

August 29, 2008

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon  
UN Headquarters  
New York, USA

Dear Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,

**Subject: armed conflict in Southern Philippines**

We would like to express utmost concern about the recent breakout of violence in Southern Philippines (parts of Mindanao island) following the issuance of a temporary restraining order against the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain by the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on August 4, 2008.

Fifty (50) people, most of whom are civilians, have been killed and some 220,000 have been displaced by the recent attacks in Lanao and North Cotabato provinces.

While we believe that MILF units that targeted villages have engaged in serious violations of international law and should be held accountable, we are also seriously concerned about the formation of armed militia units with support from the Department of Interior and Local Government. The setting up of armed groups will not protect civilians as some local government officials believe. Rather, it will lead to more chaos, insecurity and division among local communities. The protection of civilians is the responsibility of the State and its security sector such as the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police.

We thank you for your statement of August 13<sup>th</sup> where you expressed concern about the unfolding humanitarian crisis and appealed for restraint, protection of all civilians as well as access for the provision of speedy humanitarian assistance to the affected population.

We now call on your office to bring the government of the Republic of the Philippines and MILF back to the peace negotiation table as soon as possible. We also call on you to demand both parties to honor their obligation under Security Council Resolution 1325 which is to ensure women's equal and fair participation in peace processes and ensure the protection of women and children who are the most vulnerable in armed conflict situations. Finally, we hope that these efforts will lay the groundwork for the United Nations to become the main peace broker in the Mindanao peace process.

Yours sincerely,

**Group Signatories**

Mindanao Commission on Women  
Mothers for Peace  
Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement  
Mindanao Tri-People Women  
Mindanao Young Women Leaders Forum  
Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy  
Political Caucus of Women Leaders in Mindanao.  
Center for Peace Education, Miriam College  
Peace Education Network, Philippines  
Women's Crisis Center Manila  
Muslim Women Peace Advocates (MWPA)

**Individual Signatories:**

Abdulbasit R. Benito, Bangsamoro Center for Just Peace Inc.  
Lourdes Portus, University of the Philippines  
Nathan Gilbert Quimpo, University of Tsukuba  
Bianca Miglioretto  
Benedicto Q. Sánchez, Broad Initiatives for Negros Development  
Dr. Susana Salavador-Anayatin, Graduate Schools of Notre Dame University and  
Mindanao State University  
Elvie Villarido-Manaytay, The Zamaboanga Sibugay Tribune  
Chan lean heng, Science University of Malaysia

**With endorsements from:**

International Women's Tribune Centre  
Isis International  
Boston Consortium on Gender Security and Human Rights  
Sri Lanka Women and Media Collective  
Women Action for New Directions  
Femlink Pacific

- Endorsement will be solicited from other women's groups from around the world and networks such as the New York-based NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security

**Cc:**

- the president of the UN General Assembly
- members of the UN Security Council; the Philippine mission to the UN; the following country missions to the UN: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Japan, Libya, Malaysia, Norway, Sweden, USA
- the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs and the embassies of Australia, Brunei, Canada, Japan, Libya, Malaysia, Norway, Sweden, and USA in Manila
- World Bank