

STATEMENT ON PNP RAIDS AGAINST BIAF MEMBERS

The leadership of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF), the military wing of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), views with grave concern and alarm the recent spate of operations conducted by the Philippine National Police (PNP) against legitimate officers and members of the BIAF in various places in the Bangsamoro Homeland.

At a time when the GPH-MILF Peace Process is back on the political track and setting the steps for normalization, the occurrence of police raids that often ended in violent encounters cast a shadow of doubt and insecurity on the part of BIAF rank-and-file even as it sends troubling signals to the political leadership of the MILF. Against this backdrop, we cannot help but ask if another concerted plan is in the offing to sabotage the peace process?

Throughout the 17 long years of negotiations between the MILF and GPH, various security protocols have been mutually agreed in order to prevent armed encounters that can derail the peace process. Specifically, the International Monitoring Team (IMT), Coordinating Committees on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCHs) and Ad Hoc Joint Action Groups (AHJAGs) were all established to maintain the prevailing ceasefire agreement.

As a matter of record, when the coordination mechanisms were faithfully observed, peace and order was maintained on the ground. If not, as in the case of the Mamasapano encounter, armed clashes eventually happened and put at risk the gains of the peace process.

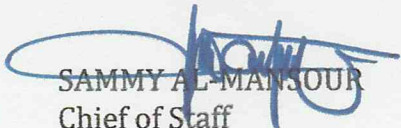
As in the present alarming situation, the raids of the PNP against BIAF members, if left unabated, may escalate tension and spark violent armed encounters. The manner by which these raids have been conducted is, to say the very least, unprofessional as the operatives wore bonnets as if they were hooded gangsters.

Obviously, standard operating procedures, such as the presentation of arrest warrants, if there be any, were grossly disregarded by raiding PNP elements.

The MILF-BIAF reiterates its policy of keeping the primacy of the peace process. It is firm in its belief that the implementation of the negotiated political settlement, leading to the establishment of the Bangsamoro ministerial government, is the best assurance of achieving lasting peace for all. Hence, we demand from the security forces of the GPH especially the PNP, even as we demand it in stricter fashion from our rank-and-file, to honor and abide by the mechanisms jointly set up by Peace Panels in resolving law enforcement issues. There must be no alibi to by-pass these mechanisms. Recent memories of such wanton disregard for said mechanisms are enough reminders of dire consequences all of us do not want to happen again.

We strongly request the Government of the Philippines, particularly the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, to look seriously and urgently into these alarming actions of the PNP. These police operations might negatively affect the peace process.

Lastly, we call on the relatives of the victims of these raids to avail of redress that can be offered by the established mechanisms.


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