

Fifty Muslim religious leaders of Metro Manila and Luzon, both men and women, gathered at the Bayview Park Plaza from November 4 to 6 this week to discuss issues critical to our lives, focusing on human rights, elections, interfaith dialogues, and Islamic peace education.

The workshops, last of the series prior to the 3rd National Ulama Summit which will take place in Davao early next year, are organized by the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy (PCID), supported by the Magbassa Kita Foundation Inc. (MKFI), the governments of the United Kingdom and The Netherlands, and the One Woman Initiative.

During the open forums, two topics were top of mind for the participant. First was the withdrawal of the President's proclamation declaring *Eid'l Adha* a national non-working holiday and the second was the presidentiables.

President Gloria earlier declared *Eid'l Adha*, the culmination of the Islamic world's pilgrimage to Mecca, as a special non-working holiday. After protests from the business sector, she then promptly withdrew the proclamation declaring November 27 and 28 as special non-working national holidays to observe *Eid'l Adha*.

There are two major Islamic holidays observed by close to two-billion Muslims around the world, including more-than eight-million Muslims in the Philippines: *Eid'l Fitr* and *Eid'l Adha*. ***Eid'l Fitr*** celebrates the end of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting.

***Eid'l Adha***

(Feast of the Sacrifice) commemorates the willingness of the Prophet Ibrahim or Abraham to sacrifice his son Ismail (Ishmael) for God.

***Eid'l Adha***

celebrates God's gift of a ram, replacing Ismail and sparing Ibrahim the painful sacrifice of killing his own son.

{xtypo\_quote} "Is this what we Muslims in the Philippines have become? A group that has so little positive value or impact to national life, that the observance of one of our two most-holy celebrations can be treated with such irreverence? But of course we are! We are of so little value that our treatment goes beyond irreverence." – Amina Rasul {/xtypo\_quote}

Thanks to Sen. Loren Legarda, *Eidl Fitr* is now a holiday (R.A. 9177). The *Eidl Adha* Festival? We thought we would thank Mrs. Arroyo for declaring it a holiday. Instead, in the usual Malacañang "urong-sulong," she has restricted the holidays to the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Press Secretary Cerge Remonde has apologized profusely for the "inconvenience."

Is this what we Muslims in the Philippines have become? A group that has so little positive value or impact to national life, that the observance of one of our two most-holy celebrations can be treated with such irreverence?

But of course we are! We are of so little value that our treatment goes beyond irreverence. During the *Eidl Fitr* festival, government thought nothing of strafing and bombing a village in Indanan, Sulu, to arrest three "high-value targets." The military did not capture the three but the village failed to observe their religious obligation while more-than a thousand families became evacuees on that holy day.

The military thought nothing of violating internationally-recognized human rights (freedom of worship) and did not even consider that they were violating Philippine law (Revised Penal Code) that imposes imprisonment for government officials and employees who prevent religious worship. Would the military do this in a Catholic village preparing to attend midnight mass on December 24?

**The Philippines has too many holidays. However, it is the manner with which *Eidl Adha* has been treated, proclaimed and then unproclaimed, which offends the Muslims of the Philippines.**

But then, I remember the death of Cardinal Sin and Ka Erdie Manalo. Cardinal Sin, internationally known as the Philippine prelate who helped restore democracy with former President Cory Aquino, died and was buried with no national holiday. On the other hand, a national non-working holiday was declared when Eraño "Ka Erdie" G. Manalo, executive minister of the Iglesia Ni Cristo (INC), died. Why the difference? Cardinal Sin and the Catholic Church could not deliver hundreds of thousands of votes but Ka Erdie and the INC could.

Don't get me wrong: I agree that the Philippines has too many holidays. However, it is the manner with which *Eidl Adha* has been treated, proclaimed then unproclaimed, which offends. It gives the Muslims of the Philippines

a clear indication—after the disruption of the *Eidl Fitr*

celebration in Indanan, Sulu—of their worth to this administration. Our value is not a positive one but a negative one (troublemakers, terrorists, insurgents, etc., etc).

Considering the Muslim world celebrates only two important holy days, one would think that Malacañang would think first before it acts. What am I saying! If the denizens of Malacañang did think things through, they would not be in the predicament they are in—with Mrs. Arroyo suffering from the lowest satisfaction and credibility ratings of any Philippine President, including Ferdinand Marcos.

Thus, it is not surprising that the Muslim religious' lack of faith in the administration came through in the results of the mock elections we held: Mrs. Arroyo's candidate, Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro, received Zero votes as did former President Joseph "All-out-War" Estrada.

**Next week**, I will share our ulama's views on all the Presidentiables. *Abangan . . . # # #*

[Joomla SEO powered by JoomSEF](#)