

Written by Amina Rasul

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By Amina Rasul

The Muslim world celebrated its new year on Friday, Dec. 18, 2009, so let me greet you Happy Amon Jadeed!

As we enter this New Year, let me share with you the recommendations of the Muslim civil-society leaders who met on December 6 to discuss the Maguindanao crisis during the roundtable on “Violence in Politics and the Politics of Violence: Understanding the Culture of Impunity in ARMM.”

The roundtable was organized by the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy (PCID) and supported by The Asia Foundation, USAID and Magbassa Kita Foundation, Inc. (MKFI). We should view the tragedy as an opportunity to undertake reforms. And, as all are won't to do during the New Year, let us focus on the positive.

Editor's Note: Non-Muslim readers who want to know more of the Muslim or Islamic New Year may click on this link,

[Islamic New Year - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

The Islamic New Year is a cultural event which Muslims observe on the first day of Muharram, the first month in the Islamic calendar ...

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_New_Year

Hereunder are the recommendations:

The declaration placing the entire province of Maguindanao under Martial Law was presented as the necessary surgical initiative to reestablish the rule of law in the province by strengthening institutions through good, accountable and responsive governance. Based on the short-time period of implementation, the declaration of martial law did not intend to place civilian institutions of governance under military supervision. However, Maguindanao is still under a State of Emergency. In any manner the Philippine Government will deem proper, legal and effective the filling up of the vacuum in the leadership and administration of the provincial government must mobilize the authority, personnel and funds of the provincial, municipal and barangay governments for the general welfare of people of the province.

{xtypo_quote} Nariman 'Ina' Ambolodto (who was appointed as OIC for Maguindanao) should not be treated as 'a flower in a flower vase.' – Former Sen. Nina Rasul {/xtypo_quote}

(**Author's Notes:** Board Member Nariman "Ina" Ambolodto was appointed as OIC for

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Maguindanao on Wednesday. Who is Ina? She was elected Board Member with the highest number of votes in the elections conducted for Shariff Kabunsuan, which has since been nullified. However, the ARMM Regional Government has issued appointments to the elected Board members. Ina was a former Vice Mayor and Presiding Officer of the Sangguniang Bayan of Northern Kabuntalan, a woman, a Muslim, a neophyte politician, a member of the Faculty of Sociology of Notre Dame University in Cotabato City

. She obtained her Bachelor of Science in Commerce from Notre Dame and her Master of Arts from the Institute of Islamic Studies of the University of the Philippines in Diliman. Eminently qualified, Ina decided not to run in 2010. This alone gives her appointment the potential of changing the image of Maguindanao politics. However, as Sen. Nina Rasul has stated, Ina should not be treated as “a flower in a flower vase.”

If Ina is truly given the support and the resources, and not treated like a decorative flower, she can help facilitate the re-institution of a responsive, efficient and accountable provincial government and the promotion of public order, safety and the rule of law in the province of Maguindanao .)

The Philippine President has delegated her supervisory function to the Department of the Interior and Local Government to monitor and audit the performance and personnel of ARMM and Maguindanao. These will measure the efficiency of the administration of the autonomous regional government. The effectiveness—fidelity to the mandates of the 1987 Constitution and compliance with the 1996 Final Peace Agreement and the 1976 Tripoli Agreement—could be best pursued by engaging the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the establishment and exercise of an oversight over the autonomous region and its regional and local governments.

Editor's Note: To read the earlier article of Ms. Amina Rasul about the same topic, please click on this link,

[Filipino-Islamic Leaders Discuss “Violence in Politics and the Politics of Violence”](#)

The AMAL (Political-reform) Movement

Based on the input and preliminary discussions, the RTD participants decided to come up with action points that they can pursue, all directed toward minimizing election-related violence and its subsequent socio-political effects. Apart from the recommendations with regard to martial law in Maguindanao (now moot and academic), the participants suggested that all concerned stakeholders come together to initiate a grassroots political movement to reform their communities' socio-political systems. The movement is to be called "AMAL," which is an Arabic word that can mean hope or action. The movement would undertake initiatives, such as the suggestions below:

Education and Strengthening Islamic Values:

1. Conduct civic and voters' education focusing on human rights and Islamic principles.
2. Relate with education officials in the selection of members of Board of Election Inspectors (BEIs).
3. Mobilize Muslim religious leaders and scholars for Islamic leadership and values campaign.
4. Propose that the *ulama* organizations such as National Ulama Conference of the Philippines develop *khutba* or sermons common to all that will focus on strengthening Islamic values
5. Establish *usrah* groups or family/couples-based strategy of teaching Islamic values and principles.
6. After election, conduct orientation seminars on Islamic leadership for newly elected officials focusing on good governance and ethics based on Islamic teachings.
7. Conduct candidate's forum with *ulama* and other sectors
8. Strategize to internalize Islamic values of peace (JIHAD: Justice, Integrity, Human Rights, Harmony, Honesty, Accountability, Dignity, Development, Democracy)

Response to Affected Sectors:

1. Provide outreach programs to internally displaced peoples (IDPs)
2. Create special IDP precincts for elections
3. Set up systems for community dialog and engagement

Establishing Linkages:

1. Muslim civil society and *ulama* organizations such as the NUCP should be encouraged to work closely with Commission on Elections and other election watchdogs.
2. Explore and identify legal remedies/relief (i.e., election audit) through partnerships with civil

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society organizations, and national election-related programs initiated by the media (such as *Boto Mo*

,
Ipatrol Mo

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3. Circulate and discuss assessment reports on automation with the communities.
4. Create alternative and more creative ways of poll watching. In other words, make poll-watching fun to encourage people—especially the youth—and other sectors to guard their votes.
5. Promote direct partnership of Mindanao and Muslim-based civil society organizations with developmental partners
6. Coordinate closely with Commission on Human Rights to record and report human-rights violations.
7. Establish partnership for transformation with PPCRV, National Ulama Conference of the Philippines, media, and local government units.

Creating and Directing a Movement:

1. Prepare and lobby for a political security-and-electoral reform agenda
2. Create a political-reform movement (AMAL)
3. Encourage peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)
4. Support constitutional change that pushes for a parliamentary-federal form of government
5. Establish a movement for peace, justice and human rights
6. Draft a position on human rights, demand justice for Maguindanao massacre victims.

{xtypo_quote} JIHAD must now mean Justice, Integrity, Human Rights, Harmony, Honesty, Accountability, Dignity, Development, Democracy – AMAL Movement {/xtypo_quote}

The recommendations range from initiatives that are short-term in nature (BOTO MO, IPATROL MO) to the long range (AMAL). The Ampatuan Massacre has shaken us to our core. The RTD participants—from Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, Basilan, Zamboanga, Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, Maguindanao, Cotabato City and the Diaspora—believe we need to cure the rot from within. This New Year, let us all wish them well and support their initiatives that some good can come from the inhuman Ampatuan massacre. # # #

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