

Ilagan forum tackles Moro people's struggle

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Dubbed "Larry Ilagan Forum Series: South-South Solidarity and Self-Determination," the event was arranged by the International Studies Program of the Social Sciences and Education Division, the Ateneo International Studies Students' Organization, and the Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID).

Tommy Pangcoga, training and project development officer of Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society, said the Moro should have the right to self-determination and lauded the efforts of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

Pangcoga said the Moro civil society is only heard because of the arm struggle by the MILF and the MNLF. "We are just sidekicks in their struggle for rights and self-determination. And we are thankful that they are there because we got the attention of the (public) and the government," Pangcoga said.

"The Bangsamoro are waged in a struggle to regain, not attain, the right to self determination. (It is because) before the Philippines was colonized by the Spaniards, we were already a people, a nation," Pangcoga said.

Pangcoga referred to a nation's definition. "The Bangsamoro were already living with honor, dignity, prosperity, and peacefully co-existing with other peoples in the ancestral domains. This peace was shattered by the coming of the colonizers."

"Through four centuries, the Bangsamoro were treated as second class people. (We were) repeatedly oppressed of basic human rights, individually, collectively, as a people and a nation," Pangcoga said.

"It's not about reconciliation, it's not about mercy. We do that after justice have been meted out first. Let's talk about justice muna, bago tayo mag-reconcile. Give us back our right to self-determination and when that happens, let's talk about reconciliation," Pangcoga said.

Pangcoga said the Moro have become dependent on the peace process because they were repeatedly denied of self-determination. "Ang nangyayari kasi giyera muna tayo pag-napagod peace talk. Nung hindi matupad-tupad, giyaera ulit."

Other speakers were from Timor-Leste and West Papua.

K'dadalak Sulimutuk Institute executive director Neta Santos spoke on the significance of international solidarity Timor-Leste's quest for independence and the need for continuing solidarity.

"Leste's independence was brought about by pressure from the international sphere," IID program head on Conflict Prevention and Peace Building Ruby Rose Lora said.

Papuan Student and Youth National Front networking officer Octavinus Takimai spoke on the contribution of international solidarity to the West Papuan's pursuit of genuine autonomy.

Radzini Oledan, IID knowledge officer, said "drawing from the parallelism in the struggle of East Timor, West Papua, and Mindanao, it shows that there really are no borders in the efforts for peace and solidarity."

"(This includes) the efforts to uphold the people's right to self-determination or their rights to still determine their own political economic and socio-cultural way of life," Oledan said.

Oledan said Mindanao's peace advocates are calling for a successful peace talk, which is slated after the Ramadan.

"What happened in Basilan should really call us to come together, for both parties to really sit down and talk about

peace. Meron na tayong 700,000 plus internally displaced persons in Mindanao and these people are victims of war in the most deplorable situation," Oledan said. (JCZ)

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