



#PeaceGoals Youth Aspiration for a Just and Lasting Peace

10-13 February 2017
Malaybalay City, Bukidnon

Context

There are two major armed movements operating in Mindanao, the southernmost supraregion of the Philippines – that of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and that of the Communist-led New People's Army (CPP-NPA).

After the all-out war approach of deposed President Joseph Estrada was met with strong criticism, the succeeding governments of the Philippines pursued peace negotiations with the MILF, albeit with intermittent but very violent clashes between the group and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Most recently, a peace agreement had been almost at hand, with the drafting of a law that was to create the Bangsamoro nation. However, it is currently stalled, as there is wide opposition against the draft.

While we put importance on the final peace agreement with the MILF, we wish to look at the conflict that involves the greater part of the country – that between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Communist Party of the Philippines. Since the CPP's armed wing, the NPA, has been put under the terrorist listing by the United States of America, peace negotiations have ceased. But presently, under Pres. Rodrigo Duterte, the peace process with the CPP-NPA-NDF already resumed, and the panels are set to meet again on January 19, 2017 in Rome, Italy. It is what the project hopes to gain support for among the youth.

For so long, media gatekeeping has been defined by commercial purposes. What we have in the coverage of the 'Mindanao Problem,' which lumped the five regions of Mindanao, is a sensationalized reportage of the MILF-GPH conflict, which is actually confined to only one region and perhaps some of the immediate surrounding provinces surrounding the region. War reporting is what is saleable to the greater media consumers. We have a mainstream media reportage that is similar to the narrative of an action movie where there is a hero and there is a villain.

Social media have started to challenge the traditional information gatekeepers as well as the traditional notions of credibility. While there are negative effects on society's interaction and the forming of identities and culture, these channels have also been considered as venues to challenge hegemonic control over information and knowledge formation.

The Peace Camp

The peace camp would review the role of the media in the heightening tensions between the parties involved in conflicts and the reportage of the consequent violence to illustrate the need for a reform in the reportage of Mindanao in mainstream media. Afterwards, we will present alternative ways of reporting which center around the discourse of Peace Journalism, augmented by the social media tools. Target participants are members of interfaith youth organizations.

In the process of engaging the youth in alternative ways of reporting, we wish to effect a different appreciation of the peace processes in the country. As an output of the peace camp, the participants will maintain their most preferred social media tools – maybe a blog, a facebook page, twitter or instagram accounts.

An interfaith youth network for peace will also be formed at the end part of the Peace Camp. This network will manage a common social media platforms for interactive exchanges for peace.

The peace camp, entitled as #PeaceGoals, will also include arts workshops, film showings, larong lahi and community immersions.

The peace camp is organized by the youth apostolate of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines-Northern Mindanao Sub-Region (RMP-NMR) Inc, and supported by the World Association for Christian Communication. Co-organizers are the following: Nagkahiusang Magsusulat sa Cagayan de Oro, Arcadia, Liga ng Kabataang Moro, College Editors Guild of the Philippines-Mindanao, Panalipdan Youth, and the Student Christian Movement of the Philippines-Northern Mindanao.