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Statement

Mindanao (Philippines): On the GPH-MILF Peace Process and the Mamasapano Incident

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Statement of the Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng mga Manggagawa Mindanao/Revolutionary Peoples' Army (RPM-M/RPA) on the GPH-MILF Peace Process and the Mamasapano Incident

The Mamasapano bloody incident last January 25, 2015 is a clear manifestation of the fragility and complexity of the peace process and security situation in Mindanao. It clearly exposes the different players, real intentions and interests of the elites and oligarchs, and most importantly of a foreign powers' intervention – specifically the United States of America (USA).

The Mamasapano debacle has caused the postponement of the Congress' deliberations of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) and clearly manifests various questions on integrity and sincerity of both the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (GPH-MILF) Peace Panels on ceasefire agreement and the police functioning of the Philippine National Police (PNP) among others vis-à-vis attaining inclusive peace in Mindanao in particular and the Philippines in general.

It has practically opened up a Pandora's box that exposes all other substantial political questions on the process as well.

The Mamasapano unfortunate incident has clearly manifested that both the GPH and the MILF failed to observe good faith in the peace talks and therefore should be held accountable to the lives lost and above all to the Filipino people who were caught in a political fiasco that in effect heightened the anti-Moro, anti-Lumad and anti-Christian sentiments.

The Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa-Mindanao (RPM-M) which had been engaged in the peace process with the government of the Philippines in the past is consistent on its position that in a peace process, the essential component of its success other than the observance and respect to formal and substantial signed agreements must confer and take its mandate among the stakeholders who are the direct beneficiaries and who should be the reason for being of any peace talks. These are not just the Bangsamoro who are identified with the MILF but also other Bangsamoro in the areas belonging to other political groups, the Indigenous Peoples and even the Migrant or Christian Settlers who live in the Bangsamoro territories.

It is apparent that foreign and local investors do not merely wait for the Bangsamoro government to be in-placed but are already positioning themselves and dipping their fingers to the very rich natural resources of Mindanao. The presence of multinational companies that engage in extractive economy posed not only a question on the ecological sustainability but as well as the very survival of other Indigenous Communities already subjected to another enhanced political marginalization, economic deprivation and cultural alienation.

Indeed the peace negotiations have achieved considerable gains. But these gains are not the billions of funds funnelled by the international community in the guise of economic development. Rather, the commendable aspects and the real gains of this particular peace process are the political recognition of the Bangsamoro's struggle for their right to self-determination and which resulted in the prevailing ceasefire between the two parties' military forces effectively providing the civilian population a respite from all the violence and destruction to slowly rebuild the communities.

The burden of the MILF and the GPH lies not only to the question of sustainable development in the areas of the Bangsamoro but as well as its security. The presence of an international terrorists and US military troops engaged in a direct police or government operation is strongly manifested in the Mamasapano encounter. More than ever, this evidence of the direct control and intervention of a foreign power has endangered the lives of the peoples and stalled the peace process.

Granting that the operation of the Special Action Force of the Philippine National Police (SAF/PNP) is to enforce their duty to serve the warrant of arrest of a most wanted terrorist as part of the anti-terrorism campaign of the country, this campaign should be well expounded in a way that the people would understand its essence and will not result to cultural biases, displacements and heavy collateral damage. A legitimate police operation should not result to an increase clamor of an all-out war.

It is clear that there is no perfect formula for a peace process but it should never be an excuse to consider war as the alternate plan if such talks would come to a crisis. It is important at this stage that the government and the MILF should reconsider their framework for peace - peace that should be anchored through widespread peoples' participation with increase trust and sense of ownership towards every phase of the process. This kind of peace framework will endure and sustain because it is well founded on democratic participation, after all, peace should be a work in progress and the people continue to gain small victories in the process. It should not be limited to the term of a sitting President.

The Mamasapano incident and the indefinite postponement of the talks on the BBL by Congress have provided an ample period to review and reconsider the many substantive questions that would boil down to the very question of stakeholders' ownership to the peace process. This means that it should not only address substantially the political objectives of the MILF but also the democratic aspirations of the three peoples in Bangsamoro territory and its peripheries.

Let us not let the deaths of 44 SAF PNP, 18 MILF-BIAF and 5 civilian casualties go down in vain. Let us help resurrect them and give their deaths more meaning to their loved ones by giving more substance to the BBL which will be reflecting the democratic interests of the three peoples within the core territories and those who will decide to be part of the Bangsamoro.

The Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa-Mindanao (RPM-M), reiterates its long standing strong support for the Bangsamoro struggle to self-determination under the current leadership of the MILF. Amidst its various weaknesses, one thing is politically clear that the MILF has helped heighten the national political consciousness of the Bangsamoro as well as strengthened its political movement if done consistently, this is a sure way that both aspects of the political struggle is in the right direction. Gaps can be seen in the current MILF's political struggle towards attaining a high level of the realization of their right to self-determination. Not minding these gaps is not building an inclusive peace which will only create another set of oppression of other peoples.

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