathering further of information and looking back at the unfolding events, the National Executive Council discovered things that could have been the reasons of this unexpected declarations.

1) The inconsistencies of reports on the allocation of AMIN Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF)/Congressional Allocation (CA) or commonly known as CDF as posted in the AMIN website (constructed by Congressman Mujiv Hataman's staff) as compared to the report of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) website. It was then discovered that what Congressman Mujiv Hataman had been reporting to the general membership was great lie because since 2004 Congressman Hataman has been telling the members that AMIN has the difficulty in acquiring CDF release orders because AMIN belongs to the opposition group and therefore it's almost impossible to access the CDF allocations. To find out just this August, that AMIN had accessed 100% of its CDF from 2003-2005. In 2003, the Honorable Congressman reported that AMIN could not access all the funds because he served only the remaining eight (8) months of the term. This is in contrast to the data found in the DBM website showing that AMIN had accessed fully the P70 Million CDF and that 42% or P29,656,200 went to Basilan, the home province of Congressman Mujiv Hataman. In whatsoever meetings that AMIN has conducted, Congressman Hataman had never reported that AMIN already accessed all the CDF nor presented the complete report of his allocations. What was most questionable on this issue was that from 2003-2006, the Php73,000,000.00 as per record of the DBM more or less, was released to Basilan without the knowledge of even the National Executive Committee nor the National Council. But according to the report of the DPWH, Office of the District Engineer, as of August 2007 a total of Php94,150,000.00 of the Congressional Allocation of AMIN was implemented in Basilan Province which covers a total of 83 infrastructure projects in the different municipalities and barangays. Seventy (70) projects out of the 83 projects are reported as 100% completed (worth Php55,150,000) but random inspection in the beneficiary barangays would not corroborate to the report since some of the barangay captains certified that no projects were implemented in their barangay by AMIN Partylist. The question here is not why it was released to Basilan but because the Congressman was not transparent to his allocations and releases. The

general membership felt that they were lied upon and being betrayed by the person whom they have trusted for the longest time. What added to the insult, was that all of the Council members, the Execom, and the civil society groups became part in deceiving the marginalized groups. And this shocking revelation is unacceptable.

When asked by the members or even by barangay captains, "Can we submit a proposal to AMIN? We have been supporting AMIN for a long time." Our immediate response was "Sorry, cap, but it's very hard for AMIN to access funds from the CDF because we are tagged as one from the opposition"... and the people would understand.

2) The current moves initiated by the Honorable Congressman with the collaboration of the former Secretary General, are apparent maneuvering to cover-up the truth about the CDF allocations. The 4th National Congress is a road block to their plan because it has started to institutionalize mechanisms for transparency and accountability in the transactions of AMIN especially in the fund allocation and disbursements. It has further asked for a comprehensive assessment of AMIN operations since 2003. The unknown and deceptive allocations have taken place during the term of the 3rd Congress precisely because of the non-functioning structures of its leadership. This happened under the leadership of Professor Moy Edding and the National Council Members who were called as "Tiriring" and "good for nothing except in asking for cellphone loads" by the Congressman himself.

Perhaps, because the officers elected during the 4th Congress were not buddies of the Honorable Congressman's, thus, made him worked out for another Congress and to appoint those persons he can control and would agree positively to all his whims without questions and will continue all that has happened since 2003. The difference between the 3rd and 4th Congress was that the 4th Congress officers will never be a "STAMPING PAD" to the whims and caprices of the few.

3) To further divide the AMIN members, Congressman Hataman, et.al. have been going around Mindanao to convince the membership to side with him through false accusations, disinformation, and promises of monies and projects from the CDF. The conduct of secret meeting with non-AMIN members, even those former AMIN members who have been attacking the Partylist on a daily basis at all fronts including the airwaves. This particularly happened in Iligan City where the former 2nd Nominee who was disgruntled because after the 2004 election Congressman Hataman did not fulfill his promise of projects, this former 2nd Nominee attacked AMIN and Congressman Hataman accusing him as "corrupt" and "good for nothing" in the Congress. The Iligan Chapter defended the Congressman because there was no evidence or facts being presented by the former 2nd Nominee. But the barking tune of the former Nominee changed after he was met by Congressman Hataman, the former is now PRAISING the Congressman and attacking the local AMIN members and officers on the airwaves. Even the lowly citizens have sensed the difference and asked questions. Why was he changing his tune? Is there any justice here? The people are calling for justice! On the other hand, the AMIN 4th Council members are likewise being divided using the same strategies of disinformation, redscare and promises of rewards.

4) The falsification of documents submitted to the COMELEC whose signatories are not those occupying the current official positions. What happened to the Nominees? Who nominated them? There is no other venue or meeting where the nominees are elected for 2007-2010 except during the 4th Congress held last February 28-March 1, 2007. Why would the 3rd Congress officers signed the submission of names of the Nominees? Even a grade 1 pupil could smell something fishy here if he/she discovered what happened. Would that mean that there is really a grand plan of deceiving the mass membership of AMIN?

5) The dragging of a revolutionary organization such as RPMM in the scene. In the series of letters

of AMIN President Timuay Alim Bandara to the Chairman Emeritus Professor Moy Edding, the former questioned the true motives of Moy Edding regarding his declarations, specifically, the letter he issued dated August 23, 2007. Timuay Alim Bandara focused on the real issues and the abovementioned facts to professor Moy Edding. Instead of answering those specific issues, the latter diverted the issue on RPMM by issuing the so-called Circular No. 01-07 dated September 7, 2007. Why not answer the issues raised point by point? Why divert the issue to outside entities not related to the structure of Anak Mindanao? When questioned about the transparency of CDF allocations, the Chairman Emeritus pointed to RPMM as trying to control AMIN. Suppose his allegation is true, that RPMM has infiltrated AMIN, then why is it that all of the decisions made even before the 4th Congress were all acted upon as per suggestion of Congressman Hataman himself? Even the date of the 4th Congress was specifically scheduled based on the availability of his time. His being the presiding officer of the pre-congress meeting? Being Number 1 Nominee for the third time, is it part of the infiltration of RPMM? If that is the case, then RPMM as a revolutionary movement, is not fair because it only favored Congressman Mujiv Hataman since more than 50% of the funds of Anak Mindanao went to the Congressman's provinces or those near to him. But that's beside the point, the issues here are the organizational structure of Anak Mindanao, its ethical and operational conduct, its check and balance mechanisms which would determine the transparency and accountability of AMIN. These are the issues that the 4th Congress would like to address and institutionalize. But what is happening right now is the usual alibi whenever there are issues and problems inside the organization, most often than not, the people involved would look from outside entities to be blamed upon.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Anak Mindanao was a result of the democratic space provided by the Partylist law wherein the marginalized sectors of the society can possibly participate in the arena of legislations. Elevating the struggle of the parliament of the streets in the House of Congress, its formation was made possible through series of debates and consultations among progressive organizations, civil society groups, peoples' organizations, and even those in the revolutionary movements including MILF, MNLF, and the so called rejectionist groups. In the beginning, there was only a common mission of empowering the social structures and constituencies so that the marginalized sectors would be effective in participating in the whole process of peace and development in Mindanao. AMIN's founding members wanted to represent the Tri-peoples in Mindanao. That the marginalized Bangsamoro and the Lumads will have a representative that would legislate laws to advance their struggle for self-determination as peoples.

But where are we now? Eversince AMIN's representation in Congress, it has not conducted any internal assessment or evaluation as what other organizations normally do. It has not strengthened its own structures. After the 3rd Congress in 2003, the participation of the decision makers which is the National Council begins and ends during the said Congress. It did not decide on major things or issues which involved the whole organization. This includes the allocation of funds from the Countrywide Development Funds. It is not the fault of the members of the Council alone because there was no venue or mechanism being institutionalized for them to participate in the decision making. No regular meeting was conducted after 2004.

Congressman Mujiv Hataman was elected as the Number 1 Nominee of Anak Mindanao Partylist for the third time (2001, 2004, and 2007). This only showed that the stakeholders of AMIN- the peoples organizations, civil society groups, individual members, even the cadres of revolutionary movements, have unprecedented trust and confidence towards him. The power which was entrusted upon him emanates from the same trust and confidence given to him by the Congress and the mass

membership of Anak Mindanao. Consequently, it is only rightful that he give back justly what is due to the members and to all stakeholders of Anak Mindanao.

In Article 3, Section 1 of the amended Constitution and By-Laws of Anak Mindanao, it stated its Basic Principles which adheres on the following: a) Transparency; b) Accountability; c) Participatory Democracy; d) Democratic Pluralism; e) Growth Equity; f) International Cooperation and Solidarity; and g) Sustainable Development. The institutionalization of the first three principles were already tackled during the First National Council meeting of the 4th Congress last April 2-3, 2007. Thus, the challenge now is how to implement them within Anak Mindanao Partylist. We do not have the morale ascendancy to call on our government for transparency, accountability, and participatory democracy when inside the Anak Mindanao Partylist, these three basic principles are not uphold and practiced.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

First, conduct a Comprehensive Assessment on the operation of Anak Mindanao Partylist since 2003-2007. There are questions we need to ask ourselves and make reflections like a) What is the impact of AMIN to the lives of its constituents?; What happened to our legislative works in Congress? How many relevant bills have we passed for our constituents in Mindanao?; c) What happened to the structures of Anak Mindanao? What is the reason for its breakdown? d) what can be done to move forward?; d) what happened to the plans and programs as a result of the Strategic Planning Workshop in Dipolog? When these are answered, it is then that we can move on and continue our efforts in serving the marginalized sector of society particularly here in Mindanao.

Second, the principle of participatory democracy in an organization could only be realized if the organizational structures are strengthened and made functional. Only then that the issues of checks and balances are institutionalized. People could only participate if they are organized and have been informed objectively where all facts about the truth are laid down and not by disinformation and misinformation. Thus, we should stop bickering and face the real issues which should be resolved inside the structures of the organization.

Third, let us consolidate our mass membership, strengthen their sense of stakeholdership. Conduct mass membership orientation on the historical development of Anak Mindanao, its basic principles and objectives and review our Platform of Governance.

Fourth, expose those opportunists who are pretending to be members and officers of Anak Mindanao, those who have been inactive and just waited for the right time to be tapped and be used if the PRICE IS RIGHT. Those who have risen from the dead like zombies in the night and claiming to be stakeholders of Anak Mindanao, they are those people who (since 2004) have either sown intrigues against AMIN and against the Congressman and now they are the ones praising him. They come to us like thieves, meeting us secretly and promise us with projects from AMIN's CDF. They are those who want to change their lifestyles using AMIN's funds to support them.

Lastly, we should be happy and feel great that Anak Mindanao has achieved its goal of winning (even if it's only 1 seat) in the 2007 election. We owe this to the hundreds of ordinary AMIN members who offered themselves, their time and efforts to campaign for Anak Mindanao..."we owe them... and they do not deserve to be deceived".

Prepared by the Office of the National Council of the 4th Congress

Anak Mindanao Partylist

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