



MINDANAO PEOPLES' MANIFESTO AGAINST U.S. INTERVENTION 2008

We, the peoples of Mindanao – Lumads, Moro and Christians – who have long desired for self-determination, national sovereignty, and lasting peace, hereby declare our unequivocal opposition to the ongoing U.S. military expedition in Mindanao.

We believe that the entry of American soldiers, advisers and war tacticians, including war materiel, equipment, and facilities, is neither constitutionally nor morally justified.

The U.S. military presence in the Philippines is founded on the Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT), Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and Mutual Logistics Support Arrangement (MLSA) which, like the U.S.-R.P. Military Bases Treaty terminated by the Senate in 1991, does not have any regard for the provisions in the Constitution barring nuclear weapons, military base operations, criminal accountability of American soldiers to Philippine courts, and accountability for damages to the environment caused by toxic wastes.

Pres. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has allowed the transgression of our own sovereignty. The lopsided MDT, VFA, and MLSA, which Pres. Arroyo upholds, reflect the master-and-lackey relationship between the United States and the Philippines. By invoking these pacts, the Macapagal-Arroyo Administration hands over limitless powers, privileges and access to U.S. military forces, turning the Philippines into a virtual U.S. military base. She has gone so far as to make the Republic of the Philippines a key ally in the War on Terror, and promoted the U.S.' anti-terrorism campaign throughout Southeast Asia.

While the U.S. government continues to paint Mindanao as a terrorist haven, we are dismayed by the evidences suggesting U.S. covert operatives had a hand in the series of bombings that have taken place in Mindanao over the past six years. We condemn the collusion between terrorist groups such as the Abu Sayyaf and the Armed Forces of the Philippines, as attested to by both Christians and Muslims in Basilan.

It is no wonder that after a series of intensive military operations, anti-terrorism trainings, and the establishment of the Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines, the AFP soldiers and their U.S. counterparts have not rooted out the Abu Sayyaf. They are fighting their own shadow.

U.S. military aid in the form of joint training exercises, monetary and material support, and regular military advice has led to an increase of human rights violations. Hundreds of Moro civilians have been wrongly accused and arrested for being supposed terrorists. Nearly nine hundred activists across the Philippines have become victims of extrajudicial killings by suspected military agents. The all-out wars and military operations have displaced hundreds of thousands across Mindanao. While the U.S. government promotes itself as a protector of democracy and an advocate of human rights, these crimes against the people are made possible through its military aid. We condemn this duplicity and hold the U.S. accountable for its complicity.

We demand indemnification for the victims of the growing number of human rights violations committed at the hands of U.S. military personnel. We call for justice, and demand that U.S. soldiers be given the same treatment under the law as any other perpetrator. We

cannot let another woman be raped, nor let another farmer be hit by stray bullets and shrapnel at the hands of foreign aggressors.

We call on Congress to conduct an immediate and comprehensive investigation into these violations. We call on its appropriate committees to probe beyond the 'amicable' settlements imposed by the U.S. military on its victims. We call for protection of these victims so that they may be able to testify freely, and attain justice and indemnification.

We are outraged at the trampling of our laws by the U.S. government through its engagement in combat operations, and building its own military infrastructure. We call on our Senators and Representatives to also conduct a thorough investigation of the violations of our laws, and to conduct a critical review of the agreements and treaties governing U.S. military presence such as the Visiting Forces Agreement, the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement, and the Mutual Defense Treaty.

We expose the humanitarian missions conducted by the U.S. military as a way to sugar coat the permanent presence of its special operations forces in the Philippines after losing its bases in 1992. Such missions are part and parcel of a larger military objective which will ultimately endanger our lives and communities.

The current economic decline hitting the U.S. has generated a desperate scramble to salvage its economy. While the Philippine government foots the bill for the military war games, the U.S. is given the opportunity to promote the exhibition and sale of its latest weapons to countries in the Southeast Asian region. The presence of U.S. troops also strengthens American economic interests in Mindanao where U.S. corporations have billions of dollars of investments.

We look back to our history and recognize the long-drawn struggle of the peoples of Mindanao against foreign invaders. In the hands of American troops, thousands of Muslims were massacred, the .45 caliber pistol was created for the Muslim insurgents, deception and back-handed tactics were employed through the Kiram-Bates Treaty— all to quell Muslim resistance to colonization. Bangsamoro and Lumad alike have, for more than a century, valiantly fought against the blades and guns of the colonizers in defense of our sovereign right over land and life.

Peace in Mindanao cannot be achieved through shortcut and death-giving solutions like the interference of U.S. military troops. Peace can only be achieved by genuinely responding to the most basic aspirations of the Bangsamoro, Lumads and Christians for land to till, just wages and working conditions, respect for human rights and self-determination.

We, therefore, demand from the Arroyo Government the immediate pull out of American troops, war materiel, equipment and facilities from Mindanao and the country. We call for the scrapping of the Visiting Forces Agreement and the abrogation of the Mutual Defense Treaty.

These are trying times for our island. We call on the peoples of Mindanao to express our resistance to U.S. military presence through broad and militant means. We, the peoples of Mindanao, shall not shirk from this great historical responsibility to uphold true peace, self-determination, and national sovereignty.#