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CALL for Support and Signature!

# **Peoples' Rights Matter! Peace and Human Rights Advocates Call for a Democratic, Moral and Inclusive Peace in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Philippines**

Tuesday 19 January 2021, by [Organizations and individuals \(Mindanao\)](#) (Date first published: 15 January 2021).

**We, peace and human rights advocates, strongly condemn the recurring violence and displacements caused by various armed confrontations that have aggravated the sufferings of several Tri-People communities (Bangsamoro, Indigenous Peoples and migrant settlers) within and outside of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), Philippines.**

It is very alarming that these incidents happened particularly in the BARMM in spite of the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) or Republic Act 11054 in 2018, the product of the decades-long peace process between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Government Republic of the Philippines (GRP). Three years on, communities have yet to realize the gains of this landmark law that has promised to achieve genuine and long-lasting peace in the region.

On August 29, 2020, we saw the murder of 9 Moro men in Aringay, Kabacan, North Cotabato. On April 1, 2020, 7 Moro individuals were killed in Miasong, Tupi. In March 26, 2020, MILF personality and Mindanao State University – General Santos City Professor Ustadz Mohammad Taha Abdulgapor was murdered on his way home in Polomolok, South Cotabato. On October 20, 2020, around 10,000 residents were displaced due to severe flooding apart from armed conflicts in the SPMS Box (Shariff Aguak, Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Mamasapano and Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Maguindanao). From January until the end of 2020, Moro and Non-Moro Indigenous Peoples (NMIP) communities were caught in armed clashes in Talayan, Talitay, Ampatuan, Datu Piang and Guindulungan in Maguindanao. In Kalilangan, Iligan City, 279 Bangsamoro and Indigenous Peoples families were displaced due to the AFP 4<sup>th</sup> Division and the NPA encounter last June 25, 2020. The AFP have launched 5 day bombings using helicopters and artilleries. We note that Moro families that survived the Marawi Siege in 2017 continue to live in the temporary shelters, with the city's full rehabilitation still pending.

The experiences of Indigenous Peoples and migrant settlers are no different. On January 26, 2020, more than 1,025 Lumad individuals were displaced due to the armed confrontations between the Armed Forces of the Philippine (AFP) and the New People's Army (NPA) in Lapaz, Agusan del Sur. In February 21, 2020, an explosion caused injury to a Lumad mother and her 5-year old daughter, following a massive evacuation of communities in Diatagon, Lianga, Surigao del Sur. In February 18,

2020, estimated a number of 105 individuals evacuated due to the encounter between the AFP and NPA in Dumalaguin, Impasug-ong, Bukidnon. On May 22, 2020 and October 24, 2020, 198 Lumad families in Kawayan, San Fernando, Bukidnon and 200 families in Arakan, Matalam, North Cotabato fled their homes because of the same armed encounters. And as early as February 2020, the NMIPs in various municipalities in Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat experienced cyclical displacements, threats and harassments.

The statement of the Timuay Justice and Governance (TJG), the traditional governance of the Teduray and Lambangian Indigenous peoples, reported that "In July of 2020, the number of IDPs increased to 3,300 in 11 conflict sites within the Teduray and Lambangian ancestral domain areas in Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat provinces." Just before the year ended (December 2, 2020), no less than 500 families from NMIPs in Itaw, South Upi, Maguindanao fled their homes to escape the attacks of armed groups identified to be members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF). On January 1, 2021, another attack ensued, along with the burning of 13 houses and farm harvests. Following the New Year's day incident, the military offensives of the Armed Forces of the Philippines intensified. On January 3, 2021, the mayor of South Upi, Maguindanao was ambushed on his way home, after distributing relief packs to internally displaced persons (IDPs). The ambush claimed a life, displaced yet again hundreds of families from Barangay Pandan, South Upi.

The displacements happened in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and typhoons, floods and landslides. The IDPS were unable to observe basic health and hygiene protocols, making their situation more vulnerable.

Despite the limited mobility brought about by community quarantines and lockdowns, Indigenous Peoples' groups and civil society organizations in the region have exhausted all efforts to respond to the alarming situation.

On several occasions, the Bangsamoro and Mindanao civil society have sought justice for the Kabacan 9 massacre victims and other Moro killings in BARMM and adjacent provinces. Civil society groups support the demands of the Marawi Siege survivors to rehabilitate the war-torn Marawi and to facilitate their safe return to their homes.

The NMIPs have also appealed for peaceful solutions by bringing their pleas to the local government units at different levels - in the municipal (South Upi), provincial (Maguindanao) to the regional level (BARMM). They have also reported to the security sectors and to national government agencies, through the National Commission on the Indigenous People (NCIP) and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Processes (OPAPP). Yet, their situations have not been addressed and, in fact, have gotten worse by the end of the year.

We believe that these conflicts are linked to the scramble for rich natural resources in the region. In 2014, mining exploration activities were carried out within the ancestral domain of Teduray and Lambangian. At present, we see the expansion of wide monocrop and oil palm plantations in the BARMM. These industries are supported by the 3-year Bangsamoro Development Plan which is no different from the mainstream development paradigm used by the powers where the struggles led by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in not so distant past is founded upon, making profit as an indicator of progress. This have caused inequalities and injustices and will not serve the interests of the tri-peoples but rather cater to those of foreign and local investors making such development unsustainable. If this is the kind of development that the new MILF-led BARMM government is promoting, natural resources will be fully extracted, exploited and depleted.

We understand the birthing pains of the transition to BARMM. However, we want to pressure the BTA to make true of its promise for a more inclusive and plural governance. We believe that the

transition period is an apt time for the new government to prove that BARMM will indeed serve the interests of its constituents that the previous ARMM was not able to fulfil. We expect that the BARMM government shall engage in true democratic processes and shall listen to peoples' demands, especially the most underserved in the region. The Ministry for Indigenous Peoples's Affairs (MIPA) for instance as an office for the rights and welfare of the NMIPs in the parliament within the BARMM should be most concerned about these violence that have affected majority NMIPs instead of just distributing relief packs and spent their efforts in organizing parallel Tribal Councils at the village levels instead of helping strengthen the existing Indigenous Political Structures of the NMIPs in the region.

The gains of BOL will be in vain if the new government will continue uphold the cease and desist order versus the processing of the Teduray and Lambangian Ancestral Domain Claim (TLADC), through BTA Resolution No. 38. The same is true for delaying the rehabilitation of the Marawi City that has been promised to displaced Moro families and the Moro communities outside the current BARMM. More importantly, the achievement will be put to waste if the right to self-determination (RSD) of the communities is not recognized.

Furthermore, the economic development paradigm should not be destructive and exploitative of the interests of people and the environment.

We compel the national and BARMM government to ensure the democratic engagement, involvement and consultation of its constituents in the region as the articulation of the full meaning and essence of RSD. One people's right to self-determination is not a justification for subsuming another people's RSD. It is the government's moral obligation to listen, respect and support the various assertions of the different peoples and sectors in its jurisdiction. Inclusivity will only be realized if individual and collective rights of the peoples are fulfilled. The government is mandated to serve its constituents regardless of political beliefs, cultural practices and ethnicity.

We urge the BTA and the Philippine national government to adhere to national and international instruments in protecting the rights and welfare of all peoples in the region as articulated in the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL).

We must respect and revisit the Mamalu-Tabunaway peace pact of the ancestors of the Moro and non-Moro Indigenous peoples in order to bring about mutual understanding and sustainable peace between and amongst the peoples in the past and current tri-people communities within and outside BARMM.

We strongly believe that all peoples and communities in the region must be afforded equal rights, supported by building and strengthening a democratic, moral and inclusive peace in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. This should be a moral imperative for all.

We, the undersigned, call

1. For the national government to intervene to lift the cease and desist order (BTA Resolution Number 38) of the BARMM on NCIP's delineation process of the NMIPs' ancestral domain, and to fast-track the passage of the NMIP Code;
2. For the safe and immediate return of IDPs to their communities, with substantial economic support, while ensuring the observance of health protocols;
3. For the realization of the NMIP provisions in the BOL and the representation of NMIPs in the Bangsamoro parliament, as provided for in the BOL;

4. For concrete systems and mechanisms and delivery of programs and services to be defined and installed democratically for Bangsamoro communities inside and outside of the BARMM areas;
5. For an investigation into the Moro and NMIP killings;
6. For the Philippine and BARMM regional governments to ensure the full participation and recognition of the rights of Marawi Siege survivors in the rebuilding of Marawi City;
7. For the government and the Houses of Congress to involve the grassroots Bangsamoro inside and outside BARMM and the NMIPs inside BARMM in deliberating the BTA term's extension proposal, learning from the wisdom of their experiences;
8. For the BTA term extension should not only be bounded with what has to be done during the transition alone but also to weigh on what has been so far and should be done.
9. For the BARMM to pursue a sustainable development model instead of cash- and monocrop agribusiness and extractive industries;
10. For the regional, national and international peace and human rights advocates and humanitarian organizations to commit to and rally behind the calls of the grassroots Tri-People in claiming democratic entitlements; and
11. For protecting, preserving and developing sustainably our natural resources, entrusted to us by the One Supreme Being. Genuine and inclusive peace can only be achieved when we care for and nurture the whole of creation for the sake of present and future generations.

Finally, Peoples' Rights Matter! And Building and Strengthening a Democratic, Moral and Inclusive Peace in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is a must and will always be a Moral Imperative for All! ###

January 15, 2021

*Reference Persons:*

- Fatima Ali
- Jen Cornelio

*Signed*

1. Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement (MPPM) – Maguindanao and Cotabato City Custer
2. Kilusang Maralita sa Kanayunan (KILOS KA)
3. Mindanao Tri-People Women Resource Center (MTWRC)
4. Association of OFW Children (AOFWC)
5. Alyansa ng mga Mamamayan para sa Karapatang Pantao (AMKP)
6. Tri-People Organization against Disasters Foundation (TRIPOD)
7. Kaagapay OFW Resource and Service Center, Inc
8. Timuay Justice and Governance (TJG)

9. Alliance of Tri-People for the Advancement of Human Rights (ALTAHR)
10. Lambangian People's Organization (LPO)
11. Oblates of Mary Immaculate - IP Ministry
12. Teduray, Lambangian Youth and Students Association
13. Kagkalimwa OFW Federation
14. Gempa te Kelindaan ne Kamal te Erumanen ne Menuvu
15. Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center - Kasama sa Kalikasan/ Friends of the Earth Philippines (LRC-KsK/FoE Phils)
16. Tri-People Youth for Change (TrYChange)
17. Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement (MPPM)
18. Umpungan Nu mga Babai sa Bagua 2 (UBB2)
19. Multi-Stakeholders Initiatives for Humanitarian Action Network against Disasters (MiHANDs)
20. Alyansa ng Kabataang Mindanao para sa Kapayapaan (AKMK)
21. Dangpanan Alternative Health and Wellness Center (Dangpanan)
22. Ranao Disaster Response and Rehabilitation Assistance Center (RDRRAC)
23. Demokratikong Kilusang Magbubukid sa Pilipinas - Lanao
24. Sambok Selan de Libon (SDL), Polomolok, South Cotabato
25. Sumpay Mindanao, Inc. (SMI)
26. Arlieto R. Berlan, Humanitarian and Development Worker
27. Samuel B. Delima, Humanitarian and Development Worker

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- If you and your organization want to support and endorse this statement PLEASE SIGN UP by sending your Organization's name or as an individual advocate to [solidaritymovementforpeace2021@gmail.com](mailto:solidaritymovementforpeace2021@gmail.com) .

- You may also share this statement to your network inside and outside of the Philippines, media friends, line agencies, policy makers in the BARMM and Philippine Congress.

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