

The Manila Times 28 June 2009 Last week, media reported on the findings of the [Norwegian Refugee Council](#) on the Mindanao refugees: "the Philippines was the most neglected displacement situation in 2008." (...)

On August 3, the Supreme Court stopped the August 5 signing of the agreement by the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Kuala Lumpur, hosted by the Malaysian government, which had facilitated the process. Within 24 hours, fierce fighting erupted in Central Mindanao, with thousands becoming refugees overnight. Within a month, 600,000 innocent civilians—overwhelmingly Muslim—were displaced and hundreds killed or wounded.

(...) The peace process has been shelved, and Mindanao has reverted to an arena for war. Since August, the refugees have grown as armed conflicts have erupted in other areas.

The term "humanitarian crisis" emerged to describe the situation in Central Mindanao, with the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) unable to return to their homes. Civil society organizations have petitioned the United Nations and other international organizations to intervene to help resolve the situation. (...)

reinterprets the concept of state sovereignty to include its primary responsibility for the protection of its people. (...)

The State's

responsibility to protect

embraces three specific responsibilities: the responsibility to prevent those monstrous crimes; the responsibility to react to situations of compelling human need with appropriate measures (...); and the responsibility to rebuild post-conflict both physical and human infrastructure.

Will the principles of

R2P

appeal to communities in the Philippines? If they do, how can we organize a constituency for the promotion of

R2P

in the Philippines? These were the issues discussed by representatives of government, civil society and the academe during the

[workshop](#)

organized by The Asia Pacific Center for

Responsibility to protect

(APC-

R2P

) on June 25 to 26 at the EDSA Plaza Hotel.

We from the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy (PCID) (...) welcomes the attempt to reinterpret sovereignty as implying responsibility of the state to its own people, that the primary responsibility for the protection of its people lies with the state itself. Should the state violate the responsibility, the international community is obligated to intervene.

This is particularly applicable to the Bangsamoro and the indigenous peoples of Mindanao. (...)The talks bogged down with the state insisting on its right to protect its sovereignty, i.e., to protect its territorial integrity, while the Muslim liberation fronts maintain that the Bangsamoro nation's sovereignty was "stolen" from them when the United States included their ancestral domain as part of the new Philippine Republic. (...)

The sovereignty of the state must be employed to protect its citizens, particularly minority populations(...). Understood this way, sovereignty should not be viewed as an obstacle to peace agreements; it should be the very basis of government in granting the Bangsamoro their right to self-determination.

The central theme of

R2P

(...) is something that PCID has advocated in the past. During the height of the conflict resulting from the MOA-AD controversy, PCID issued various statements asking regional and international organizations like the UN, EU, and ASEAN to exert their responsibility to avoid a humanitarian crisis brought about by the more than 600,000 people displaced by the conflict. (...)

A problem I foresee is this: how can we expect the Arroyo administration to push for

R2P

when it has been accused of engaging in acts against its own citizens, which have resulted in a humanitarian crisis?

Source:

<http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2009/june/28/yehey/opinion/20090628opi7.html>