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appy women's month! I would like to pay tribute to the millions of Muslim women in the Philippines who work against great odds to keep their families safe and are praying that peace will come.

I have been taught by my mother that Islam liberated women by giving them rights previously denied to them: rights of ownership and inheritance, decision-making in marriage and divorce, among others. Over the last couple of decades, Influential groups like the Malaysian Sisters in Islam have reviewed the Qur'an and Hadith (words and deeds of Prophet Muhammed) to remind us of the basis for the equality of men and women. Both men and women are equally enjoined to do what is right and abstain from wrong doing in all aspects of life.

Editor's Note: Excerpts of this article were published also on March 22, 2008, in Ms. Amina's "Durian" column in the Manila Times newspaper of the Philippines. Unfortunately, from the early years of Islam, politics have intervened, changing many of the original principles. Today, Muslim women in many communities have lost the rights given to them during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

Women in Muslim Mindanao share the burden. They live and work to protect their families under tremendous pressures most Filipino women cannot even imagine.

Sura 49, Verse 13 of the Holy Qur'an states: "O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other, not that ye may despise each other." Thus, not only are Muslims enjoined to be part of a pluralistic society. Muslim men and women are recognized as father and mother of all nations, as equal members of society. Thus, partnership defines the Islamic ideal relationship between men and women.

Islam gave women freedom and rights. If men were to be solely responsible for women, then the Holy Qur'an would not have instructed "And whatever wrong any human being commits rests upon himself alone; and no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another's burden."

## Women, War and Peace - MabuhayRadio

Written by Amina Rasul

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Women in Muslim Mindanao share the burden. They live and work to protect their families under tremendous pressures most Filipino women cannot even imagine. And yet they persevere because they are the glue that holds the family together. They hold the trust of their children to keep them safe. As Kofi Annan said, "There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they grow up in peace".

I was in Bali last week, participating in the Regional Ethics in Leadership Conference organized by the St. James Ethics Center of Sydney, Australia. The Center brought together "representatives of business, professional and community groups from ASEAN and Australia to discuss issues of common concern.

Simon Longstaff, Center director, explains that the conference identifies some of the major ethical issues facing the region and facilitates discussion of these issues, including the articulation of different perspectives from around the region so that the participants, especially the Australian fellows of the Center, can explore how to accommodate our differences as we focus on the role of leaders in developing regional awareness and cooperation.

The subject of the conference this year was Peace. Exactly what is 'peace'? Is it merely the absence of war? Is peace possible without justice and trust that government can provide justice?

All throughout the discussions, I thought of how elusive peace has become in the country, especially in Muslim Mindanao. Muslim women who suffer from deprivation, oppression and human rights violations believe in a just peace as described by Frederick Douglass: "Where

justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe”.

Exactly what is ‘peace’? Is it merely the absence of war? Is peace possible without justice and trust that government can provide justice?

Seems to me that the nation believes there is such an organized conspiracy. As the Catholic majority observed Lent, I wondered about the role of the church in the search for a just peace. The church leaders have decided not to interfere in politics. It is all well and good that the princes of the church call on their faithful to look within for the inner strength to fight their personal demons and find peace. However, in the current state of nation, we cannot merely contemplate our navels: else we might not notice the body rotting for want of justice to cut off the evil of corruption.

Didn't St. Augustine say, “In the absence of justice, what is sovereignty but organized robbery?” # # #

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