



**Sulu Armed Violence  
Reduction Initiative** 2008 Review

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## Acronyms

<b>AFP</b>	Armed Forces of the Philippines
<b>ARMM</b>	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
<b>AVRI</b>	Armed Violence Reduction Initiative
<b>AVRI RG</b>	Armed Violence Reduction Initiative Resource Group
<b>COMELEC</b>	Committee on Elections
<b>CPP/NPA</b>	Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>CVO</b>	Civilian volunteer organizations
<b>HDC</b>	Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
<b>IANSA</b>	International Action Network on Small Arms
<b>IPHO</b>	Integrated Provincial Health Office
<b>IRR</b>	Implementing Rules and Regulations (Jolo Zone of Peace)
<b>JIDF</b>	Jolo Internal Defense Force
<b>LGU</b>	Local Government Unit
<b>MILF</b>	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
<b>MNLF</b>	Moro National Liberation Front
<b>NDF</b>	National Democratic Front
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>PhilANSA</b>	Philippines Action Network on Small Arms
<b>PIDS</b>	Philippine Institute for Development Studies
<b>PNP</b>	Philippine National Police
<b>PNP FED</b>	Philippine National Police Firearms and Explosives Division
<b>PMG</b>	Police Mobile Group
<b>RA</b>	Republic Act
<b>RARAV</b>	Regional Action to Reduce Armed Violence
<b>RPA</b>	Revolutionary Proletarian Army
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UN PoA</b>	United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons
<b>ZOP</b>	Zone of Peace (Jolo)

## Editorial

*Sihnag*—Tausug for ‘glow’—is the first annual review published by the Sulu Armed Violence Reduction Initiative (AVRI). The AVRI team, located in Sulu, Manila and Sydney, have gathered together a collection of articles reflecting a variety of viewpoints on armed violence in Sulu in particular and the Philippines more generally, as well as examples of violence reduction efforts from around the globe. *Sihnag* will grow from year to year along with the AVRI effort, and in this first edition we recognize the efforts of many community members and leaders who have contributed in various ways to starting a much-needed dialogue on violence in Sulu.

In any society, the use of weapons requires robust debate and discussion, and AVRI seeks to stimulate a wide and inclusive dialogue in Sulu about weapons control and violence reduction. Greater understanding of the parameters of the problem of armed violence and possible solutions is central to changing behavior and attitudes. AVRI believes several factors require attention. In particular, the use of violence for political purposes must be questioned; the ban on private armed groups enforced consistently; cultural norms condoning the use of violence for settling family feuds must be condemned; and mechanisms established to diffuse family feuds before they escalate. Civil society, Local Government Units (LGUs), the media, the police, the military, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and many others can all play important roles in stimulating such discussions.

Disciplined and lawful use of guns in the hands of individuals requires consistent control and monitoring through an effective set of measures to track guns over the course of their life-

span and to regulate holders and users. In the Philippines, a key challenge lies with the implementation of the laws. Resolving this challenge requires a combination of political will, a strengthening of law enforcement agencies, and addressing the factors motivating the acquisition, use and misuse of guns by individuals and groups.

In August 2007, the disbanding of militias—Civilian Volunteer Organizations (CVOs)—and the banning of the open display of guns in public was called for through the Sulu Provincial Government by Governor Abdusakur Tan in the so-called ‘twin resolutions.’ This has created a positive stimulus to act critically and creatively to reduce armed violence in Sulu.

AVRI was created in 2007 by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and fully established in early 2008 with generous support from the Government of Norway. Its creation was quickly followed by intense activity to develop the Jolo Zone of Peace (ZOP), an important first step in the long road towards violence reduction and prevention. AVRI and many Suluans now want to see these measures move from fine words on paper to meaningful action. If such action is achieved, then Sulu is well placed in the years to come to provide a powerful example of local action saying “no” to gun violence, drawing upon a clear understanding of the causes, nature and impacts of such violence.

2008 also saw the introduction of an armed violence monitoring scheme by AVRI, which we hope to refine in 2009. Monitoring is crucial to effectively understanding the trends, peaks and lows of gun violence, as well as ‘hot spots’ around the island. Several incidents throughout the year highlighted the impacts of the long running armed conflict on civilians, including the so-called ‘Ipil Massacre’<sup>1</sup> in the municipality of Maimbung in February and an incident of ‘friendly fire’ allegedly hitting civilians in barangay Sionogan (Indanan Municipality) in June.<sup>2</sup>

- 1 Eight people, including a soldier on leave, a pregnant woman, two children, and two teenagers, were killed when AFP troops raided the village of Ipil, Mainbung town on 4 February 2008. According to the AFP, Abu Sayyaf bandits holding captive a rice trader from Jolo were in the area at that time, around 3 A.M. However, according to Attorney Jose Manuel Mamaug of the Commission on Human Rights assigned to the region: “It was an attack on sleeping residents as far as our team’s findings are concerned.” CHR-Region IX (2008), *Fact Finding Report on the Ipil Massacre Incident*, February; Julie Alipala (2008), ‘CHR blames Sulu military commander for Maimbung ‘massacre,’ *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Mindanao Bureau, posted February 14.
- 2 GMA News (2008), ‘DSWD in Sulu confirms 4 people hurt in shelling in Indanan town,’ *Flash Report*, June 16. DSWD is the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Armed civilians, deeply divided along clan lines, remain a leading security concern in Sulu. Killings as well as threats of violence and intimidation were recorded throughout the year. Family feuds, which can be alarmingly violent in nature, present a formidable challenge; it appeared that in 2008, clan conflict was on the rise. Added to this mix was the rise in kidnappings by the Abu Sayyaf Group—a constant threat to Sulu’s populace and those visiting for humanitarian and other benign purposes.

There remains much to be done to ensure that armed violence will no longer prevent the closure of schools and markets, burden health services, and undermine the rule of law in Sulu. As AVRI deepens its efforts, it aims to strengthen and build institutional synergies and partnerships among Sulu stakeholders to address armed violence reduction and prevention. It will continue to assist LGU’s in the Jolo Zone of Peace initiative, conduct research, organize focus group discussions and public forums to promote debate and dialogue and offer advice drawing upon good practice from within the Philippines and globally.

## Highlights of the Sulu Armed Violence Reduction Initiative in 2008

AVRI has organized or participated in various events over the course of 2008 to facilitate and build public awareness about armed violence in Sulu. Some highlights include:

- **January–March:** With support from the Government of Norway, the AVRI secretariat was established, based out of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HDC) office in Jolo, Sulu. A ten-person Resource Group (AVRI RG) was developed to help plan activities, monitor implementation, provide cross-sectoral support, and act as a forum for policy-makers and decision-shapers to discuss policy concerns. The AVRI RG includes representatives from provincial and local governments, the police, and communities engaged with public health, youth, women’s rights, and social justice, as well as Muslim and Christian representatives of the MNLF.
- **April:** An AVRI goal of creating non-violent zones was realized with the announcement of the ZOP. The HDC Board Chair, Sir Michael Aaronson came to Jolo and presided over the event along with the Mayor of Jolo and other local dignitaries. The event received national and international attention. Through the rest of the year, the AVRI team worked to implement the ZOP, supporting efforts by the Jolo Municipal Government to draft the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).
- **May:** A member of the AVRI team participated in the Asia Pacific Meeting for the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development—an important learning opportunity, as well as a chance to publicize the budding AVRI effort.



- **June:** As part of the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence organized by the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), AVRI convened a public forum on June 5 bringing together the police, army and civic organizations in Jolo.<sup>3</sup> The forum aimed to provide a neutral space for different stakeholders to express and exchange views. The panel included Dr. Raden Ikbala, Integrated Provincial Hospital Office-Sulu; Mr. Cocoy Tulawie, team leader, Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society-Sulu; Engr. Barjunaid Amilasan, Chairperson of the civil society group, Sug People's Alliance of Tausug (Sugpat); Father Romeo Villanueva, Executive Director of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Organization; Lt. Col. Bajunaid Abid, Jolo Internal Defense Force (JIDF), and PCI Amil Baanan, Chief of Police, Indanan Municipality, Philippines National Police-Sulu. The panelists provided a range of perspectives ranging from the effects of armed violence on children to linkages with human rights to the potential of security sector transformation. Participants made a number of recommendations, notably on the strengthening of the Jolo ZOP and the role of LGUs in supporting the initiative. Following the forum, members of the AVRI Secretariat appeared on DXMM radio and discussed the proceedings. Another radio segment devoted to armed violence reduction took place the following week. This session featured *Gabbang*, a local orchestra of traditional musicians, who sang songs about the perils of armed violence.
- **July:** A second public forum, co-organized by the Jolo Municipal Government and AVRI, took place on July 20. This event was arranged to learn from the peacebuilding experiences and insights of Fr. Roberto C. Layson, a noted peace advocate who works closely with internally displaced persons in Mindanao and who was instrumental in establishing the 'Space for Peace' communities in Pikit, Cotabato.

Participants included the Mayor of Jolo, barangay captains, civil society organizations and members of the AVRI RG. Fr. Layson noted that the Pikit peace zone had resulted in many improvements in the quality of life of the local community, and stressed the key roles played by women and young people in forging the zone of peace through monitoring and campaigning. Fr. Layson also emphasized that Muslims, Christians and Mindanao's indigenous peoples, the Lumads, needed to work together to achieve *and* maintain peace. Following Fr. Layson's comments, the meeting was opened for discussion of the Jolo ZOP. Participants felt the ZOP would benefit from:

- Attention to the historical and ideological context of the situation in Jolo;
- Strengthening the initiative at the barangay level;
- Further consultations with stakeholders and local government departments;
- Increased participation from religious leaders;
- Strengthening the justice system, especially the traditional dispute mechanism at the barangay level.

Also in July, AVRI gained international media exposure when it was featured on Al-Jazeera's "People and Power" program in a segment entitled 'Sulu's Gun Culture.' This documentary, by journalist Orlando de Guzman, provided a snapshot of the extent of armed violence among warring political clans and discussed Tausug relationships to guns as well as identifying some factors contributing to their acquisition. AVRI's efforts, such as the Jolo ZOP, were also shown, as well as community dialogues such as that conducted among the locals of Luuk municipality.

- **August:** AVRI facilitated the creation of a Council of Elders, composed of eminent citizens of Jolo and representatives of

<sup>3</sup> The Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence is an annual worldwide awareness-raising initiative of IANSA of which AVRI and the HD Centre are members. IANSA provided AVRI with a USD500 grant for the events, for which we are appreciative. For more on IANSA, see [www.iansa.org](http://www.iansa.org)



▲ Old Mindanao Week of Peace poster in Cotabato. Part of a photo-essay in *Small Arms Survey 2007* taken by Lucien Read, January and February 2007.  
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barangays, to provide guidance and credibility to the ZOP and serve as an alternative mechanism for peaceful dispute resolution.

- **September:** AVRI and the Jolo Municipal Government agreed to conduct a forum to review the effectiveness of the ZOP. For its part, AVRI committed to undertake a ZOP baseline survey to provide information and input to the review forum. At the Review Summit for the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita of the Government of the Philippines highlighted in his speech the work of the HDC and AVRI in combating violence in Sulu.
- **October:** On 1 October, AVRI commemorated the six-month anniversary of the ZOP by hosting the opening night of

the two-week Eid Festival celebration to mark the end of Ramadan. More than 5,000 people attended presentations and events showcasing local talent and supporting the ZOP. An AVRI-supported band played local songs using modern and traditional musical instruments, and local troupes performed traditional Tausug dances, such as the *pangalay* and the *tauti*. The Mayor provided a compelling speech and implored Suluanos to support and respect the Zone. T-shirts printed with the slogan 'Peace is healthy for children and other living things' were distributed as prizes for various events. Throughout the rest of the month, six community coordinators were hired to undertake part-time work in their local communities. In addition to collecting information on incidents that breach the principles of the ZOP, they also act as local sounding boards for armed violence concerns, monitoring and reporting.

- **November:** A survey was concluded of some 1,600 Joloanos to gauge views on the ZOP. This effort provided an interesting snapshot of the work required to raise the Zone's profile. At the end of November, AVRI was asked to organize the sixth annual Mindanao Week of Peace in Sulu. The event was co-sponsored by the Provincial Government, the Municipal Government of Jolo, and private donors, and included activities such as a parade, a 'ride for peace' motorcade covering four municipalities, foot races, and art and music shows, all focused on the theme of peace. Over 5,000 people attended this year's events.
- **December:** Throughout the year, short radio advertisements/plays were devised and aired on DXMM, DXSM, Hot FM and My Radio to publicize the adverse effects of armed violence. The December versions were combined with a sermon by Ustadz Yahiya Abdulla, an AVRI RG member representing religious communities.

## Who's who at AVRI?

### The Resource Group

#### **Erwin Tan**

Administrator, Sulu Provincial Government

#### **Abdukhamar Hassan**

Administrator, Jolo Municipal Government

#### **Ustadz Yahiya Abdullah**

Islamic scholar, Sulu Ulamahs

#### **Father Romeo Villanueva**

Priest, Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and Executive Director of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Organization

#### **Zoraida Gumbahali**

Represents the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society, women's sector

#### **PCI Amil Baanan**

Chief of Police, Indanan Municipality, Philippines National Police-Sulu

#### **Sitti Alhada Abayan**

Chairperson of the youth organization Baggut<sup>4</sup>

#### **Benhar Usman**

Councilor, Municipality of Patikul, MNLF representative (observer status)

### Community Coordinators

#### **Kalmie A. Abduhasad**

Pharmacy graduate from Luuk Municipality

#### **Dreiza N. Abidin**

Former development worker from Panamao Municipality

#### **Jeaness Sarah Agil**

From Siasi Municipality

#### **Basil Amirhusin**

From Jolo Municipality

#### **Biszal Emul**

Tailor from Indanan Municipality

#### **Wasphy S. Hassan**

Engineer from Talipao Municipality

### The Secretariat

#### **Alfhadar J. Pajiji**

Initiative Coordinator, former Secretary General, Regional Legislative Assembly, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao

#### **Nash U. Abduhadi**

Communications Officer, journalist

#### **Vandrazel M. Birowa**

Initiative Project Officer, information technology specialist

<sup>4</sup> Tausug for 'knotted'



► Gunsmith scrutinizing a weapon he is crafting in Danao. Part of a photo-essay in *Small Arms Survey 2007* taken by Lucien Read, January and February 2007.  
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## Weapons availability in the Philippines

Jennifer Santiago Oreta, PhilANSA

The Philippines has long been awash in small arms and light weapons outside government hands. Insurgent groups, including the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the Communist Party of the Philippines' New People's Army (CPP/NPA), the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), and the Abu Sayyaf Group, hold substantial weaponry.<sup>5</sup>

However, such holdings make up only a fraction of the total number of guns and light weapons in the Philippines. Civilian weapons possession is the largest in terms of volume. Official estimates place the number of registered firearms in the Philippines at 1,081,074 and 'loose firearms' (firearms that have never been licensed or with expired licenses) at 482,162.<sup>6</sup> An estimated additional 150,000 loose firearms are in the hands of criminal organizations and insurgent groups.<sup>7</sup> Some external analysts, however, place the total at closer to 4.2 million illegal firearms, extrapolating from the fact that unlicensed guns have been used in 92 per cent of resolved criminal firearms cases.<sup>8</sup>

The range of weaponry available in the country is staggering. Farmers from Mindanao, for example, have described to the Philippine Action Network on Small Arms (PhilANSA) the impressive range of weapons in circulation in the province: AK-47s, M-16s, M-14s, M-1s, .38 and .45 pistols and revolvers, paltik (locally-manufactured guns), rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), M-79s, PV-49s, landmines, machine guns (30/50/60), and 81mm mortars.<sup>9</sup>

The Philippine Center for Transnational Crime reports that most of the firearms and ammunition in the country come from

5 Project Ploughshares (2007), *Armed Conflicts Report: Philippines-CPP/NPA*, January. Available at [www.ploughshares.ca](http://www.ploughshares.ca)

6 Paper presented by Colonel Maligalig of PNP-Firearms and Explosive Division-Civil Security Group to PhilANSA, September 2, 2008.

7 Pattugalan, Gina, N. (2004), 'Small Arms Proliferation and Misuse: Human Security Impact and Policy Actions in Southeast Asia', *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* vol. 19, no. 1, University of the Philippines, Third World Studies Center; Sinfuego, Roy and Ilgan, Aris (2005), 'PNP orders crackdown on 150,000 loose firearms,' *Manila Bulletin*, April 16, available at [www.articlearchives.com/crime-law-enforcement-corrections/law-police-forces/75356-1.html](http://www.articlearchives.com/crime-law-enforcement-corrections/law-police-forces/75356-1.html)

8 Small Arms Survey (2002), *Small Arms Survey 2002: Counting the Human Cost*, Oxford University Press, p. 99.

9 PhilANSA (2008), *Voices to silence guns*, p. 12.







Group	Estimated Membership	Weapons Holdings <sup>10</sup>
MILF	13,459 (1998) 11,769 (2007)	10,227 (1998) 7,747 (2007)
CPP/NPA	9,388 (2002)	6,149 (2002)
Abu Sayyaf	1,148 (1998) 383 (2007)	386 (1998)

local manufacturing, smuggling, pilferage from military and police arsenals, and losses from PNP and AFP operations, as well as from legal trade.<sup>11</sup> Gun smuggling is a particular problem, as the Philippine archipelago, with its 7,107 islands and tens of thousands of kilometers of irregular coastline, provides ideal cover for hidden landings and secret storage areas for gunrunners and traders. However, not all arms in the Philippines come from outside the country; many are locally produced. According to the Philippine National Police-Firearms and Explosives Division (PNP-FED) there are 45 legal firearms manufacturers, 522 authorized dealers, 133 gun repair shops and approximately 5,000 illegal gunsmiths nationwide.<sup>12</sup>

As one example, the Cebuano city of Danao is well-known for its gun industry; Danao-made handguns, such as .22, 5.56 US-made rifles, and .38 caliber revolvers and .45 caliber pistols, are the most commonly traded in the country. Aside from being relatively cheaper than foreign-made handguns, these guns also are highly marketable and easier to procure.<sup>13</sup> “Prices vary according to the origins and urgency of the disposal: a 9 mm. costs around 25,000 Philippine pesos (PhP), a .45 caliber pistol around 24,000 PhP, and an M-16 26,000 PhP.”<sup>14</sup> A Danao gun-maker also said “he can finish making a KG-9 in a month . . . with a capital outlay of about 7,000 PhP (about USD150) and sell it for about 10,000 to 11,000 PhP (about USD220 to 240).”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> 2007 data: Discussion with National Intelligence Coordinating Agency official by author in 2008; 2002 data: Military Intelligence Report cited in Ferrer, Miriam (2003), ‘Philippine political context-challenges of democratic consolidation,’ Paper presented to CIDA’s Country Development Programming Framework for the Philippines, August 29; 1998 data: Rojas, Felipe L (1998), *Philippine Center on Transnational Crime Paper on Terrorism, Philippines*. Available at [www.pctc.gov.ph/papers/InternationalTerrorism.htm](http://www.pctc.gov.ph/papers/InternationalTerrorism.htm)

<sup>11</sup> Philippine Center for Transnational Crime (no date), *PCTC paper on illicit trafficking and manufacturing of firearms: the Philippine context*. Available at [www.pctc.gov.ph/papers/FA's%20illicit%20Trafficking%20&%20Manufacturing.htm](http://www.pctc.gov.ph/papers/FA's%20illicit%20Trafficking%20&%20Manufacturing.htm)

<sup>12</sup> Makinano, M and A Lubang (2001) *Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: The Mindanao Experience*, International Security and Outreach Programme, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada. Available at [www.international.gc.ca/](http://www.international.gc.ca/)

<sup>13</sup> Philippine Center for Transnational Crime, (no date), *PCTC paper on illicit trafficking and manufacturing of firearms: the Philippine context*.

<sup>14</sup> Makinano, M and A Lubang (2001).

<sup>15</sup> Aragon, Chito. O (2008), ‘High powered firearms seized,’ *Cebu Daily News*, March 18. Available at <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/cebudailynews/metro/view/20080318-125448/High-powered-firearms-seized>

16 In the Philippines the distinction drawn between homicides and murders is based on knowledge of motivation and the key difference is whether and how someone is charged for the killing(s). If intent to kill can be proven it is murder. If it is not established then it is homicide: therefore, killings are homicides until classified as murders.

17 Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2006), 'Crime Statistics by Region', May. Available at [www.pids.gov.ph](http://www.pids.gov.ph)

18 Fianza, Gen. Florencio, Special Envoy on Transnational Crime (the OSETC) (2007), 'OSETC and initiatives on regulation,' presented at the Asian Parliamentarians Workshop on SALW and the proposed ATT, February 6–7, House of Representatives, Philippines.

19 Dursin, Kanis (2000). 'Worried governments target small arms trade,' *Asia Times*, May 12. Available at [www.atimes.com/se-asia/BE12Ae01.html](http://www.atimes.com/se-asia/BE12Ae01.html)

20 Government of the Philippines (2003), *Report to the First Biennial Meeting of States on the Implementation of the Program of Action of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its aspects*. New York. July 8. Available at <http://disarmament.un.org/>

21 Fianza, Gen. Florencio (2007).

22 Republic Act (RA) 8294, 6 June 1997

23 Executive Order 580 of 21 November 2006

## Weapons and crime

At the national level, in addition to the thousands of murders and homicides<sup>16</sup> each year, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) reports that for 2006, there were 12,201 assaults (including attempted murder), 2,589 rapes, and 7,312 violent robberies; preliminary data for the first quarter of 2007 indicate 2,855 assaults, 775 rapes and 1,845 violent robberies.<sup>17</sup> The PNP acknowledges that firearms are used in most of these crimes.

Meanwhile, the lucrative organized criminal sector relies on weaponry for security and intimidation as well as for operations such as kidnapping.<sup>18</sup> While the black market provides easy access to weapons for lawless elements, corruption in both the military and police also accounts for the 'crossing over' of legal guns to the illegal trade. At the international level, the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons has led to the increase of transnational organized crime, and the presence of criminal groups poses a threat not only to national but regional security. Besides the acquisition and use of guns by rebel groups, the PNP has detected the involvement of international crime organizations in the Philippine's gun problem. For example, intelligence has confirmed that *yakuzas* (members of Japanese organized crime networks) have acquired large shipments of *paltiks* from Cebu City. Gunsmiths from Cebu are brought to Japan expressly to manufacture guns.<sup>19</sup>

## Controlling weapons possession and use

Formally, the possession of guns by civilians is regulated in the Philippines, yet unlicensed weapons pose a major challenge. Of the 13,365 firearms retrieved by police between 1993 and 2003, only 1,953 (15 per cent) were licensed, while 11,412

(85 per cent) were unlicensed.<sup>20</sup> In 2006, of the 4,846 firearms involved in crimes, only 52 (1 per cent) were licensed and 4,794 (99 per cent) were unlicensed.<sup>21</sup> Control of firearms is in the hands of the PNP, particularly the Firearms and Explosives Division (FED). The FED handles the administration, enforcement and implementation of firearms and explosives laws. Among these laws is the Marcos-era Firearms Law of the Philippines (Presidential Decree 1866a), created in 1983 to suppress crimes affecting public safety due to the proliferation of illegally possessed and manufactured firearms. Amended in 1997, the law prohibits the "unlawful manufacture, acquisition, disposition or possession of firearms, parts of firearms or ammunition and the machinery, tools or instruments used or intended to be used in the manufacture of any firearm or ammunition."<sup>22</sup> To own a license, the applicant must be a Philippine citizen, at least 21 years old, and have no pending criminal charges. Even if licensed, firearms must be kept in the residence unless a permit to carry is issued by the Police Chief. This permit requires a firearms proficiency test and a psychiatric evaluation, as well as a drug test.

President Aquino added National Emergency Memorandum Order No. 6 in 1990 after the December 1989 coup attempt. The Order calls for the re-registration of all licensed civilian firearms, orders an inventory of firearms issued to police forces and the seizure of all unlicensed guns. The legislation provides for an annual inspection of firearms held under license, under which the chief of the national police is to issue annual directions to the senior inspector of the police of the various provinces to verify all arms in the possession of persons holding licenses and to report his or her findings. Since November 2006 a fine is also imposed on gun owners who lose or acquire stolen firearms following negligence<sup>23</sup>—although there are fears that such a measure will only discourage the reporting



◀ Only the most obsolete of confiscated guns are reportedly stored at police warehouses in Manila. Part of a photo-essay in *Small Arms Survey 2007* taken by Lucien Read, January and February 2007.  
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of firearms losses or theft. The implementation of effective safe storage regulations is therefore particularly important.

After the 1990 Emergency Order RA 7166 was passed in 1991. Known as the COMELEC (Committee on Elections) gun ban, it prohibits the carrying even of licensed firearms outside one's residence during election periods and gives power to the COMELEC to grant permits-to-carry and suspend the issuance of civilian gun licenses. The powers apply only during election periods, however.

To reduce the proliferation of illicit firearms, in March 2003 a one-year Firearm Amnesty Programme was launched, subsequently extended until September 2005, to grant amnesty

to persons in possession of illegal firearms.<sup>24</sup> The amnesty included high-powered rifles and *paltiks*, although high-powered weapons would only be licensed through special authorisation by the police chief. In December 2006, a new one-year amnesty (excluding the election period) was approved by the President. In 2006, 5,414 firearms were confiscated, and 4,540 persons arrested for illegal gun possession. As of August 29, 2008, there had been only 9,247 applications for gun-amnesty, with 8,992 approved.<sup>25</sup> However, comparatively few arrests or seizures of firearms are taking place in Mindanao.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to these measures, the PNP and the AFP have partnered to launch a series of campaigns, including:

<sup>24</sup> Government of the Republic of the Philippines (2006), *Report on the Implementation of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects*. Available at [www.un.org/events/small\\_arms2006/mem-states.html](http://www.un.org/events/small_arms2006/mem-states.html)

<sup>25</sup> Executive Order 585, 11 December 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Evangelista, Romie A. (2007), 'Gun ban drive yields 1,269 firearms', *Manila Standard Today*, March 26.



- ‘OPLAN Paglalansag,’ aimed at disbanding private armed groups or civilian defense forces and seizing their ammunition;
- The ‘Recall’ program to recover firearms not returned by active, retired or dismissed PNP personnel;
- The ‘Balik-Baril’ (‘Bring a rifle and improve livelihood’) programme, aimed at encouraging rebels to turn in their weapons in exchange for livelihood support;
- ‘Gun Ban Policy’ to revoke all permits to carry firearms outside residences during election periods;
- The establishment of checkpoints to check on the illicit weapons in the possession of unauthorized carriers.<sup>27</sup>

To help ensure that confiscated weapons do not re-circulate through theft and leakage, the Government has also destroyed thousands of guns in the past six years, reportedly in accordance with existing rules and regulations.<sup>28</sup>

## Controlling manufacture and trade

In compliance with the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (UN PoA), the Philippine Government has laws on purchasing, manufacturing and trading of firearms. Licensed manufacturers of small arms and light weapons are required to apply a reliable marking system on each weapon, as an integral part of the production process. Extensive records are maintained on the manufacture

and distribution of those weapons. The national police keep data on weapons confiscated, captured, surrendered and deposited.<sup>29</sup> A management information system has been recently upgraded to verify routes and destinations of weapons. Meanwhile, illegal arms manufacturers are threatened by heavy penalties. End-user certificates, or letters of intent, are also used in the export and import of such weapons.

In 2008, the Government, along with 152 other member states of the United Nations, adopted a resolution establishing a working group to draft an Arms Trade Treaty, expected to establish common standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. It has submitted its view to the UN with regard to the feasibility, scope and parameters for the legally binding instrument.

Finally, as with other countries in Southeast Asia, controlling illicit trade is a difficult challenge for the Government of the Philippines. The most taxing challenge in the region is how to control border flows of small arms. The Government reports regularly that it is doing its part to implement the UN PoA, abiding by international agreements and protocols relative to the problem. It cooperates with international groups such as the Association of Southeast Asian National Police and the International Police Organization to help curb the proliferation of illicit firearms. The Government has also drafted a Memorandum of Understanding with Malaysia to address the issue.

<sup>27</sup> De Jesus, Antonio (no date), ‘Briefing on illicit small arms and light weapons’, Philippine Center on Transnational Crime.

<sup>28</sup> Philippine Center on Transnational Crime (2006), *Report of the Republic of the Philippines on the implementation of the UN PoA to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in all its Aspects*.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



## The 2008 Jolo Zone of Peace Declaration

We, the people of the Municipality of Jolo, bound by the common ideals of peace under the spirit of democracy, seeking for the establishment and perpetuity of a true and genuine peace in this municipality that is our home and place of work, do hereby submit and commit ourselves to the implementation and enforcement of the following Declaration and Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR)

### Declaration

1. The area of the Jolo Zone of Peace shall cover the entire Municipality of Jolo and extend to all its adjacent Barangays within one (1) kilometer radius to include the maritime areas in neighboring municipalities contiguous to Jolo.
2. The carrying of firearms, explosives, or other forms of deadly weapons, whether openly displayed or concealed, by any resident or visitor, or by any Government official, security detail, soldier, or policeman not on official duty shall be prohibited in the Jolo Zone of Peace. Depositing of such items in an authorized station created for such purpose shall be made possible and strictly enforced.
3. The open display of licensed firearms, by any resident or visitor, or by any Government official, employee, security detail, soldier, or policeman not on official duty shall be strictly prohibited in the Jolo Zone of Peace.
4. The presence of authorized Government officials, employees, security detail, soldiers, or policemen in full combat uniform, bearing firearms and other forms of equipment shall be strictly minimized in the Jolo Zone of Peace. This shall include any and all forms of vehicles: military, police, civilian government, private, or public utility vehicles authorized to carry arms, be fortified with arms, or with authorized armed individuals on board. Re-routing of such personnel and vehicular traffic for passage purposes shall be made possible and strictly enforced.
5. To allow for the orderly flow of pedestrian and vehicular traffic within the Jolo Zone of Peace, all traffic and public safety ordinances shall be strictly implemented. Public utility vehicle terminals shall be relocated to strategic areas to decongest the main streets of Jolo, drivers' education on traffic rules and regulations shall be enjoined, and ambulant or sidewalk vendors shall be relocated to a designated area.
6. To prevent vices from disrupting the aspirations of the Jolo Zone of Peace, no form of illegal gambling shall be allowed in Jolo. Likewise, the campaign against illegal drugs and other forms of criminality shall be heightened. To help the Jolo Municipal Government in this endeavor, the people of Jolo shall be empowered to participate actively by developing an information and communication network aimed at immediate police response and action.
7. Because environmental degradation can cause problems for the Jolo Zone of Peace, the Jolo Municipal Government, in coordination with the concerned citizenry, shall pursue the effective implementation of a comprehensive Solid Waste Management Program for Jolo.
8. The Jolo Municipal Government shall be the lead unit in the enforcement of the Jolo Zone of Peace Declaration, and in the implementation of its IRR. It shall be supported by the Jolo Internal Defense Force (JIDF) comprised of AFP and PNP (PNP MG) units, Coast Guard and by other Government and civic organizations, and individuals committed to the pursuits of this Declaration.
9. Finally, for instances calling for the facilitation and mediation of conflicts that exist or may arise within the Jolo Zone of Peace, there shall be created a Council of Elders as advocate of peace, aimed at expediting the peaceful settlement of disputes, especially between clans and families, before they are brought to the Judiciary.

Agreed on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2008 by the Jolo Municipal Government, Sulu Provincial Government, eight Barangay officials of Jolo, the AFP, the PNP and NGOs and CSOs in Sulu.

## Jolo's Council of Elders

Three words describe the Council of Elders (COE): Advocates, advisers, and mediators. These same words were also used to express the COE functions when Jolo Mayor Hussein Amin signed the Executive Order creating the Council pursuant to the implementation of the Jolo Zone of Peace (ZOP).<sup>30</sup> As local leaders, the individuals chosen to make up the COE have the full support of the Mayor and credibility for their integrity and ability to carry out these tasks. The members of the COE include:

- **Timhar Tulawie.** Chair of the COE; he was a member of the provincial legislature and is currently actively engaged in local dispute resolutions. Even without “legal” authority, locals engaged in conflict often ask him to mediate.
- **Ustadz Abdulpatta “Tuan Pat” Radjaie.** One of Sulu’s most charismatic and popular religious personalities, he is one of Sulu’s top speakers and often requested to deliver inspirational messages and act as the groom’s spokesperson during formal marriage proposals.
- **Ustadz Yahiya Abdulla.** An AVRI RG member, Ustadz gives value to traditions in settling disputes. The key, according to him, is to listen attentively to people as you instill to

them the importance of justice, tolerance, patience and forgiveness.

Their mandate is clear: to act as advocates, advisers and mediators in ensuring the successful implementation of the ZOP. As advocates, they shall in their own capacity make clear to Joloanos what the Jolo ZOP is all about. For instance, Ustadz Yahiya Abdulla’s (both COE and AVRI RG member) radio sermons are frequently aimed at raising public awareness of the ZOP.

They also provide advice to the Jolo Mayor on how best to improve Jolo’s security and lessen criminality and illegal and immoral vices. Along this line, the COE have organized themselves into committees to address illegal drugs, gambling and the carrying of weapons. The Jolo Mayor in response to their advice will now order the police to enforce the law.

As mediators, they recommend amicable settlements among conflicting parties before going to courts. At times, they are called on by warring parties to prevent or end conflicts and to pacify those who are about to engage in violent conflict.

The tasks of these three individuals are clearly not easy nor to be taken lightly. It may also be dangerous at times but comes with the honor and responsibility of being a custodian of peace in Jolo—a responsibility these individuals value with their lives.

<sup>30</sup> Executive Order No. 12, series of 2008, issued and signed by Jolo Mayor, Hussin U. Amin

## Gun violence in Sulu: recent measures

Alfhadar Pajiji and Nash Abduhadi, AVRI Secretariat

Gun violence is a leading cause *and* feature of deaths and injuries in Sulu. A report from the Sulu Integrated Provincial Hospital Office suggests that gunshot wounds were the second leading cause of death in Sulu from 2004 to 2007.<sup>31</sup> Strikingly, this data did not include most of the deaths that occurred from fighting between the MNLF and the AFP—including civilians killed in crossfire—as Islamic practice demands that Muslim corpses be buried immediately. AFP soldiers killed in action also are not reflected in hospital records, as they are brought to military camps to be immediately airlifted to nearby Zamboanga city. If these figures were included, gunshot wounds would almost certainly become the province's leading cause of death.

In September 2007 the Sulu Provincial Government led by Governor Abdusakur Tan took some important steps to address armed violence with the agreement of the so-called 'twin resolutions.' The first resolution calls for disbanding the armed militias known as CVOs, and the second resolution for banning the open display of guns in public.<sup>32</sup> As a follow-on to these steps, in April 2008 Jolo was declared a Zone of Peace in which the carrying of firearms by civilians and off-duty security forces is prohibited. The declaration also appealed for a dramatic reduction in the presence of military forces, as well as for an increase in anti-gambling and anti-narcotics enforcement efforts.

In November 2008, results of a survey conducted by AVRI were presented to the public at an event attended by representatives of the Jolo Municipal Government, barangay officials, police and military, civil society and other relevant stake-

holders. The survey, conducted between mid-October and early November 2008, was a first attempt to gauge the impact of the ZOP and gather preliminary data from government agencies like the Integrated Provincial Health Office (IPHO), Justice Department, and the police in order to compare the security situation in Jolo during the seven months before and after the April declaration. The survey included a quantitative element, drawing on police records, and a qualitative survey of 1,600 households designed to measure the public's awareness of the ZOP.

How effective has the Zone's creation been? Sadly, Jolo's residents have not enjoyed a dramatic improvement in security so far. In the seven months prior to the Zone's declaration, AVRI found that Jolo experienced 14 *reported* crimes, four of which were gun-related deaths. In the seven months since the Zone's creation, there were 20 reported crimes, of which 12 were gun-related deaths—a three-fold increase. Adding to the disturbing picture, the resolution of reported crimes, or crime closure rates, dropped from 79 per cent prior to the declaration to 60 per cent afterwards.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, according to the survey, only 23 per cent of Jolo residents knew that the Zone had been declared.

### The need to strengthen policing

A number of factors may be limiting the ability of the Jolo Police to pursue and close cases of violent crimes committed with guns. One is the limited overall police presence. According to Jolo Police Chief Usman Salih Pingay, Jolo's 140,000 residents are served by 142 police personnel—a ratio of about 1:1,000, the mandated lower limit established by the Philippine National Reform Act.<sup>34</sup> In recent months, however, including in the period after the establishment of the ZOP, up to 40 police have been detailed to protect VIPs and politicians, leaving only about 100 police on duty. Since this force is divided into

31 Based on hospital emergency room and in-patient records; only hypertension killed more people. Gunshot wounds were followed by pneumonia and heart disease. Sulu Integrated Provincial Hospital Office, Sulu Health Situation Annual Reports as compiled by the Local Government Support Program for ARMM, 2008.

32 Resolutions 12-2007 (Resolution on the Banning of the Public Display of Guns) and 13-2007 (Resolution on the Dismantling of CVOs in Sulu).

33 Communication between Alfhadar Pajiji and members of the Jolo Police Office, November 2008.

34 Republic Act 8551 (Philippine National Police Reform Act) provides that every municipality/city should have one police staff member for every 1,000 citizens.

12-hour shifts, this means that at any one time there may be only 50 police on duty in all of Jolo. Indeed, so short-staffed are the sixteen police precincts dispersed over Jolo's eight barangays that it is the norm for people to go to a police station to report a crime, rather than police coming to the scene

of a crime. The Police Mobile Group (PMG, intended to provide temporary security support) sometimes provides relief, but the Provincial Police Office can move or re-assign them at any time to augment the security needs of various municipalities. When necessary, the police also can request support from the Jolo Integrated Defense Force (JIDF), comprising about 40 personnel from the AFP and the Marines Battalion Landing Team; however, the JIDF's primary mandate is protecting Jolo against external forces and threats, including terrorism, and support to the police is on a strictly limited basis.

The strains caused by a shortage of police are compounded by a lack of communication with the public. There is no police hotline for Jolo constituents to use to report complaints and incidents of crime. However some of these obstacles have practical options available. One solution could be to ask the major mobile phone service providers to provide a special number for the Jolo Police—for example, 0919-JOLO-ZOP (0919-5656-965). This could be useful given that an estimated 97 per cent of households in Jolo do not have a landline, and there are no public pay phones. Without such mechanisms, and greater public awareness of the Zone of Peace concept, it is not clear how the ZOP can be effectively implemented. During the open forum after the presentation of the survey's results, the following suggestions were raised to strengthen the Jolo ZOP:

- Commit to practical and stringent implementing rules and regulations.
- Recall the police personnel detailed to VIP's and politicians.
- Upgrade police facilities to improve communication and establish a police hotline.
- Develop a public awareness campaign to raise knowledge levels about the ZOP.





## Vox populi: Suluanos speak about armed violence

“Tribal wars, family feuds, religious conflicts, and thirst for power by politicians are responsible for the high number of civilian and non-combatant casualties in Sulu. A constituency for peace has been clamoring to minimize if not eradicate armed conflict in Sulu. With God’s grace and the support of our fellow Tausug, our province of Sulu will be labeled a “Peace Zone” instead of a war zone. Insha’Allah!”

—**Jeaness-Sarah A Agil**, AVRI Community Coordinator, Siasi Municipality

“During Ramadan, the time of fasting for the Muslim Umma throughout the world, Jolo becomes much more peaceful. It is a time to spiritually, physically, morally and mentally render homage to the commandments of Allah.”

—**Kalmie Abduhasad**, AVRI Community Coordinator, Luuk Municipality

“Our common concern for humanity and for the world is all we really need to make peace work. There may be a lot of imbalances and dissatisfaction coming from our differences, but these should not bother us. What we can do best is to make a better today. In this way, the future’s history will be owed to us. If humans created war, then surely we are also the ones who can put an end to it.”

—**Dreiza N Abidin**, AVRI Community Coordinator, Panamao Municipality

“Many residents and businessmen wanted to be fully briefed on the implementation of the rules and regulations of the Jolo Zone of Peace. They hope that the initiative will bring peace to the area.”

—**Wasphy S Hassan**, AVRI Community Coordinator, Talipao Municipality

“Sulu once had a strong government, a stable economy, and admirable customs and traditions. Today, we are in a very different situation, which we cannot accept. The hostility of the past 35 years has created immense suffering.”

—**Biszal J Emul**, AVRI Community Coordinator, Indanan Municipality

## Words to deeds: Jolo Zone of Peace Implementing Rules and Regulations

In the lead-up to the launch of Jolo ZOP in April 2008, the importance of formulating Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) was recognized by various stakeholders. These were referred to as the “teeth” to bite violators of the ZOP, and provide the mandate for the police to enforce it appropriately. Nonetheless, developing the IRR requires inclusive consultation with enforcement agencies as well as other stakeholders to ensure that they reflect the needs and aspirations of the people of Jolo and are enforceable.

In the course of deliberations, it was observed that enforcing the ZOP would require either adding additional security resources and personnel or shifting resources and personnel away from existing operations and reassigning them to the ZOP. Furthermore, local politicians and others authorized to carry weapons would need to be consulted and informed. Hard decisions needed to be made; coordination and approval from senior leadership in Task Force Comet of the AFP and the PNP was *and* remains critical. The IRR would need to reflect the abilities and needs of the security forces to implement the ZOP. For instance, there is a need to explicitly express in the IRR the numbers of detailed personnel/bodyguards for the VIPs and politicians entering the ZOP.

### A militarized zone vs a peace zone?

AVRI for its part broadly supported the IRR suggestions on the table whilst bringing forward the view that refinements could be made, and various communities consulted. AVRI also

◀ At least 400 bikers from all the motorcycle clubs in Sulu join the ‘Ride for Peace’ covering four municipalities (Jolo, Patikul, Talipao and Indanan) during the 2008 Mindanao Week of Peace, November.  
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## A lad of sixteen

Nash U. Abduhadi, AVRI Communications Officer

A lad of sixteen  
Chaste  
With M-16  
On his arms  
Just for protection  
For safety  
He's bloodthirsty  
For fatality  
And guiltless  
He can  
Murder  
A basic  
Weapon  
With clever  
Sounds  
Of violence  
Irritating . . .  
A lad of sixteen  
Modest  
With M-16  
A bullet  
On his thorax  
Sounds of a toy gun  
(Bang! Bang)

18

► 'Walk for Peace' during the 2008  
Mindanao Week of Peace, November.  
© AVRI







## Dreams: Alfhadar Pajji

I dream that a dream dreams me

In that dream, I saw that all my dreams are drowning  
And I feel like drowning too  
So I let myself swim in that sea of dreams

Whirling, sinking, gasping for air  
Trembling, wavering, going for the lifeboat of denial  
Washed in the billowing waves of revival  
Caught at the rudder of the most dreamt paradox

After a seemingly endless plummeting  
In that ocean of ad infinitum  
I finally reached the bottom of the abyss of rejuvenation  
There, I see myself  
Back in my younger days  
Struggling, swearing, almost yielding  
To the hopelessness of existence

There  
Broken by the suppressed cries of children  
Subdued by the grand exhibit of gore and violence  
And stifled by the callousness of the carnage on sight  
I embraced panic without misgivings

There  
Grappled by numbness  
Irreversible blank stares of the bomb victims  
And silenced by artillery barrage and the staccato of loose firearms  
I shouted "fine" to creeping death

**Author's note:** In 2003, on one of the many visits to Sulu Provincial Hospital to monitor human rights violations, I was aghast to see three seriously wounded children drenched in blood at the hospital's emergency room. An M-79 grenade launcher slug that they had dug up blew up just a few meters from their house. This poem is dedicated to them.



the AVRI RG to public and radio forums, AVRI has consistently emphasized the support of many people in Jolo for the ZOP, while also stressing the need for greater awareness of the initiative. This was corroborated in November 2008, when AVRI research revealed that only 23 per cent of Joloanos knew of the ZOP.<sup>35</sup> AVRI is concerned that despite good intentions the IRR's may well create confusion and loss of faith amongst the public if not carefully devised.

As early as late March, a draft of the IRR was submitted to the authorities, namely PSI Usman Salih Pingay of Jolo Police and the then-commander of the JIDF, Lt. Col. Bajunaid Abid, as well as representatives from the Coast Guard and Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA). The Mayor's office was represented by the Administrator and AVRI RG member Kamar Hassan and Brian Alawi of the Municipal Planning and Development Office (MPDO). AVRI was represented by Alfhadar Pajiji. There were at least four meetings to discuss the draft. Line by line, word by word, the "framers" deliberated and went through the nitty gritty of the draft IRR. For instance, the description of the Council of Elders as "custodians of peace" was changed to "peace advocates." But the biggest challenge encountered by the group was those provisions pertaining to approval by higher authorities. Thus, in December, when incidence of crime in Jolo had increased, punctuated by the kidnapping of a Chinese national (a trader in downtown Jolo) by the Abu Sayyaf, Jolo Police Office with the support of AVRI devised an Anti-Criminality Action Plan aimed at expediting the approval of the IRR. The Action Plan will be submitted to the Mayor (the Chair of the Municipal Peace and Order Council, MPOC).<sup>36</sup> The Action Plan and the IRR are anticipated to take effect after the MPOC will be convened in the first quarter of 2009.

35 From a sample of 1,600 households over October–November 2008.

36 By virtue of executive order No. 309, LGU's are mandated to constitute a MPOC in its crime prevention and suppression mission.

raised the concerns of many Suluanos that the ZOP will reflect the interests of those most engaged with the formulation of the IRRs—the security sector—with the operational consequence of creating a militarized zone rather than a peace zone. In all of its forums, meetings and consultations, ranging from



## Gun violence in the Philippines

### Philippines Action Network on Small Arms

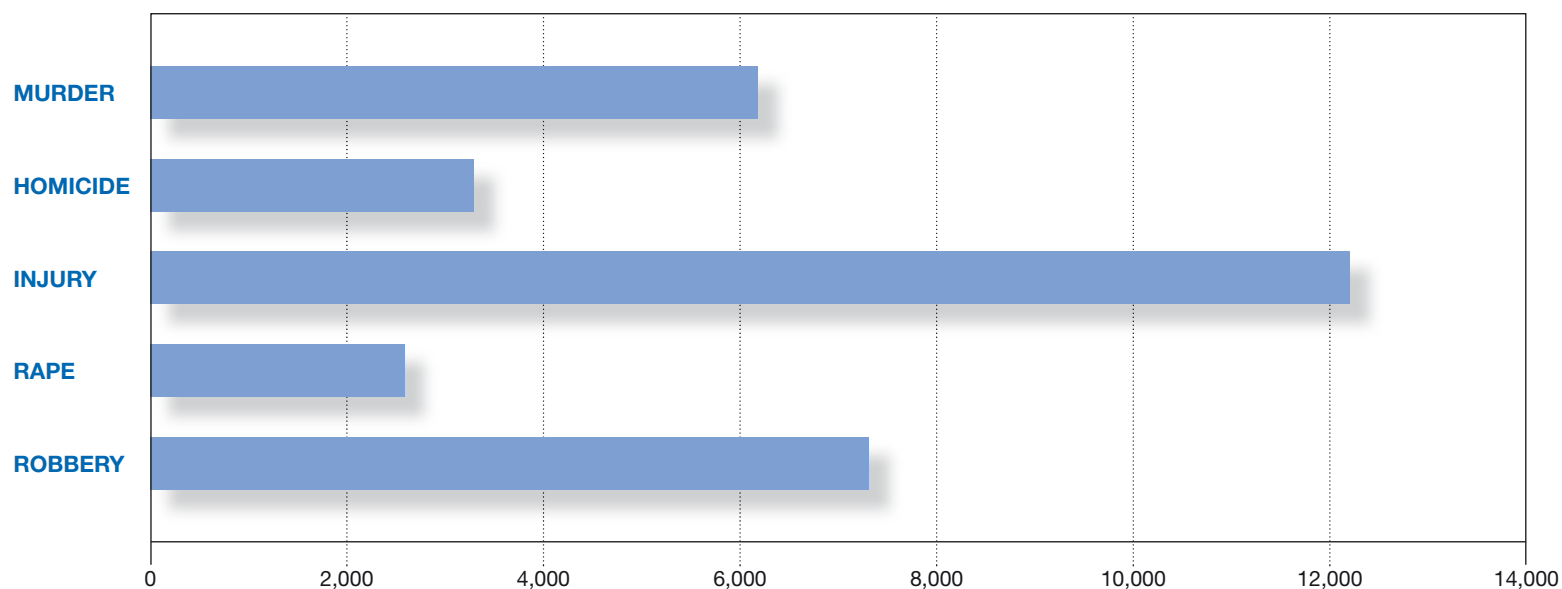
Gun violence is an issue of significant concern in the Philippines. According to the PNP, guns are implicated in most violent deaths in the Philippines.<sup>37</sup> Armed conflicts consume the potential of so many; not only those using the guns, but also civilians caught in crossfire are killed or maimed. Meanwhile, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) reports that for 2006, there were 6,185 murders and 3,296 homicides; preliminary data for the first quarter of 2007 indicate 1,436 murders and 723 homicides.<sup>38</sup> (In the Philippines the distinction drawn between homicides and murders is based on knowledge of motivation and the key difference is whether

and how someone is charged for the killing(s). If intent to kill can be proven it is murder. If it is not established then it is homicide: therefore, killings are homicides until classified as murders.)

Gun violence does not only result in deaths. Daily reports in television and newspapers indicate that crimes committed in the country are almost always aided by guns. The crime figures from PIDS for 2006 indicate the gravity of this concern.<sup>39</sup>

One commentator has noted that 87 per cent of firearms used in crimes from 1993 to 2004 were unlicensed, although a substantial number had registration papers.<sup>40</sup> Election periods are particularly insecure; the number of election-related deaths in 2004, mostly from gunshots, reached 189, while the recent 2007 mid-term election claimed 111 deaths.<sup>41</sup> The Philippines is not alone in this tragedy of gun-related violence: globally,

◀ An example of the “Peace is healthy for children and all living things” t-shirt given by AVRI to Joloanos during the celebration of the Jolo ZOP night in October. © AVRI



37 Philippine Information Agency (2005), ‘Philippine Police prioritizes campaign vs loose firearms’, May 18. Available at [www.gov.ph/news/default.asp?i=9415](http://www.gov.ph/news/default.asp?i=9415)

38 Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2006), ‘Crime Statistics by Region’, May. Available at [www.pids.gov.ph](http://www.pids.gov.ph)

39 Ibid. Failed homicide attempts fall into the category of physical injuries. Robbery cases include only those which involved harm and violence to victims.

40 Del Puerto, Luigi (2005), ‘PNP claims gains in drive vs. loose firearms,’ *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 19.

41 Guinto, Joel (2007), ‘Election violence claims 111; 120 injured,’ *Inquirer.net*, May 14. Available at [http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/nation/view\\_article.php?article\\_id=65650](http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/nation/view_article.php?article_id=65650),

the annual number of deaths from gun violence in non-war settings is about 200,000 per year, or about 550 people a day.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, it is estimated that there are some 875 million guns in the hands of civilians, military and police forces worldwide: with civilians holding 75 per cent (650 million).<sup>43</sup>

## A focus on Sulu

In Sulu, there is a saying that women wear gold and men carry guns. Clan fighting, the long-running insurgency and the high number of armed civilians all lead to frequent violent confrontation and intimidation in Sulu. The pressure to be armed is high: “If you don’t have a gun here in Sulu, if your home is not armed, you will be crushed. Instead we use our guns for defense, so that when people give us trouble we can fight to our deaths.”<sup>44</sup> The Provincial Government and the PNP are trying to implement a total gun ban in the province, but claim that policing Sulu is an arduous task as long as warlords and politicians continue to augment their arsenal, and walk around with their firearms in clear view. The PNP and the AFP lament that civilians in Sulu have firearms with higher caliber than those held by the police force. In the opinion of many, various levels of government have not consistently demonstrated an ability to protect its citizens. Consequently, AVRI is a welcome complement and stands to contribute to raising awareness, convening stakeholders and suggesting policy options.

## Existing laws and policies

While there are laws in the Philippines on gun ownership, registration, and usage, these measures are antiquated, inadequate and focused more on punishment rather than preventing armed violence. At the same time, the gun trade—both legal and illegal—thrives because of the continued and increasing

demand for guns for self-protection and to settle scores that the judicial system is too weak to address. The inability of enforcers to prevent lawlessness, criminality, banditry and insurgency further creates the impression of a chaotic and dangerous society. It is no surprise, then, that many civilians look at guns as objects of value and a provider of security. Paradoxically, the proliferation of guns makes people feel more insecure and further exacerbates the already volatile social, political and economic divides that exist in Philippine society. Meanwhile, the simple presence of a gun can turn an otherwise resolvable situation into one with lethal outcomes: guns give power to those holding them, and mere possession can embolden a holder to take drastic action.

National laws exist to control the ownership, usage, manufacture and trade of weapons. These, however, are not adequate in themselves to address the scourge of gun violence; further steps are required. Such steps critically include:

- *Building safer communities* and striking down the criminal elements operating in communities and prosecuting crimes with impartiality. Additionally, the Government of the Philippines must seriously pursue peace talks with armed opposition groups to put an end to violent hostilities that have victimized communities for decades. Furthermore, the justice system—including the investigation, apprehension, prosecution, penal and rehabilitation stages—require reform to regain the trust and confidence of citizens. People will not feel the need to arm themselves if they feel safe and secure in their homes and communities and if they believe that the justice and security sector is impartial and trustworthy.
- *Enforcement* is key to address the easy availability of guns, including the proper implementation and strict monitoring of laws. While there is an urgent need for Congress to review

<sup>42</sup> Florquin, Nicolas and Christina Wille (2004), ‘A common tool: firearms, violence, and crime,’ in *Small Arms Survey 2004: Rights at Risk*, Oxford University Press, p. 174.

<sup>43</sup> Small Arms Survey (2007), *Small Arms Survey 2007: Guns and the City*, Cambridge University Press, p. 39.

<sup>44</sup> De Guzman, Orlando (2008), ‘Guns in southern Philippines’, PRI’s *The World*, audio file. Available at [www.theworld.org/?q=node/16981](http://www.theworld.org/?q=node/16981).



existing laws, rules and regulations relating to arms and accordingly pass stronger gun control measures, without rigorous enforcement their impact will be minimal.

- *Civil society and local communities* can assist state security forces in supporting and monitoring the rule of law with the goal of reducing injuries, deaths and criminality. A comprehensive approach must also include a crack-down on corruption in the military and police.
- *Targeted socio-economic programs* that improve livelihood options for the poorest of the poor to lessen the chances of turning to violent crime to survive.

These proposals represent immediate measures that the state can take to arrest the current spiral of violence. The urgency should not be underestimated. When so many do not feel safe in their communities, or even their homes, there is no time to lose.

## Philippine Action Network on Small Arms: PhilANSA

The Philippine Action Network on Small Arms (PhilANSA) was convened in July 2001, at the time of the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. PhilANSA now comprises 14 organizations and/or networks across the country, each working on different areas or issues related to small arms use and abuse (e.g. peace, human rights, public health, children's rights, demobilization, reintegration, relief and rehabilitation).

PhilANSA is an active member of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), the global effort to coordinate action against gun violence and the uncontrolled arms trade. PhilANSA aims to address the complex issue of weapons in society and focuses on the following concerns:

- The demand and supply sides of weapons use and sales;
- The misuse and proliferation of arms;
- The multiple impacts of weapons in society;

PhilANSA's key areas of intervention include:

- Giving voice to gun violence-affected communities and sectors;
- Advocating stringent enforcement of existing gun control laws, as well as strengthening of national laws;
- Media campaigning to raise awareness about gun violence and to encourage the media to give equal if not more attention to stories that promote a culture of peace;
- Adding to international pressure to address arms supply issues;

◀ "Let peace reign to all people in Mindanao!", a poster made by school-children participating in the 'Walk for Peace' during the 2008 Mindanao Week of Peace, November. © AVRI

- Supporting the peace processes with the MILF and the National Democratic Front;
- Introducing amendments to and monitoring implementation of the agreement between the Government and the Revolutionary Proletarian Army;
- Researching alternative methods of conflict resolution and the supply-demand-impacts of gun violence and the arms trade;
- Promoting a culture of peace through community-based programs (e.g. inter-faith dialogue, toy gun ban campaign) and integrating gun violence reduction issues into peace education programs;
- Participating in the Regional Action to Reduce Armed Violence, which casts a spotlight on the impact of weapons and armed violence in Southeast Asia.

PhilANSA operates on voluntary and project-based commitments from its member organizations/networks. It is governed by a steering committee, which coordinates the day-to-day operation of the network. At present, the Steering Committee is composed of the organization's four founding groups: Amnesty International-Pilipinas, the Center for Peace Education of Miriam College, the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute, and Pax Christi-Pilipinas. The position of convenor of the Steering Committee rotates between members on a yearly basis; the current convenor organization is Pax Christi-Pilipinas.

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► A product of the thriving Danao craft industry. Part of a photo-essay in *Small Arms Survey 2007* taken by Lucien Read, January and February 2007.  
© Small Arms Survey

## Global happenings: the International Action Network on Small Arms

IANSA is the global movement against gun violence, a network of over 800 civil society organizations working in 120 countries. Members include democracy campaigners, peace groups, human rights activists, development agencies, women's groups, religious organizations, public health and humanitarian workers, victim support groups, academics and lawyers.

IANSA seeks to reduce gun violence—deaths, injuries, disability, trauma, fear, crime and conflict involving small arms—and thus reduce the associated negative economic, social, political and human rights impacts. It aims to achieve this goal by securing better national, regional and international policies to stop the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons.





Most IANSA members also participate in national and/or regional sub-networks (for example, PhilANSA or the West African Action Network on Small Arms). In addition, there are active thematic networks such as the Women's Network, the Public Health Network and the Ecumenical Network.

IANSA supports campaigns at the national, regional and global levels. One of the leading campaigns is the 'Control Arms' campaign, conducted in conjunction with Amnesty International and Oxfam. IANSA also supports efforts to strengthen and implement regional agreements, as well as reform of national policies and practices. IANSA is the designated coordinator of civil society participation in the UN small arms control process, and has brought the views of NGOs to every UN meeting on small arms since 2001. A leading annual event is the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence; 2008 was the most successful to date, with members from 81 countries participating.

Visit [www.iansa.org](http://www.iansa.org) for more information and to join up!



## Viewpoint: the Tausug male enigma

Noralyn Mustafa

Many research studies have been conducted on the subject of the Tausug man, and many books and monographs have been written about him. Unfortunately, while such works are highly informative in many ways, few if any have helped others truly understand the enigma that is the Tausug male. The Tausug male has eluded methodology and measurement because his soul and character can only be captured by racial memory and genetic empathy, and, in a sense, by listening to him with ears close to the very ground on which he treads.

The Tausug male has always defied easy generalizations. Is he really quick to anger, and to swing the *kris* (snake-like sword) or draw the gun? But in many conflict situations, he can also allow *sabar* (patience, resignation) to rule over his passions. Is he as death-defying and daring as his *parang sabil* (holy war martyr) ancestors of myth and legend? And yet his faith commands him to value life—not only his, but that of others—and obligates him to defend it at all costs.

### Culture of violence

Why does the Tausug man kill and kidnap, plunder and play the role of pirate? Why have social scientists and peace advocates lumped these aberrations together as the inevitable consequences of a 'culture of violence?' To conveniently encapsulate the character of the Tausug as a natural consequence of an aggressive and confrontational environment can be erroneous.

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The Tausug man can also compose the most romantic love ballads, conceive the most heart-rending tragedies in his folktales, and express such poetical sentiments as that in a popular *lugu* (chanted song) about a *malul* (a sampaguita-like flower) on a mountain slope, heartbreakingly pouring out its loneliness. And yet he is almost always invariably portrayed with the ubiquitous weapon in his hand or by his side—a *kris*, or *barung* (sword), or, in contemporary portraits, a gun. Even now, when he dons his traditional costume on occasions, he dares not do so without a kris or barung to complete it. This somehow reinforces his image as a member of the warrior class among Filipino Muslims, and the weapon becomes a symbol of his legendary bravery and courage.

Historically, he looks back with unabashed pride at half a millennium of resistance against attempts to subjugate him. Almost self-deprecatingly, he admits that he has been at war for the past five hundred years.

### Sense of honor

Before any attempt is made to understand the Tausug male and his so-called culture of violence, it should be necessary to first examine his particular sense of honor, for here we may find the initial clues to what makes him value the gun above all his worldly possessions, and to use it when provoked.

Among the Tausug, the male is not only the provider; he is, more importantly, the protector and defender—of the family's honor; the family itself, especially the female members; the home; his land and other possessions, and, in a broader sense, the clan, in that order. In many cases, his only reason for self-preservation is for him to be able to fulfill this obligation.

In Tausug idiom, the male is the 'post' of the house. When he dies or for any reason is absent, the structure is in grave

danger of collapse and destruction. Failure to fulfill this role is unthinkable, and results in condemnation and social sanction that is aptly expressed in the word '*dayyus*' (the Spanish word *pendejo* approximates its meaning), so derisive that a Tausug male would rather die than be called one.

As a social being, long before the days of foreign incursions into his homeland, the *kauman* (neighborhood, community) had taught him the power and safety of numbers. For his own survival, he must protect and defend the clan, so that even today, it is a matter of honor for him to lay his life on the line for a kinsman, no matter how many times removed, so as to ensure that when he himself is in peril, the clan will rally to his defense. For this reason, the Tausug takes pains to *sugsug* (trace blood ties) so as to determine his bonafide relatives.

But this 'clannishness' can also be a deterrent to confrontation by outsiders. One can never tell whose relative one may be messing with. Tongue in cheek, the Tausug man warns trouble-makers that they will have to resort to '*magdupa-magdangaw*'—literally, 'to arms-length and the length between thumb and middle finger,' but figuratively, to every blood relation that the aggrieved party can trace.

### Role of protector

And in order to be protector, the male Tausug must, first and foremost, have a weapon. For the Tausug, the gun is the instrument by which he can reasonably fulfill the role that, almost from the age of puberty, his society has imposed on him. Undeniably, it is an extension of his masculinity, with or without its Freudian undertones, although in the case of a bladed weapon, the sexual symbolism is forthright. A man refers to his wife, albeit humorously, as his *taguban* (scabbard). A gun also underscores his capability as provider, in the same

way that the amount of jewelry worn by his wife is a measure of his wealth, for one needs money to purchase guns. And the equation is simple: the more guns he has, the more followers he must have, and the more powerful he becomes. The gun is, therefore, both an instrument and a symbol of power. It enhances a Tausug man's particular concept of masculinity, but it also gives him the power to intimidate, to trespass, to oppress, and to grab what he covets and cannot have otherwise.

Piracy, banditry, kidnapping for ransom, warlordism—these are but manifestations of a more perverse sense of male power, an almost inborn obligation to protect and defend, a passionate desire to manifest his manhood, and the greed, perhaps common to all cultures, for power. These, from a Tausug man's point of view, compose the foundation upon which this so-called culture of violence developed. And as contemporary events have shown, it does not take much to provoke this cultural mindset. When the day comes that the Tausug male no longer sees his survival as a person, as a clan, as a race, in peril; when he no longer has to prove himself through the barrel of a gun; when he has gained the ability to acquire what he desires without one; then maybe he will no longer be at war with himself.

## Of wooden guitars and plastic drums: the AVRI Band

Nash U. Abduhadi, AVRI Communications Officer

Who would have thought that a guitar made from recycled wood and strings and drums cobbled together from empty plastic containers and milk cans could spread a message of peace to thousands of music lovers? This is what has happened with the band now proudly known as the AVRI Band. The all-male band is composed of young school students, and includes singer Alkhodair “Khodz” Roger; Adzmar “Adz” A. Sajili on lead guitar; Sansibar S. Sali and Omar C. Muksan on backup guitar; and Wahabi N. Mohammad on drums.

“I remember the days when I was simply leaning out our window, singing my heart out. I then talked to Adz and suggested that we put together a band,” front-man Roger recalls. Adz was keen, and hurriedly made a guitar out of scrap wood. However, the two felt that a proper band needed more members. Sansibar, a good friend of Adz, was invited to contribute his skills on guitar; meanwhile, the first drummer they recruited was busy looking for a name for the band. But he did not need to look far. As he struck one of the milk cans before him with his drumstick, he saw the words ‘Mead Johnson,’ the milk maker, and announced to the group that from then on, the band would be called MEAD. Still, the group needed someone who could persuade people to give them the chance to perform. This was where Wahabi came into the picture. His enthusiasm and determination secured the group their first public appearance, a slot at the Peace Concert sponsored by HDC's Peace Working Group during the Mindanao Week of Peace celebration in 2007. This appearance was followed by another perform-



ance during the Tausug Song Festival, sponsored by the Jolo Municipal Government.

It was at this point, however, that tragedy struck. A gunfight broke out between rival neighbors; the group's drummer was caught in the crossfire and killed. Devastated, the band slipped into inactivity. Adz decided to go to Zamboanga, and the rest of the guys stayed in Jolo.

▼ The musical instruments of the AVRI Band, December 2008. © AVRI



But this hiatus did not last long. While Adz was in Zamboanga, ideas for songs kept flowing in his head. After only a short time away, Adz decided to go back to Jolo, and the band united back and decided to pursue their dream. Their comeback started at the Panghimati (Enlightenment) Concert organized by Bong Pelaez, a prominent Sulu musician. Then came Hari-Raya Nights 2008. And then came the Zone of Peace Concert in October 2008. A week before the affair (the Hari-Raya Night festival), AVRI Community Coordinator Basil Amirhussin was still on the lookout for performers; he contacted MEAD's manager and asked if they could perform on short notice. Without a second thought, the group agreed—provided that AVRI would hire them proper instruments! AVRI agreed, and the gig was on. With only a frantic week to prepare, the band practiced non-stop. When the night came, they were ready. But there was one change they had agreed on. Up to that point, the band had retained the name MEAD, in tribute to their loving friend who had so inspired them. Now, however, they felt that it was time to launch a new identity that expressed their commitment to stopping the gun violence that had claimed his life. When the lights went up, they made their formal debut as the AVRI Band. They wowed the 5,000 strong audience with their soothing music and their innovative performance.

Now, the AVRI Band's fame can only grow. The only thing holding them back is the lack of proper instruments. "We hope and pray that some kind-hearted person will help us so that we can play our best," says Sansibar. But beyond the band, these young men still hope for a quality education. "Of course, we want to go back to school, because we also have our dreams in life. But as long as the music is still there, we will perform as long as we can," says Adz the lead guitarist. "*Dih kami mamutawan saka-inu dihi niyu kami buta-nan* (We will hold on as long as you're holding on)."



## UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, passed unanimously in October 2000, is the first resolution passed by the Security Council to specifically address the impact of war on women, and women's contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace. It outlines obligations for parties to a peace process to "adopt a gender perspective," with special attention to, among other things: (a) the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-war reconstruction; (b) measures that support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, and that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements; and (c) measures that ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary. It further calls on parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and emphasizes the responsibility of all states to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for war crimes, including those relating to sexual violence against women and girls.<sup>45</sup>



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## Women's contributions to armed violence reduction in Sulu

Zoraida Gumbahali, AVRI Resource Group member

Many Suluanos have an old-fashioned vision of women's roles: women do the chores at home, care for the children, and spend time thinking about fashion and their appearance. But women

have many roles, old and new and they deserve better attention. As civil society organizations (CSOs) become more prominent in Sulu, more and more women are getting actively involved in humanitarian service, human rights advocacy—and in risky peacemaking assignments. Some of these women are now part of AVRI and contribute valuable insights and perspectives for reducing armed violence in Sulu.

The roles of women in Sulu are not limited to these important activities, but have recently extended to crisis management.

▲ Press conference after the open debate in the Security Council on 'Women, Peace and Security'. United Nations, New York, 24 October 2000. © UN Photo/Maluwa Williams-Myers

<sup>45</sup> For more information see [www.peacewomen.org](http://www.peacewomen.org)

During the Ipil massacre in February 2008, women were among the first to arrive to the area to document the violence and assist the victims. Women are also increasingly stepping in when the particular circumstances do not guarantee the security of male CSO members, and they have taken leading roles in trauma healing and some psychosocial treatment for armed violence victims.

Women bring a vital perspective to armed violence prevention planning and implementation that deserves to be acknowledged and further strengthened. With an increase in government support for peace and security programs and the involvement of an increasing number of international organizations focused on violence prevention, there should be wider scope for the roles of women.



► 'Walk for Peace' during the 2008 Mindanao Week of Peace, November.  
© AVRI

## Strengthening gun laws for women's safety: a global perspective

Improving both the content and implementation of national gun laws can have important consequences when analysed from a gender perspective: for men, women, boys and girls. Although women do not make up the majority of homicide victims, when women are killed—and it is overwhelmingly men who kill them—guns are often a preferred weapon. In South Africa, for example, one murdered woman in five is killed with a legally owned gun; some 50 per cent of South African women murdered each year are killed by men known intimately to them—four women a day, or one every six hours.<sup>46</sup>

For their part, men are more likely to commit gun violence. In almost every country, a disproportionate percentage of gun owners and users are men. Data indicates, for example, that:

- Over 90 per cent of gun-related homicides occur among men and boys, particularly between the ages of 14 and 44 years;<sup>47</sup>
- Boys are involved in 80 per cent of the accidental shootings that kill about 400 children and injure another 3,000 in the United States each year;<sup>48</sup>
- Of those who commit suicide with a gun, 88 per cent are men and 12 per cent are women.<sup>49</sup>

Key issues for lawmakers to consider to link partner and family violence laws with national gun laws include:

- *Spousal notification* can be an efficient mechanism to prevent gun acquisition by men with a history of family violence, whether or not it resulted in a criminal conviction. Canada requires current and former spouses to be notified before a gun license may be issued.<sup>50</sup>

- *Background and criminal record checks* must include verifying an applicant's past record related to family or partner violence. In the United States, federal law makes it a criminal offence to possess a gun while subject to an intimate partner violence restraining order<sup>51</sup> and eleven U.S. states have laws that prevent individuals with a history of intimate partner violence from purchasing or possessing a firearm.<sup>52</sup>
- *Prohibition for past partner and family violence offences* is a standard in Australia, where a five-year minimum prohibition against owning guns exists for those who are subject to restraining orders or have been convicted of any violent offence. In some Australian states this blackout period has been increased to up to ten years. South Africa has similar legislation.
- *Seizure* ensures that when a person becomes subject to a restraining order for the first time and owns a gun, police must seize the weapon, as is the case in Australia.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, police in the United States are invested with the authority to remove guns from the home of an individual under a restraining order or of someone convicted of a domestic violence misdemeanor.
- *Safe storage* should apply in all circumstances but is critical in situations where family or partner violence is occurring. Guns that are securely under lock and key, with ammunition stored separately, are less likely to be misused.
- *Registration* of weapons is essential for police to be able to effectively remove guns in situations of intimate partner violence and enforce prohibition orders. Computerization can often make the difference between law enforcement's ability to access domestic violence records and missing an opportunity to intervene before violence takes place.

**Acknowledgement:** A variation of this article was developed by Cate Buchanan for the UN Development Programme for the 2008 publication, *How to Guide: Small Arms and Light Weapons Legislation*, July.

46 Mathews, S *et al.* (2004), *Every six hours a woman is killed by her intimate partner: a national study of female homicide in South Africa*, Medical Research Council Policy Brief, Medical Research Council, Cape Town, pp. 1–4.

47 World Health Organisation (2002), *World Report on Violence and Health*, Geneva, pp. 274–275.

48 Jackman, Geoffrey *et al.* (2001), 'Seeing is believing: what do boys do when they find a real gun?', *Pediatrics*, vol. 107, June, pp. 1247–1250.

49 Small Arms Survey (2004), *Small Arms Survey 2004: Rights at Risk*, Oxford University Press, p. 178.

50 Canada, 'Firearms Act (1995, c.39)', Art. 55(2).

51 United States, 'Gun Control Act of 1968, Public Law 90–618.'

52 Vigdor, Elizabeth Richardson and James Mercy (2002), 'Disarming batterers: the impact of domestic violence firearm laws', in Jens, L and P Cook (eds), *Evaluating Gun Policy: Effects on Crime and Violence*, Brookings Institution, Washington D.C. However, the commission of a violence misdemeanour does not always result in the abuser's guns being surrendered.

53 Australia, 'Firearms Act 1996', Art. 73.



## Global happenings: reducing gun violence in Pereira, Colombia

Juan Manuel Arango Velez, Mayor of Pereira, Colombia

A combination of social factors has led authorities in Pereira (a city in west-central Colombia) to address the problem of small arms and light weapons. These included the high number of homicides committed with guns, as well as the realization that verbal aggression almost always leads to a fatal ending when guns are available. Keeping the peace was further impeded by the imbalance amongst those carrying guns, with the organized delinquency far better armed than public law enforcement agencies.

This diagnosis led us to rethink citizen culture to tackle new social behaviors. A culture of good citizenship is the best way to ensure cooperation with public law enforcement, and therefore must be the goal of a policy of public security, based on a bi-polar model of both repression and education. One of the tools for achieving this is the promotion of a culture of disarmament. The city understood early on that disarmament exercises, beyond taking thousands of weapons out of circulation, must also change the perception citizens have of the role guns play in their security.

A proposal to collect illicit firearms and discourage the use of weapons by civilians was put forward in Pereira. This included

an education campaign whereby young people who previously belonged to violent groups toured schools and colleges of the city with the message “no to arms.” A public consultation process also took place to raise awareness on the use of firearms by civilians. In July 2006, over 130,000 votes opposing the possession of weapons by civilians were registered—91 per cent of the total number of votes registered.

We received positive responses from cities such as Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Ibagué and others, who share our vision of a society where weapons would only be found in the hands of forces that are authorized to hold weapons. Indeed, the public consultation process held in Pereira inspired several major cities in Colombia to pursue public initiatives aimed at restricting the legislation pertaining to the possession and carrying of firearms.

A society without arms may appear to be a utopian ideal, but we will never know what can be achieved if we do not try. In the case of Pereira, we have succeeded in reducing the homicide rate by 23 percent during the first eight months of 2006, a positive indicator that has been attributed to the reinforcement and commitment of the police force, and to the disarmament message that forms part of our programme on citizen culture, security and coexistence: “Pereira Con Vida” (Pereira with Life).

**Acknowledgement:** This article first appeared in the 2007 HD Centre publication, *Missing Pieces: A Guide for Reducing Gun Violence Through Parliamentary Action*. Available at [www.hdcentre.org](http://www.hdcentre.org)

## Global happenings: strengthening gun laws in South Africa and Australia

### Public consultation: the case of South Africa

Legislative reform requires broad involvement of citizens and parliamentarians. The development of the new arms law in South Africa presents an example of the power of a largely transparent and public process. Starting in 1999, wide public consultation and parliamentary hearings were key features that created opportunities to challenge norms of possession and misuse as both a political and cultural issue. The draft law was subject to scrutiny by many interest groups within civil society which included weapons dealers and owners as well as health professionals, women's rights groups, violence prevention groups, human rights advocates and various community-based organizations.

Individuals and organizations were given six weeks to provide written submissions on the Bill, which was then debated in the parliament over a six-week period through a public hearing process. This lengthy consultation period enabled the production of a final piece of legislation which reflected as far as possible the interests and concerns of all stakeholders. Throughout this period there was intense public debate on the merits of the law and its purpose. One of the results of this public process is that it appears to have shaped and influenced both public opinion in favor of stricter regulations, and altered behavior of civilian gun owners in reducing the demand for firearms.<sup>54</sup>

The new Firearms Control Act was finally passed in October 2000 at its second hearing. Among its provisions are owner licensing requirements, background checks on gun owners, and limitations on the number of guns that may be owned. In

conjunction with a clampdown on illegally held guns, the Act is regarded as having helped cut gun-related deaths.

### Moving from rights to responsibility: The example of Australia

Prior to 1996, all eight Australian states licensed gun owners, but only five actually registered all guns. The murder of 35 people in Port Arthur, Tasmania in April 1996 was the catalyst for improved national arms control. Within weeks, prompted by public and media pressure, all state and territory governments committed to pass nationally uniform laws including:

- Registration of all firearms;
- Stronger licensing provisions, including proof of genuine reason to own any gun; uniform screening, including a five-year prohibition on owning firearms for anyone convicted of intimate partner or family violence or subject to a restraining order; a safety course requirement; a minimum age of 18; a 28-day waiting period on each purchase; and strict storage guidelines;
- A ban on semi-automatic rifles and shotguns;
- Improved controls on the trading of firearms, including the requirement of a separate permit for each gun; and
- A ban on private and mail order sales of small arms.<sup>55</sup>

The new laws were phased in between mid-1996 and mid-1998, and a one-time tax levy funded the government's buy-back of newly banned guns from their owners. The law resulted in the world's largest weapons collection and destruction exercise to date, with 700,000 guns taken out of circulation.<sup>56</sup>

**Acknowledgement:** This is an excerpt from the 2007 HD Centre publication, *Missing Pieces: A Guide for Reducing Gun Violence Through Parliamentary Action*. Available at [www.hdcentre.org](http://www.hdcentre.org)

54 Kirsten, Adèle et al. (2006), *Islands of Safety in a Sea of Guns: Gun-free Zones in South Africa*, Small Arms Survey, Geneva, in particular Annex 6.

55 Australasian Police Ministers' Council, 10 May 1996 and 17 July 1996, Consolidated Resolutions Relating to Legislative Issues.

56 *Small Arms Survey* 2004, p. 184.

## The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development

The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, signed on June 7, 2006 by representatives of 42 countries and since endorsed by a further 52 states, is a programmatic statement outlining the negative impact on human development of armed violence and the responsibility of states to address its causes and drivers as well as to promote measures aimed at its mitigation.

The nations that have endorsed the Declaration—including the Philippines—recognize the ability to live free from the threat of armed violence as a basic human need and accept that providing for the human security of citizens is a core responsibility of governments. In particular, the signatories commit themselves to:

- Promoting conflict prevention, resolution and reconciliation, and supporting post-war peace-building and reconstruction;
- Stemming the proliferation, illegal trafficking and misuse of small arms and light weapons and ammunition, as well as to effective weapons reduction, post-war disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and small arms control, including control of arms transfers and illegal brokering;
- Upholding respect for human rights, promoting peaceful settlement of conflicts based on justice, and addressing climates of impunity;
- Fostering effective and accountable public security institutions;
- Promoting a comprehensive, gender-sensitive approach to armed violence reduction issues;

- Ensuring that armed violence prevention and reduction initiatives target specific risk factors and groups, and are linked to programmes providing non-violent alternative livelihoods for individuals and communities.

The signatories also pledge to take action to deal effectively with both the supply of and demand for small arms and light weapons; to enhance financial, technical and human resources devoted to addressing armed violence issues; to support initiatives to measure the range of costs of armed violence, assess risks and vulnerabilities, evaluate effectiveness of armed violence reduction programs, and disseminate knowledge of best practices; and to achieve by 2015 measurable reductions in the global burden of armed violence and tangible improvements in human security worldwide.

The Geneva Declaration process is led by a core group of 13 countries that have formulated a ‘Framework for Implementation’ centered around three pillars: advocacy, dissemination and coordination; measurability and monitoring; and programming. Regional summits have since been held in Guatemala, Kenya, and Thailand in 2007 and 2008, resulting in three regional declarations (signed by a total of 63 countries) that reflect regional and sub-regional perspectives on armed violence reduction and development.

A review summit was held on 12 September 2008, attended by some 86 states and more than 35 NGOs. The summit statement reiterates that states hold primary responsibility for preventing, reducing and ending armed violence on their territories; calls for international assistance for the implementation of armed violence prevention and reduction initiatives at national and local levels, noting that adverse security situations should not be used as a form of conditionality; and reaffirms the signatories’ support for UN efforts to promote armed violence





reduction, in particular the 2001 UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons.

On 17 November 2008, the resolution 'Promoting Development through the Reduction and Prevention of Armed Violence' was adopted by the UN General Assembly. The resolution calls on the Secretary General to seek the views of the member states on the interrelation between armed violence and development and to report back to the General Assembly at its 64<sup>th</sup> session in 2009.

For more information visit: [www.genevadeclaration.org/index.html](http://www.genevadeclaration.org/index.html)

## 2009 AVRI Activities

AVRI aims to continue into 2009. Key activities are likely to include:

- Continued assistance to the Government of Jolo in implementing the ZOP. This will include support in finalizing the IRR, advising the Council of Elders when needed, collecting and analyzing data on violence through the AVRI network, and convening experts to advise on ways to improve the program.
- Research activities, including a household survey of security perceptions in Jolo. Such surveys have been widely used around the globe to generate a better understanding of popular perceptions of specific issues. In the case of armed violence and insecurity, household surveys enable researchers and policy-makers to develop a clear picture of how citizens view their security, how they view the threats to their communities and households, and the effectiveness of security services.
- Convening focus groups including the police, military, MNLF, MILF, businesspeople, barangay leaders, women's organizations, religious communities and leaders, academics, journalists and youth groups. The focus groups will be asked to reflect on the factors influencing armed violence in Sulu, and on possible solutions.
- A series of public forums to promote debate and dialogue on armed violence issues between various stakeholders.
- A range of other activities, such as: the production of radio plays, posters and billboards, and t-shirts with armed violence reduction slogans; sponsorship of sports activities to target youth engagement, an event during the Mindanao Week of Peace, and campus and school events; and publication of a second edition of *Sihnag*.

◀ Meeting of the UN General Assembly, which adopted the Resolution on Promoting Development through the Reduction and Prevention of Armed Violence. UN, New York, 17 November 2008. © UN Photo/Devra Berkowitz

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For more information on AVRI go to [www.hdcentre.org](http://www.hdcentre.org) or send an email to [hdcsmallarms@hdcentre.org](mailto:hdcsmallarms@hdcentre.org)

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