

Statement of Bangsamoro Women Leaders in Support to the Peace Process

We, the Bangsamoro Women Leaders from CSOs, Academe, IPs, Youth and Religious groups recognize the continuing resistance of the Bangsamoro against any form of injustice as manifested in several forms. Foremost of which was the attempt of the Spanish conquistadors to subjugate the Moro followed by the American Colonization and later the transitory Japanese occupation that saw the Bangsamoro problem as underdevelopment.

The Americans never grasped what the problem of the Bangsamoro really was. They saw it as underdevelopment - and their solution was education, economic development and annihilation whenever Moros' they resisted. This notion and its symptomatic solutions were conceded by the Philippine Government until the apparent political uprising of the Bangsamoro in the late 1960's that soon became a rallying force in their quest for Right to Self-Determination. The Tripoli Agreement of 1976 and later on the GRP-MNLF Final Peace Agreement in 1996 did not even end or solve the Bangsamoro problem and the Mindanao conflict.

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao was first created on August 1, 1989 through Republic Act No. 6734 (otherwise known as the Organic Act) in pursuance with a constitutional mandate to provide for an autonomous area in Muslim Mindanao. While the MNLF opted to join the government in running the ARMM through the so-called "autonomy", some victim-Moro politicians supported by "big bosses" in the national government paved way to seize the leadership from the MNLF. The continued exploitative and oppressive policies of the Philippine government, exacerbated by militarization, human rights violations and lawlessness led the government to deduce that the ARMM is a "Failed Experiment".

No less than the supreme court of the Philippines acknowledged that the ARMM is a mere administrative region that is limited to special legislations and lack the necessary political mechanisms to allow the Bangsamoro to exercise their autonomy. Despite this, the above-mentioned narrative was faced by the Bangsamoro steadfastly. Until today, they still hold on to their greatest clamour – to exercise in full their Right to Self-Determination (RSD).

With the signing of the 1996 Final Peace Agreement between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the GPH, there were expectations that peace in Mindanao will immediately reign. But the agreement failed to deliver the peace that has long been desired by the Bangsamoros. Since 1997, the MILF and the GPH has been engaged in another series of peace talks. In the recent talks between the GPH and the MILF, both panels agreed to move forward on substantive agenda.

It is in this context that we, the undersigned participants of the Bangsamoro Women Leaders' Forum, acknowledge the supremacy of a peaceful resolution to the Mindanao Conflict. We call on the GPH to exercise its full political authority and consider the creation of a Bangsamoro Sub-state as a solution to address the long standing instability in Mindanao. The Sub-state encompasses the recognition of the rights of all People in Mindanao including the Indigenous People and the Non-Muslims.

We, therefore, call on all the national and local leaders in the government, the civil society organizations, concerned agencies, institutions and individuals to join us in strongly urging the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the MILF to fast track the signing of a political settlement to once and for all resolve the Bangsamoro Problem.

Signed on the 10th day of November, 2011 at Cotabato City, Philippines.

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