

OIC to Work Closely with Malaysia On derailed Southern Philippines Peace Process
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BANGKOK, Jan 13 (Bernama) -- The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is working closely with Malaysia to ensure the "derailed and diluted" peace process in southern Philippines, which Kuala Lumpur brokered, is back on track.

Its secretary-general Iyad Ameen Madani cited "congressional discussions" in the Philippines as one of the factors which hampered the peace process between Manila and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

"The (peace) process has been slowed down, derailed and diluted by the congressional discussions.

"We still believe this is an opportunity that should not be lost. So, we are coordinating closely with our colleagues in Malaysia as Malaysia has spearheaded (the peace process in southern Philippines)," he told a group of journalists in an interview at the end of his three-day visit to Thailand late Tuesday night.

Malaysia has been facilitating the peace talks between the Philippine government and the country's largest Muslim rebel group since 2001, culminating in both sides inking a peace agreement on March 27, 2014.

Decades of violence in the southern Philippines has claimed thousands of lives in the resource-rich region.

The OIC secretary-general visited Malaysia, before arriving in Thailand.

Madani was in the Philippines not too long ago and talked to the presidential leadership in the government as well as the congressional leadership on the country's southern peace process.

"We (the OIC) even went down to the south and talked to the different fronts," he said.

On issues affecting the Rohingyas in Myanmar, he said he had sent a letter to Aung San Suu Kyi recently after her party won overwhelmingly in the country's general election and assumed the leadership of the country.

"We are still working to see if we can get a positive response from Myanmar. We have sent a letter to Aung San Suu Kyi, expressing our hope that now the election is over, her party has won with overwhelming majority, that things will improve, that attitude will improve," he said.

Madani said the situation that had befallen the Rohingyas in Myanmar went "beyond the internal problem (of the country), it's a human rights problem and national rights problem".

He said that deprived of citizenship and not allowed to run for office, the Rohingyas had co-existed with other ethnic groups in Myanmar for centuries and this should continue.

According to Madani, the OIC has for a long time, tried to open a "channel of communication" with Yangon, to offer the organisation's help in addressing Myanmar's humanitarian problems.

The organisation would continue working with the regional countries and ASEAN through their bilateral relations with Yangon to bring positive effects to the Rohingya issue, he said.

Madani also appreciated efforts taken by regional countries like Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as Bangladesh in alleviating the humanitarian crisis suffered by the Rohingyas.

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