



AMIN Party List and BANGSA JOINT STATEMENT

March 5, 2008

The Massacre of eight civilians including two children and one pregnant woman in Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu last month by soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines shows who really are the terrorists. This incident depicts the anti-people, anti-peace and fascist character of our Government. Like its pathological liar Commander-in-chief, the AFP is now attempting to cover-up this dastardly and criminal act perpetrated by its soldiers.

Earlier news reports said, the Western Mindanao Regional Office of the Commission on Human Rights had made its probe to the incident of which results pointed out that "From all indications, the February 4, 2008 Barangay Ipil incident is a clear breach of human rights of the victims."

"The issue of legitimate encounter-coupled with the consequent death of government soldiers cannot hold water, in view of the witnesses' separate accounts that the civilians were directly fired at and pursued without let-up, however halted when scores of unarmed residents died as a result. More so, while at it (firing directly at the fleeing civilians), all were shouting at the top of their lungs 'Tama na! Mga civilian lang kami!' ('Stop firing! We are civilians!')," the probe team said.

In an obvious attempt to cover up, the Western Mindanao Command of the AFP conducted its own investigation in order to justify the incident. As expected, Wesmincom's Inspector General, on February 27, cleared the government troops of any accountability on the deaths of the civilians. However, a day following, WESMINCOM Chief, Lt. Gen. Nelson Allaga said that they have not yet cleared the troops involved in the massacre.

We have reason to believe that Gen. Allaga's retraction to the statement clearing the soldiers of accountability is made only for expediency, because his promotion is now being deliberated at the House of Representatives. We are certain that after this, the AFP will surely clear all the perpetrators of the massacre.

We will not wait for the wholesale whitewash and cover-up to happen. We will not let the perpetrators of this dastardly act to go scot-free.

The Bangsamoro had already suffered much. The recent Maimbung Massacre evoke sad memories of a long list of massacres perpetrated against the Bangsamoro: The massacres of Bud Daho, Bud Bagsak, Padang Karbala, Jabidah, Manili, Tacub, Colongcolong, New Pasi, Tago-ig and a lot more. The massacres never stopped. The atrocities and crimes against the Bangsamoro continues, and now under a new pretext, that of the global war against terror. We will not allow these to happen again.

We uphold the result of the probe of CHR Western Regional Office and support its recommendation that aside from the filing of criminal and administrative charges against the soldiers of the AFP, the following demands should be heeded:

- Concerned National Government agencies and local government units to extend all possible assistance, compensation, material or otherwise, rehabilitation, psychological and traumatic therapy, stress-debriefing, counseling, or any assistance to recoup and repatriate the lives of the survivors;
- Right to repatriation, as the duty of government to protect its own citizens were not observed but violated. It is not the victim's own doing that triggered the incident;
- Re-orient the agents of the government, especially the AFP, on its paramount responsibilities on the rights of citizens and state obligations and cultural sensibility and non-discrimination;
- For the CHR-to immediately extend financial assistance to the victims as may be provided for by law through Survivors Benefits, Medical Assistance and Community Assistance, respectively.

and lastly, for the Commission on Human Rights to immediately pursue the filing of criminal and administrative charges against those who are directly and indirectly involved with the massacre.

***Justice for the Victims of the Maimbung, Sulu Massacre!!
Uphold CHR Western Mindanao's report and recommendation.
Prosecute the AFP perpetrators!!***

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