

MORO National Liberation Front

THE BANGSAMORO REVOLUTION

...DID NOT START FROM A VACUUM"

ASIA COLLECTION
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII LIBRARY



by:

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

THIS IS AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION FROM AN ARABIC INTERVIEW WITH USTAZ ABDULBAKI ABUBAKAR, CONDUCTED BY ABDULMAJID AL-IWADI, WHICH WAS PUBLISHED IN ONE OF THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS AND PROMINENT SOCIO-POLITICAL MAGAZINE OF KUWAIT "AL-MUZTAMAH", NO. 600, DATED 21 DECEMBER 1982

THE STRUGGLE OF THE MORO ISLAMIC FRONT IN SOUTH PHILIPPINES IS ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS JIHAD IN OUR CONTEMPORARY ARAB AND ISLAMIC WORLD. ORIGINALLY, THE WORD MORO IS A SPANISH WORD. THIS WORD HAS BEEN USED BY THE SPANISH COLONIZERS TO DESCRIBE THE MUSLIMS IN SOUTH PHILIPPINES. THE FRONT HAS INHERITED A LONG HISTORY OF JIHAD. IT STILL ENGAGES IN ITS HOLY WAR WITH THE BUTCHEROUS CRUSADING SOLDIERS OF PRESIDENT MARCOS.

IN THIS INTERVIEW, THE MUZTAMAH TRIES TO PRESENT THE HOLY WAR OF THE MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (MNLF) FOLLOWING THE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE MUJAHIDEEN STRUGGLE IN SOUTH PHILIPPINES. WE HAVE IN THIS INTERVIEW ONE OF THE LEADERS OF THE FRONT, BROTHER ABDULBAKI ABUBAKAR, THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR FOREIGN RELATIONS. BROTHER ABDULBAKI WAS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FRONT TO ALL NEGOTIATIONS THAT WERE CONDUCTED BETWEEN THE MNLF AND THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT. HE HAS ATTENDED ALSO THE MEETINGS OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE SINCE THE FRONT WAS ACCEPTED AS A MEMBER OF THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC) WITH A STATUS OF PERMANENT OBSERVER.

AL-MUZTAMAH: It is known that an agreement was reached between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Philippine government. Was this agreement implemented or not?

ABDULBAKI: Surely, we have arrived at this Agreement in December 1976 after great efforts and exhaustive attempts by the OIC that acted as a mediator between the MNLF and the Philippine government. This negotiation resulted into what is called the Tripoli Agreement. Furthermore, the negotiation could be traced back to the Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference in 1973 in Benghazi where the Conference specifically studied the case of the Muslims in South Philippines and decided in that Conference the creation of the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission (QMC) composed of Saudi Arabia, Libya, Senegal and Somalia. The said commission visited the Philippines in October of 1973. It came back with a report denying all Marcos' allegations that the Muslims are communists. The same report stated further that the Muslims were neither communists nor do they have any connections whatsoever with communism. But they are true Mudjahideen fighting for their self-defense and the defense of their faith. The QMC forwarded its report to the Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference in Kuala Lumpur in the year 1974.

In effect, the Islamic Confe-

rence called for a peaceful negotiation between the MNLF on the one hand and the Philippine government on the other hand. Negotiation was then accepted by the Philippine government and it was conducted under the auspices of the OIC in 1975. I was one of the MNLF negotiating panel. However, it failed because the Philippine government refused to study the compromised demand of the MNLF for Autonomy. We should bear in mind that the original demand of the MNLF was not for Autonomy, rather, it was for complete independence since we have never been part of the Philippines. We were only illegally annexed to the Philippines as a result of the collusion between the Philippines and the American colonizers in 1946. It was the American imperialists themselves who made the decision to annex our lands to the Philippines without the consent and knowledge of our people. In spite of this fact, the OIC mediation urged the MNLF to compromise its original and true demand for complete independence, inasmuch as the OIC resolution called for negotiation within the framework of Philippine national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Following that resolution, we were

constrained to demand only for a mere autonomy, otherwise we will be subjected to isolation from the world after a long history of being isolated from the Muslim world when we have been fighting for almost 400 years. We fought against the Spaniards for more than 3 1/2 centuries and we confronted the American Imperialists for 40 years. Throughout this long period, we were isolated from the Islamic world. In 1974, when we first came to the OIC to submit our case, we were in a state of apprehension that we might be isolated from the Muslim world again, if we will not follow their resolution. This goes to show, that our compromise from our original demand was to meet the desire of the Islamic Conference but not a compromise to Marcos.

The Philippine government has never defeated us in any battle of this present war. Neither had we been defeated in any previous wars and we've never bowed down before any power on earth who came to colonize our country. In 1976, the OIC renewed its activities to resume our negotiation for the second round. The Philippine government agreed to the proposed negotiation which

led into the signing of the so-called Tripoli Agreement. We compromised many things at the expense of this Agreement. We suffered great loss because in accordance with the agreement the Philippine government will give autonomy to only 13 Islamic provinces out of the 26 provinces of the Moro Muslim ancestral lands. In short, our compromises were two-fold. We compromised our right for political independence and secondly, we compromised a great part of our sacred land. In spite of that, the Philippine government has never implemented this agreement from the very beginning until now.

AL-MUZTAMAH: What were the motives of President Marcos in signing the Agreement in 1976 which he violated immediately? And what was the position of the front toward President Marcos violation of the said Agreement?

ABDULBAKI: The Philippine government was facing serious problems during that time, economically, militarily and politically. President Marcos wanted to ease the pressures against him. He was also afraid that the Muslim might be able to obtain material assistance from

the islamic countries. So he pretended that he wanted peace for the Muslims and he did not want bloodshed. Moreover, he accepted the idea of negotiation again and signed the Tripoli Agreement in 1976. There were also compelling reasons. Example of which was the economic crisis facing the Philippine. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced that it will not grant another loan to Marcos because he had taken already the maximum limit from the loan and as you very well know, Philippine loan has already amounted to 16 billion U.S. dollars. Aside from that, was Marcos' heavy reliance on the procurement of petroleum supply from the Muslim countries. To the extent that more than 90 percent of Philippine daily oil consumption was imported from oil producing Muslim countries. Marcos was afraid that the MNLF might be successful to convince the Muslim oil producing countries to boycott their oil supply to the Philippines especially that the oil contract was about to end in December and subject for renewal in February. These reasons and many more compelled Marcos to sign the Agreement. A period of two months is enough for Marcos to overcome all his problems

that we mentioned. In addition, Marcos was able to procure armaments from Israel within this period. That is why he did not respect that Agreement since its signing.

As to the position of the MNLF with regard to the violation of Marcos of the Tripoli Agreement, it reverted back to its original demand for complete independence and self-determination for the Bangsamoro people. This means that all its compromises are considered null and void. The front re-affirmed not to tie back itself with the Tripoli Agreement whose violation and repudiation have been completely materialized or done under the hands of Marcos. Likewise, the front sought to secure assistance and support from the islamic countries to achieve its demand.

AL-MUZZTAMAH: Lately, it clearly appears that the operation of the Muslim Mudjahideen in the South reduced at a time when there was a substantial increase in the activities and throwing of bombs conducted by the communists and other groups against the Philippine government. What is the reason for that?

ABDULBAKI: Indeed, the Philippines is presently facing three revolutions: The Rightest revolution has grouped the opposition from political leaders, priests, Democrats and those people abandoned their legal opposition but were rather convinced of the necessity of armed resistance and they were accused by Marcos for the spit of bombing in Manila. There is also a Communist revolution which is more dangerous because the Communists revolution wants to overthrow and overhaul the government. They are well-organized and well armed. They can cooperate also with Communists countries and organizations in the world. For this reason, you hear armed encounters between them and Philippine government in the Central part of the country. Consequently, this has drawn the forces of the Philippines from the South to the North; thereby lessening the armed encounters between the Muslim Mudjahideen and the Philippine army due to the small number of colonial soldiers in the South. The Muslim Mudjahideen are steadfast and strong and they control the rural areas. Whereas, the Philippine soldiers control the Cities. It has been confirmed through reports and military plans that we gathered from the enemy that they will confront first the

the Communists in Central part and then they will return back to the South to crush the Bangsamoro revolution. That does not mean that the fighting was over, no, the fighting is still going on. Government policy of grabbing Muslim lands is similarly continuing following a scheme which is more dangerous than firearms.

AL-MUZTAMAH: What is the truth about the separation of some leaderships from the Front?

ABDULBAKI: Every revolution is expected to have weak personalities within its ranks and we are as a revolutionary grouping or revolutionary government similar to that of any established governments face also the same common problem. Thus, we have some weak personalities within our camps who have been penetrated and used by the Philippine government and they were supported by the government with a great deal of money in order to split from the Front. From among them are those who have trampled upon the rights of others. For instance, the taking of others' wealth illegally. This kind of an act prompted the Front to take stern measures against them which brought about their expulsion. Those people who were expelled

grouped together; but they did not escape the attention of the government for as I said they were penetrated. Exchange of communications between them and the government took place in a secret manner. Further, they were provided with Philippine passports through which they were able to enter Manila publicly under Philippine political immunity; they pretended also that they were from separate Front so that the government can say that the Moro National Liberation Front under Nur Misuari's leadership can not represent the islamic movement in the intire South under the pretext that there were other Fronts. These groups join Marcos in calling that we are Communists. It is our belief that those people are agents of Marcos and they do not possess any fighting power in the ground neither do they represent any Muslim. Some of them published his name in Kuwait newspapers that he is a Muslim from the Philippines who came to collect financial contributions from there.

AL-MUZZTAMAH: Marcos and some agents alleged that the islamic revolution headed by the MNLF is a communist revolution. What is the purpose behind their allegation?

ABDULBAKI: They alleged that in order to create a cloud of doubts and confusion in the minds of the Islamic public opinion taking advantage of the fact that the Moro revolution at this primary stage is still revolving within the realm of the islamic world since the MNLF is a member of the OIC with a status of permanent observer and the cause has an islamic character. Such allegation that we are Communists is nothing more but intended to sow feeling of sensitivity on the part of religious people.

AL-MUZZTAMAH: We want you to tell us about the magnitude of the victory that the MNLF's Mudjahideen have attained or gained in South Philippines?

ABDULBAKI: The islamic revolution has undeniable gains out of this struggle. As regard to the islamic awareness in our country, our people have come to realize the meaning of islamic revolution, the value of freedom in their faith and the governing of their own affairs. This sort of victory led the Muslims to support the MNLF struggle not only secretly but more importantly publicly. While in the international scene, our islamic revolution was able to restore the line of communication with

the Muslim world after a long period of isolation. Nowadays, there are 42 Muslim nations that recognize the MNLF as fighting Front which has proven its fighting capability for the defense of Islam, its identity as well as the lives of Muslims there. With regard to military aspect, all Muslim territories have fallen under the control of our revolution except some Cities. We have also military control over coastlines through which we could make gunboats and utilize them in our struggle.

AL-MUZTAMAH: From which sources do you acquire supply of arms?

ABDULBAKI: First of all, we have accumulated guns from the previous wars we had engaged before. We fought against the Spaniards, Americans and Japanese for a period of 400 years respectively. We fought against the latter in the second world war. Some of these accumulated guns are obsolete, while the rest are undoubtedly functional and useful in the present warfare. In the 60's the political rivalry in the Philippines was too violent.

As such, the only recourse left for any candidate was to organize and arm his own para-military

troops in order to win in the election. With the help of this means, we were able to accumulate considerable number of arms which we did not return to the government when the war of genocide was launched against us. Instead, we use those arms to fight back. Our estimate of those arms put the number at 30 thousand assorted rifles. Presently, we depend basically on the enemy for the acquisition of our armaments and ammunitions by way of laying ambushes against enemy armed forces. Furthermore, we have another trick of acquiring guns by purchasing them from the Philippine army for they are morally weak; they come to the South to rob Muslims of their properties under the license of standing order issued by President Marcos since 1972 which is called "search and destroy order". This license is being utilized also by the army to search every Muslim house to steal all valuable things of the occupants. When they find nothing to steal from the Muslims, they rob themselves of their properties by selling to us their guns supplied to them by the government. That's why we consider the times of war as our season to harvest guns from the enemy. This helps the tactic of the revolution to

acquire gun from the same type of gun of the enemy. This procedure encourages our fighters to capture war materials from the enemy specifically ammunition.

AL-MUZTAMAH: You told us that the government is uprooting the Muslims and driving them away from their homeland. What is their modus operandi?

ABDULBAKI: They employed various means to uproot and drive the Muslims of their land in the past and in the present. I can cite some of these modus operandi that serve as basis for Muslims to stage the revolution. It is a well known fact that the first revealed religion introduced to our island, the so-called Philippine islands now was the religion of Islam. The people embraced the religion of Islam voluntarily and gradually from the far North to the far South. Manila was then the capital of two Muslim Emirates until 1565 when Spanish conquistadores were able to liquidate and annihilate all Muslims in the area. As a consequence, the Spaniards were able to govern the northern and the central part of the archipelago. They continued their war campaign as far as South wherein

they collided with the Muslims. This is so because the Muslim government there was more cohesive and well organized than that of the others in the archipelago.

After the Spanish evacuation from the Philippines, following their signing of a treaty with the Americans in 1898, the Spaniards handed over the Philippines including the Moroland without knowledge of the Moro people to the Americans. Taking advantage of the said treaty, the American Imperialists passed laws to the effect that all land titles of the Moroland not duly attested by the Spanish authorities are automatically considered null and void. by virtue of this machination, all Muslims lands can be considered part and parcel of public ownership of the American colonial control since no Muslim land titles were attested by Spanish authorities considering the facts that the Spaniards have never governed the Moroland even for a single day throughout their control over the Philippine archipelago which was composed only of Luzon and Visayas for 3 centuries. Out of this American colonial law, the Filipinos took advantage of organizing a continuous flow of migration to the South.

In the same manner, American colonial law allows every immigrant from the North to the South to own 44 hectares of Muslim land. In contrast, the original inhabitants were allowed only to possess 4 hectares of their own ancestral land. According to the same law, every company is allowed to acquire 1600 hectares of Moroland. This policy opened the door for Christian landgrabbers from the North to flock to the South with fake license of possessing companies in order to grab as wide land as possible from the Moroland.

As for the present modus operandi, the government of the Philippines is resulting to the force of arm to displace the Moros of their remaining land by the Christian migrators. They established for them a government identity in the form of governorate or others over the Muslim land. This is exactly the modus operandi being pursued by the Zionist to drive away the Arab Palestinians from their own land of Palestine utilizing various covers for machination such as the use of lending institutions and others like the so-called development projects. The Philippine government nowadays is making use of its lending institutions to distribute loans to

to every Muslim even without the the collateral. When Muslim started organizing their economic business out of these loans, the army of Marcos come to rob with the intent of sabotaging the Muslim economic livelihood which will cripple their capabilities to pay the loans. For instance when the money of the suffering Muslims were already concentrated in a place such as the Barter trade of Zamboanga City last 1980, suddenly the looting army of Marcos came and burned the said Barter trade center. As soon as the Muslims can not pay their loans the tentacles of the government machination come to the victims or their relatives to ask them for payment otherwise the government can have all the excuses to seize their land and properties. The program of immigration and displacing the Muslims of their land is still going on till now.

Another type of machination which is being executed by the Philippine government is the establishment of housing projects in the Muslim lands, especially those lands located at the cities or suburbs. Out of this machination, the government find good reasons to nationalize the lands to be occupied by the projects and in

return these houses shall be used for rent with high rentals that no ordinary Muslim can afford to pay. Through this process, the Moro Muslims become foreigners in their own land and they find no house of sanctuary for themselves and their children.

It is sad to note that the Philippine government is conniving with some clergymen of Notre Dame schools in the Moro areas by allowing the Muslim to teach their own Islamic religion in these Catholic missionary schools with the end in view of preventing them indirectly from setting up their own Islamic schools. The most sacrilegious acts being perpetrated by Marcos machination program are the Filipino Christian soldiers are getting married to Muslim women by force or other abominable acts. These sacreligious acts are carefully designed to produce a generation of mix Muslim-Christian blood that shall constitute new generation with less fervor of national feeling of identity or being colonized people. It can be deduced from here that in the future Moro Muslims shall be governed by those sons of illegitimate (mur-tads) and bastard individuals.

AL-MUZTAMAH: Where is the location

of concentration of Muslims in the Philippines? And what is their number?

ABDULBAKI: The total number of the Moro Muslims is estimated at 7 million or more out of 50 million population of the Philippines. The place of their concentration is located at the South of the Philippines with land area of 38% of the total land area of the Philippines. The Muslim lands are agricultural and almost 100% luxuriant. As for the marine resources, the Moro sea is considered the richest sea in the region if not in the whole world because it is being protected and fortified from the east by Mindanao and other Moro island and from the South by Sulu archipelago, while from the north by Palawan island. So all fish from Pacific Ocean, China sea and Celebes sea run into the Moro sea since this sea is seldom subjected to tidal waves. However, Imelda Marcos, wife of President Marcos is exploiting this rich Moro marine resources by the deployment of tens of fishing gunboats to collect what in fact belong to the Moros and export them to foreign countries just to satisfy her desire for millions of dollars, while the Muslims can not go fishing because the Phi-

Philippine naval boats will run after them and massacre them.

AL-MUZTAMAH: When did the genocidal campaign against the Moro Muslims start under the hands of Marcos? And what is the estimated number of the victims?

ABDULBAKI: The genocidal campaign started wayback in 1968 and the estimated number of casualties from the Muslim civilians since 1968 till now is not less than 135,000 with more than 500 masjid turned into ashes. But the martyrs from the Mudjahideen are very few, only around 3 to 5 thousand. On the enemy side, the Muslim Mudjahideen have inflicted heavy casualties on them. As per our statistics, enemy forces suffered a death toll of 45 thousand. In the mid 70s, we destroyed than no less than 45 tanks and armored vehicles and we shot down 22 American-made fighting aeroplanes including sobre jets. The genocidal war against the Muslims is intensifying in a more sophisticated manner. President Marcos himself has confessed that his regime has slaughtered 60 thousand Muslims in 1980, while the Chief of the armed forces of the Philippines in (Southern Command) confessed also but he put the figure at 75 thousand.

Contrary to what they said, our statistics which bear the victims' names show that 135 thousand is the accurate figure of Muslims massacred by the barbaric regime of Marcos.

AL-MUZTAMAH: When did the MNLF start its holy war against the Philippine government?

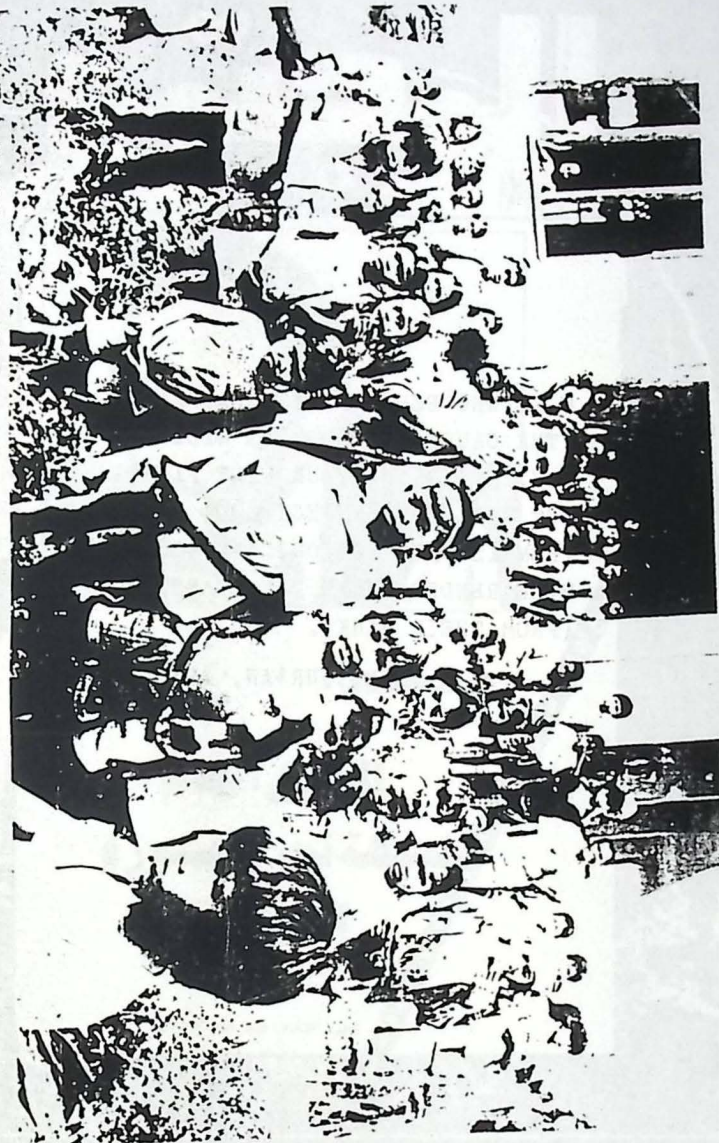
ABDULBAKI: The war between us and the Philippine government broke out in 1972 but the genocidal war against us started in 1968. That date confirms the fact the the campaign of extermination against the Muslims was launched after a thorough study and careful planning by the Philippine government since the timing was made to coincide with the Muslims' setback in 1967 when they can not pay attention to Muslim problems outside of the Middle East. The Islamic revolution did not start from a vacuum. It came into being as a positive response to the genocide against us in which the MNLF saw it imperative to start the military resistance as the only viable solution to solve our conflict after all peaceful means have been exhausted. The MNLF is composed of educated young Muslims who are sincere believers in the

principles of Islam. The MNLF's name came to the limelight in 1972 only when it was able to acquire power sufficient for it to exercise political and military role as well. After a lapse of 1 year, we were able to submit the case to the Foreign Ministers Conference of the OIC. I can still remember that the first country that invited the attention of the OIC to the Bangsamoro case was the state of Kuwait in 1972 at Jeddah's Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference.

AL-MUZZAMAH: We would like you to explain to us the extent of contribution of the Islamic countries in extending assistance to the case of the Muslims in South Philippines.

ABDULBAKI: In reality, the contributions are very great. By virtue of the initiatives undertaken by the Islamic countries, the signing of the Tripoli agreement was forged even if it was not implemented. Similarly, the recognition and acceptance afforded to us by the OIC as a member of the Organization with a status of permanent observer has given the MNLF a distinctive political personality enabling it to defend itself and struggle for its people's rights for self-determination.

"BANGSAMORO ISLAMIC REPUBLIC IS OUR NATIONAL HOMELAND"



O YE WHO BELIEVE! IF YE WILL AID
(THE CAUSE OF) GOD, HE WILL AID
YOU, AND PLANT YOUR FEET FIRMLY.
BUT THOSE WHO REJECT GOD, FOR
THEM IS DESTRUCTION, AND (GOD)
WILL RENDER THEIR DEEDS ASTRAY
(FROM THEIR MARK).

-HOLY QUR'AN, 47:7-8

الاجتماع



يعرف الناس معاني الثورة الإسلامية

الاجتماع تطاور

الأمين العام
لجبهة تحرير مورو
الإسلامية

أجرى اللقاء : عبد المجيد العوضي

الاجتماع ١٤٠٢ هـ - المجلد ١١ - العدد ١٠٠ - السنة الرابعة

"The Philippine government has never defeated us in any battle of this present war. Neither had we been defeated in any previous wars and we've never bowed down before any power on earth who came to colonize our country."

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