

## **PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

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Peace does not mean to be a place without noise, trouble or hard work. It may mean a situation in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart.

Very disappointing indeed that my hometown so called "Land of the Promise" rarely makes the headlines except when some Western tourist are kidnapped and the scene of on-going conflicts of many different groups of people that lasted over 35 years. People from different parts of the Philippines were too scared when they heard people coming from Mindanao, isn't that too annoying to hear?

I have once experienced to travel in the northern part of the country and yet I need to hide my identity. Why? Elders would just give such despicable reasons that in order to avoid discriminations and the people will not be afraid of me or else I'll end up outcast. I need to speak in their native language and were told not to speak a bit of our dialect unless I'm already home. It is so unfair that because of some history in our past it won't let us live normally and naturally at the present. Peace and order situation in my hometown affects my rights as a human. I should be given all what is intended for me, would it be too much to give me even just a little respect?

Questions really stocked into my mind is, where these all came from? The violence is all over the country but why do we need to be isolated as the most dreadful one? These things lead me into research about the conflict back in time. It is all because fight for peace in Mindanao, it is inseparable from the question of economic and social development. At present the level of armed conflict is quite low and the government is negotiating with both the MNLF and the MILF. It is possible, though far from certain, that a new agreement on autonomy for the Bangsa Moros will be reached. But peace is not just the absence of war. A lasting peace means not only respecting the rights of the Moros and the Lumad, it also means putting an end to all the forms of poverty, inequality and injustice which breed violence. Mindanao is potentially a very rich island, but its natural wealth needs to be owned and controlled by its people and not as at present by an alliance of corrupt politicians, landowners and the multinationals.