

07 AUG 2001

MILF-Communique

MILF-MANILA SIGN GUIDELINES FOR CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES

PUTRAJAYA, Aug 7 (Bernama) -- The peace panels of the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) today signed a set of guidelines for the cessation of hostilities in Mindanao.

Under the guidelines, the parties agreed to normalise the situation in the conflict areas in Mindanao and pave the way for the successful conduct of relief, rehabilitation and development programmes.

Representing the Philippine government was Jesus Dureza while the MILF was represented by its chief negotiator, Haji Murad Ebrahim.

The signing was witnessed by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar here prior to talks between Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

According to the joint communique issued by Dureza and Murad to the media, the guidelines would implement a peace agreement entered into by the parties in Tripoli, Libya, on June 22 this year.

These prohibit hostile and provocative acts, the harbouring of criminals and lawless elements as well as other acts that endanger the safety and security of the people in Mindanao.

The panels agreed to hold their next round of talks within September 2001 to discuss the remaining agenda items on rehabilitation, development and ancestral domain.

The communique says: "The guidelines not only silence the guns for the peace of mind of the people. These also prohibit all public pronouncement that will tend to undermine the sincerity or credibility of both parties in waging peace.

"Towards this end, the war of bullets and of words shall cease and the parties shall follow the road to peace through earnest and principled negotiations. This will accord the Bangsa Moro people permanent space for peace, self-reliance and development".

It says the implementation of the ceasefire is open for all the people and the world to witness and the local monitoring team shall include representatives of local government units, non-governmental organisations and the religious sector.

"Representatives of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), especially Malaysia, Libya and Indonesia have been invited to observe and monitor the ceasefire as well as the implementation of all agreements," it says.

The panels expressed their appreciation for the efforts of Dr Mahathir, Arroyo and Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi for advancing the cause of lasting peace, development and stability in the region.

Syed Hamid also witnessed the signing of a unity agreement between the MILF and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

A breakaway group of the MNLF, the MILF was formed in 1978, two years after the signing of the first agreement between MNLF leader Nur Misuari and Imelda Marcos, wife of then president Ferdinand Marcos in Tripoli, Libya.

With the agreement, both parties agreed that the Moro people would be represented under one name, that is the Bangsa Moro Solidarity Conference.

-- BERNAMA

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