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# AMANA

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**INCLUSIVE PEACE  
PROCESSES IN ASIA**

**A WOMAN'S JOURNEY IN BECOMING  
A PEACE BUILDER**

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# M. Abdus Sabur

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Asia is a region rich in cultural, social, economic, civil and political diversity. The countries in Asia also display a wide range of geographical, biological, demographical and physical diversity and differ considerably in their resource endowments. Many of them however have been subjected to colonial rule and the colonial legacies include resource depletion, poverty, statelessness of indentured labor and artificially drawn borders that divide people and their homes, family and community. The transition from colony to self rule has not been easy. Among the many challenges faced were sustainable development, mass illiteracy, human resource development, and just, participatory and accountable government. Post-independence governance has often been dominated by Western-educated elites who have ruled in an authoritarian manner with majoritarian groups dominating minorities, leaving little room for political pluralism and inclusive governance.

Against this back drop, conflict emerged between majority and minority groups and communities within the nation state and in some cases, it exploded into full-scale war. Heavy-handed military interventions accompanied by gross human rights violations were able to suppress the rebellion for a short time but have failed to eliminate

struggles for self determination. After loss of lives and resources, governments have yielded to half-hearted dialogue. Therefore conflict still continues in many countries. According to social scientists, conflict is natural and not necessarily bad, but the challenge is how to transform violent conflict, which is always bad, creatively through dialogue so that broken relationships can be restored and the aspirations of the parties in conflict can be realized by peaceful means. Towards this end there have been initiatives which we call peace processes but unfortunately, with little or no durable solution found so far.

This issue of AMANA provides eight case studies of peace processes in Asia and reflects the views of both insiders and outsiders to the conflict. The thesis put forward in this issue is that participatory peace processes will succeed in both vanquishing violence and promoting sustainable peace. This issue also describes peace actions and activities in the countries involved, as perceived by alumni of the AMAN School of Peace and Conflict Transformation. We hope this will be a resource for students of peace studies as well as those who are engaged in peace processes at both the community and higher levels.



M. Abdus Sabur is Secretary-General of AMAN and the Asian Resource Foundation.

# Challenges of Resolving the Indo-Manipur Conflict

**Jiten Yumnam**

## *The Violence of Conflicts*

Manipur, an independent nation for many centuries and currently in India's North East, continues to be afflicted with low-intensity armed conflict for decades, ever since its controversial merger with India on 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1949. The state of Manipur was recognized as an independent country as early as 550 B.C in the Burmese royal chronicles and in 33 A.D as per Manipur's own royal chronicle '*Cheitharol Kumbaba*'. Manipur, which became fully independent on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947 via the Indian Independence Act 1947, was the first "country" in South Asia to hold democratic elections under universal franchise in 1948 under the Manipur Constitution Act, 1947 and established its own constituent assembly. Manipur drew up its own constitution in 1947. The king of Manipur, Maharajah Bodhachandra, who was the nominal head of the constituent assembly was invited to Shillong by the Government of India and forced to sign the Merger agreement under duress. The Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947 was already in operation at the time the merger agreement was signed by the Manipur Maharaja Bodhachandra. The king lacked the capacity and authority to enter into any treaty with any power or the representative of the Government of India since he was not the plenipotentiary of the independent and sovereign state of Manipur, of which he was only the constitutional head. The Manipur Merger agreement has not yet been ratified by the Manipur Constituent Assembly.

The emergence of armed opposition groups or insurgency groups in Manipur such as the United National Liberation Front on 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1964, the Revolutionary Peoples Front, on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1978, are all premised in regaining the lost

sovereignty of Manipur. India continues to declare the armed opposition groups of Manipur who are demanding the right to self-determination as "terrorist" under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. The AFSPA continues to be the most draconian piece of emergency legislation imposed in Manipur to suppress the peoples' movement for the right to self determination. Under Section 3 of AFSPA, the entire State of Manipur has been declared as a "disturbed area" legitimizing full deployment of Indian armed forces. The Act allows non-commissioned army officials to kill, even on mere suspicion, with immunity. Extra-judicial executions, enforced disappearances, rape of women, arbitrary arrest, detention and torture are widespread due to application of these emergency legislations, primarily the AFSPA. The practice of torture continues with impunity.

## *The Processes of Peace*

The peace process in Manipur has been through rough and turbulent times as the state continues to adopt divergent policies and strategies for securing peace in the region and both the state and non-state actors remain firm in their terms and conditions for peace. The state continues to insist on peace talks under the framework of the constitution of India. The insurgent groups insist on either plebiscite or referendum under the auspice of the United Nations without imposing any conditions. For instance, on 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2000, the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) of Manipur put forward three conditions for talks with New Delhi. The group demanded that New Delhi should include the agenda of sovereignty if it was truly serious about its offer of talks adding that the Centre must first 'demilitarize' the region and a third country should monitor the talks. This was not accepted by

the government of India which continues to insist on talks under the framework of the constitution of India.

In 1997 the UN Human Rights Committee (HRC) in hearing the third periodic report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) has pointed out that the problem in Manipur and other parts of India's North East is political and that the approach to resolving it must also, essentially, be political in nature. In doing so, the Committee reminded the Government of India to keep in mind the right to self-determination of peoples, the right to freedom of expression and the right to participation in governance. However, there seems to have been no effort on the part of the Government of India to implement these UN recommendations.

### ***Participation: Challenges and Opportunities***

The years 2005-2006 and 2010-2011 witnessed the holding of both spontaneous and organized public meetings on the issue of plebiscite throughout Manipur. Many civil organizations held a series of public meetings at different places on the theme "Manipur-India conflict and people's participation in its resolution". Most of these public meetings adopted certain resolutions which among others included endorsement of people's participation in resolving the Manipur-India conflict; demand for holding of plebiscite to resolve the conflict; and seeking the co-operation of the United Nations and other international human rights organizations in the resolution of the conflict. The spontaneous public response to the call of an insurgent group speaks volumes as to the popular support which the insurgent group commands. Open public endorsement of the plebiscite proposal is a clear reflection of the fact that the people of Manipur are still in favor of the idea of an independent Manipur as espoused by the insurgent groups. The magnitude of the events was unprecedented in the history of Manipur as no such spectacular public response to the call of an insurgent group has ever been witnessed before. People of various hues came out to participate in the meetings held to discuss

issues relating to plebiscite and in fact endorsed the plebiscite proposal. Apart from social activists, University Professors also took an active role in spreading awareness to the masses on the prevailing conflict situation in addition to highlighting various aspects of the plebiscite proposal. The ensuing public debate and discussion mainly centered on the feasibility of holding plebiscite under the existing circumstances, the future of Manipur and also the historical trajectories leading to the present situation. In the year 2011, the government imposed restrictions on organizing plebiscite related meetings. Several leaders of community based organizations were kept under surveillance and subjected to search and warrant and further threats were issued to them.

A sustainable, just and stable peace in Manipur can only be achieved if those responsible for ordering and carrying out grave human rights violations were apprehended and held accountable for their crimes. Subsequent trials that conform to international human rights standards and to the highest standards of impartiality, competence, objectivity and independence of the judiciary in protecting the lives and security of innocent civilians would also need to occur. As recommended by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in the hearing of periodic reports of India to CERD in March 2007 the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 must be repealed. It is a draconian and inhumane law; the Government of India must repeal without delay all such extra legislations that suspend people's inherent rights. The Government should make urgent and effective measures to stop fake encounters, disappearances, custodial violence, custodial death and extra-judicial killings by police and security forces and conduct impartial investigation into all of them.

### ***Lessons Drawn***

Both *Manipur* and *Kashmir* illustrate the deadweight of history and the importance, yet impracticality of resorting to plebiscites. Subjugated people are entitled to express their indignation and their sentiments through, for example, a

referendum where the choice on offer is autonomy rather than secession. Far from infringing upon the territorial integrity of the Nation State, autonomy should be viewed as a means towards ensuring the just, equitable and sustainable territorial integrity of the Nation State and its peoples. This becomes impossible though if claims rooted in ancient history lead to an entrenchment of interests, positions and demands. Experiences over the last fifty years have proven beyond doubt the futility of pursuing a military solution to what are basically political conflicts. Sustained deployment of

armed forces and of border security forces, armed with special powers not only provoke a violent counter-response but also result in a serious loss of credibility when the State in question continues to ignore recommendations from UN Special Rapporteurs and human rights treaty bodies in blatant disregard of its international human rights obligations. Lack of investigation of encounter killings and the resultant impunity erode the very foundation of accountability and the rule of law.



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Jiten Yumnam is a human rights defender, defending and promoting human rights of indigenous peoples in Manipur in India's North East.

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**"PEOPLE WANT YOU TO BE HAPPY.  
DON'T KEEP SERVING THEM YOUR PAIN!"**

**IF YOU COULD UNTIE YOUR WINGS  
AND FREE YOUR SOUL OF JEALOUSY,**

**YOU AND EVERYONE AROUND YOU  
WOULD FLY UP LIKE DOVES."**

**•-Rumi-•**



# EVADING PEACE IN KASHMIR: FROM ANCIENT TO PRESENT TIMES

Mushtaq Ul Haq Ahmad Sikander



• Author: Nvvchar. Image source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kashmiri\\_gate\\_now\\_preserved\\_as\\_Heritage\\_Monument.JPG](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kashmiri_gate_now_preserved_as_Heritage_Monument.JPG).

## *The Violence of Conflicts*

The absence of Peace in Kashmir is a legacy of the partition of the Indian sub-continent. India and Pakistan have both put forward claims and counter claims regarding Kashmir. India proclaims it to be an *Atoot Ang* (integral part), Pakistan claims it to be its *Shahrag* (Jugular vein), constituent of 'K' in its entirety. Kashmir and its inhabitants till recently were not even a party to the dispute. Kashmir was debated as a bilateral issue between the countries of India and Pakistan, which is to be solved bilaterally without any external intervention. The sacrifices offered by the masses, coerced both to accept the inhabitants of Kashmir as a party to the dispute and inevitable for a concrete Peace Process in Kashmir. On 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1948, India took the Kashmir Issue to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). India presented itself as a victim of aggression from Pakistan and accused Pakistan of helping and aiding the tribal invaders on the Indian territory of Kashmir, which had acceded to its dominion. This claim was rebuffed and rebutted by Pakistan. The U.N passed many resolutions favoring plebiscite

in Kashmir. On March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1949, Admiral Nimitz was appointed as the plebiscite administrator and UN military personnel were deployed to observe the ceasefire line. India played delaying tactics, with the active support of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, the leader of the majority party National Conference, who represented the Kashmiri. During the eventful year of 1947, after partition of the sub-continent, a war started between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir claim. Peace was then brokered by the United Nations but despite the UNSC resolutions advocating plebiscite, and the right to self determination of the Kashmiri people, the dream of plebiscite could not be realized for various reasons.

In the aftermath of the 1962 Indo-China war Pakistan initiated a clandestine operation called 'Operation Gibraltar' through which it sneaked thousands of its troops into Uri, Poonch and areas of Jammu the territory held by India. India started an onslaught and bombing of Lahore, and the operation became a predecessor of a full fledged war between the two

countries and after sometime Peace prevailed. In the last decade of the Cold War, Pakistan played a front ally role against U.S.S.R in Afghanistan. When the war in Afghanistan was concluding with the withdrawal of U.S.S.R, Pakistan started to train the Kashmiri youth for an armed insurgency in Kashmir. The youth were driven to the wall due to the alienating policies of the government of India, which never let democracy and rule of law flourish in Kashmir.

The year 2008 started with an agitation over transfer of land to Amaranth Shrine Board. The transfer was witnessed as an attack on the identity and rights of Kashmiris. It was also alleged that the land transfer was a part of a long term conspiracy to change the demography of Kashmir, on a similar pattern as Israel opted in Palestine. This led to the revocation of the order of land transfer, which later backfired as a vigorous communal back lash was witnessed from Jammu Hindus which resulted in the two parts of Jammu & Kashmir State becoming polarized, communally. This agitation resulted in a number of deaths.

The situation and resentment also continued in 2009 and flared due to the alleged rape and murder of two girls from Shopian, which also resulted in subsequent agitation. The inception of year 2010 was marked with innocent killings of youth at the hands of armed security personnel. These innocent wanton killings continued throughout the year making Kashmir burn again more intensely than ever. Unlike the 2008 agitation, thousands of people were not given the opportunity to assemble, and brutal measures were opted to curtail the movement of people, which led to the death of more than one hundred and twenty two youth, particularly teenagers.

Many Indian politicians, parliamentarians, civil society activists and peace keepers visited Kashmir in an attempt to temper the situation. The State with the help of the army and Police were able to clamp down and suppress the agitation against the killings of teenagers but the alienation and resentment

still remains. The Indian government announced a three member team of Interlocutors to engage in dialogue with various sections of Kashmiri society. The team tabled their report in 2011, which is yet to be disclosed to the public, though certain recommendations were made public. The recommendations included partial revocation of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) from certain areas of J&K and partial troop relocation, but these recommendations are based on surmises as the report has not yet been made public.

### ***The Processes of Peace***

In Kashmir, the politicians and leaders are divided on the basis of their association and dissociation with the political nature of the Kashmir conflict. Those who deem Kashmir as a part of India are called mainstream politicians, and those who don't consider it part of India, hence call for the Right of self determination to be implemented, are known as Separatists<sup>43</sup>. The peace process for mainstream politicians has always meant minimal interference by the Centre and freedom to carry out the affairs of the State independently. For mainstream Political parties autonomy, self rule and internal freedom remain the destined goals and catch words, and they wish to attain the same while remaining in the Indian Union and under the preview of the Indian Constitution. Anything outside these boundaries is unacceptable to them.

Since the onset of the armed insurgency in the early 1990's, the separatists have declined any talks with Indian State. The separatists formed a conglomerate of various political outfits that they were heading and each separatist leader patronized a militant organization, the conglomeration was named All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC).

A new approach in the Peace Process talks was initiated with the introduction of Quiet Diplomacy in the aftermath of the 2008 Land Row Agitation, "The Indian government is working on "quiet diplomacy" as part of efforts to resolve the Kashmir issue, and "this will only be made public after the desired results are achieved", Indian Home Minister P Chidambaram has said.



### ***Participation: Challenges and Opportunities***

Scores of diverse reasons, ranging from Social, Political, Economic and Cultural aspects that belong to contrasting ideologies, world views and goals are responsible for the failure of Peace Process in Kashmir. The Kashmiris are deeply hurt and resentful when they are not included in Peace Talks and Dialogues. “Kashmiris have been struggling for their inalienable and immutable right to self determination since 1947- the year when India invaded Kashmir at the behest of Maharaja Hari Singh, the autocrat who had already victimized Kashmiris in a dictatorial way. While using all the fascistic, chauvinistic, imperialistic and Procrustean modes of repression and oppression India tried to break the will of the Kashmiri people to resist. Six lakh freedom activists were put to the sword and thousands of freedom zealots including the senior ailing leaders like Ashraf Sehrai and Aasiya Andrabi Saheba have been languishing in Indian concentration camps for years on end.

The Peace Process in Kashmir has to be sustained if any Peaceful Resolution of the Kashmir Problem is to be sought. It needs to be remembered that Kashmir is a Political Problem, and not an Internal Problem of India, which it can solve on its own terms. More than six decades of engagement with the Kashmir problem has demonstrated the shortcomings of this approach. The Kashmir Issue is an identity problem, which has not been integrated with the mainstream Indian identity.

Any permanent solution to this issue will need to include compromise by all the parties involved in the dispute. The unrelenting posture depicted by all parties, is giving birth to a vicious circle of violence. Till compromise on certain points and fields such as disputed nature of the Kashmir Issue, demilitarization of both parts of Kashmir and implementation of U.N Resolutions which support the right of self determination of Kashmiris are made, Kashmir will continue to burn time and again. Negative Peace can obviously be maintained, which can be well termed as Peace of Graveyard but Positive and Permanent Peace will continue to evade Kashmir.

### ***Lessons Drawn***

**Kashmir** illustrates the deadweight of history and the importance, yet impracticality of resorting to plebiscites. The appointment by the Indian government of a three member team of Interlocutors to engage in dialogue with various sections of Kashmiri society is clearly a step in the right direction. However, although the team tabled its Report in 2011, the Report is yet to be disclosed to the public. In the case of **Manipur**, the mechanism of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission will contribute greatly to the restoration of normalcy.



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# The Mindanao Peace Processes

Emran G. Mohamad

## *The Violence of Conflicts*

The core issue of the problem in Mindanao is the continuing assertion of the Bangsamoro people for restoration of their independence. Problems of land, mass poverty, neglect and underdevelopment and other social inequities are serious problems that need the attention of the national government. However it is the issue of the political relationship of the Bangsamoro people with the government that needs serious and immediate attention because aside from its historical roots, it is being perceived as the major cause of other social, economic and religious problems.

Understanding the problem in Mindanao as sovereignty-based, the Bangsamoro liberation front asserts sovereign right over a territory that the Philippine Government is currently exercising sovereign power over and which it considers part of the national territory. The foundation of the Philippine claim is that the territory was part of what the United States granted to the Philippine state when independence was proclaimed on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1946. The Bangsamoro contend that the incorporation of their territory into the Philippines was without their plebiscitary consent, a blatant violation of their human rights as guaranteed by various United Nations instruments that guarantees peoples' right to determine their political status. Even after their territories were made part of the Republic of the Philippines in 1946, the Bangsamoro people continued to assert their right to independence. This peaceful movement for independence was deflected when the *Ilaga*, which were government-backed Christian militias, attacked Muslim communities in the early 1970's, burning mosques and houses, and massacring hundreds of people, including women and children. The Muslims were left with no other alternative

but to fight back to defend themselves and their communities.

The conflict in Mindanao is between the **Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP)** and the **Bangsamoro Liberation Fronts** and has been going on for more than three decades. Although there have been occasions of violence predominantly the protagonists engage in peace talks. Every time a shooting war between the protagonists erupts, which usually take place in short spans of time it is always followed by lengthy negotiations, though every time war breaks out the consequences are painful and the costs are tremendous.

The perceived injustices and oppression perpetrated against the Bangsamoro people by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines heightened and it became evident to the Bangsamoro leaders that it would not be possible to regain independence through political means due to lack of a constitutional mechanism. Because of this the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was organized in the late 1960's to pursue the liberation of the Bangsamoro people and their homeland from the Philippine colonial rule through revolutionary means. In 1969 and the early 1970's alone, several thousand people were killed and hundreds of villages were burned resulting from the AFP and MNLF armed clashes. When the MNLF signed a peace agreement with the government in 1976, a more religious faction under the Salamat Hashim wing separated and was formally organized in 1981 as Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

## *The Processes of Peace*

The late MILF Chairman, Sheikh Salamat Hashim espoused and the Bangsamoro people in general

firmly believe that the most civilized, diplomatic, democratic and best way available in resolving the Mindanao conflict is through **negotiation** for a just, comprehensive, lasting and acceptable peaceful political settlement.

The Third Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) of the OIC held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on February 29<sup>th</sup> to March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1972 took cognizance of the problem of the Muslims in the Southern Philippines and decided “to seek the good offices of the Government of the Philippines to guarantee the safety and property of the Muslims” as citizens of the country. It authorized the OIC Secretary General to contact the Philippine government. The following year, the OIC decided to send to Mindanao a fact-finding delegation composed of Foreign Ministers from Libya, Senegal, Somalia and Saudi Arabia. It also urged Indonesia and Malaysia to exert their good offices to help find a solution within the framework of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Through the mediation efforts of the OIC, representatives of the Philippine government and the MNLF met in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on January 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, 1975. This was the start of formal negotiations between the two parties. The Jeddah meeting showed no progress initially because of serious disagreements on many issues. In an attempt to reconcile the differences, the OIC put forward a plan of action as a basis for the settlement of the problem. The plan of action was in accordance with Resolution 18 of the Fifth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, which called for the establishment of an autonomous region for the Muslims, at the same time respecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Philippines. The talks culminated in the signing of the Tripoli Agreement of 1976. The Tripoli Agreement provided the establishment of autonomy for Muslims in Southern Philippines, within the realm of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines, covering thirteen provinces. The autonomous region has the authority to set up its own court, schools, legislative and administrative systems, financial and economic systems, regional security forces, and to have representation and

participation in all organs of the state.

Subsequently, formal ceasefire took effect on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1977. A committee composed of representatives from the GRP, MNLF and OIC Quadripartite Commission was created to oversee the implementation of the ceasefire agreement. At the beginning the truce was holding but it collapsed towards the end of the year.

It was under the presidency of Fidel V. Ramos that agreement on the full implementation of the Tripoli Agreement of 1976 was reached. The accord signed in Manila on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1996 embodied the totality of all agreements, covenants and understanding between the government and the MNLF. Prior to the signing of the agreement, several rounds of talks were held in Tripoli, Jakarta and Mindanao with the active mediation of Indonesia. The 1996 peace accord defined the specific provisions of the Tripoli Agreement of 1976 which were left for discussion in later negotiations.

The 1996 Peace Agreement was to be implemented in two phases. During phase one, the Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD), the Southern Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD) and Consultative Assembly were to be established covering the provinces mentioned in the Tripoli Agreement. It was also during this transitional period that integration of MNLF forces into the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the police force started. Full implementation of the agreement would be in phase two, after the Organic Act (Republic Act 6734) of the ARMM was amended to include the provisions of the agreement. The 1996 GRP-MNLF peace agreement did not change the mandate of the ARMM. The ARMM was placed under the leadership of the MNLF with the election of MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari as Regional Governor on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1996.

The differences between the Government and the MNLF did not end with the signing of the agreement. To this day, the MNLF, at least the Nur Misuari faction, continues to accuse the government



of violating and not implementing some provisions of the peace agreement. The MNLF asserts that the Republic Act 9054 watered down the 1996 Peace Accord. On the other hand, the government maintains that it faithfully implemented the accord.

A year after the Supreme Court restrained the Government from signing the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) and later declared it unconstitutional, the two Parties **“re-established official contact”** on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009 and issued the four-point “Joint Statement” to do so. This is a key reference of the resumed peace talks.

### ***Participation: Challenges, Opportunities and Lessons Drawn***

The GRP and MILF are supposed to be on the final stretch of their peace journey. In January 2010, the GRP and MILF Peace Panels began discussions on their last major agenda, which is the negotiated political settlement of the age-old Moro Question and the armed conflict in Mindanao which will be in the form of a **comprehensive compact**. Even in the initial discussion, however, it has proven to be very difficult and strenuous. The two parties have put forward diametrically opposed drafts on the comprehensive compact which contained the political settlement package. The MILF panel is pushing for an asymmetrical state-sub state-arrangement while the government peace panel is offering “enhanced autonomy” with all its built-in integrative features.

One explanation for this seemingly unnecessary difficulty is the fact that the GRP had inadvertently reverted to its Constitution as a framework of negotiation vis-à-vis the comprehensive compact, contrary to what the Parties agreed in the beginning: the government not to invoke the “Constitution of the republic of the Philippines”, and the MILF to desist from bringing up the issue of “Independence”. The government peace negotiators are still glued, helpless or deliberately, to “thinking within the box” in finding solutions, even as other states faced with similar sovereignty-based conflicts have already come out of their “box” and reaped in peace and development dividends after they succeeded in forging peace pacts with their respective adversaries: Kosovo in Europe; Bougainville in Papua New Guinea; Northern Ireland in the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom; Aceh in Indonesia; South Sudan in The Islamic Republic of Sudan, and in Nepal.

From the time of writing this paper, the MILF Peace Panel Chair has accepted the fact that he himself does not know if there will be signing of a comprehensive compact or if it will ever be signed at all... in the near or distant future.



Emran G Mohamad is a peace advocate in Mindanao, who has been actively involved in the GPH-MILF Peace Process and other peace and development related undertakings in pursuit of the legitimate right of the Bangsamoro people to Self-determination.



# Sri Lanka: Ending the War in a History of Conflict

- Kanishka Rathnariya and Supipi Jayawardena

## *The Violence of Conflicts*

Different ethnic identities in Sri Lanka are “hierarchically nested segments” which run parallel to each other. Although there are a number of ethnic groups in Sri Lanka; the Sinhalese, the Sri Lankan Tamils, Sri Lankan Muslims, Tamils of Indian Origin, the Burghers, the Veddhas, the Malays and many others, the most significant socio-ethnic division in Sri Lankan society is between the ‘numerical majority’ Sinhalese and the numerical minority Sri Lankan Tamils. Over the years, tensions between these two groups escalated into a conflict of opinion about the Sri Lankan state. The Sinhalese, the majority group in the island, and the Sri Lankan Tamils, the island’s most significant minority, have sharply different perceptions on the nature of the Sri Lankan state; and diametrically opposed attitudes to decentralization and devolution of power to regional units of administration. It is this conflict of opinion that escalated into violence from the 1970’s onwards. In addition to the Sinhalese and Sri Lankan Tamils the two other main numerical minority groups; the *Tamils of Indian Origin* and the *Sri Lankan Muslims* have their own perceptions and grievances in relation to the Sri Lankan State. Tamils of Indian Origin have historically had grievances over a denial of citizenship and the Sri Lankan State’s ability to lift them from a vulnerable socio-economic status. Sri Lankan Muslims on the other hand wish to have safeguards over their rights in geographical ‘pocket’ areas in which they are a majority surrounded by high percentages of national and regional Sinhala or Tamil populations. If the Sri Lankan State was structured in a manner that addressed these grievances and accommodated differences of opinion in its policy making mechanisms there would not have been a Sri Lankan conflict and a

thirty year civil war. Instead, the Sri Lankan State was inadequately structured to deal with the social, economic and political inequalities in Sri Lankan society in an equitable manner. This resulted in the creation of ethnic tension between the Sinhalese and the Sri Lankan Tamil’s while “dragging” Tamils of Indian Origin, Sri Lankan Muslims and other ethnicities into a ‘*conflict of nationality*’. The end of the 1970’s marked the rise of the Tamil separatist militancy and the continued concentration of state power in the hands of the Sinhalese.

With these two opposing trends continually growing stronger, something was bound to break and it did in 1983. In 1983 thirteen soldiers were killed in a Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) ambush, sparking anti-Tamil riots throughout Sri Lanka leading to the deaths of between five hundred and one thousand Tamils. This was the beginning of what the LTTE called the ‘First Eelam War.’ The LTTE eliminated virtually all their rivals among all the other Tamil groups and sent what was referred to as its mentor the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) to the periphery of Tamil and Sri Lankan politics. This period marked the rise to dominance of the LTTE and the ‘militarization’ of the Sri Lankan government’s administration in Tamil-dominated areas in the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka.

Marking an end to the seventeen years of United National Party rule in the country, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumarathunga became the President of Sri Lanka in 1994 with an overwhelming majority. She campaigned on an explicit peace platform in 1994, both at the Southern provincial council election and at the Parliamentary and Presidential elections and won an overwhelming

mandate for negotiations with the LTTE and for constitutional reform to establish maximum devolution. President Kumarathunga's government commenced negotiations with the LTTE in late 1994 but they collapsed soon and war erupted again in April 1995. The then PA government embarked on the 'war for peace' strategy. It was the Kumarathunga government that first used this strategy prior to the Rajapakse Government in power today. However, that entailed an attempt to contain the LTTE military whilst pursuing a vigorous program of peace-building and constitutional reform proposals aimed at winning the Tamil community and thereby the political alienation of the LTTE from its constituency. As part of this process, four major proposals were made public during the Kumarathunga government; proposal for constitutional reforms in 1995, proposals relating to the devolution of powers in January 1996, proposals for a constitutional draft in October 1995 and the Constitutional Bill of August 2000. Unfortunately, the government failed to reach a consensus on the proposals.

In such a context, it is evident that the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) has its actual ideological beginnings in 1994 with the election of Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga (SLFP) to the executive presidency with a pledge to end the ethnic conflict. Peace talks were initiated in 1994 but failed in 1995 when the LTTE sank a naval craft resulting in what the LTTE calls the 'Third Eelam war'. From 1995 to 2001 the war raged across Sri Lanka with suicide bombings in the South and heavy fighting in the North and East.

In 2001 general elections were held and the UNP came back into power with Ranil Wickremasinghe (UNP) being sworn in as Prime Minister. The Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) with Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) as the Executive President and Ranil Wickramasinghe of the United National Front alliance as the Prime Minister entered into formal 'peace processes' with the LTTE with the signing of the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) on

23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2002. At the same time, the security forces of the Government of Sri Lanka "suffered a humiliating military debacle with unprecedented heavy casualties" as triumphantly announced on the LTTE website in April 2001, following a failed offensive initiated by the Sri Lankan army. Furthermore, the devastating attack carried out by the LTTE on the Bandaranaike International Airport in July 2001, hastened the urgency to focus on a negotiated settlement.

### *The Processes of Peace*

It should be noted that it was the LTTE that first announced a CFA on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2001. In a formal statement, the organization announced a month long unilateral cessation of hostilities as a gesture of goodwill during the festive season, to facilitate and promote initiatives towards a peace process. The government of Sri Lanka responded favorably to the announcement and made a similar offer to commence a cease-fire on December 24<sup>th</sup> for one month. With Norway's interventions a formal cease-fire agreement was signed on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2002. It must be emphasized that the CFA was true to its wording; it was an agreement to 'cease' 'fire' between two sides. It was a situation in which there was 'no war, no peace'. This did not suit the LTTE politically because, as in the case of the South, the people in the North and the East at the grass roots felt that they were not receiving their 'material share' of peace and the ordinary people in the North East were becoming restless

Starting from September 2002 there were six rounds of talks between the GOSL and the LTTE in Thailand, Norway and Japan. The Sri Lankan April 2004 Parliamentary election was another decisive factor. The manner in which the UNF government was defeated in Sinhala southern areas with the UPFA securing one hundred and five over the UNP's eighty two showed that people felt that the manner in which the peace process had been carried out was unfair to the South because the dividends of peace had not made it to the grass roots in a visible manner.



The most significant political turning point in the entire pre-CFA, CFA and post-CFA period was the Presidential elections of 2005. In 2005 Mahinda Rajapakse (SLFP) the Prime Minister won the Presidential elections against Wickramasinghe (UNP) by a slim margin. A majority of Tamils in areas controlled by the LTTE did not vote and it was speculated that the LTTE rejected the UNP candidate because he was backed by the international community. After this, although the GOSL and LTTE rebels declared their respect for the 2002 ceasefire, at talks in Geneva the situation continued to deteriorate with violations of the ceasefire occurring from both sides.

Ethnic violence broke out in Trincomalee in April 2006 with the explosion of a bomb in a crowded market place. This occurred at the brink of the forthcoming Sinhala and Tamil New Year, where ethnic tensions had been building in preceding months. In response to the incident, Sinhalese thugs incensed by the incident commenced rampaging through the town burning down Tamil business establishments and injuring and killing Tamil people in the streets.

Following an attack at the entrance to the Army Hospital on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2006 by the LTTE in an attempt to kill the Army Commander General Sarath Fonseka, the Sri Lankan Air Force responded with an air attack on a LTTE base in Sampur located in the Trincomalee District, Eastern Province. Confrontations between the LTTE and GOSL continued with both sides being aggressors, but it was the LTTE's decision to not open sluice gates in Mavil Aru in the Trincomalee - Batticaloa border in Eastern Sri Lanka that resulted in an escalation of violence and another phase of warfare marking a de facto end to the CFA.

### ***Participation: Challenges and Opportunities***

We can assume that although the CFA and the 2001-2005 peace process was largely seen as a failure in terms of bringing an end to the Sri Lanka conflict according to most parties it did pave the way for an end to the Civil War. The reason for

this assumption can be based on specific positive consequences generated during the CFA:

- Physical security was improved and thousands of deaths and casualties were averted during the no war period.
- Access to and movement of goods and services greatly improved for all communities and all people living in Sri Lanka.
- Economic activity rejuvenated in the country as a whole. Lifting of the economic embargo made it possible for a greater variety of products and services to be accessible to the people of the North and East.
- Humanitarian agencies gained increased access to vulnerable populations, and relief and rehabilitation activities expanded substantially. Out of approximately eight hundred thousand registered IDPs, over three hundred thousand returned to their homes and started to re-establish their livelihoods and resumed normal living.
- Sri Lanka received unprecedented financial support from the international community.

These were the *pros* in the CFA notwithstanding that Sri Lanka did not capitalize on them. However, there were a number of *cons* that were not addressed. These resulted in Sri Lanka going into a period which can be best described as “no war, no peace”.

The CFA was structured on demarcating the territory of Sri Lanka into LTTE controlled and government controlled areas. This in a way was interpreted by political elements as an ‘*undermining*’ of the Sri Lankan state’s territorial integrity.

Furthermore, there was “a significant lacuna” in the provisions of the CFA such as the absence of a Human Rights component which resulted in a failure to bind the parties involved in the conflict towards the observance of Human Rights norms. Most importantly the critical issue about the conscription of child combatants by the LTTE could not be dealt with in any manner under the agreement.

While a large majority of the Muslim community in the East was directly affected by the war (although they were not directly involved) with the signing of the CFA tensions among Muslim and Tamil Communities in the East escalated. Although peoples representatives from the Muslim community kept demanding from both the LTTE and the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure that an independent delegation of Muslims be allowed to take part in the negotiations process, this was not accommodated.

### **Lessons Drawn**

The *Sri Lanka* experience stresses the role of ceasefire agreements (CFA) and the emphasis on post-conflict peace-building. The CFA process, during the final years of the Sri Lankan war, produced lessons of relevance to future peace processes both within and outside Sri Lanka. Any peace process produces unforeseen and unintended consequences. Facilitators therefore need to consider the potential costs of their

actions, applying a consequentialist ethic and precautionary principles, including a benefit-harm analysis and the careful and continuous weighing of possible scenarios and outcomes to determine strategy. It is crucial to have a skilled facilitator that all parties accept and feel comfortable with throughout negotiations in order to make the process as fair and even-handed as possible. Political will and ownership are important for any dialogue to reach a conclusive and implementable agreement. Political commitment is influenced by internal and external political pressure; but it is the strongest when participating parties enjoy a sense of ownership of the dialogue process. Ownership by the people of the process should be considered as another significant factor in any peace process. The current situation in *Sri Lanka* highlights the dangers of neglect of adequate post-conflict peace-building measures. In the words of one Sri Lankan commentator, “*Now, we have ended our war but our conflict still remains*”.



**Kanishka Rathnapriya** is a Former Research Coordinator for Sri Lanka One text Initiative, a Multi-Party negotiations process.

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## **Peace Process of Nepal: Cautious Optimism on Post Conflict Peace Building**

### **Kuldeep Niraula**

#### ***The Violence of Conflicts***

“While the conflict in Nepal has no doubt a political, ideological and even geo-political dimension its main root causes are social and economic, related to frustrated expectations that came with the advent of democracy, related to abject poverty that persists for a large percentage of the population related to poor and inefficient delivery of social services in areas such as education and health and related to inequality, exclusion and discrimination. A large percentage of the population of Nepal, in particular

Dalits and members of ethnic groups feel that they are politically and economically excluded, unable to contribute to decisions that affect their lives and unable to benefit from the economic advancement of the nation.” **Henning Karcher, UNDP Resident Representative in Nepal (19<sup>th</sup> May, 2003).**

The CPN (Maoist) started the ‘people’s war’ on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1996, by attacking police posts at Holeri (Rolpa) and Thibsisikot (Rukum) and a bank in Gorkha district was looted. The insurgency thus

started continued for more than a decade, creating fear and a sense of insecurity amongst the people. The dissolution of the elected government in 2002 and the royal takeover by the then King Gyanendra in February 2005 brought the Maoists and the Seven Political Party Alliance together in order to work against the movement made by the King. They launched a joint protest against the King, resulting in *Jana Andolan II* that took place for nineteen days through the mobilization of people from all over Nepal in April 2006. This popular protest forced the King to release his power to the people.

### ***The Processes of Peace***

On 30<sup>th</sup> April, after being sworn in as Prime Minister, Girija Prasad Koirala invited CPN (M) for peace talks. On 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2006, the government and the Maoists signed the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) that ended the decade long armed insurgency in Nepal. On 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2008, the Constituent Assembly Election was held after which CPN (M) emerged as the largest political force giving it the upper hand in the constitution-making process (Thapa, 2008).

The parties have agreed to constitute a National Peace and Rehabilitation Commission and a High Level Truth and Reconciliation Commission to make the peace campaign successful by ensuring justice for victims through such commissions. The agreement also vows to form the High-level Recommendation Commission on State Restructuring as well as such other mechanisms as may be necessary for the implementation of the peace accord. The parties have agreed not to operate any kind of parallel structure or any such structure, in any form in any area of the state or government mechanism. They have agreed to settle their problems through dialogue and negotiation.

The Peace Accord also has the provision of management of arms and armies and the parties have agreed to have the peace process observed by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Nepal, the National Human

Rights Commission and the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN).

### ***Participation: Challenges and Opportunities***

The CPA pledges to accomplish the progressive restructuring of the state in order to solve the existing problems of the country relating to class, caste, region and gender. It reiterates the full commitment to a competitive multi-party democratic system of governance, civil liberties, fundamental rights, human rights, rights of women and children, right to personal liberty, full freedom of press, and the concept of rule of law including democratic values and norms. In the agreement, the parties agreed to adopt policies to protect and promote the domestic industries and means and resources; to build a common development concept for the socio-economic transformation of the country and for justice; and to create an environment that promotes industry investment.

Nepal's peace process has entered into a phase of significant progress. After five years of signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the parties have reached a deal with the Maoists fighters, who will leave the cantonments and enter either army or civilian life. The deal has also been made on the constitution-writing and arrangement of power-sharing. Parties seem to be focusing on the critical task of writing a new constitution, which promises the federal restructuring of the state. However, challenges remain even in this phase of the peace process with continuously evolving coalition dynamics and divisions within parties.

Nepal has decided to aim for a federal political structure with the multi-party democratic system. In Nepal, federalism has been considered as an effective means of managing diversity. In this respect, it is a great opportunity for Nepal to address the problems created by a centuries-old feudal, top-down and unitary state-governing system. Federalism is a concept that goes beyond a single constitution or statutory provision and should be owned by all people and every community, hence, belonging and public legitimacy are preconditions



to make the federal system functional (Upreti, 2009). Federalism is a political mechanism intended to make a state inclusive and bring government closer to the people. However federalism itself does not guarantee these noble attempts as these objectives require respect for human rights and good administration regardless of state structure.

### ***Lessons Drawn***

In *Nepal*, the emphasis has been rightly placed on post-conflict peace-building. Implementing such approaches as outlined above necessitates

that there be a speedy resolution of contentious issue regarding the constitution-drafting process. Post conflict peace-building in Nepal has so far focused on reconstruction rather than developing completely different systems. Priority issues at this stage include; integration and rehabilitation of the Maoist combatants; justice for the victims of conflict; fostering development efforts and improved protection of human rights in this transitional period.



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Kuldeep Niraula is a Research Officer at The Carter Centre, Nepal, which is currently associated with work related to Peace Building in Nepal.

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## UNDERSTANDING THE POST CONFLICT SITUATION IN ACEH

***Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad***

### ***The Violence of Conflicts***

The Free Aceh Movement (GAM) is a “nationalist organization the political goals of which are explicitly based on territory rather than religion”. The movement was founded by Dr. Hasan di Tiro, the grandson of Tgk. Chik di Tiro, who became a national hero in Aceh during the war with the Dutch. As in many conflict areas in the South East Asian region such as Southern Thailand and Mindanao, Dr. Hasan di Tiro claimed that Aceh was not a part of Indonesia (Islam, 2006; Tiro, 1996). He insisted that Aceh should be an independent state which he called a *successor state*.

GAM, which is essentially an ethno-nationalist movement, began their activities in 1976 and Dr. Hasan di Tiro called himself *Wali Nanggroe* - a guardian of state. He recruited many young

Acehnese as combatants. It is said by a former combatant that his troops were not likely to read the *Green Book* authored by Muammar Qadafi. This is ultimately why GAM soldiers have been less radical than young Muslims from other countries who were trained in Libya alongside the Acehnese. It is also said that the Acehnese soldiers drew inspiration from the fact that Aceh had its own Kingdom and was not a part of Indonesia. If they had been allowed to read the *Green Book*, their mission may have resulted in similar action to what has occurred in Pattani and Mindanao.

### ***The Processes of Peace***

After more than thirty years, on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2005, GAM signed a MOU with the Indonesian government. Another aspect of this integration process was the chance for Dr. Hasan di Tiro to

return to Aceh after more than thirty years in exile. Finally in October 2009, he made his trip from Sweden by transiting in Kuala Lumpur to Aceh as part of the integration process. On the day of his arrival, more than two hundred thousand people from Aceh were waiting for him in front of the Bayturrahman mosque.

### ***Participation: Challenges and Opportunities***

One of the most significant challenges following the signing of the MOU was the integration process of ex-combatants into society. Re-integration has been slow to say the least. At the local level, the ex-combatants were given financial compensation as part of the program (Fordin, 2008). These funds were seen as a way of naturalizing GAM members as ordinary people with an ultimate aim of releasing a spirit of freedom amongst them.

At the same time, opportunities were made available for GAM members to become leaders in Aceh as either governors or heads of districts. To make this process go smoothly, GAM changed the name of the organization to *Komite Peralihan Aceh*, the Committee of Aceh Transition (KPA).

On February 2010, there was a terrorist attack in Aceh. This tragedy had an extremely negative impact on the peace process in Aceh.

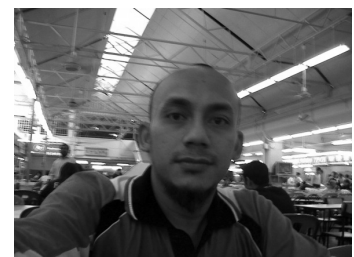
President Martti Ahtisaari made several trips to Aceh to monitor the peace process because following the terrorist attack in 2010 many provocative actions which could have a serious impact on the peace process took place. He warned the Indonesian government to take the situation seriously especially the intelligence operations in Aceh. The KPA realized that if they responded through violence, this could provide the central

government an opportunity to run a new military operation in Aceh. Finally, after the election PA, a KPA party member won in every district, however, until today, the criminal problem still exists in Aceh.

There has also been internal conflict among ex-combatants and people believe that this could be a new source of conflict in the future. In this context, GAM members can be classified into four groups; the first is the group that does not agree with the peace process; the second group agrees with the peace process and enjoy some 'integration' in Aceh by being installed in Parliament; the third the group focuses only on daily needs and are eager to be ordinary people; but it is the fourth group who are likely to become new combatants in the near future. This group is not coordinated by the elite of KPA and they have spread and engaged in various criminal activities in Aceh. The issues of improved jobs and education are crucial to solve such problems in Aceh.

### ***Lessons Drawn***

The striking feature of the Aceh peace process has been its reliance on restoring traditional institutions of governance. The Helsinki MOU, itself states that: "*Kanūn* Aceh will be re-established for Aceh respecting the historical traditions and customs of the people of Aceh and reflecting the legal requirements of Aceh. The Institution of Wali Nanggroe with all its ceremonial attributes and entitlements will be established." Lately, the revival of *adat* institutions is being promoted under the institution of *Majelis Adat Aceh* (MAA). The *adat* institutions are under the guardianship of *Wali Nanggroe*.



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# KAK YUS : AN INSPIRATIONAL REALITY

**RIZKI AFFIAT INTERVIEWS YUSDARITA WISTO, KNOWN TO MOST IN ACEH, INDONESIA AS KAK YUS AND BRINGS FORTH HER SELDOM HEARD INSPIRATIONAL STORY OF COURAGE, HOPE AND LEADERSHIP**

During the conflict between the Free Aceh Movement and the Government of Indonesia (1976-2005), civilians in Aceh had been victims of arbitrary detention, involuntary disappearances, torture, and massacre. Many fled their villages, some remained and a number of them joined the resistance movement. It was a war that forced women to play many roles: as combatants, rebel supporters, breadwinners and even village leaders.

The role of women in conflict and post-conflict is not only problematic, but also tragic. Their role was acknowledged, but barely received formal recognition. Some decided to stand up and fight against the odds, Yusdarita is one of them. She hails from Rembele village in Bener Meriah. With her effort, she became the leader of her community and managed to establish ten women's cooperatives throughout the district that helped empower women in her village.

**Q: Could you share with us your background?**

**A:** I was born in Bener Meriah district. A district with three ethnic groups: Aceh, Gayo, and Java. It was difficult for us because my family is Acehnese, a minority in Bener Meriah, but my husband is a Javanese. I could have been killed by the militia and he could have been killed by the rebels, but we survived. I am a conflict survivor. My father was kidnapped and murdered and his body was found after six years, prior to this we did not know his whereabouts. Many of my family members were tortured and killed. Our possessions were forcefully taken.

When the conflict was in its worse phase I had to flee. My health was terrible, I was paralyzed for some time because of lack of medicine.

After my condition was a little better, I moved to Banda Aceh. I did not stay in my village because I was afraid I would be abducted and disappear like many others. I finally decided to return home because I was reminded of the women in the village. I believed that if we could come together as one then we could be stronger.

**Q: How did you start the community group?**

**A:** I had been active in a village health service since 1992, especially since its attention was on women and children. Then I made a group for women to collect money and give them small loans. At that time our district was already affected by conflict. We started the group because many women became breadwinners for their families as a consequence of the war and they needed support. We started modestly. There were ten members, all of them were women affected by conflict. We collected money worth only twenty thousand rupiah per person (around US\$2), so the total money we had was only two hundred thousand rupiah.

In 2005 I joined a national program in economic development at the village level. In 2006 I was introduced to an organization called Women Volunteers for Humanity [*Relawan Perempuan untuk Kemanusiaan*/RPuK]. There I gained immense





knowledge. I didn't know the world outside until they told me about many conditions and incidents that women had to face.

**Q: What kind of obstacles did you have to face during that period?**

**A:** Even after the armed conflict it was clearly evident that Bener Meriah district remained highly sensitive with ethnic conflict on the rise. In my village there were around fifty percent Gayo, forty eight percent Java, and two percent Aceh - me and my family. This posed a big challenge when I initiated the cooperative. When conflict occurred in our district, people were forced to be part of the militia or become rebel fighters. It was a sin if we didn't join, and we would be kidnapped and killed. People were afraid that the funds we received would be distributed to the Free Aceh Movement, but we proved them otherwise. After all these efforts, today, Gayo and Java people are also a part of our group.

**Q: What drives you to do this work?**

**A:** I followed my conscience. I feel that we, women, face the same suffering no matter where we are. I just followed my heart, I wanted to do something and this work gave me satisfaction, even though I am not economically stable. I am happy to help in whatever way possible.

**Q: How has economic independence and trainings changed the women in your village?**

**A:** The women have been able to improve their economic status. There was a woman who started with no house, now she has one of her own.

Besides financial gains our groups also carry out discussions on the rights of women and children. Some of the women are now also members of *Tuha Peut* [a traditional legislative council at the village level].

**Q: What are other problems you see among women in the village?**

**A:** Violence against women is a big problem. When we, me and Women Volunteers for Humanity, tried to advocate the case of a thirteen year old girl who was raped and left pregnant by the perpetrator, the parents refused to take the case to the police because they feared it would cost them money. We explained that the local government has a budget allocated for judicial processes for such cases and we could provide a lawyer for free, but the parents did not agree.

**Q: What does a woman leader mean to you?**

**A:** Women leaders in the village promote participation of women in solving their problems. So far men only think about their own needs. For example, if they build a mosque, they include two restrooms, one for each sex, while the need of women in accessing water and restrooms is more than men. Equality does not mean a one to one comparison: rather, it depends on the actual need.



*Rizki Affiat is an independent researcher and active in the Aceh Women's League (LINA).*

## AMAN ALUMNI SOW SEEDS OF PEACE

Since its inception in 1990, AMAN has trained over five hundred youth peace builders across Asia and the Middle East on issues of peace, justice and rights. This section covers the involvement of AMAN alumni in peace building in their own societies and how AMAN helped them in their journey.




**Tilottam Paudel: Nepal**

I was born in Nepal in 1982 and during my school days I became involved in the Jagriti Child Club. It was the first child Club of Nepal initiated by my leadership.

I then started Jagriti Child and Youth Concern Nepal in 2000 to fulfill my dream of working on the issue. During my work on child and youth rights I got an opportunity to participate in AMAN activities, including the three weeks course on peace studies and conflict transformation offered by AMAN.

Through the knowledge gained in these trainings I was successful in working in different field areas in Nepal even amidst the rising conflict. It is due to the knowledge and capacity building in the workshops and training that I attended at AMAN, that I was able to organize many youth and child rights-related programs, National youth conferences, was involved in the district level fact finding Human Rights monitoring program, played the local Organizer's Role for the South and West Asian Youth for Peace Training Workshop in Nepal and successfully visited sixty districts of Nepal for program and human rights monitoring.

I would like to express my gratitude to the AMAN for always encouraging me to do better work in the social sector. AMAN is truly the backbone of my successful life. 




**Faiza Tariq: Pakistan**

I initiated my career with an organization in the social sector called *Initiative for Development and Empowerment Axis - IDEA* as a Human Resource and Gender person. I attended AMAN's seven day training 'Youth for Peace Workshop' in December 2011. The

training workshop emerged not only as a source of inspiration to me but also a platform for learning the tools and techniques for upbringing our youth which is an asset for our future-for the promotion of peace and formulating strategies to understand the meaning and the root causes of conflict and how to cope during conflict and crisis.

In the past few years, Pakistan has been struck badly several times by both natural and man-made disasters. We have been striving to make youth realize their roles and responsibilities and to help shape them to be the leaders of tomorrow with the support of other NGOs/INGOs and Government departments and Educational institutions.

After attending the training workshop *Youth for Peace*, IDEA organized a seven day peace building 'Youth for Peace' training program in schools and at community level; not only training Parent Teacher Council (PTCs) teachers and youth on peace but also involving the community through a participatory and activities based approach as was used in the training workshop in Thailand. The training and the activities were conducted in Swat from January to February, 2012. The key focus was on Conflict-Youth & Peace and the major objectives were to clarify concepts such as peace and its significance within the community and the concepts of conflict and conflict resolution. These programs further aimed to build a strong relationship between the PTCs, youth and the community so they can work together as effective support systems for peace promotion and community development and help them realize their roles and responsibilities in creating healthy and peaceful environments. These Youth Forums were developed in the conflict-affected districts of Swat and KPK, which are now actively taking part in promoting peace and in bridging the gap among the people of the nation by organizing different cultural & sports activities in the region. 

# Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

This is in appreciation for introducing Mr. Satya Prateek to the readers of AMANA. His scholarly critique of the inherent ambiguity of so called progressive Islam and its limitations will definitely enrich the on going discourse over the role of Islam in its multiple dimensions both within the faith as well as without. Coming from a different religious background his observations become even more enlightening, especially his ability to do so without any malice. Thanks, and wish the AMANA team all the best.

Ali Ahmed Ziauddin  
Dhaka

## Events at AMAN:

A 'Philosophy in Action' Workshop was held in Nong Chok, Bangkok which saw academics from South Asia , South East Asia and Sweden present, discuss, and debate different themes related to the concept of philosophy in action. The two day study workshop was held on January 28-30, 2012.

The 8th School of Peace Studies and Conflict Transformation was held from 18<sup>th</sup> February to 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012. Twenty-six participants from three continents participated in the three weeks peace school organized by AMAN in Bangkok and Chiang Mai.

A study workshop on Women in Armed Conflict was held in Aceh, Bangkok and Southern Thailand from 22<sup>nd</sup> April to 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2012. AMAN brought together Women from Southern Thailand, Mindanao and Aceh who were affected by armed conflict and/or work for women and children affected by the same; and also facilitated an exchange visit and sharing of experiences between them.

