

On Monday, the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy organized a roundtable discussion on the implications of the Ampatuan massacre on the Muslim provinces and communities. Titled “Violence in Politics and the Politics of Violence,” participants came from all the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao provinces and the large Muslim communities in Lanao del Norte, Zamboanga, and Metro Manila. The Asia Foundation and Mahbassa Kita Foundation, Inc. (MKFI) supported PCID.

Former Sen. Santanina Rasul noted that the Philippines showed the world in 1986 that it could topple down a dictator and restore democracy through peaceful means. But the promise of EDSA people power did not change the dynamics of warlordism in the different parts of the Philippines

. Over the years, warlordism and feudalism have become even more entrenched in many provinces, cities and municipalities. The Maguindanao massacre is a grim testament to this. Dr. Rasul, the last Muslim to occupy a seat in the Senate, also noted that “through all these most of our leaders have remained silent, except for presidential [former Defense Secretary] Gilbert Teodoro who not only renounced the perpetrators of the crime but moved to expel the perpetrators from his party.”

{xtypo\_quote} The Philippines showed the world in 1986 that it could topple down a dictator and restore democracy through peaceful means. But the promise of EDSA people power did not change the dynamics of warlordism in the different parts of the Philippines

. Over the years, warlordism and feudalism have become even more entrenched in many provinces, cities and municipalities. – Former Sen. Santanina Rasul {/xtypo\_quote} A ty. Nasser Marohomsalic, PCID Convenor, warned about the implications of the Maguindanao massacre on the majority’s perception of Muslims. Although Muslims in Mindanao disowned the culprits and damned them as a *kaffir* or a *munafique* (the bearer of the highest form of unbelief), detractors can use the incident to further their anti-Muslim agenda and propaganda.

Written by Amina Rasul

Saturday, 12 December 2009 19:30 - Last Updated Saturday, 12 December 2009 20:07

---

The true culprit is the increasingly undemocratic and feudal political and social systems that prevail in the country today. Atty. Marohomsalic described the country as holding a culture of impunity promoted by the security apparati of the state which itself enforces authority with political violence to curb political dissent and dampen the revolutionary spirit of the people.

Dr. Steven Rood, Country Director of the Asia Foundation, agreed that what needs addressing is the prevalent feudalistic political culture.

Article II, Section 6 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution is firm about the separation of the Church and State: “The separation of Church and State shall be inviolable.” However, many support the position that this principle might not necessarily be applicable in the context of Muslim Mindanao since there is no separation of church and state in Islam. Thus, Muslims of the Philippines demand their religious leaders to be more active in addressing socio-political issues. The ulama (Muslim theologians and religious leaders) should then be considered a major stakeholder.

{xtypo\_quote} What needs addressing is the prevalent feudalistic political culture. – Dr. Steven Rood, Country Director of the Asia Foundation {/xtypo\_quote}

In Islam, what is immoral cannot be legal. In our secular system, some legal acts (such as legalized gambling) are still considered immoral. Thus, Islamic principles on governance, leadership and accountability, on human rights, can be utilized as foundations of good governance in ARMM. Further, to effectively implement peace and development programs and better governance in Mindanao, the role and capacities of the Muslim religious must be taken into account. The *ulama* and imams have a wide network on the ground thru the *masjid* and the *M adrasah*

, and can contribute to the people’s better understanding of democratic reforms viewed through the Islamic perspectives. (The PCID has developed and published its manual, “*Islamic Model for Peace Education*,” which has modules on governance, leadership and accountability based on the Holy Qur’an and *hadith* .)

## **Mindanao’s War on Terror**

The Ampatuan massacre was a most heinous crime against humanity, whether viewed from Philippine legal perspective or from the point of view of Islamic law. The Commission on Human Rights has reported that the Ampatuans may have been responsible for at least 200 killings or disappearances, prior to the massacre.

Since the War on Terror started in Mindanao, whispers had circulated about killings in Shariff Aguak via chainsaw, burial while alive, via quartering. Killing fields were quietly mentioned. Surely, these loud whispers were picked up by the well-funded intelligence networks of the military, the police, national government leaders and the Office of the President! There were no investigations conducted. Instead, the Ampatuans grew closer to the Palace. Many are skeptical that such closeness, cemented by secrets kept by the Ampatuans about the 2004 and 2007 elections, can be so easily dissolved. What about the evidence on electoral fraud? And then EO 1959 was declared, imposing martial law in Maguindanao province to quell what Justice Secretary has termed as “looming rebellion.” Some of us wonder: if the Ampatuans and their followers are guilty of rebellion, then a political settlement is possible. If they are guilty of the massacre of 57 civilians, a crime against humanity, no amnesty can be given.

The two houses of Congress, in joint session, have started investigation of the validity of Executive Order No. 1959. Martial law was not declared after Oakwood, during the height of the war against the Abu Sayyaf, at the height of the fighting last year against Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) commanders Ombra Kato and Bravo which displaced 700,000 and forced them to go to poorly resourced refugee camps. Why has it been imposed in Maguindanao to deal with allies of the President? Rumors abound that perhaps the search is not just for evidence about the massacre but also evidence about fraud conducted during the elections.

Regardless of justifications (or lack of it) for the declaration of martial law, it seems that majority of our colleagues from Maguindanao support the imposition of martial law in their province, but for a limited time. So entrenched are the Ampatuans that no other way to reinstate to secure the safety of the citizens is seen as viable. Some of the recommendations made during our roundtable include:

1. Martial law in Maguindanao must be limited to Maguindanao only.
2. Martial law must be time-bound and for a short term.
3. The military administrator and troops must be professional, credible and respectful of human rights. General Ferrer has been acknowledged by the participants as a professional, credible

Written by Amina Rasul

Saturday, 12 December 2009 19:30 - Last Updated Saturday, 12 December 2009 20:07

---

military officer capable of implementing EO 1959.

4. The civilian elected officials, duly elected and not implicated in the massacre, must function to ensure that public service does not ground to a halt. An OIC must be appointed from among the board members of Maguindanao who are not implicated or under investigation.

5. Human rights watch must be supported by state to ensure no violation of human rights by any group.

6. The crimes of multiple murders must be viewed as heinous crimes, not associated with rebellion. # # #

(**Next week:** Implications of the Maguindanao Massacre on Muslim Mindanao)

**E ditor’s Note:** Our columnist, Amina Rasul, is the Lead Convenor of the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy and Trustee, Magbassa Kita Foundation, Inc.

[Joomla SEO powered by JoomSEF](#)