

STATEMENT

## **US Troops Out of Mindanao; Genuine Self-Determination for Moros Now**

Monday 15 September 2008, by [Stop the War Coalition \(Philippines\)](#) (Date first published: 15 September 2008).

The United States' involvement in the war in Mindanao can no longer be denied. Several times in the last month, at the height of Philippine military offensives against Moro fighters, US soldiers were repeatedly seen with Filipino troops, helping recover bombs, evacuating casualties, or joining Filipino troops in Philippine military camps throughout Mindanao. The Philippine military itself categorically confirmed that the US military has been providing it with "technical assistance" in pursuit of Moro rebels.

All these continue a pattern of reports that have accumulated in the last few years: Just in February, a Filipino general confirmed that it was the crew of a US spy plane that provided the intelligence which resulted in an operation in which eight civilians, including a pregnant woman and two children, were killed in Maimbung, Sulu.

The latest revelations that the US has been expanding its military structures in Zamboanga City not only confirm what we have been warning against; they heighten our concern that the US intends to stay in the Philippines for the long-haul.

In joining Filipino troops in their operations, providing them information, locating bombs, rescuing casualties, or giving technical assistance, the US military is clearly involved in actual combat in the Philippines. In stationing troops and equipment in various military facilities in the south, the US has established permanent basing in the country.

Not only is this patently unconstitutional, it also further contributes to escalating and exacerbating the violence and insecurity in Mindanao, drawing parties towards all-out war, away from a just and peaceful resolution.

We therefore demand that US troops immediately withdraw from all of Mindanao and that no US troops be involved in any operations.

We likewise demand that the Philippine military desists from further military offensives, that it immediately pulls out its troops from the region, and that it returns to the negotiating table.

We oppose the arming of civilians by the Philippine government and demand the immediate disbandment of militias and private armies.

We denounce the targeting and killing of innocent civilians by any side and we demand justice and reparations for all those who have been killed, displaced, and affected by the war.

To address the root causes of the war, we support an agreement that would genuinely advance the Moro's and the indigenous people's right to self-determination - as they themselves define it, free from others' imposition and intervention. This entails recognizing and respecting the Bangsamoro

people's right to self-rule.

In any agreement, the indigenous peoples' rights must at all times be assured and protected through specific provisions and measures. While we call for the indigenous people's rights not to be subsumed under those of the Bangsamoro, we oppose efforts to set one oppressed people against another and we refuse to allow one oppressed peoples' rights to be used to deprive another people of theirs.

Narrow vested interests of local and foreign powers should not be allowed to stand in the way of guaranteeing the universal right to self-determination. For it is only by advancing the right to self-determination of the Bangsamoro and the indigenous peoples that lasting peace and justice can be achieved. #

STOP THE WAR! COALITION- PHILIPPINES

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