

Written by Amina Rasul

Monday, 24 March 2008 03:55 - Last Updated Monday, 24 March 2008 04:04

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Introduction. We at the [www.mabuhayradio.com](http://www.mabuhayradio.com) concur with Ms. Amina Rasul when she wrote that “Manila people-power movements have not recognized the crimes committed by this administration against the Muslims in this country, (the demonstrations) only focusing on the crimes of corruption.” For that matter, human-rights violations were committed allegedly by elements of the Philippine government not only in Bangsamoro but also in places in the main island of Luzon like in Bulan town, Sorsogon Province, or in Cagayan Province, where innocent peasants were gunned down supposedly as members of the New People’s Army. This online publication will monitor all the human-rights violations in the homeland and would periodically publish updates on the investigations and other developments about the reported cases.

Here is Ms. Amina Rasul’s article, “People Power and the Bangsamoro”:

On Thursday (Feb. 21, 2008), I had the privilege of briefing the military and defense attachés of the different embassies during their regular breakfast meeting. It was a rare opportunity for me to have a frank discussion of the situation in Mindanao with an international group interested in security matters, thanks to New Zealand Group Captain Mary Cox, the only female Defense attaché I have met. Mary is proof positive that women can do as well as men, even in male-dominated sectors like defense.

Ms. Amina Rasul’s column, “People Power and the Bangsamora,” was published in the Manila Times issue of February 24, 2008.

I appreciated the frank discussions which ensued. As usual, I strongly recommended the strengthening of our local police to be effective partners in counter-terrorism, as is the case in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand. A professional, well-trained and well-equipped police are the best defense against terrorism and criminal elements since they are local and, therefore, plugged into the community. Who better to collect intelligence reports than those who are part of the community?

## People-power Demonstrations (in Metro Manila) Do Not Address Human-rights Violations in Rural Areas -

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Unfortunately, our police are generally not well trained and are ill-equipped. Further, they are more influenced by local politics since they are under the jurisdiction of the local governments. Thus the need for military intervention.

The February 4 massacre of eight innocents in Barangay Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu, could have been prevented if our local civilian peacekeeping forces had been our principal line of defense against criminal elements. The police would have known that Ipil is not an Abu Sayyaf lair. As it is, the military early morning raid resulted in the deaths of Marisa Payian, 4; Wedme Lahim, 9; Alnaly Lahim, 15; Sulayman Hakob, 17; Kirah Lahim, 45; Eldisim Lahim, 43; Narcia Abon, 24. The soldiers even killed two of their own and wounded 5 others. According to the Commission of Human Rights report, they mistook each others as enemies and traded gun fires.

According to CHR Regional Director Jose Manuel Mamauag, "None of them was an Abu Sayyaf member. Seven civilians and a government soldier were killed in that attack". I wish we had more government officials like Director Mamauag, brave and conscientious, unwilling to be muzzled. (Secretary Neri should take note).

The Ipil Massacre has been relegated to the inside pages of newspapers, a blip on the consciousness of a Filipino nation engrossed in politics and the unveiling of the corruption which allegedly permeates the presidential palace.

This is not the first time that Mamauag and his courageous team have gone to Sulu to investigate charges of human rights violations. Mamauag should be elevated and appointed Commissioner of CHR. Public servants like him give government the credibility it sorely needs.

Unfortunately, the Western Mindanao Command's Judge Advocate General's Office (JAGO) headed by Captain Fred Lleosa absolved all the soldiers involved, claiming the attack in the village was a legitimate operation. We smell fresh white paint.

Sadly, the Ipil Massacre has been relegated to the inside pages of newspapers, a blip on the consciousness of a Filipino nation engrossed in politics and the unveiling of the corruption which allegedly permeates the Palace near the stinky river. Which smells more odious, you tell me.

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The murder of eight poor Moros cannot compare to the drama of Jun Lozada. After all, what possible value can we affix to the lives of our murdered children Marisa (4), Sulayman (17), Wedme (9) and his sister Alnaly (15)? None. They are mere statistics, dismissed as collateral damage. What value can we affix to the suffering of their families, who belong to the poorest of the poor category? Zero. After all, these Moros are already basket cases anyway, used to a life of penury with no water, no electricity, poor education, poor health, poor nutrition. This is the message driven home to us in the Muslim communities.

Millions of Moros wonder whether the people-power demonstrations (in Metro Manila) will change our lives.

As for me, I signed the statement of the former senior government officials and joined the Makati interfaith rally because of Marisa, Sulayman, Wedme, Alnaly and their elders Kirah and Eldisim Lahim and the unfortunate mother-to-be Narcia Abon. Their lives have value to me and to the millions of Moros who wonder whether the people-power demonstrations will change our lives. I joined because of the broken promises, the oppressive poverty and human-rights violations that burden our communities, the failing peace processes. Manila people-power movements have not recognized the crimes committed by this administration against the Muslims in this country, only focusing on the crimes of corruption. As they pray for Jun Lozada, I will pray for our murdered innocents.

And I pray that the movers of the people-power movements do light even one little candle for them. They must be worth at least one. # # #

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