

Mindanao, Once the Worst Conflict Zone in South East Asia, Shows the Possibility of Resolving Global Disputes

Washington, D.C, District of Columbia Jul 8, 2022 (IssueWire.com) - The war between Russia and Ukraine isn't an isolated case. After the end of the Cold War, ethnic and religious identities emerged as a primary source of conflict. The emergence of a new conflict structure requires a new approach to problem-solving.

Today, the achievements of the international organization Heavenly Culture, World Peace, Restoration of Light (HWPL), present a new model of peace to the global community. Chairman Lee Man-Hee of HWPL is a Korean War veteran who experienced the horrors of the war, and was honorably discharged from military service because of a combat injury. He is now a peace activist who works to achieve the cessation of war.

Mindanao was the site of one of the largest conflicts in Southeast Asia. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), was the largest armed force in Southeast Asia. In the 2010s, the Philippine government declared war on the MILF, resulting in over 120,000 casualties. The conflict is an example of an ethnic-religious-based conflict that emerged in the 21st century. After much bloodshed, the Philippine government and the MILF signed a Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro in October 2012 due to the intervention of the international community, recognizing Muslim autonomy in Mindanao.

Even after the agreement, the conflict between Islam and Catholicism did not end. In September 2013, Antonio Ledesma, former Catholic Archbishop of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro, requested Chairman Lee of HWPL to mediate the settlement.

On January 24, 2014, Chairman Lee visited Mindanao and held a Peace Walk, inviting more than 1,000 people including students from Mindanao State University to the City of General Santos. Chairman Lee called to stop any acts that might encourage conflict in the name of religion and stressed that "The will of the creator is not war, but peace." Afterwards, he asked the attendees "Do you want peace or war? If you want peace, please raise your hands." Seeing everyone with raised hands, Chairman Lee asked Fernando Capalla, former Davao Archbishop, and Esmael Mangudadatu, Governor of Maguindanao to sign a peace agreement.

The government forces and MILF finally agreed on the final annex of the Preliminary Peace Agreement on January 25, 2014. The agreement is to recognize Muslim autonomy and gradually disarm the MILF in the Bangsamoro region in southern Mindanao, and it is considered the biggest progress in the 18-year negotiation process between the two sides. In May 2014, the Parliament began to enter the Bangsamoro Basic Law into the legislative process. The civil war of Mindanao ended when President Rodrigo Duterte finally signed this Law in August 2018.

The Civil Peace Agreement arbitrated by HWPL was Mindanao's declaration of permanent peace. Since then, HWPL and all related parties have continued to cooperate. Signing MOUs with 70 educational institutions in February 2016, HWPL implemented peace education curriculums that have since been presented to the United Nations and UNESCO. HWPL signed an MOU with The Commission on Higher Education in 2018. Through this cooperation, 2551 teachers, from 557 educational institutions in the Philippines are trained to teach peace education to up to 23,000 students.

On May 25, 2015, "the 2nd Anniversary of Peace Walk in Commemoration of the Declaration of World

Peace " was held in Buluan, Maguindanao Province, hosted by HWPL. At the event, local Catholic and Islamic leaders and key figures from the MILF, politicians, soldiers, police, and about 3,000 citizens gathered to create peace and harmony. On January 24, 2016, and HWPL Peace Monument was erected in Camp Darapanan, Sultan Kudarat in Mindanao, to commemorate the second anniversary of the Civil Peace Agreement. During the January 24th celebrations, MILF Chairman Hon. Ahod Ebrahim declared January 24 as 'HWPL Day.' The HWPL Peace Monument was erected on July 19, 2021, in Barangay Bagua Mother, Cotabato City, Mindanao, and was made using melted weapons owned by Former MILF combatants.

About HWPL

HWPL is a non-governmental organization in South Korea seeking peace and cessation of war and it is registered in special consultative status with the UN Department of Global Communications (DGC) and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Learn More: <https://www.hwpl.kr/language/en/about-hwpl-en/>

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