

*Document***Position Papers of Technical Working Groups on
Six Clustered Agenda Items**

MORO ISLAMIC LIBERATION FRONT

Introduction**A. Historical Background of the Bangsamoro Problem**

When the Spaniards set their foot in Manila in 1570, Islam had taken its roots in the bay area. In the southern portion of the archipelago, there were already three established sultanates, attesting to the existence of advanced political system the Moros had had. It was during the Battle of Manila that year that the word "Moro" was first used by the Spaniards, reminded of their experience with the Moors, who fought them for territory and dominance in the Iberian peninsula.

Military campaigns were launched to subjugate the Muslims in 1578. These expeditions came in six stages starting from the Spanish conquest of Borneo in 1578, ending in the attempts to consolidate Hispanic hold in some parts of Mindanao to prevent the other foreign powers at the time (e.g. the British and the Dutch) from penetrating the Muslim sultanates. The Moro people fiercely resisted each of these aggressions. Despite some minor gains towards the end of the Spanish era, the Castellans, who gained some advantage with the introduction of fast steamboats and the weakening of the sultanates due to internecine wars on succession, never subjugated the Moros.

But the wounds remained and even grew deeper. The Moro wars as well as the cultural conditions imposed on the Indio's, e.g. the Moro-Moro, *sarzuela* and the like, separated the Christianized Filipinos from the Muslims in the South. Stereotypes portraying the latter as "uncivilized and barbaric" have persisted, suggesting that the Muslims were being treated as second-class citizens.

American colonialism of Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan began with the Bates Treaty that was signed on August 20, 1899. The document was just a tactical ploy designed by the American occupational forces to thwart any alliance between the defenders of the young Philippine Republic and the sultanates. When the Americans succeeded in crushing the revolutionary government in Luzon, they mounted military expeditions to pacify and subjugate the Moro people. These took several forms, foremost of which was the no-nonsense unleashing of full military might capped by the opening of settlements for the Filipinos from Luzon and the Visayas.

Through the *pensionados* — scions of Moro families who were sent to institutions of higher learning in Manila and the U. S. — the Americans were able to erect some pillars of their colonial government. In August 1916 President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones Law (Public Act No. 240 of the Second Session of the 64th United State Congress) into law. This was followed by the abolition of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu. The administration of the Moro lands came largely under the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes under the Department of the Interior.

American and Christian Filipino officials were in general agreement on the overall policy on their integration into the mainstream of Filipino society. But this policy was seriously obstructed by at least three circumstances: 1) The atmosphere of mutual suspicion between American and Filipino officials; 2) Continued Moro resistance and struggle against the domination of the imperial government based in Manila; and 3) The priority given to national economic development and security consideration in the Bangsamoro homeland.

Throughout American regime, the Filipino leaders (Quezon, Osmeña, Laurel, Recto, etc.) did not manifest interest of the Moros at heart, being motivated to ensure control and demonstrate their capacity to government and hasten the granting of (political) independence. Pockets of small uprisings dotted and shook American presence in Mindanao. Notable among these were: the Maranao revolt in Tugaya in 1923, the uprising led by Datu Santiago in Parang, Cotabato in 1923-1924; the one by Datu Tahil in 1927 against land taxation and *cedula*, among others, and the most notable of all, the one led by Hadji Kamlon of Sulu in the 1950s.

The Americans never grasped what the Moro problem really was. They saw it as underdevelopment of "Non-Christian Tribes" - and the solution was education, economic development and judicious application of force whenever the Moros resisted. Worse, to some, the Moros were considered savages needing to be civilized and the homeland of the Moros as territory promising vast economic resources for an independent Philippine; hence, the term "Land of Promise." Migration was greatly accelerated in 1936, further boosted with the creation of such bodies as LASEDECO, NARRA, and EDCOR. This stage set the process of "denationalization" and "minoratization" of the Moros.

The Japanese occupation force little understood the actual situation of the Moros. They tried to use the "Brother Asians" appeal but the best that they could achieve was the guarded, enthusiastic obedience of some Moros living in occupied towns. The majority of the Moros, however, supported the anti-Japanese war effort, and not a few were pleased at the opportunity to legitimate by show their martial bravery. In many instances, the Moros and the Filipinos fought side by side to repulse the Japanese imperial army.

Under the contemporary period, political analysts and pundits are wont to point out to three underlying causes to the Moro problem: landlessness, socio-cultural differences, and power struggle. In the eyes of progressive minds they are four: political autonomy or self-determination, leadership, oppression and exploitation, and mass liberation. The underlying circumstance is that the Bangsamoro is fighting against "forcible denationalization," if not actually physical extermination.

Three events in the late 1960s and early 1970s precipitated Mindanao Crisis: The Corregidor incident (Jabidah Massacre) of March 1968 the November 1971, elections, and the imposition of Martial Law in September 1972. The first event led to the formation of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). To that however, five Muslim scholars from Mindanao and Sulu were known to have planted the seeds of "Jihad" on the Bangsamoro Homeland. One of these scholars was Ustadz Salamat Hashim now the MILF's chairman. The auspicious birth of the Mindanao Independence Movement espoused by the Grand Old Man of Cotabato" Governor Datu Udtog Matalam.

There was a shift of political power from the traditional Muslim ruling class to the newly elected Christian leaders as a result of the November 1971 elections. Almost simultaneously, a Christian vigilante group called the "Ilonggo Land Grabbing Association" came into being. The declaration of Martial Law put an exclamation point to the neo-colonial attempts at finally subjugating the Moros. It only exposed the then unified MNLF, and soon it became the rallying force of the Moros in their quest for self-determination.

Finding it difficult to suppress the MNLF, which had gained an observer status in the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), the Philippine government gave way to the signing of the Tripoli Agreement in December 1976. Apart from this it unilaterally established autonomous regions in Regions IX and XII and created several offices to dramatize its policy of measured benevolence towards the Moros. These offices included the Offices of the Regional Commissioners for Regions IX and XII, Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA), Philippine Amanah Bank, Philippine Pilgrimage Authority, Office of Islamic Affairs in the Department of Foreign Affairs, Agency for the Development and Welfare of Muslims in the Philippines, Commissioner for Islamic Affairs (later Ministry of Muslim Affairs, OMACC, and now Office of Muslim Affairs), among others. This culminated by the enactment of R.A. 6734 that established the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in 1990.

The Tripoli Agreement did not end or solve the Bangsamoro problem neither did the GRP-MNLF Peace Agreement signed on September 2, 1996. While the MNLF opted to join the government and had a hand in the running of the ARMM and the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCDDP), the Bangsamoro problem remained. The continued exploitative and oppressive policies of the Philippines government, punctuated by unabated militarization, open human rights violations and myopic initiatives that serve more as palliatives and cosmetic approaches in containing, or denying the existence of the problem, further strengthened the resolve of the Moros in the struggle for self-determination.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front borne by the disenchantment, disenfranchisement and dejection of the Moro masses from the Philippine government's refusal to recognize the inherent right of the Bangsamoro

to regain their freedom and reclaim their homeland that were subjected to laws promulgated without due representation from and consultations with the Moro people.

From July 17, 1997, the MILF entered into a General Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities with the GRP, the latter, through its Armed Forces continued to violate the agreement and the subsequent documents forged between the GRP and MILF Peace Panels to ensure continuously confidence building and fruitful negotiations. The GRP unveiled its "All-Out War Policy" to bring down the Moro rebels to their knees. Just like what the Americans did to the Bates Treaty, the AFP ignored the joint statements acknowledging certain MILF major and satellite camps - only for the duration of the peace process - on the pretext that these turned into bases from which "terroristic activities" of MILF were launched. They launched offensives notwithstanding the existence of civilians and holy structures in the communities within MILF camps.

The All-Out War Policy bodes well with real intent of pursuing genocide or ethnic cleansing. This leaves no alternative for the Moros but carve their separate state. The unitary system with sprinkling of autonomy in areas dominated by Moros and tribal peoples did not sit well with the Moro people's desire for real freedom to control their own religious, political, cultural, educational, and economic affairs.

The experience of the Moros had its parallel in Algeria and other countries. Emotionally, the former is now where the Algerians were in 1955. Mere socio-economic development progress side-by-side with military action by France did not succeed in making the Algerians of the time accept the offer of autonomy. Their suffering galvanized their resistance, until as then French President Charles de Gaulle belatedly realized, independence was the only acceptable solution to the Algerian problem. This is the reality that the GRP must face.

As the MILF, however, firmly believes that the Bangsamoro problem can be solved through peaceful means, it has embarked on a negotiation to pave the way to a peaceful and democratic return of the Bangsamoro homeland to the Bangsamoro people. This is in accordance with Quranic provisions contained in Chapter VIII, verse nos. 60-62. It is for this reason that the organization entered into the AGCC and subsequently submitted a nine-point agenda for the peace talks with the GRP. These nine talking

points have been clustered into six, namely: 1) Ancestral Domain and Agrarian Related Issues, 2) Destruction of Properties and War Victims, 3) Human Rights Issues, 4) Social and Cultural Discrimination, Corruption of the Mind and Moral Fiber, 5) Economic Inequities and Widespread Poverty, and Exploitation of Natural Resources.

While the GRP Panel preferred to delve on positive and more forward looking aspects, the MILF maintains that the true nature, scope, magnitude, and depth of the Bangsamoro problem must be emphasized for the well-being and future of the Moro people. No amount of stonewalling or window-dressing will ever justify any effort to arrive at another set of palliatives and / or shortsighted remedies "in the name of the peace process" but to the detriment of the downtrodden and oppressed Bangsamoro.

The annexation of the Bangsamoro homeland through the Treaty of Paris of December 10, 1898 constitutes an illegal and immoral act, which is a violation of human rights. The position of the MILF is clear. There is no viable and lasting solution to the centuries-old conflict between the Bangsamoro people and their prosecutor except to give way to the aspirations of the native inhabitants of the area — the Bangsamoro and the highlanders, and this is no other than the restoration of their usurped legitimate rights to freedom and self-determination.

B. The Bangsamoro People and their Homeland

The ancestral homeland of the Bangsamoro is not just located in Mindanao, Sulu, Basilan, Tawi, and Palawan. In a map found in London Library and Museum, Muslim areas in the Philippines at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards in the Philippines were found throughout the archipelago. There were seven kingdoms and principalities, namely: a) the Sultanate of Maguindanao, b) Sultanate of Sulu, c) Muslim principality of Palawan, d) Muslim principality of Panay, e) Muslim principality of Mindoro, f) the Muslim kingdom of Manilad (Manila), and g) the Muslim principality of Iloco.

Due to the partial success of the Spanish *conquistadores'* attempt to proselytize the Indios, the Moros were decimated in Luzon and the Visayas. At the end of the Spanish regime, the Moros were found principally in the southern portion of the archipelago: on the island of

Mindanao, in the Sulu archipelago, and on the island of Palawan, south of Puerto Princesa City. The dominant Islamized tribes consist of 13 major ethno-linguistic groups: the Maguindanaons (Cotabato and parts of Zamboanga del Sur), Maranaw (Lanao, and parts of the Misamis and Bukidnon and also in Caraga region), Tausug (Sulu), Yakan (Basilan), Iranons (north of Maguindanao and Cotabato provinces and south of Lanao del Sur), Jama Mapun (Tawi-Tawi and Cagayan de Sulu), Palawani (Southern Palawan), Kolibugan (Zamboanga del Sur), Kalagan (Davao areas), Samal (Sulu), Sangil (Saranggani Island group), Molbog (Balabac Island Southern Palawan) and Badjao (South of Sulu) – (per Yambut et. al., 1975:16). Each of these groups occupies a more or less distinct territory, though in some instance the smaller groups have their living spaces penetrated by families belonging to the larger groups.

Then there are highlanders or lumads, the tribal ethnic groups like the T'durays (Tirurays), Manobos, B'laans, Bagobos, Subanons, T'bolis, Bukidnons, and other indigenous cultural communities, who opted not to embrace Islam, but form part of the Bangsamoro nation. They have the same aspiration as the Muslims to reclaim their ancestral domain and be free from oppression.

Notwithstanding the unifying bond of Islam and custom and traditions (in the case of the highlander or lumads), the Moros differ in certain respects: 1) subsistence patterns, 2) historical development and in the intensity of their contacts with the rest of the archipelago and the world beyond, and 3) in the details of their social organization, degree of their Islamic acculturation, and in their dress, custom, arts and many other aspects of culture.

These accidental differences, including patterns of psychosocial behavior, were exploited by the Marcos regime to divide the Moros in its attempt to weaken the then unified MNLF. What it could not win in war, it somewhat accomplished, albeit with little success in politics of compromises, concessions, and deception. This strategy also somewhat worked in magnifying the misperception that the Moros by themselves could not govern, rendering the various mechanisms devised by the GRP (especially the SPDA, the Bogus Autonomous Regions under PD 1618, and the ARMM) as "meant to fail."

The Bangsamoro homeland consists of the picturesque, crab-like island of Mindanao. The minnows are the islands of the Sulu archipelago (or BaSulTaw. Moroland is said to be a territory of 36,540 square miles. By way of comparison, it is larger in territory than either Portugal or Austria. And the Bangsamoro Population outnumbers that of Albania, Costa Rica, and even the oil-rich desert country of Libya.

In terms of the history of the Bangsamoro, three regions have loomed more important than others have the Sulu archipelago, the Lake Lanao region, and the Pulangi (River) Valley, that is Cotabato Empire of old.

Sulu is the gateway that connects to Borneo and Malay Peninsula, which explains the very close ties between the people of these areas. In 1994, seeing the tremendous potentials of reviving the thriving trade and commerce that made the region prosperous some 500 years ago, former President Fidel V. Ramos, under his much-maligned Philippine 2000 vision, orchestrated the establishment of the BIMP-EAGA (Brunei-Malaysian-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area). The rapid gains of said multilateral borderless economic arrangement were vaporized when the currency crisis struck mid-1997. But then the Bangsamoro people remained in abject socio-economic condition, despite the promised bonanza especially after the signing of the peace pact in September 2, 1996.

Lake Lanao, all of its 135 square-mile size, supplies the electric power generated through hydro plant to a larger portion of the Island of Mindanao. Paradoxically, a big part of the province of Lanao del Sur, where it is located is not yet energized. The more prosperous Lanao del Norte, now dominated by Christians, with some big industries located therein, especially in Iligan City, is the one enjoying the benefits of cheap electricity, together with those in Northern Mindanao, Caraga Region and the Zamboanga peninsula, all populated mostly by Christians.

The Rio Grande de Mindanao (Spanish name for Pulangi which also means "river") is like Mount Fuji to the Japanese or the Nile River to the Egyptians. It is not just a channel for transportation/navigation, source of irrigation, trade and commercial route, and agro-industrial key production area. More than other, it is a symbol, a source of pride amongst the Maguindanaons and the other Moros in the area. The Marcos regime came up with the Cotabato-Agusan River Basin Development Project

(CARBDP) aimed at transforming the valley into a modern complex of agricultural production, marketing, and corporate growth. The Marcos era ended without seeing the fruits of such a grandiose scheme.

Three dispensations in succession concocted asset or a package of programs to gain attempt at developing the valley, including the 200,000 hectare-plus Liguasan (Ligawasan) Marsh. There is the Maridagao Malitubog Irrigation Development Project, a multi-billion peso project, and the aborted Liguasan Marsh Development Project, whose feasibility study was spearheaded by the National Economic and Development Authority at a cost of P6 million but was flatly rejected by the native inhabitants of the Marsh area. The World Bank is set to bankroll a bigger project to encompass MalMar, Liguasan, and the Pulangi. Yet, the Bangsamoro natives have not participated in the drawing of the plans, never been consulted or even are going to be displaced once these projects are in place.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of discussion and evaluation of the contents of this position paper, the following terms are defined:

1. Ancestral domain — refers to all areas and territory historically belonging to the Bangsamoro, distinct and definite, comprising the following: lands, water, air space, and natural resources therein.

2. Aggression — a deliberate, unprovoked act by one country or group on another; refers to the persisting pacification campaign and military operations and adventurism directed against the Bangsamoro people to suppress their legitimate cause and grievances.

3. Assimilation — also refers to acculturation, which means the adoption of new traits or patterns disruptive or destructive of the common culture and heritage of indigenous people of natives of the land leading to minoritization of systematic cultural disorganization of a people nation. In sociology, it also refers to racial desegregation with derogatory connotations.

4. Bangsamoro homeland — areas and places comprising the ancestral domain of the Bangsamoro people located in the island of

Mindanao, the Sulu archipelago, and other island immediately surrounding Mindanao, including the bodies of water, marshes, mangroves, mountains, and the earth beneath and the air space above them.

5. Bangsamoro people — native inhabitants composed of Islamized ethnic groups, highlanders, *lumads*, and other non-Muslims with Bangsamoro ancestry and the those who have been born, raised and educated in the Bangsamoro homeland, signifying and declaring legally their being Bangsamoro members.

6. Corruption — making corrupt, perverts, and decayed the state of being including practices, social order, and cultural identity; also referring to acts of dishonesty, bribery and falsification.

7. Discrimination — making distinction with the intention or purpose of unfavorable treatment or showing favoritism.

8. Exploitation — act of unjustly deriving profits or material gains from the work or resources possessed by an individual or group.

9. Human Rights — a term or a program enunciated in Helsinki, which embodies the "right to be free from government violations of the integrity of a person or people...right to the fulfillment of such vital needs as food, shelter, health care, and education...right to enjoy and determine civil and political rights and liberties."

10. Marginalization — a process of causing people to live on the margins of society by displacement or exclusion from participation in any groups, society or political efforts.

11. Oppression — collective act of treating with unjust harshness, especially by ruling over tyrannically.

12. Persecution — collective effort of inflicting suffering for religious or political reasons.

13. Self-Determination — the right of a people to decide its own form of government or political status.

14. Subjugation — state of being conquered or held in subjection, of which the Bangsamoro people, are not.

15. War — armed conflict between nations, tribes, or other groups, or an instance of this; concerted and constant efforts to put down, decimate or exterminate; or a state of hostility.

III. Objectives/Purposes

The general objective of this work is to solve the Bangsamoro problem.

There is a need to find and reach a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Bangsamoro problem.

This problem involves a wide variety of social, cultural, economic and political issues and concerns that include, but not limited to the following: ancestral domain, displaced and landless Bangsamoro, destruction of properties and war victims, human rights issues, social and cultural discrimination, corruption of the mind and moral fiber, economic inequities and widespread poverty, exploitation of natural resources, and agrarian related issues.

The specific objectives of this work are:

1. To find the truth about the historical roots of the Bangsamoro struggle;
2. To find a peaceful, comprehensive and permanent political solution to the Bangsamoro problem;
3. To establish a system of life and governance suitable and acceptable to the Bangsamoro people.

IV. Issues and Concerns

1. Ancestral Domain and Related Issues

The MILF maintains that the issue on ancestral domain involves a) intrusion into the domain (by vested interest, settlers, and multinationals),

- b) declaration of ancestral domain as public and disposable lands, and
- c) wanton destruction and irreverence towards ancestral domain.

Throughout contemporary history, the Bangsamoro were subjected to various forms of oppression, subjugation, and genocidal campaigns. The situation of the Bangsamoro people became worst when colonies and settlements projects in Mindanao and Sulu were established to decongest Luzon and Visayas. It was also a palliative to appease former Huk members. The systematic deprivation of the Bangsamoro people of their ancestral domain is anchored in the Regalian Doctrine, which has been enshrined in the Philippine Constitution of 1935, 1973 and 1987 with it the state declares itself the sole owner of what is called state domain and reserves the right to classify it for purposes of proper disposition to its citizens. To this effect, the Philippine government enacted series of laws, detriment to the occupancy, use and rights of the Bangsamoro people of their homeland.

On November 6, 1902, the Philippine Commission passed Land Registration Act No. 496 which requires the registration of lands occupied by private persons or corporations, and the application for registration of title, says Sec. 21, it shall be in writing, signed and sworn to by the applicant. This provision of law is totally discriminatory. First, the registration was not only totally alien to the Moro communities; most of them would have been unable to comply, illiterate that they were. Second, it failed to take cognizance that the Maguindanao and Sulu Sultanates were independent Muslim State, possession had been, and was a complete and absolute title to their land in accordance with Islamic Law.

To ensure unchallenged exercise of the state authority to dispose of state domain or public lands, the Philippine Commission enacted Act No. 718 entitled "An Act making void land grants from Moro Sultans or Datus of from Chiefs of Non-Christian Tribes when made without governmental authority or consent, Section 82 of Public Land Act No. 926 which was amended by Act No. 2874 by the Senate and House of Representatives on November 29, 1919 in accordance with the Jones Law and finally incorporated in Commonwealth Act 141 under Section 84, enacted and approved on November 7, 1936, continues to carry the almost exact wordings of said law, reiterating further the legitimacy of the transfer of

sovereign authority from Spain to the United States, and the illegality of the Moros claim.

On October 7, 1903, the Philippine Commission passed Public Land Act No. 926 which allowed individuals to acquire homestead not exceeding 16 hectares each corporation 1,204 hectares each of unoccupied, unreserved, unappropriated agricultural public lands as stated by Section 1. Nothing was said about the unique custom of the Moro communities.

Public Land Act No. 926, amended through Act No. 2874 by the Senate and House of Representatives on November 29, 1919 in accordance with Jones law, provided that 16 hectares allowed earlier to individuals was increased to 24, but the Non-Christian, including the Moros, was allowed an area which shall exceed ten (10) hectares with a very stringent conditions, that is, it shall be an essential condition that the applicant apply for permit to cultivate the land and if the applicant has not begun to cultivate and improve the land six months from and after the date on which the permit was granted, the permit shall ipso facto be cancelled and land.

Commonwealth Act No. 141 amended on November 7, 1936, withdrew the privilege earlier granted to the settlers of owning more than one homestead at 24 hectares each and reverted to one not exceeding 16 hectares. But the non-Christians (including the Moros) who were earlier allowed a maximum of ten (10) hectares were now permitted only four (4) hectares.

For the administration of agricultural colonies, Commonwealth Act No. 141 created the National Land Settlement Administration. This took charge of the settlement projects in Koronadal, Cotabato, and in Malig, Isabel. With the subsequent reorganization of the government in 1950, the office was merged with the Rice and Corn Production Administration, forming a new identity known as the Land Settlement and Development Corporation (LASEDECO). Later, Republic Act. No. 1160 abolished LASEDECO and created the National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Administration (NARRA). With efforts of the NARRA it had resettled 20,500 at the cost of P44.5 million in 1963. The government also created the Economic Development Corporation (EDCOR), which issued homestead lands to, alleged former Huks.

The defunct Commission on National Integration (CNI), created under R.A. 1888, as amended by R. A. 3852 on May 4, 1964 did not succeed in its objectives, but merely perpetuated and made more stark the discriminatory oppression and misleading thrust of the Philippine government by implementing more settlement projects, allowing more concession to the political elite.

On March 11, 1974, former President Ferdinand E. Marcos issued PD No. 410 "Declaring Ancestral Lands Occupied and Cultivated by National Cultural Communities as Alienable and Disposable, and for other Purposes." This edict had a ten-year period of effectively but it lapsed without getting implemented. It was overtaken by events, one of which were the shaky bureaucratic realignments and reorganizations that plagued the dictatorial regime.

Subsequent laws passed by resurrected Congress did not alleviate the suffering and dislocation of the Moro people. Bureaucratic red tape and unconscionable practice of certain irreverent parties taking advantage of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), as extended, and other programs like the Integrated Social Forestry and the issuance, and other certificates of Ancestral Domain claim (CADC) made matters worse. Even wildlife sanctuaries and national parks, like Liguasan Marsh and Lake Lanao, were surreptitiously titled and mortgage with the Land Bank of the Philippines.

2. Destruction of Properties and War Victims: Displaced and Landless Muslims

The destruction of properties, loss of hundred of thousands on innocent lives, physical and psychological injuries to those who survived the bloody wars from the early 1970's to the present, and displacement and or disposition of lot more came as result of genocidal.

As an instrument to fulfill the grand design of the Marcos government, then President Ferdinand E. Marcos declared Martial Law on September 21, 1972 to support the ILAGA movement backed by the Philippine Constabulary (PC) and Philippine Army (PA), see the book of Dr. Muslim. Until the middle part of 1971, ILAGA operations were concentrated in various Muslim villages in the Municipalities of the then two Cotabato Provinces (North and South) with mixed populations, but largely in

municipalities where the Muslims were in the minority. In the second half of the 1971, they reached the province of Lanao del Sur, particularly the Municipality of Wao, which was among the centers of the Christian Filipino migration. Then, they spread to several Muslim towns of Lanao del Norte and in Bukidnon. In 1972, ILAGA operated in Zamboanga del Sur. For the period of two years, practically all Muslim areas in Mindanao were under siege by the ILAGA backed by the Philippine Armies and Philippine Constabulary.

June 19, 1971 is a very memorable moment for the people of Carmen, particularly in *Manila* with 70 Muslims were massacred by the agents of the Marcos regime. From January to June 1971, a total of 358 Muslims were recorded killed by the ILAGA backed by the PC and PA. In Alameda alone, about 92 house were recorded burned. In the nearby Municipalities, 55 Muslim houses in Carmen; 18 in Pikit; 25 in Kidapawan and 22 in Buldon were all burned in the ILAGA in just five days in August 1971. A total of 411 Muslim houses were burned in the municipalities Wao, Lanao del Sur and Buldon in Maguindanao respectively.

Other Municipalities with notable killing and burning of several hundreds or even thousands of Muslim houses, mosques, and Islamic schools were Magsaysay in Lanao del Norte, Kisulon in Bukidnon, and Siay and Ipil in Zamboanga del Sur. A notable ILAGA *Commander Toothpick* reinforced by a PC *Captain Manuel Tionco* made Upl in Cotabato as his Kingdom. As pointed out by a Muslim leader, Senator Mamintal Tamano when interviewing the Muslim evacuees of barrio Kulongkulong, Palembang, Cotabato, after the more than seven hundred Muslim (men and women, young and old) massacred in their barrio on January 2, 1972, I could not shake their belief that some of the ILAGA were soldiers of the Marcos regime. The incident was popularly known as *Kulongkulong Massacre*. Jubair (1999) in his teak, confirmed the findings of Dr. Muslim in his dissertation.

Appearing simultaneously with the reported ILAGA atrocities, until the middle part of 1972 were series of massacres of Muslims reportedly by the units of the Philippine Constabulary and the Philippine Army. It was noted that there were 73 Muslims massacred by the PC in Alamada, Cotabato in January 19, 1971; 37 (40 by Jubair) Muslims were massacred by the Philippine Army in Tacub, Kausuagan, Lanao del Norte on November 22, 1971. In the same incident, some 162 were reported

missing allegedly salvaged by the PA soldiers. In a neighboring municipality of Magsaysay, Lanao del Norte scores of Muslim civilians were on their way for voting and were gunned down by the Army soldiers.

These atrocities against the Muslims by the ILAGA and the military machinery of the government had converted several Muslim areas as "Killing fields," where the rest as evacuation centers. Naturally, the Muslims in these areas and those of the neighboring municipalities were forced to leave behind their farms and homes, many of which were subsequently looted and occupied by the Christians even up to the present. Worst, those land occupied by the Christians were titled forcefully with manipulations and connivance with the corrupt government officials of the DENR, DAR and the Register of Deeds.

Records or documents submitted to the Egyptian-Libyan team that visited the Philippines in 1972 could give us a sense of the extent of displacement suffered by the Moros.

The following are some of the vacated Muslim areas presently occupied by the Christian settlers from the north.

1. *BAGUMBAYAN* — Muslim in this town were totally displaced by the Christian. This Muslim evacuated to Maganoy and Datu Piang Municipalities. Their houses and mosques were burned and effects looted.
2. *AMPATUAN AND ISULAM* — Muslim in these Municipalities have been driven either to Buluan, Maganoy and Datu Piang; their houses and mosques were burned and effects looted.
3. *ALAMADA* — Muslim were driven the neighboring towns of Buldon, Sultan Kudarat and some went to Lanao del Sur; their houses and mosques burned and effects looted.
4. *COLOMBIO* — Muslim were driven to Alep (Datu Paglas) and Buluan; their houses and mosques were burned; their effects looted.
5. *UPI* — Muslim were driven to the poblacion, to Cotabato City and Dinaig; their houses and mosques were burned; their effects looted.
6. *PALEMBANG* — Muslim were driven to Lebak, Cotabato City, Sultan Kudarat and Parang; their houses and mosques were burned; their effects looted.

7. *LANAO DEL SUR* — Muslims in Wao Municipality were driven to the interiors of Lanao del Sur; their houses and mosques were burned; their effects looted.

8. *LANAO DEL NORTE* — All Muslims living along the National Highway from one end to the other, a distance of over 100 kilometers were driven to the interior of Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur; their houses and mosques were burned; their effects looted.

9. *ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR* — All Muslims living in the several small villages along the seacoast of the peninsula was driven to Basilan and Sulu Island; their houses and mosques were burned; their effects looted.

10. *BUKIDNON* — All Muslims living in several towns in Bukidnon were relocated to Lanao del Sur; their houses and mosques were burned; their effects looted.

To summarize the extent and effect of the first two years of ILAGA and government military atrocities, we could conclude that the Muslims in the rural areas were badly devastated which under *international laws* needs *condemnation and indemnification*. Hundreds of thousands of houses, madaris (Islamic schools) and mosques were burned and tens of thousands of innocent Bangsamoro were massacred and more than one million of rural Bangsamoro residents were displaced. About five hundred thousand are still living in the island state of Sabah and more than seven hundred thousand in other urban centers in Mindanao, Visayas and Luzon. There is also the permanent damage to properties and lives of the Muslims living along the seacoasts of Zamboanga peninsula, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi whose number reached to about one million.

The sinister design of the Manila central government did not end after two years of the atrocities by the ILAGA and the GRP military armed forces against the Bangsamoro. It exists even up to the present. What happened between the 1972 to the present is a series of cooling and warming of atrocities. Evidence to this, for the past more than three years, from 1997 to the present, the MILF and the GRP has signed more than 30 documents related to cease-fire agreements and or maintenance of peace and order and almost all of these agreements were violated by the GRP armed forces which shows the insincerity of the government. They always claimed that the MILF violated the agreement, which is contrary to what really happened.

Many had thought that the days of living dangerously, the period of open plunder and persecution of the Bangsamoro people ended with the ouster of the conjugal dictatorship after a bloodless coup in February 1986. The moral ascendancy of the Aquino regime paved the way to peace negotiations with the MNLF, while the MILF chose the wait-and-see stance. The ARMM was created by virtue of R.A. 6734 but it did bring out the projected socio-economic development in the region. Victims of the pacification campaigns during the Marcos regime were never heard.

Again, while the Ramos administration continued the past national leadership's reconciliation and unification efforts, the dispossessed, displaced, and oppressed Bangsamoro people failed to have the government's ear. It just opted to appease and deal with one group that led to the signing of the GRP-MNLF peace agreement on September 2, 1996. Several delegations paid calls on the new Regional Governor but the plight of hundreds of thousands of those who were widowed, orphaned, displaced and dispossessed did not occupy the regional government's top priority. The usual reform to deafening appeals was budgetary constraints. As has been done, small livelihood projects, grants, a few scholarship grants, support to cooperatives, and minor packages of beneficiaries, many of who never lost their beloved during the war in the 1970's nor lost a limb and some properties.

The problem of refugees has remained unsolved up to this day. Displaced Moro people could not return to their places of origin, especially in Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Norte, and Zamboanga del Sur because either their lands have been stolen and titled by other parties or they fear continued persecution. Some 500,000 Moro refugees are still lingering in Sabah and could not return due to lack of opportunities and funds. Compounding is what is termed now as "statistical genocide" whereby the Bangsamoro people are subjected to minoritization in the national statistical records. At present even the National Statistical Office could not provide an accurate figure regarding the nearest estimate of the Bangsamoro population. For several years now, the NSO's census reports have shown a slow growth of the Bangsamoro population, which are quite improbable campaigns and military operations undertaken in the Bangsamoro homeland.

Marcos was responsible for the "Jabidah Massacre" in the island of Corregidor on March 17, 1968. Sixty-four Muslim recruits of the

Philippine Army who were undergoing clandestine training in preparation of invasion of Sabah were brutally killed when they sensed something fishy about their mission. The incident, spurred by then Senator Benigno S. Aquino, Jr.'s expose, led to the birth of the Moro National Liberation Front led by Nurullaji P. Misuari, a political science professor at the University of the Philippines. In quick succession, the MIM and the Ansari-El Islam, a national Muslim religious brotherhood led by former Senator Ahmad Domocao Alonto of Lanao del Sur,

Just as the Ilaga materialized, the "Blackshirts" in Cotabato and the "Barracudas" of Lanao came into being. The Christian armed band aided by the military and some police operatives swooped down on Muslim villages. Soon it engaged in series of gun battles with "Blackshirts" and Barracudas" was sending thousand upon thousand to flee from their homes. Those who stayed were mutilated by the ILAGA. Reports of cannibalism were even recounted by some witnesses who refused to come out in the open. The most famous of the ILAGA leaders were Commander Toothpick, the Manero brothers led by Commander Bucay (real name Norberto Manero, Jr.), and Commander Inday. There was, of course, the "Magnificent Seven", Christian leaders who formed the "central committee" of the Ilaga with "Commander X", suspected to be a top-ranking military official that time and who later turned politician, as chairman.

These are the most infamous massacres that took place before and during the martial law period.

3. Human Right Issues and Concerns

The Bangsamoro People are the native inhabitants of Mindanao, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Palawan and Basilan, who are not Spanish subjects on April 11, 1899, and then resided in said Islands, who have neither been naturalized under either of Act No. 2927 and Commonwealth Act No. 473, nor have ever been elected to public office prior to the adoption of the 1935 Constitution.

The Bangsamoro People have fought against Spaniard, American, Japanese, then Filipino aggressions of their ancestral domain, now invoke the human right protection and guarantees accorded them by international conventions and customary laws.

The subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, contrary to the Charter of the United Nations. The process of liberation is irresistible and irreversible and that, in order to avoid crises, an end must be put to colonialism.

The recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of the Bangsamoro People is the foundation of liberty, justice and peace in Mindanao and its islands. It is essential, if the Bangsamoro Nation and People are not to be compelled to pursue rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that their human rights be protected by the rule of law. The ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone in Mindanao and its Islands may enjoy his or her economic, social and cultural rights, as well as his civil and political rights.

The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized. The human right to development also implies the full realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, including their inalienable right to full sovereignty over all of their natural wealth and resources.

The Government of the Republic of the Philippines has undertaken to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in the international covenants. The Government of the Republic of the Philippines has also undertaken to take the necessary steps, in accordance with its constitutional processes and with the provisions of the international covenant, to adopt such laws or other measures as may be necessary to give effect to the rights recognized by international law and conventions. The Government of the Republic of the Philippines is under obligation under the Charter of the United Nations to promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and freedoms.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the common standard of achievement for a peoples and all nations, with the Government of the

Republic of the Philippines, keeping such Declaration constantly in mind, striving by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among its peoples and among the peoples of Mindanao and its Islands.

In the light of the international, multilateral obligations of the Republic of the Philippines, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front places on the table the following Human Rights issues and concerns:

- The subjection of the Bangsamoro People to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constituting a denial of fundamental human rights, contrary to the Charter of the United Nations.

- The duty of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines to respect and ensure to the Bangsamoro People, and the individuals within the latter's territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights and freedoms set forth in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and those recognized shall remain with out any distinction made on the basis of the current political, jurisdictional or international status of the Bangsamoro People and Nation.

- The popular will of the Bangsamoro People as the sole basis of the authority of government over them.

- Promotion the realization of the Right of the Bangsamoro People to self-determination and respect of that right, in conformity with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

- The faithful and strict observance of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the International covenants on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and similar instruments upon which the Government of the Republic of the Philippines is a party.

- The inherent right of the Bangsamoro People to self-determination, by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

- The inalienable right of the Bangsamoro People to freely determine their political status.

- The natural right of the Bangsamoro People to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

- The inviolable right of the Bangsamoro People to freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law. In no case may the Bangsamoro Nation be deprived of its own means of subsistence.

- The human right to development also implying the full realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, including their inalienable right to full sovereignty over all of their natural wealth and resources.

- The imperative that the right of the Bangsamoro People to permanent sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources must be exercised in the interest of their national development and of the well-being of their people.

- The state responsibility of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines in ensuring that any person whose rights or freedoms as recognized under international conventions and customary laws are violated shall have an effective remedy, notwithstanding that the violation has been committed by persons acting in an official capacity.

- The guarantee against torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

- The guarantee against arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honor and reputation.

4. Socio-Cultural Discrimination, Corruption of the Mind and Moral Fiber

A. General Features:

a. The difference in the philosophy of life resulted in the difference of identities of the Bangsamoro from the Filipinos, as follows:

a. Intellectual Identity

b. Spiritual Identity

c. Material Identity

d. Social Identity

e. Cultural Identity

f. Moral Identity

b. The difference in the conceptions, orientations and deeds of the Bangsamoro from the Filipinos in the following social ethos:

a. Lifestyle

b. Family relationship/system

d. Educational System

e. Judicial System and,

c. Economic System

f. Political System

c. The difference in the cultural beliefs, customs and traditions of the Bangsamoro from the Filipinos.

d. The difference in the level of morality between the Bangsamoro and Filipinos

a. Relationship of sexes

b. Relationship to Materials/environment

c. Social Gatherings

d. Recreations, entertainment, enjoyment and amusement.

e. Work ethics

B. Specific Features:

1. The Philippine Government imposition of a philosophy of life irrelevant; not suitable neither acceptable nor totally opposed to the Bangsamoro people in the Moroland.

2. The non-recognition or the exclusion of the Bangsamoro nature/identities in the Philippine Government activities projects and programs.

3. The Philippine Government imposition of social and cultural activities, projects and programs irrelevant and inconsistent to the Bangsamoro lifestyle, family, economic, educational, judicial and political systems.

4. The continuous acculturation programs of the Philippine Government for the Bangsamoro assimilation and integration in the designed culture for the Filipinos as manifested in the educational programs.

5. The Philippine Government continuous imposition of programs in the economic, educational, judicial and political system derived from the western secular and liberal orientations to the Moroland.

6. The promotion and even institutionalization of a copied western secular and liberal lifestyle in the Bangsamoro homeland, for instance: the open mixture of men and women in love affairs, in workplaces, in recreations, entertainment, enjoyment and amusement, and the unlawful equality of sexes.

7. Legalization and institutionalization of the following:

i. Gambling

ii. Prostitution

iii. Production and selling of alcoholic beverages and other forms of intoxicants.

8. The unregulated media programs of either print, broadcast and telecast media, especially the latter like Television and Movies.

9. Tolerance of the Philippine Government on the proliferation of the following:

i. Seductive dressing/attire

ii. Drinking of alcoholic beverages (liquor and wines) and other forms of intoxicants.

iii. Pushing and using illegal drugs.

iv. Clubs, centers, theaters and other forms of gathering places inclusive of malicious, seductive and immoral acts.

10. The Philippine Government tolerance of the unethical practice of profession in either private or public organizations, e.g., bribery in the office, nepotism, graft and corruption in government officer, etc.

5. Economic Inequalities and Widespread Poverty

From the view point of an ordinary Moros, the aspect of economic inequity and widespread poverty in their homeland are brought about by the following factors:

1. ILAGA, AFP, and para-military drove Moros out of the choices part of Mindanao as a result of the aggressive wars launched against them.

2. Moros are lack of the means for economic participation such as land.

3. Moros are excluded in the exploitation of the other natural resources of Mindanao.

4. Imposition of monetary interest to bank borrowers.

5. Collateral requirement for loans, which prevent the great majority of the Moros who do not own properties from availing of credits from private and public banks.

6. Moro communities were neglected in the allocation of government services.

7. Discrimination in the recruitment activities of business firms and government corporation operating in Mindanao.

8. Graft and corruption practices of some politicians and government officials.

6. Exploitation of Natural Resources

The native inhabitant otherwise known as the Bangsamoro people to the Bangsamoro lands consisted of tribes scattered throughout its islands. These Tribes were generally free and were each governed by a system of laws. Consisted with the idea of preserving the Bangsamoro land, the natural resources are characterized towards conservation of the Bangsamoro lands and other natural resources.

The importance of natural resources to the Bangsamoro can not over explained. To the Bangsamoro people, they look upon on the natural resources as their only legacy and exclusive heritage and all the Bangsamoro people are call upon to preserve them for themselves and their posterity.

As embodied in the international Covenant for the respect for human rights, especially of the indigenous people and minorities. The Bangsamoro people, who for almost five centuries have been subjected to persecutions, oppressions, and threats of annihilation as a Nation is asserting their rights to determine their natural resources.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which the sole representative of the Bangsamoro people's aspiration to regain there illegally and immorally usurped political, economic, civil and cultural rights and their homeland which has been forcibly annexed without and against their consent. The ultimate goal is to attend their rights to determine their natural resources, with well-organized political system stable economy, strong cultural and educational institutions, and a distinct religion before the arrival of colonial power. This is the collective aspiration of the Moros.

In the context of the peace process, the MILF has submitted the nine talking points in order to solve Bangsamoro problem in a peaceful manner given in sincerity and goodwill from both sides. If there are those who desired peace more, it is the Bangsamoro people who, as Salah Jubair aptly put it. "A Nation Under Endless Tyranny" and had suffered for so long just because of conflicts not of own making, for another perspective in Islam, the foundation of faith — ideology, literally mean "PEACE" not the silence of gun, that the one dwells in heart and in mind of every human being, who believers in divine revelation.

The Bangsamoro people shall allowed to determined the Exploitation, Development, Disposition, or Utilization any of the Natural resources of the Bangsamoro land.

That genuine peace may not be attend unless the Government departs from its attitude of indifferent and intolerance toward the legitimate cause and inviolable right of the Bangsamoro people. By just adopting and implementing piece meal and stop-gap approaches, intertwined with militaristic stance. The Bangsamoro problem will persist for another century and beyond its Asian neighbors denying and smokecreening these matter nearly divert as from the real agenda of the Peace Talks, Peace, thorough a just, Meaningful, Acceptable, and lasting solutions to the Bangsamoro people problem.

The wanton exploitation and utilization of the natural resources of the Bangsamoro land constitute of the violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in which the Government of the Republic of the Philippines is a State party.

7. Recommendation/Solution

In view of the foregoing, it is imperative and incumbent upon the Government of Republic of the Philippines to adopt an official stand reflective of the system of life and governance, suitable and acceptable to the Bangsamoro people. Such solution shall include the following:

1. Recognition of the Bangsamoro as a distinct people and nation.
2. Restitution of the ancestral domain to the Bangsamoro people.
3. Reparation for damages caused by injuries to life, liberty and property.
4. The Bangsamoro people shall have the exclusive control over their national governance, security and national resources.
5. Identification, investigation and prosecution of persons for the commission of war crimes and massive violations of human rights against the Bangsamoro people before an international tribunal for war crimes.
6. Pronouncement of a public apology by the Government of Republic of the Philippines to the Bangsamoro people for the crimes and harm caused by their subjugation, oppression, and exploitation.❖