

End Sabah clash in 'brotherly way', MNLF warns Putrajaya
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 4 — A Filipino separatist group has cautioned Putrajaya against sending more troops to Sabah, and called for the United Nations (UN) and Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC) to intervene in the standoff there that has turned deadly, Manila-based paper The Philippine Star reported today.

The call was made by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), who also offered itself as the mediator between the Malaysian government and the Sultanate of Sulu, but which insisted that the Philippine government should be excluded from the dialogue.

MNLF chief Nur Misuari also warned Datuk Seri Najib Razak against persecuting people of Moro descent in Sabah, asking the prime minister to "please tone down his voice".

"The blood of our brothers in Sabah is sacred," Misuari said here.

"I hope Najib will not persecute our civilians in Sabah as it will trigger bigger trouble and it will drag us into war, and I don't like that."

Misuari, who claimed that his grandnephew is a relative of Najib's, asked for the conflict to be resolved in a "brotherly way... to the best interest of everybody."

The MNLF leader also admitted that some of the men involved in the armed incursion were his relatives and the front's members, but has denied instigating the conflict.

"How can that be? I was in Africa for more than a month with my wife and I have nothing to do with the move of the sultan," he said, adding that sending "only 200" armed men is not "his style".

He then reiterated his clan's claim over Sabah and Sarawak, calling the states "original properties of his great, great grandfather".

Two days ago, a MNLF leader had warned that the Lahad Datu standoff could widen into a civil war engulfing Sabah, since more than 8,500 Filipinos, mostly Tausugs or Suluk tribesmen, were residing in Sabah and potential supporters of the Sultanate of Sulu.

"I am afraid there will be a civil war in Sabah because thousands of Bangsamoro are residing in Sabah," Gapul Hajirul, political chief of MNLF said.

"Our Tausug brothers and sisters of Sulu and the Samals in Tawi-Tawi were saddened and are hurting by the turn of the events," he was quoted as saying.

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