

## The scale of 'rido' in Mindanao

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WHAT is *rido*? "*Rido* refers to a state of recurring hostilities between families and kinship groups characterized by a series of retaliatory acts of violence carried out to avenge a perceived affront or injustice." This is from the 2007 book "*Rido: Clan Feuding and Conflict Management in Mindanao*," edited by William Magno Torres III, published by The Asia Foundation.

Evidence from surveys of representative samples. This week's horrific massacre of 57 persons in Maguindanao makes it quite clear that the SWS report, "Violence in ARMM mostly due to family or clan-conflict," based on statistical surveys completed in early December 2004 in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and separately in the Philippines as a whole, remains valid five years later.

That report, issued on Feb. 24, 2005, said: "The experience of violence is twice as common in ARMM as in the country as a whole, and is mostly due to family or clan conflict, and hardly due to Muslim-Christian conflict. ... Conflict between families or between clans, the most common source of violence throughout the country, has been experienced by 28 percent of ARMM families, compared to only 16 percent of families in the Philippines as a whole."

*Rido* is normal for people in ARMM. The SWS survey of ARMM found that 72 percent approve of taking personal retribution in case a family member is murdered, raped or physically hurt. This is in contrast to a SWS national survey finding that 59 percent of Filipinos in general disapprove of such retribution. According to Dean Carmen Abubakar of the UP Institute of Islamic Studies, it is not because Muslims are more violent by nature, but because the faulty formal justice system in ARMM leaves its people with hardly any option but to settle serious grievances themselves.

Incidentally, the SWS report observed that the second most common source of violence in ARMM was the conflict between Muslim rebels and the military. Violence from this source occurred in the neighborhood of 20 percent of ARMM residents surveyed, whereas violence due to conflict between Muslims and Christians occurred in the neighborhood of only 5 percent of them.

Evidence from surveys of key informants. Chapters of the book "*Rido*" discuss studies, based on interviews of key informants, that document 1,266 cases of *rido* in Mindanao occurring from the 1930s up to 2005, killing more than 5,500 people. Of these cases, 40 percent were resolved, 3 percent recurred, and 57 percent remain unresolved. Land disputes and political rivalries were the most commonly cited causes of *rido*.

Nine provinces were studied by Jamail A. Kamlian, of the MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology, who interviewed congressmen, provincial governors, municipal mayors and council members, members of provincial/city/municipal peace and order councils, military/police officials, and community leaders. In this way he accounted for 671 *rido* cases that left 3,895 people dead, 3,637 wounded, 59 imprisoned and 62 missing. Almost half of the cases began no earlier than the year 2000. Of the informants, 35 percent cited property disputes, and 21 percent cited political rivalry, as initial cause of the conflict.

In Tawi-Tawi, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Zamboanga Sibugay, and Zamboanga del Sur, most informants felt that the judicial system is not capable of settling family/clan conflicts. Only in Basilan, Sulu, Zamboanga del Norte and Lanao del Norte did most feel that the system is capable of settling such conflicts.

In eight of the provinces, the great majority of Kamlian's informants denied that the conflicts were influenced by the Islamic religion. The one exception was Sultan Kudarat, where 69 percent said Islam had an influence.

Maguindanao was studied by Abhoud Syed M. Lingga of the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies, whose informants were politicians, traditional and religious leaders, women and community leaders, and representatives of the police and media. Election conflicts were the most cited (19 percent) cause of *rido*, followed by land conflicts.

An inventory of Lanao del Sur rido over 1994-2004 was made by Mocketar I. Matuan of Mindanao State University-Marawi, who looked for informants among traditional/religious leaders and past candidates for elective office, choosing to interview those who were knowledgeable but not closely related to the rido. He found 337 cases of rido, from which 798 people died and 104 were injured. The cause of rido was politics in 52 cases and land disputes in 45 cases. Although 82 cases were filed in court, only eight assailants were imprisoned. "Not a single rido was settled by the Philippine justice system," he said.

The book has a very interesting chapter by Gerard Rixhon, pointing to similarities in the historical contexts of clan-feuding Tausugs and clan-feuding Corsicans. Rixhon, a Belgian-born Filipino citizen who spent 20 years with the Oblate priests in Tawi-Tawi and Sulu, says that "Manila symbolizes a distant and uncaring government that neglects the people of Mindanao and Sulu," just as Paris symbolizes a distant and uncaring government that neglects the people of Corsica.

He informs us that Corsicans still speak their native Corsican language, even though the official language became French upon annexation by France in 1768. In order to accommodate Frenchmen expelled from newly-independent Algeria, Corsica was forced by the central government in Paris to make room for 70,000 settlers, in a population of only 190,000. So it comes as no surprise that there is a Corsican National Liberation Front, which aims for independence from France.

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