

# OBSERVER

A JOURNAL ON THREATENED HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

ISSN: 2192-3353



FORMS OF PEACEFUL PROTEST

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## OBSERVER:

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IN THE PHILIPPINES

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**ISSN** 2192-3353

**PRICE** single issue 3.00 euro

## SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

OBSERVER: is published biannually.

## DONATIONS & MEMBERSHIP

International Peace Observers Network e.V.  
PURPOSE: „Observer“  
Registered non-profit institution; donation receipt and supporting  
membership possible.

**SWIFT/BIC-CODE:** GENODEM1GLS

**IBAN:** DE40430609671119085800

**BANK:** GLS Gemeinschaftsbank, Germany

## EDITORIAL DEADLINE


vol. 4, number 2: 15th October 2012

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Stiftung Umverteilen; not responsible for the content.



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## EDITORIAL

Every four and a half years, the human rights record of each member state of the United Nations is reviewed under the "Universal Periodic Review" in Geneva. On May 29, 2012, Secretary of Justice of the Philippines De Lima referred in her speech in front of the UN Human Rights Council, that "[t]he Administration is firmly committed to resolving verified cases [of extrajudicial killings] and bringing perpetrators to justice, whether they are State or non-State actors [... therefore] [t]he witness protection system is being strengthened." On May 30, Philippine media reported the third killing of a witness to the 2009 Maguindanao massacre, the largest-ever single attack on journalists and media workers in world history with 57 victims.

If the state fails to ensure safety, how can people take action against cases of grave human rights violations like the before mentioned? The most recent past has shown that people all over the world have protested peacefully for a fairer political and social order and they have achieved surprising results. At the same time it became obvious once more how dangerous the involvement in movements and struggling for social, political and economic rights can be, how easily peaceful protest can turn into a life-threatening and -destroying situation and how fragile the phenomena of power is.

On the occasion of the Arab Spring, the globally spreading Occupy Movements, and the continuing regional and global struggles, this issue is dedicated to the courage, strength and vigour of all people who stand up for human rights, in spite of peril and threats against them.

Peaceful protest has a long tradition in the Philippines. The diverse forms

of protest organized by national federations of farmers, and farm workers advocating for agrarian reform and rural development, can be regarded as a contemporary example for the persistence of the multi-faceted tradition. The horrible consequences that can come along with the struggle for human rights are illustrated by Knappmann in her article on cases of harassment, to which indigenous people in Mindanao are exposed to. In his guest article, the German parliamentary Beck emphasizes the importance of social movements in the struggle for justice and stresses that non-violent protest increases the probabilities of achieving a regime change. Weitzel subsequently conceptualizes the theoretical framework of peaceful protests and Hollendung analyses power as a phenomenon of human interaction. Felsberger contextualises the impressive demonstration of people's power in Cairo last year, when the protesting crowds forced the former President Hosni Mubarak to resign. Unlike in Egypt, demonstrations against the regime in Syria have turned into a civil war, as Schmidinger reveals. An instrument for enabling peaceful co-existence in conflict regions are so-called peace zones, Albers reports of.

This edition illustrates further examples of non-violent protest from around the globe, such as the anti-mining protests in Peru and Germany. We exemplarily depict the Occupy Movement by focussing on "Occupy Manila".

The speaking tour of human rights defenders from our Filipino partner organisations in Germany constituted a special highlight of IPON's work this year. The discussions and reactions

that the reports about their daily life as human rights defenders in the Philippines evoked in the audience are summarized by Hammann.

With those multifarious contributions this edition attempts not only to provide an insight into the diversity of peaceful protests but to contextualize and analyze them, in order to get a broader understanding of the topic. ■



## CALL FOR ARTICLES

Preview of the Next Issue: Actual Impunity – When Laws are Nothing but Paper Promises. Call for articles until October 15, 2012 (editorial deadline). We welcome contributions on a human rights perspective concerning the discrepancy between inputs (laws, policies, and budgets), processes (implementation of laws and policies), formal output, and outcomes (de facto realities) such as the prevalence of land conflicts. Articles including a systematic analysis on the consequences on local, national or international level are most welcome.

## THE LONG TRADITION OF NON-VIOLENT PROTEST IN THE PHILIPPINES



**Steffen Rudolph**

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*If one refers to profound incorporators of non-violent protest, most people would name Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King. If it comes to outstanding non-violent protests in the history of mankind most people cite the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain or the decolonization of India. However, Philippines also possess a comprehensive legacy and authorship of non-violent protest themselves. In history there has always been a choice between the use of violence and its refusal, the same can be said at present time.*

### José Rizal: The first non-violent thinker in the Philippines?

José Rizal is famous to be “The First Filipino” and an integral constituent of the Philippine sense of national identity. This angle of view is only half the story and considers only one side of the coin. As a matter of fact, José Rizal has to be designated as one of the first non-violent political deep-thinker in modern history. Until his illegitimate execution by the Spaniards in 1896 he dauntlessly raised his voice against a violent revolution. In a time, in which many wanted to fight against the Spaniards to set Philippines free he advocated a peaceful change via reforms. He refused the use of violence by all means and at all times. His weapon of choice was neither the gun nor the “bolo”, but the quill. Coming from an affluent and well-educated family with roots in China and Spain his thoughts spread throughout the country and were even incorporated amongst the elites in Europe. Ironically, he was one of the first famous delinquents killed by the colonial power and his death was rated as beacon to start the rebellion.

He was born in 1861 on the island of Luzon as the seventh of eleven children. After studying in Philippines he moved to Madrid where he finished his exams in medicine. Later he worked as a doctor in Paris and Heidelberg, Germany. In 1884, his first novel “Noli me Tangere” was published and followed by the “El Filibusterismo” in 1891. In both of his books he criticized the Spanish colonial government in the Philippines. In 1892 he returned to the Philippines and founded the reformistic “Liga Filipina”. The “Liga” enunciated justified demands of partial autonomy but always abnegated violent means.

Still, the league was immediately dissolved by the Spanish Governor. The more radical and pro-violent “Katipunan”-movement tried to garner the support of the famous author several times but Rizal always spoke to the contrary. He always warned the people not to start a war and espoused a rapprochement.

### Books as protest

Few novels had a wider influence on their country than the two main Novels of José Rizal. Equally few other writers had to pay a higher price for their writings: Rizal was executed mainly because of his books. The Spaniards obviously recognized the might of the truth, written between the two boards of a book and executed the author. The intention of the novels was to draw attention to the calamitous state of affairs in the Philippines in satirical ways. They both end on a note of failure and the triumph of evil over good. Especially the second book leaves no suggestion of redemption. By giving that example of failure, Rizal tried to warn his countrymen of a violent uprising. Thus there is promiscuous humor, mordant satire, romance and ethnographic description which unsettles the readers response to the narrative in many ways, structural aspects of the social organization of the native society are revealed by the sharp description of the author. The tension between official Christianity and native ritual and belief, the gendered nature of social relations in the Philippines at that time and cultural beliefs and practices are other topics of Rizal’s criticism. In flourish expression and apt description Rizal draws a cautionary tale of the cruel and unjust life in the colonial Philippines.



© IPON | Rizal - The first non-violent thinker in the Philippines?

## Rapprochement and reforms: Rizal's successors

Amongst others, Manuel Quezon is considered by many as a successor of Rizal by function and by spirit. Quezon was the third President of the Philippines, after the short-lived time under Aguinaldo and Malvar. He held office from 1935 till 1944. Quezon was the first president using the newly granted freedom to start reforms and increase autonomy. He stood for rapprochement with the new colonial power - the USA - and tried to imply change through reforms. During his presidency, Quezon tried to tackle the problem of landless peasants in the countryside with partial success. In history there has always been a choice between violence and peaceful means. Often times they are interdependent, as the next example shows.

## Clamped between Terrorism and dialogue: The Moros<sup>1</sup>

The Moros of the southern Philippines have been fighting a four-hundred year war on autonomy. Sometimes they resorted in peace talks but for a long time they used violence. Among Muslims in Mindanao there have been many conflicts about which way to choose. The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) formed itself in the 1960s. Their goal was the autonomy of parts of the mostly Muslim inhabited parts of Mindanao. The MNLF took part in terrorist attacks and assassinations. Their sphere of action is restricted to Philippine territory. Alleged contacts to the terror network Al-Qaida have never been proven. The government in Manila sent troops to counter the insurgency. The bloody war between the Military and the Moro rebels caused countless deaths of soldiers, rebels and

### Ahead of his time?

A good example of this in the Noli is the famous chapter on the sermon in which the mismatch between the arrogant and bullying pretensions of the preacher. The naive ignorance of the congregation is exploited to demonstrate the nature of the intellectual and physical tyranny of the clergy. Many parts of the second Novel are targeted at the easygoing political apathy of the students and the failure to react to the political constraints they had to face. The one possible answer, uprising and revolution is the one

which Rizal rejected through his refusal to engage in insurrectionary movements. So his decision to write his novels became his mode of political action. Unfortunately, Rizal was probably ahead of his time in two different ways. First, the Spaniards were not prepared to engage in rapprochement unlike the British Empire did in the post Second World War to India. Secondly, it seems the Philippine people were not ready to choose non-violent protest and resorted to war. Despite his failure in enforcing his opinion, Rizal has contributed to the case of nonviolent protest in many ways.

1) The muslim Moros are the most numerous non-christian demographic group in the Philippines. In 2005 the Moros represented about 5 % of the overall population in the Philippines.



civilians. Again and again the conflict flared up and still today new conflicts can start immediately because many weapons are in the convulsion. In 1976 a peace agreement was signed between the MNLF and the government of the Philippines in Tripolis. This agreement could only be signed because of the massive engagement of Muslim leader Nur Misuari. Misuari and others tried to end the violent conflict and establish a peaceful solution. Unfortunately the Marcos government made several concessions but did not fulfil the contract as hoped by Misuari and other moderate muslim activists. As a result of this, parts of the MNLF split off and formed the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The conflict is still going on today but most parts of the Muslim people have left the path of violence and are active in the organization of the Autonomous Muslim Mindanao.

In 1986, after the People Power Movement and the fall of dictator Marcos, the new President Corazon Aquino followed a more active politics with the goal of ending the lethal conflict. Since these days the number of violent conflict has decreased drastically. Only hardliners still fight in the MILF nowadays. On August 1 in 1989 the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) was founded with Republic Act Nr. 6734. Elections in all concerning areas were held and most people voted for the joining to the ARMM. In 1996 the MNLF and the government signed the final peace contract and Nur Misuari became the first Governor of the ARMM. For him, it was a long way from being a military leader to becoming a peaceful and respected politician. Most Moros are satisfied with the ARMM but some others still press for complete liberation from the Philippines. There are still many conflicts going on in the ARMM, but the example of Nur Misuari gives hope that one day the violent conflict will be ending.

### The triumph of peaceful protest: People Power

In 1986 the Philippine people formed a strong non-violent movement, which became known as "People Power Revolution", also known as "EDSA Revolution". The Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines supported the revolution and millions of Filipinos were mobilized by civil

society groups. It marked the fall of Marcos dictatorship which lasted for two decades. Marcos committed extensive human rights violations. Globally, Marcos leadership was known for its unimaginable extent of political corruption. During the time of Marcos, his family confiscated the biggest media, utility services and manufacturing companies.

The Revolution consisted of a series of demonstrations which started in 1983 and culminated in 1986. Most of the demonstrations took place on the Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, better known as "EDSA" in February 1986. More than two Million Filipinos were involved: Several political, military and religious groups showed the discontent of wide parts of the population. The protests were fuelled by the opposition to many years of corruption and mismanagement by the Marcos Government. In 1983 Benigno Aquino, leader of the opposition, came back to the Philippines after living in exile. Right at the airport he was killed. The assassination of Benigno Aquino, served as a catalyst for the revolution. Despite warnings and threats from pro-Marcos-groups and the military Aquino had decided to go back to the Philippines. When he was asked about his thoughts of the death threats, Aquino stated „The Filipino is worth dying for.“ By saying this and by being executed like Rizal before him, Aquino became the symbol of the People Power Revolution for many Philipinos.

Financial problems and reports about corruption fueled the discontent of the masses even more. After being pressured by the US-Government Marcos surprisingly announced that elections should be held in February 1986. The widow of Aquino, Corazon Aquino became candidate for the presidential office. After a controversial vote count with more or less open manipulation Marcos was declared the winner. But the Filipino people refused to accept this result and went on the streets. The embankment was broken and Marcos could not sustain office. As a reaction the "Reform the Armed Forces Movement" started a coup attempt against Marcos. In a radio message aired over Radio Veritas, Cardinal Sin called all Filipinos to help the rebels by going to EDSA and give emotional support, food and other supplies to the rebels. Many people followed his call despite threats from pro-Marcos-

groups. Overall, Radio Veritas played an important role during the mass uprising.

At the climax of the rebellion around three million people filled EDSA. One morning, government troops arrived to stop Radio Veritas from reporting, but the radio station switched to another transmitter and kept on sending. The mood in the streets was festive; many people brought their families with them. On several occasions military forces tried to dissolve the gathering, but on every occasion they hold their fire. The military did not shoot on their own people. The pressure of Marcos

increased more and more. Finally, he left the country.

The peaceful downfall of this dictator can be considered as one of the biggest victories of non-violent protest in the history of humanity. The peaceful rebellion served as a role model for later revolutions, for example in Eastern Germany and Eastern Europe.

### What is going on today?

Today there are still many unsolved conflicts, social imbalances and injustices in the Philippines. The new political system still has not provided social welfare and corruption is still spreading. But many

things have changed for the better. Many people use different forms of non-violent protest: Farmer-groups who go on hunger strike to take possession of their land, journalists who face threats and try to write the truth about corrupt politicians, unionist who peacefully fight for better wages, indigenous people who resist the interest of multi-national-companies which want to exploit the natural resources, and all the activists and politicians who work on social issues. They all have one in common: They all are the successors of Rizal and they keep the long tradition of non-violent protest in the Philippines alive. ■



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## NON-VIOLENT TOOLS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ON NEGROS



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1983 (Berlin/Germany), completed her Masters in Cultural Studies with emphasis on Migration at the Viadrina University, Frankfurt/ Oder. She was in the Philippines from Oktober 2011 till April 2012 to support the IPON Team in Bacolod as a human rights observer.



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*TFM (Task Force Mapalad) uses non-violent protest methods to demonstrate their anger about the vague implementation of CARP and to demand the fulfilment of the promises of the agrarian reform.*

With the use of non-violent forms of protests, the peasant organisation TFM wants to draw attention to the situation of the poor farmers, who are mostly affected by the passive attitude of the government towards the Philippine agrarian reform. Their phrase "Fire from below" symbolizes the active efforts of the landless farmers and farm workers in the form of protest camp, marches, community organizing, dialogues or even hunger strikes. These are in response to the poor implementation within the Philippine agrarian reform. Last year for example the farmers of Negros and Mindanao marched to Manila and due to desperation they shaved their heads and started a hunger strike in front of the DAR National (Department of Agrarian Reform). TFM organizes campaigns and mobilizes the community while being committed to non-

violence. But why is TFM endorsing non-violent forms of protests? Danilo Gaban, TFM-Coordinator for Negros, explains to us that the struggle of the farmers is comparable to the struggle Jesus had to deal with while on earth. He also suffered quietly, with the will to use peaceful forms of defence. This is the motivation behind the use by the farmers of non-violent protest forms after all these years. Their belief and the support of the church give them strength with Jesus as role model on their side. Furthermore, Gaban says, nobody can be convinced honestly while using violence. There will be no recourse, neither within the society nor within the members of the Philippine government. So everybody who wants to be a part of TFM should operate within this legal approach. So although their struggle for land has already endured for more than 20



© IPON | Bishop Navarra blesses the TFM farmers after a mass in the San Sebastian Cathedral church in Bacolod.



years, the farmers still do believe in their non-violent methods.

The recent three-day protest march, which took place on 6th February underlined this commitment to the use of non-violence protest form. Using the motto "The Last Two Minutes" a few hundred farmers started their protest march from two different cities in Negros Occidental. José Rodito Angeles, former TFM-Speaker and farmleader of Hacienda Grande, emphasized the urgency of this walk by saying, that the implementation of CARP (Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program) should be done within the year 2012. In 2013, local elections will be held in Negros, which means, that applications for land titles will be delayed again. Because of the political reorganization and by the interest to cooperate with the rich elite of Negros, the farmers can not expect the support of the new elected politicians. By 2014 the agrarian reform will end. Besides that, it is not really in the interests of the Philippine government to implement the agrarian reform on time.

"Our protest march", so Angeles, "is not just for our land and our families. We march for all of the farmers disfranchised by the government when they lost interest in pursuing agrarian reform and chose to turn away from the pleading farmers. We call on other farmers to join us in putting a stop to the deafening silence of P-Noy (President) and the disheartening lack of accomplishment of DAR. If we would not act now, we might be too late." Meaning that the farmers who are not able to get a land title by this year, will never get their own land. "We will no longer wait for the president to act; we will move him to action. We have waited all our lives," said TFM-Negros Präsident Alberto Jayme.

The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) failed to reach its own aims for the years 2010 and 2011. Last year less than 50 percent of the area in Negros was



© IPON | IPON observer Gerlinde Becker conducting an interview.

distributed to the farmers. The whole development in the agrarian sector is a sad story. On Negros Island, only five percent of the supposedly distributed area was distributed to farmers since the beginning of the agrarian reform at the end of the 1980s; namely only 1,151 hectares out of 23,323 hectares. This hopelessness and the resulting anger disposed the farmers to join the protest march.

The protest march was supported by the Catholic Church by blessing and praying

for the farmers as well as by providing accommodations for the nights.

In the morning of February 6, two groups of farmers started their walk. Meeting point of the first group was San Carlos, while the second group started their walk in La Castellana. Self-made banners were hang on buses, that followed the protest march and served as resting point during the three day march. Farmers positioned themselves and upheld banners with slogans saying "Too fast on corruption,



© IPON | TFM farmers on their way to Bacolod during their protest march.

too slow on poverty alleviation,” or “Pres. P-Noy and Secretary de los Reyes: Nasaan ang suporta?” In the first three hours of the march it seemed that the speed of the march reflected the impatience and desperation of the farmers. Fast strides and an indescribable restlessness plunged the first hours of the march. One could almost sense an elation amongst the farmers hoping that this march would finally change their situation. As the blistering sun rose during noonday the speed slowed down. The farmers interrupted their march to eat their food or even for a quick nap. The whole walk stands metaphorically for their long struggle the farmers are going through, dominated alternately by hope, that the situation would finally improve and by disillusionment, when farmers have to admit, that the political power of the „landlords“ is too influential and that even the Philippine government does not show real dedication for the agrarian reform.

After the break, the farmer continued their march rested and satiated, but the energy that was felt before did not reach the former level. Maybe it was the sun that exhausted the farmers, but maybe it was also the long lasting fight for their rights as landless farmers that caused the exhaustion. Some older farmers took a rest in the bus, while the younger ones continued their walk, holding the banners.

At around 3 pm the farmers reached Victoria, where they planned to stay overnight. Reverently,

the farmers entered the church. No one missed touching the Jesus statue and to genuflect at least a few seconds before sitting down on the hard wooden benches of the church. Most of the farmers were silent and thoughtful, maybe some were just tired. The rest of the day the farmers prayed and rested.

In the morning at five the priest held a mass to bless and pray for the farmers who gratefully received the blessing and prayers. Encouraged and rested, the farmers continued their walk.

During the second day more and more farmers from the different haciendas in Negros joined the walk and at the end of the day around 300 farmers marched into the town of Silay. Also in Silay the church served as shelter and accommodation for the exhausted farmers. On February 8, all farmers converged in Bacolod to demonstrate in unity in front of the DAR and to award President Aquino and the responsible minister for the agrarian reform with the “Kalabasa Award”, an award for extreme lack of achievement. On February 9, a delegation of farmer continued their walk by boarding the ferry to Manila, after being blessed by the bishop of Bacolod, Navarra, who also submitted a letter to the farmers addressed to President Aquino. Bishop Navarra compared the situation of the farmers with the Jewish people who Moses led to the Promised Land of God. “Yes, God heard the cry of his poor sacadas and poor little farmers when the Agrarian

Reform was enacted. A taste of the Promised Land was at last possible for them," Navarra wrote in his letter. He continued by mentioning, that this hope was soon abolished when the farmers recognized the unattainability of this dream. Not only did the Bishop request the President to use his power to finally implement the CARP, he also requested Secretary de los Reyes and the big landowners to finally hear the cry of the farmers and give them their allowed land.

After this emotional Holy Mass, the farmers walked to the port of Bacolod, invigorated and full of hope, to continue their march towards Manila.

In Manila other farmers from Batangas and Mindanao converged in front of the DAR National to camp out and to demand the promises President Aquino gave during his election campaign. "We are appalled by our President's deafening silence on CARPER (extended agrarian reform). We feel like he has no heart for CARPER after all of his promises," Jayme said.

Manila's Bishop Pabillo, national

director of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines-National Secretariat for Social Action, Justice and Peace supports the protest of the farmers and held a public Mass for the farmers on February 11, in DAR Central Office in Elliptical Road, Quezon City. The support from the church motivates the farmers to keep on fighting non-violently for their rights. After two days of camping in front of the DAR National by the farmers, Secretary de los Reyes were forced to negotiate with them. These ended when the Secretary gave the wanted admission to the farmers. Sadly though, on Valentine's Day the Presidential Security Group and the police dispersed the peaceful farmers' gathering and 29 farmers were put in prison. Allegedly they acted against the law which first prohibits protests before Malacañang and secondly prohibits to be shirtless in public. Some farmers wrote their demands on their torsos so that the police had a reason to put them in prison. Indeed the farmers were allowed to leave prison after a few hours, but still: this action showed very

much how unwelcome the farmers were. Also, the violent answer to the non-violent protests of the farmers shows clearly the attitude of the President towards the farmers. This incident was condemned by Bishop Vincente Navarra and Bishop Broderick Pabillo, who both appealed to President Aquino to hear the cry of the poor farmers.

Farmers say, that under President Aquino the CARP had its worst year. TFM is already organizing the next nationwide protest campaign in case Secretary de los Reyes does not fulfil his promise. If this march does really happen, it will last three months with Davao as the city where it will be begin. Further cities and places that are involved are amongst others Cagayan de Oro, Cebu, Toledo City, San Carlos, Bacolod, Iloilo, Boracay, Mindoro, Batangas and Manila. Supposedly 1,000 farmers are expected to participate. But this will only take place if the government again fail to fulfil their concession. ■

#### SOURCES

- The found information on this article was given by Danilo Gaban.



## MANDATES AFFIRMED

*The mandate conferences in 2011 and 2012 ceremonially certified the ongoing cooperation between IPON and Task Force Mapalad (TFM) on Negros and the official partnership with the Panalsalan Dagumbaan Tribal Association (PADATA) on Mindanao.*

*IPON Mindanao has been working with the indigenous group PADATA since July 2011. On 29th January 2012, the deal for a future cooperation between the two organisations was sealed. The mandate conference took place in Panalsalan, Bukidnon on Mindanao. More or less 60 PADATA members attended the event. PADATA is henceforth the first official partner organisation of IPON on Mindanao.*

*The mandate with TFM was renewed for another year on Negros on 16th December 2011. More than 70 people attended the meeting. The former president of TFM, José Rodito Angeles, depicted IPON's successful work on Negros over the past few years and emphasised on the importance of extending the cooperation. There are still more than 135,000 hectares of land left to be relocated under the land reform.*



## “WHY IS IT THAT IT NEEDS A PERSON DYING FOR OUR VOICE TO BE HEARD?”



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IPON in 2011/12.

*On August 24, 2011 an alliance of indigenous peoples groups launched a peaceful rally to protest against the renewal of a ranch license in an area they claim as ancestral domain<sup>1</sup>. At the same time other members gathered to participate in what was supposed to be a dialogue with the security guards hired by the ranch lessees to talk about the cases of harassment the group is exposed to by these guards. But what the day will be remembered for is the murder of one of their members.<sup>2</sup>*

The struggle of the Panalsalan Dagumbaan Tribal Association (PADATA) which is named after the two Barangays (villages) in which many of the members of this indigenous peoples group are living in, dates back into the pre-Marcos era. Facing the fate of being driven of their land in the 1960s, the families organized in the group attempted many times to regain control of their farm lands on which their ancestors were living since time immemorial. What is anchored inside the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA), the right of indigenous peoples to their ancestral land as well as the right to be informed and consulted prior to any project that is to be launched on the

affected area, is in reality bypassed in many cases.

In the case of the Indigenous People (IP) group PADATA both, the rights to land as well as the principle of Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) were undermined when the former ranch lessee Mr. Ernesto Villalon renewed his license at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in 2010, using a fake FPIC, given by a tribe that is not actually living in the area. In consequence PADATA is facing two struggles: While trying to claim the land of their ancestors they are also facing the harassments of the security guards, hired by the ranch lessee in the affected area to intimidate the group and to drive them of the land once again.<sup>3</sup>

© PADATA | Destroyed house, June 2011. The houses and cottages of the PADATA-group are systematically burned down.



1) Ancestral domain refers to areas generally belonging to Indigenous Groups since time immemorial.

2) This article is based on the first hand information IPON observers collected during extensive research conducted in the area between 2010-2012. The information was collected during multiple meetings with the local police, interviews with witnesses and other PADATA members as well as visits to the area and the accompaniment of PADATA at the mentioned rally in Malaybalay, Bukidnon.

3) For more details on the forms of cases of harassment of PADATA see the article: Albers, Carmen/Knappmann, Alexia: “Indigenous Group in Central Mindanao Struggles for Homeland” in: Observer: A journal on threatened human rights defenders in the Philippines” Vol. 3, No. 2, Dec. 2011, pp. 32-33.

The opponents are, however, very unequal. While PADATA is struggling for their land through peaceful means such as peaceful protest, rallies, sit ins, dialogues, law suits, police visits and blotters (police reports), they are facing a powerful and very well networked ranch lessee, willing to use any means to keep hold of the land, including violence against the indigenous peoples. How far he is willing to go, was clearly demonstrated on August 24, 2011 when one of the PADATA members was shot dead inside the ranch.

The day started with two different protest actions. While one part of PADATA members was participating in a rally in Malaybalay, Bukidnon, trying to get the attention and support of the Vice-Governor Jose Ma. Zubiri, Jr., a group of 26 other PADATA members gathered inside the area, answering the call by the security guards to what was supposed to be a dialogue to talk about the cases of harassment. The farmers participated in hopes of getting the allowance to return to their crops to harvest without the risk of the guards to shoot at them. However, as soon as they arrived at the meeting the guards started once again to harass them and ordered under the threat of arms to hand over their backpacks and bolos, which they use for farming. "They said it was for security reasons," one witness reported the next day.

Welcie Gica, a 28 year old member of PADATA and father of two sons aging 3 and 4, arrived late to the meeting. When told by the head of security M. Ceballos to hand over the backpack he hesitated. According to the witnesses, it was then, when Ceballos opened fire and shot Gica twice. According to the autopsy report the victim succumbed to bullet wounds in the left armpit and neck and had an exit wound through his mouth.

Gica died of his wounds immediately. Back in Malaybalay it was almost the end of the rally, when the president and vice president of PADATA, who had been participating in the protest at the capitol, received the phone call and the information that one of their members had been shot dead. The information came as a shock to the group, which had just finished a dialogue with the Vice Governor about the cases of harassment.

The next shock came the following day. The police, which had come to the area to bring in some of the security guards including the main suspect for questioning, had released all of them after around 8 hours, claiming that none of the witnesses had pinpointed one perpetrator or signed an affidavit, stating that it was in fact M. Ceballos who shot the victim. According to the witnesses however, when the police came to the area and arrested some of the guards, there were still many other armed guards, roaming around inside the village intimidating the witnesses and told them not to tell the police what happened. One of the eye witnesses claims, that she was offered 1,000 Philippine pesos in exchange for her silence, but she didn't take the money. They admit that they first were too scared to sign the affidavit; however, they also claim that they had told the police who shot Welcie Gica. Also two of the eye witnesses signed the affidavit in the next morning and therefore within the 36 hours, the time period in which the police is allowed to keep a suspect. However, at that time Ceballos as well as the other guards were already released from the police station. Even worse, they simply had returned to the area.

The action taken by the police is therefore questionable. First of all, the suspects were released not after 36 hours, but within 8 hours after the

## NEWSTICKER +++

*The members of PADATA are constantly threatened by private security guards on the Villalon Ranch, Mindanao. Since 2011 they have to deal with serious cases of destructive arson.*

- + June 2011 - 40 armed security guards open fire and burn down 23 houses; incidents are reported to the local police on the same day
- + June 2011 - no police investigation is conducted
- + June 2011 - more fire incidents
- + June 2011 - cases of destructive arson is filed by more than nine families
- + October 2011 - Provincial Prosecutor renders a resolution stating the case as probable cause
- + October 2011 - information is filed in the court
- + December 2011 - Warrant of Arrest against 14 security guards is issued
- + January 2012 - just two of the 14 accused are arrested
- + December until March 2012 - Warrant of Arrest has not been served; case is brought to national Human Rights Office in Manila by IPON
- + March 2012 - Regional Conference Meeting is held at the regional police headquarter; a two month-deadline is set to serve the Warrant of Arrest
- + February until March 2012 - Prosecutor reinvestigates the case of destructive arson

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© IPON | Dozens of security guards with high-profile guns create an atmosphere of fear and insecurity, „Villalon ranch“, Bukidnon.

arrest. Also the argument, that the witnesses were not signing an affidavit immediately can be questioned as they were intimidated, a fact that should have been considered by the police, which had been informed about more than 30 harassment incidents in the months preceding the murder of Welcie Gica and was therefore very well aware of the climate of violence, fear and intimidation inside the affected area.

Vice Governor Zubiri called for two ad-hoc meetings the day following the incident. In the first meeting he urged the agencies, responsible for solving the land conflict, to take the necessary actions to solve the issue. In the second meeting he ordered the Chief of Police to take the necessary action, to protect the IPs in the area, and to restore peace and order. The NCIP, the agency responsible for making a decision regarding the fake consent used by the ranch lessee to apply for the renewal of the ranch license in 2010, finally annulled this fake FPIC in September 2011, and with this the legal basis for a renewal of a ranch license was annulled as well. However the DENR, the agency responsible to take action and to revoke the renewal of the license, hasn't done so until now.

While grateful for the support and action from the vice governor one question asked by one of the witnesses remains unanswered: "We had rallies, we went to the NCIP and DENR to protest. We reported the shootings and harassments to the police in the last months. So why is it that it needs a person dying for our voice to be heard?" Until today the group is still trying to get justice for the victim. The group participated in a protest camp, lasting almost three months in front of the DENR, trying to get the attention of the responsible agency to their cause. Sadly until today there is no reaction or decision by the agency, yet. Colegado, vice president of PADATA, participated in a two weeks visit to Germany, where she was able to inform the international public about their struggle during several meetings with German politicians, roundtable discussions and workshops.<sup>4</sup> However, Ceballos who had returned to the area until finally on December 15, 2011 a warrant of arrest was issued against him for the murder of Welcie Gica, is now at large. ■

4) For more information on the visit of two human rights defenders in Germany, see the article by Dominik Hamann this issue, p. 36.



## NO VIOLENCE!

*The probability of achieving regime change through peaceful protests is almost twice as high as through bloody uprisings. This presents positive perspectives for the Russian demonstrations.*

Non-violent revolutions do not always remain non-violent, as demonstrated by the uprisings in Egypt, Libya and Syria during the Arab Spring. Yet peaceful movements which seek to bring about regime change are often successful. They toppled illegitimate regimes during the post-Soviet "colour revolutions" in Georgia and Ukraine. They ended apartheid in South Africa, having previously brought to an end "bourgeois Socialism" in East Germany. Non-violent movements overcame British rule in India and Malawi and brought down authoritarian regimes in Chile, the Philippines and Portugal.

Recent research has found that the success of non-violent confrontations depends in particular on one key factor: demonstrators taking a conscious decision in favour of non-violence. The research shows that the probability of full or partial regime change being achieved through peaceful protests is more than twice as high as through violent confrontations. Yet the outcome of civil resistance also depends on the methods used in practice. It is important to question the legality of the regime and deprive it of its capabilities and

material resources. At the same time, space must be created for dissenting views and the unity and clear goals of the movement maintained. It would seem that the most important thing for a protest movement seeking regime change is to win over decisive sections of the police and army. This has been demonstrated by the movement in Tunisia on the one hand and that in Syria on the other. For a government which can count on the unreserved loyalty of its troops is able to quell even the strongest of public protests. Yet this is only possible through a great deal of bloodshed, whilst half-hearted or ineffective attempts to quell dissent tend to actually aid the protesters in the achievement of their aims.

In order to circumvent state television, which merely spouts the official line, and overcome the huge distances between Russian cities, demonstrators are relying in particular on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. In this, they are no different to the Arab Spring activists. In light of these facts, how positive are the perspectives of the current Russian protest movement? So far, it has done many things right. It has concentrated

on one single demand: the call for fair elections. It has brought together liberals, communists, nationalists and otherwise apolitical citizens in a broad coalition, despite the strong animosities and potential divisions between these groups. And it has paid attention to the most important core element which legitimises demonstrations and lends them popularity across the world: it has remained peaceful. ■



**Volker Beck, Member of the German Bundestag**  
Volker Beck has been a Member of the German Parliament for Cologne since 1994.

In the 16th electoral term of the German Bundestag, he is the leading Parliamentary Secretary for the ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS parliamentary group, a member of the Greens' party council and human rights spokesman for the parliamentary group. He studied art history, history and German language and literature at the University of Stuttgart.

© Asja Caspari | Informing a critical society - Discussion with the International Society for Development, Bonn, during the speakers tour of IPON in April 2012 (see pp. 36-38).



## AS OLD AND YOUNG AS MOUNTAINS



**Susann Weitzel**

1985 (Germany), Bachelor of Environmental Sciences at University of Lüneburg. Training course in Non-violent Communication in Steyerberg, Germany. Human rights observer with IPON in 2009.

*„Making Peace Without Weapons“ – since 1978 this motto has formed peaceful protests. It has been seen on thousands of billboards and its statement is the topic of many speeches. The motto was developed during protests against military actions, yet there is an implicit assumption that peace is more than “no weapons”. It is a sense that comes along with the insistence on truth and non-violence and, according to Mohandas K. Gandhi, the latter are as old as mountains.*

The main characteristics of the peaceful protest are influenced by history and by personal experience in the context of non-violent resistance. Be it the campaign of the Quaker to fight for religious liberty (1656-1682), the Salt Satyagraha led by Gandhi (1930), the protest of women in the “Rose Street” of Berlin (1943) or the interfaith coalition against the Vietnam War founded by the Berrigan brothers – they all are examples of non-violent actions against inequity, depression and life-threatening measures (Thorbecke 2011:

In the following paragraphs, some thoughts of different persons will be used to demonstrate the complexity of an idea that has determined the peaceful protest up until now.

### Non-violence as a life principle

The principle of non-violence is connected to a holistic view of life. Though it has several different dimensions, i.e. personal and political aspects that overlap (Gugel 1996: 15). It includes



© Hannah Bahr | Hard days of protest are more colorful with flowers.

21). They have made an impact and have set the pattern for subsequent campaigns. Their representatives spoke about non-violence as a basic principle for their actions. In spite of all discussions about non-violence there are various basic assumptions regarding what lies behind it.

an ecological alternative way of life, efforts to a non-violent education, moral courage, working on long-term problem solutions and the vision of a society without social classes and government authority (ibid.: 17), to name but a few. It offers an alternative to existing structures and implies

Gandhi's belief that the change of ourselves results in the change of life and vice versa.

In order to describe the complexity of non-violence, Gandhi (1869-1948) formed the idea of Satyagraha<sup>1</sup>. Current peace scholars continue to use this very concept to analyze the potential of non-violence as an all-encompassing approach to solving conflicts.

## Emerging Satyagraha

It is difficult to translate Satyagraha into another language without paraphrasing. Gandhi created this word that corresponded to the power structure and disputation at that time (Arnold 2011). It describes a power that was shaped through truth and love. Satyagraha does not mean the avoidance and evasion of violence, but the development of a specific power. Satyagraha deepens "ahimsa" (Indian word for non-violence), the well-known Indian term based on an old religious, philosophical and ethical tradition (ibid.). Perhaps employing the word "empowerment" is better than spreading the term "non-violence". Negative terms do not convey the proper message of Satyagraha. "A negative word does not create an action-guided vision" (ibid.).

Living out Satyagraha means recovering that power in oneself. Every person has the need for power, equity and truth which connect all people. For this reason Gandhi believed in Satyagraha throughout his struggle. It is important to love oneself and to get rid of self-doubt (Tempel 2009: 155). Self-doubt is in contradiction to Satyagraha which is an affirmative power. Similarly Nelson Mandela quoted during his inaugural speech in 1994: "And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our

own fear, our presence automatically liberates others." (words by Marianne Williamson).

Working on self-doubt includes coping with one's own fears: Fear



© Hannah Bahr | A mass against violence.

of the enemy, fear of inequality, the fear of failing and suffering and so on. When considering these aspects, one immediately also touches on the subject of patience, since working on oneself and therefore bringing about changes (inner changes as well as changes in the world) are processes that take time. While implementing change, it is important to keep the rhythm of our human existence in mind (Goss-Mayr 2011: 47). If we ignore that rhythm we automatically take up arms. Besides, "[f]orced changes do not last" (ibid.) and change takes its time.

Patience does not mean passiveness, as it is commonly misinterpreted. In this regard Satyagraha means being insistent. Amongst others, this insistence comes from Hindu traditions. „[...] It will serve no purpose if you go for something two days long and after it alight on a waste heap. [...]” (words by Sri Aurobindo) – it is all the more important that Satyagraha is understood as a principle of life instead of being seen as a method or

policy, that is used in specific moments only.

For this reason it is necessary that endurance is fostered (Goss-Mayr 2011: 47). There are different ways doing

so. Some meditate or pray (ibid.). Some search for human sources to rekindle their inner fire. That means, for example, inviting people during resistance that have been part of the non-violent resistance for years and that have the ability to share their power and spirituality (ibid.). Exchanges subsequently may give impulses and open one's mind.

Hildegard Goss-Mayr (2011: 46) noticed during her stay in the Philippines that the protesters were tired and looking for a space to breathe. The latter was required for their power of endurance. They therefore met up to cultivate friendship; to be with the family and children; to enjoy pursuing the right path to equity together (ibid.). Taking a deep breath and celebrating life is important to respond actively in a targeted manner. It contributes to getting rid of feelings of loneliness and helplessness and it furthermore helps to focus on the shared vision and long-term objectives. People's eyes shine in anticipation of happiness.

1) Satyagraha: Sanskrit Satjāgrah, satjā (truth) and agraha (insistence).



And happiness that accrues from the feeling of dynamism is proven to be contagious (Tempel 2009: 167).



© Hannah Bahr | Creative forms of protest.

### Applying Satyagraha: Serving the enemy

If dynamism is known to be contagious and if it is a dimension of Satyagraha, does it mean that Satyagraha can also be passed on to the "enemy"? The crucial point of non-violence is indeed the love for enemies (Gugel 1996: 14).

"One shall serve the enemy, one shall pay homage to the enemy and rescue him by fighting against him. And one shall fight out all issues from start to finish. Though the end is not composed of victory and booties, but of reconciliation and peace." (del Vasto 1977: 59). Non-violence focuses the conservation of life, "the respect for every person" (Goss-Mayr 2011: 39) and is targeted on offering a humane life for all beings. It includes the basic acceptance of the human rights of the enemy by not violating his dignity. Ending the enemies' lives would be in contradiction to this attitude. Hildegard Goss-Mayr (2011: 39) talks about a dual liberation: Liberating the victims and liberating the perpetrators. This works because of the belief that everybody has a conscience that is can be appealed to and that can be influenced (ibid.).

Non-violent communication, founded by Marshall Rosenberg, has assumed that it can be possible to forgive enemies if people among other things free themselves from grudge and old behavioral patterns that are no longer suitable. Being on a

reconciliatory path is a process and a very complex psychological issue.

### Abandoning passiveness and resignation

Satyagraha means passing through an active, alert inner process. Since it has been developed during active protests, it also means offering active resistance. The term "non-violent action" is quite common when it comes to conflicts and solving these in a non-violent matter. This active dimension demands – amongst patience – commitment and the willingness to get involved in a conflict.

According to Hildegard Goss-Mayr (1976: 70, 71) a non-violent action is characterized by: (1) being inventive, creative and constructive, (2) being democratic (choose methods and strategies of action together) and (3) aiming for overcoming inequity (includes the dual liberation, see above).

A non-violent action implies that people are prepared to accept voluntarily and consciously the consequences that arise from the actions (Goss-Mayr 2011: 39). An example by Gandhi can illustrate the dimension of the aforementioned requirements: If you fail to convince lawmakers through petitions etc., then you have to force them to repeal the law by violating the law and then accepting the punishment (Gugel 1996: 35). Violated laws, blockades, occupations and damage to objects are part of the means of non-violent action (ibid: 18). Thereby, the protesters shall balance out the consequences for other people with the aims of their action.

If there is violence against the participants of a non-violent action, "[...] we either resist passively or ease." (ibid.). This shows that the protesters are prepared to suffer. Putting up with this kind of harm caused Gandhi to become known all over the world and to bring science to analyze this type of reaction carefully.

It cannot be taken for granted that someone would take on this type of challenge (Goss-Mayr 2011: 45). Thus, it is very important to prepare mentally, to think the chosen action through and to take part in trainings. And to be aware of the following: giving into a situation is not synonymous with giving up.

### Preparing non-violent actions

There are a lot of ways to prepare a peaceful protest. Taking, for example, non-violent

communication: It is well-known through the life of Marshall Rosenberg, that non-violent communication contributed to a constructive culture of non-violent conflict resolution. It assumes that the most satisfying reason for acting is the desire for enriching life (Rosenberg 2007: 1). It is connected to the tradition of Satyagraha as a positive and constructive power. Many aspects of non-violent communication are located within peaceful protests and the preparations of non-violent actions. It maintains the dual liberation and supports protesters when the inner process is carried out. It makes protesters aware of the beauty of life and lends the power to continue fighting for equity.

## Challenges

If an idea is extraordinary there are many challenges to it. Therefore the idea of Satyagraha calls for ample questions, problems and disputes (Gugel 1996: 194). There are so many experiences with non-violent movements and actions, but there is always the question of assignability. Is non-violence dependent on the political, social and cultural context? Other core issues, that arise and are discussed in peace studies, are: What is equity? Is it possible to solve all conflicts non-violently? Is the idea of mankind – especially in relation to the “enemy” – realistic? Who defines

violence? Is violence against objects authorised? Is non-violence merely the hype of departed persons like Gandhi? Does Satyagraha work in a context of genocide? (Gugel 1996: 194-213). These questions cannot be answered in a simple fashion and shall provide an incentive for detailed debates.

Those debates show that Satyagraha is indeed as old as mountains – old and young one has to admit. A mountain changes its character constantly and becomes taller and smaller, bigger and thinner. Satyagraha, as a power within people, is as old as mankind and is renewed every time a thought or a baby are born. ■



© Hauke Diederich | Is it a form of nonviolent protest, even when objects get destroyed?

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## THE POWER OF THE PUBLIC – A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH ON RECENT HISTORICAL EVENTS



### Anna Hollendung

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*We are witnessing a number of great and unexpected upheavals. On miscellaneous places worldwide – especially in the Arab World – people seized power. Suddenly, people gathered in public spaces and forced dictators to resign or change the rules of the political game, which hitherto seemed mostly to be unthinkable. Even though not every rebellion led to a revolution or the founding of a new constitution, the unforeseen events testify human being's ability to start something new by interrupting the predictable course of events. To understand the uprising in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Yemen and the political changes occurring in Morocco, Jordan and Kuwait, the following article will investigate Hannah Arendt's concept of power.*

What became apparent in these recent or past upheavals such as the People Power Revolution in the Philippines in 1986, or the Peaceful Revolution in Germany in 1989?

We will take a look at theories on peaceful resistance, as Susann Weitzel suggests in her article "as old and young as mountains". Passive resistance, civil disobedience, Saytagraha and non-cooperation are all concepts trying to lay out possibilities on how to act effectively against oppression and injustice. These strategies assume that violence breeds more violence and that the only possibility to break the circle is to opt against violence once and for all. The concepts provide an insight into the steps and rules that actors need to follow in order to succeed. As a result, these concepts are of a technical nature but are not helpful to comprehend the phenomenological nature of the recent historical events.

© Hossam el-Hamrawy | Demonstrators in Cairo, Egypt.



The same applies for theories trying to justify violence. Friedrich Engels, for example, understood violence as the power that hastens the development of economics in line with the general provisions. The emphasis lies on the continuity of a predictable course of events.<sup>1</sup>

### The unpredictable nature of acting

The results of the Arab Rebellion came unexpected. Retrospectively, nobody imagined what the desperate act of self-immolation of the Tunisian greengrocer, Mohamed Bouazizi, was about to initialise. To what extent the actual situation in the region varies from opponent groups' constitutional drafts becomes obvious when we consider the question of Women's Rights in the context of the Arab Revolutions for instance. "Women have been very kind to revolutions, but revolutions have not been kind to them"<sup>2</sup>, summarizes Dr. Rouba Al-Fattal, co-founder of the Euro-Arab Forum. Journalist Mona Eltahawy describes on her blog how the targeting of female activists and journalists for sexual assaults "politicised previously apolitical Egyptians"<sup>3</sup> almost six years ago. The new council emulates their deeds, as new reports about sexual assaults of demonstrators and the so-called "virginity tests" by state officials demonstrate. The idea of control over the course of events turns out to be a mere illusion.

When the power of the people is substituted by its mere opposite – violence, as Hannah Arendt puts it, the unpredictable nature of human action becomes particularly self-evident. Gaddafi losing

1) Arendt, Hannah (2003 [1970]): Macht und Gewalt [On Violence] – München/Zürich, Piper Verlag, p.13.

2) <http://wisbrussels.wordpress.com/2011/05/28/event-report-women-have-been-kind-to-revolutions-but-revolutions-havent-always-been-kind-to-them/> (last viewed 24 March 2012).

3) See article „These ‚Virginity Tests‘ will spark Egypt's next Revolution" – <http://www.monaeltahawy.com/blog/> (last viewed 25 March 2012).



the support of the Libyan people and hence declaring war on them is such an example. When masses of Libyan people rose up in the streets and started to rebel, power emerged. It revealed that the old regime had already become powerless – it was not based on the consent of the people anymore (if we understand consent in its widest sense that includes passive disagreement). Unfortunately, the Gaddafi regime did not step down when it became conspicuous that there was a hiatus between their expectation of power and the reality. They tried to remain in charge – despite the lack of power.

**One single person is always powerless**

The juxtaposition of power and violence strongly distinguishes Arendt

from her predecessors. Unlike Arendt, political theorists and philosophers often conflated power with authority: Max Weber, for example, defined power as „the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests“<sup>4</sup>. According to Arendt, a single person is always powerless. That person might be (physically) strong or may have authority, but power only emerges when people act in concert. It disappears when they disperse, as she declares. In her conception, power is inter-subjective as it arises in the space between people. She also thinks that power is performative as it is grounded on action and only exists as long as it is continually acknowledged.

Therefore, her concept of power does not include a decision against violence as a specific strategy and does not put it as

a moral question – she focuses on politics and liberty. Politics and liberty cannot be based on violence and terror, which destroys the public space, the plurality of human beings and isolates the subjects, as the totalitarian regimes have sternly shown. The existence of a public space, plurality and connectedness between persons are the preconditions for political action. Therefore liberty and politics can exclusively be grounded on the active consent of the citizens – on the power of the people. ■

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© Philip Rizk | Protestors force Mubarak to resign, Tahrir-Square February 2011.

## THE EMERGENCE OF PEACEFUL PROTEST IN EGYPT UNDER MUBARAK



### Stefanie Felsberger

finished her degree in Political Science at Vienna University where she is currently enrolled in Arabic Studies. Her thesis in Political Science focused on democratization theory and Egypt. Stefanie Felsberger is currently working at the Austria Institute for European and Security Policy.

*"It's no longer any use begging for our rights by appealing to the regime, because it will not listen. But if a million Egyptians went out to the streets in protest or announced a general strike, if that happened, even once, the regime would immediately heed the people's demands. Change, as far as it goes, is possible and imminent, but there is a price we have to pay for it."*<sup>1</sup>

The wave of protest in December 2010 which eventually led to the ousting of the Tunisian President Ben Ali caught most analysts, scholars, politicians and journalists off guard and even after Ben Ali had been forced out of office in January 2011 most experts considered the Tunisian Revolution an isolated event. Such a strong call for democracy and change was regarded as most unlikely if not impossible in Arab countries and especially change by means of popular and peaceful protest was seen as the least achievable. In this paper I shall argue that, firstly, the idea that Islam and democracy are incompatible and secondly, the focus on elite politics and the simultaneous disregard for social movements distorted the analysis of the state of affairs in Egypt. To substantiate the argument this paper shall proceed through three main chapters. Firstly, I shall demonstrate how the notion that Islam has

a negative effect on the emergence of democracy and democratic movements prevented many analysts from drawing the correct assumptions about the Egyptian society. Secondly, I shall argue that the emphasis on elite politics and their role in both the emergence of democracy and democratic transitions distracted the centre of attention from those spheres of society where changes actually took place. To stress this point I shall, thirdly, give a short account of the development of peaceful and popular protest movements in Egypt. Finally, I shall sum up my points.

My first point focuses on the argument that democracy can only flourish in a cultural environment that embraces democratic values such as individualism, equality or compromise. The argument claims that religions leave an important stamp on the predominant culture of any region and that certain religions like Protestantism are

1) Anonymous in Alaa Al-Aswany on February 28, 2010.

© Matthew Cassel | Protesters on top of an Egyptian army tank at Tahrir Square on 29 January call for the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak.





more conducive to democracy than others such as Confucianism, Catholicism or in our case Islam.

After the terrorist attacks of September 2001, the absence of democracy and political instability in the Middle East was seen as a threat to international security and this perception spurred the search for what caused the lack of democracy and freedom. Some analysts started a debate about the compatibility of democracy and Islam (Ehteshami 2004). At the time analysts looked for a common feature in the Middle Eastern region that stifled democratic change and some of them came to the conclusion that it was Islam that hindered democratic change. But other scholars such as Larry Diamond (2010) or Stepan and Robertson (2003) argued against the idea that one religious belief could prevent democratization and supported the notion that there were many other reasons behind the lack of democracy in the Middle East such as economic inequality, the rentier economy and the influence of oil, internal and external support for authoritarian statecraft – to name a few.

But also before 9/11 and the War on Terror scholars developed a line of argument which claimed that because there were no democratic traditions in the Islamic tradition, democracy could never take root there and was ultimately confined to regions where democratic traditions – at least basically – were already existent. Among them is Elie Kedourie (1992: 5-6) who claims that there is “nothing in the political traditions of the Arab world — which are the political traditions of Islam — which might make familiar, or indeed intelligible, the organizing ideas of constitutional and representative government.”

Very prominent are also the ideas of Samuel Huntington (2001) who stressed the point that there was only one Muslim country which could count as democratic and this country would be Turkey. According to Huntington the only Arab



© Matthew Cassel | A protester holds a sign with Mubarak's face pasted on a donkey.

country with (signs of) democracy was Lebanon. But in the case of Lebanon he contributed the emergence of democracy to the Christian majority which was predominant in the country and he claimed that once there was a Muslim majority, democracy ceased to exist (Huntington 1991: 18).

Contrary to this line of argument Ray Hinnebusch (2000) claims that former theories of democratization valued linear and simple theories and explanations over accuracy which led to one superficial explanation of Middle Eastern or Muslim exceptionalism instead of thorough analysis of the reality in those countries.

But it seems that those arguments obstructed the view for certain developments in Arab countries. According to the 2010 Egypt Human Development Report which was undertaken by the United Nations Development Report (UNDP) religion is very important to 96 percent of interviewed Egyptians (Egypt Human Development Report 2010: 72). But the important position of religion in peoples' lives does not appear to have any influence on their attitude towards democracy. In a study in 2008 Jamal and Tessler found that “support for democracy in the Arab world is as high as or higher than in any other world region” (2008: 97) maybe exactly because there is such a striking lack of democracy.

Also according to the findings of the UNDP 84 percent of the correspondents stated that it was important to live under a democratic regime and while 90 percent of the respondents support the fact that leaders should be elected in free elections, 73 percent state that civil rights are important to protect individual rights and freedoms (Egypt Human Development Report 2010: 77). Thus it seems that the discourse on the incompatibility of these two concepts is rather based in Western intelligentsia and used to explain the persistence of authoritarianism in Arab countries which is also mirrored by Jamal and Tessler's finding that “large numbers of Arabs and other Muslims contend that the tenets of Islam are inherently democratic” (Jamal and Tessler 2008: 101).

My second line of argument relates to the focus on elite politics which perfectly explains the phenomenon of “durable authoritarianism” (Masoud 2011: 21) but fails to give account of the breakdown of this form of authoritarianism. An example for this could be Karen Kramer's work on ‘Arab Political Pacts’ (2006).

Among scholars was a strong emphasis on the phenomenon of durable authoritarianism and, thus, they also analysed the region through this lens.

Egypt was a very prominent example of what was also termed “electoral authoritarianism” (Schedler 2002). In the



Western discourse elections are intrinsically linked with democracy, but in the Egyptian context elections were nothing but a means for the regime to maintain their hold on power. While elections were held, they were so tightly controlled that the ruling party was guaranteed to win but at the same time the regime was able to claim at least a semblance of democratic legitimacy. Like other regimes Egypt “fail[ed] to institutionalize other vital dimensions of democratic constitutionalism, such as the rule of law, political accountability, bureaucratic integrity, and public deliberation” (Schedler 2002: 37). The literature assumed that such hybrid regimes had a long lifespan because they provided for the appearance of democracy and allowed for some participation as well as very limited opposition in order to prevent a full blown revolution. But in Egypt the balancing act between the appearance of democracy and the underlying control of the regime had been alienating more and more people.

Yet it was exactly this development which was overlooked by the focus on political elites which includes the regime and the opposition movements on the other side. This led to a failure to explain or presume the breakdown of this durable authoritarianism – also due to a focus on elite politics and to neglect for political mass participation. Thus, one lesson drawn from the events in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria is that authoritarianism is in fact an instable type of regime because at some point the population



© Matthew Cassel | Pro-democracy protesters outside the Egyptian State TV building on 11 February.

will demand their rights. Moreover, neglect for the ideas and aspirations of the population led to wrong assumptions and focussing on the developments among the political elites in Egypt cannot explain why Mubarak fell because not only does this leave out ‘the street’ as factor in politics

but it also does not mirror the realities of the events in February 2011 as Mubarak was forced down by a leaderless movement of demonstrators



© Matthew Cassel | Protests calling for the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak continued at Tahrir Square on 8 February.

– an aspect which hardly corresponds with elite politics.

The focus on elite politics was also the reason why the emerging protest movements in Egypt were not deemed as crucial as they actually were. This leads to my third point which covers the development of the protest movements in Egypt in recent years. One can put the start of the recent developments in mobilization and political protest in Egypt at the year 2000. Before there was hardly any open public space for political dissent with the government breaking down on any formation of dissent and with no real opposition existent. So, in 2000 the “second intifada triggered perhaps the largest and most spontaneous demonstrations in the Arab world since the first Gulf war” (Pratt 2007: 170). This change spurred the hopes of many Arabs that they could achieve more equality, justice and emancipation with people-power (Sadiki 2000: 83). In March 2003 the US invasion in Iraq served as new rallying point and over 40,000 people attended a rally on Tahrir square on 20th March 2003. Protesters were dispersed after occupying the square overnight – an event which became known as ‘Tahrir intifada’ (El-Mahdi 2009: 95). But only in 2004 did the aim of the protest change from international to national issues when the Egyptian Movement for Change – or better known under the movement’s slogan ‘Kifaya’ which means ‘Enough!’ – was founded. The movement and other groups such as the Popular Campaign for Change publicly urged Mubarak not to seek re-election and they also strongly opposed to the idea that Hosni

Mubarak's son Gamal Mubarak could inherit the office from his father (El-Mahdi 2009: 88). Despite remaining limited to urban centres, the movement became quite popular across Egypt and inspired many others to become active (Hamzawy 2005: 3). Kifaya symbolizes significant change in how protest movement in Egypt worked because for the first time activists were calling for political changes and reform whereas in the past they had not dared to question the system itself but only protested out

of economic or social grievances (El-Mahdi 2009: 92). In the following years Egypt saw several waves of protest in the country – to name just a few in 2006 the Egyptian judges protesting against corruption and election manipulation (El-Mahdi 2009: 99-100) as well as in 2007 and 2008 the protests against the soaring food prices were organized across the country (El-Mahdi and Marfleet 2009). Thus, those protest movements laid the groundwork for what was going to happen in February 2011 when millions

of protesting Egyptians forced President Mubarak to step down.

So, as I have tried to show it was the focus on elite politics and the idea that Islam is not conducive to democracy which led to wrong assumptions about the state of affairs in Egypt. There were other factors which contributed to those false assumptions but in terms of theory these two points call for a reassessment of several assumptions that have been predominant in political theory and the literature on Arab countries. ■



© Hossam el-Hamalawy | A burnt down Central Security Forces truck, on the Nile Corniche facing the National Democratic Party headquarters. Protesters sprayed anti-Mubarak graffiti on its side, accusing Mubarak of being an „agent“ for the US, demanding that he leaves.

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## SPRING IN CIVIL WAR



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Translated by Friederike Sczesny<sup>1</sup>

*As of now the 'Arab Spring' in Syria has become a civil war that is increasingly showing signs of denominationalism. Under these circumstances the collapse of the Assad-Regime will not necessarily result in democracy.*

Meanwhile it seems to be merely a matter of time until the Arab-nationalist Baath-Regime, which has been ruled by a family clan of the heterodox Shiite Nusayris (Alawis) minority since the Hafiz al-Assad's coup d'état in 1971, is going to collapse.

The lack of willingness to compromise and reform, the missing organised civil opposition with strong unions as well as the political and military support of the 'Free Syrian Army' by Turkey, Saudi-Arabia, Qatar and the USA have led to a militarisation of the conflict, which will complicate a new start in Syria.

Currently the opposition keeps together as they have a common enemy. But in contrast to Libya, there is not even a pro forma unified political representation of the opposition. The Syrian National Council is basically a session in exile and its members admit on the quiet that they have no control over the Free Syrian Army under the command of Riyad al-Asad. Leaders of the civil opposition complain about being left out by western intelligence agencies regarding the financial and military support of the Free Syrian Army. Furthermore, the army is already split up in rivalling militias that are likely to rip each other into shreds after the fall of Assad. Salafi groups, that had no significance in the past, become more and more popular as their demand for military interventions and the active support by conservative Sunni Gulf monarchies over the last few weeks is well received. The allegations of the regime that some of the bloodiest attacks were of al-Qaida's responsibility were deemed wrong by Western media. However, by now, even western intelligence services assume the involvement of al-Qaida in the Syrian

civil war to be true. Hence, Syria could be facing a scenario like Iraq did after 2004.

### Religious minorities in fear?

There are no guarantees for the safety of religious minorities, especially for the Nusayris (Alawis), a heterodox Shiite sect - not to be confused with the Turkish and Kurdish Alevis who are another Shiite sect. The fear of a revenge campaign by Sunni militia is ineradicable to the point that fellow believers from the adjacent province Hatay (Antakiya) in Turkey have been gathering in the streets over the last days to demonstrate their support for Assad. Many Syrian Christians also prefer to choose 'the devil they know' over a possible Sunni-Islamist takeover. Undeniably, the two strongest and best organised fractions of the Arab opposition within Syria are the Muslim Brotherhood and the Saudi-backed Salafi-groups. Christians' fears of a Sunni revenge also have historic roots. Historic traumas play an important role within the big Armenian and Assyrian communities in particular. Almost one million Assyrians and 200,000 Armenians are descendents of those Christians, who survived the genocide by the Young Turks in 1915 and found refuge in the French mandated territory "Syria" after World War I. The intervention of the Turkish AKP government on the side of the Syrian opposition and the close ties between the Turkish Sunni religious governing party and the Muslim Brotherhood are evoking historic fears among these Christian minorities. As long as the umbrella organization of the Arab Syrian opposition, the Syrian National Council (SNC), is based and supported by Turkey, the Armenians will see it as a tool of the Turkish neo-ottoman expansionism.

Besides the Christians and Alawis, also Imamite Shiites and Ismaili Shiites fear the revenge of Sunni Islamists. Many of them are afraid of becoming a target of the opposition due to the Iranian support for the regime.

The minority of the Druz, a religion with some connections

© Syria Freedom | Syrian rebels take a position behind a wall as they fire their weapons during a battle with the Syrian government forces, at Rastan, in Homs province, Syria, on January 31, 2012.



<sup>1</sup> Last edit 28 March 2012. A previous version of this article was published in German language in Austria. Schmidinger, Thomas (21.02.2012): Aufstand in Syrien - Frühling im Bürgerkrieg. In: <http://derstandard.at/1329703280705/Aufstand-in-Syrien-Fruehling-im-Buergerkrieg> (last viewed 6 May 2012).



to the Ismaili Shia, but generally regarded as an independent religion in Lebanon, Syria and Israel, is split. The Druz on the Golan and the Jebel Druz-Region took part in the uprising against the regime, but with the increasing influence of Salafi and other Sunni-extremists also parts of the Druz population of Syria seem to dread a Salafi takeover of the state.

## The Kurdish question in Syria

The Kurdish minority appears split, too. With more than 2 ½ million Kurds, about 10% of the Syrian population belongs to the biggest national minority. For many years, the Syrian Kurds were oppressed by the Arab-nationalist regime. Already in the 1960s, more than 120,000 Kurds were categorized as aliens and lost their rights as Syrian citizens. The regime tried to deport them from the border region and established an Arab cordon ("Hizam Arabi") on the border to Turkey. As a consequence, Kurds have been the spearhead of resistance against the Arab-nationalist Baath-Regime.

Nowadays most Kurdish parties, like the Azadi, the Yeketi or the Democratic Party of Kurdistan – Syria (el-Parti), are indeed found on the side of the opposition. But the PKK party, sister party of the PYD (Partiya Yekitiya Demokrat), is an important player against the opposition groups. Some of the Kurdish parties even allege the PYD to collaborate with the Baath-Regime. Hence, it was accused of being involved in the killing of the prominent leader of the Kurdish Future Movement Mishaal al-Tammu in October 2011. While the PYD strongly denied these accusations, the mistrust between the PYD and the other Kurdish parties is growing. In fact, the regime did not mind the PYD when it started to open Kurdish cultural centres and language schools and even accepted that the party started to act as a Para-state force in at least two of the three Kurdish regions. While the Kurd Dagh, with the city of Afrin and the region around Kobani (Ain al-Arab), is meanwhile controlled by the PYD, the other Kurdish parties who are all schisms of the historic Democratic Party of Kurdistan-Syria are still strong in the Jazira-Region around Qamishli. Most of these parties

established the Kurdish National Council of Syria (KNCS) in October 2011. Although the KNCS reached an agreement with the Syrian National Council (SNC) in the mid of May, they already left the SNC two weeks later. The quarrelling SNC reunited in the night from March 27 to March 28, but the KNCS left it again, saying the SNC had failed to address Kurdish hopes of creating an autonomous federal region within a post-Assad Syria. In the meantime, the PYD also calls for an end of the Baath-regime. However, due to their links to the PKK, they still strongly oppose the pro-Turkish-opposition forces.

Besides the question of the future relation between religion and the State and hence the religious minorities, the question of the Kurds is the second biggest issue regarding the future polity of Syria. Although most of the Arab opposition groups are currently able to profess equal rights and cultural rights for the Kurds, some of them emphasize on the fact that there will not be a political autonomy along the lines of Iraq. The 'Kurdish Future Movement' is still backing the protest movement, as well as youth groups and numerous Kurdish intellectuals and artists. The KNCS and the PYD also struggle against the regime, but they do not coordinate with the SNC. They hope to obtain as many rights for the Kurdish minority as possible during the reorganisation in Syria as they are now involved in the subversion of the regime. However, especially the PYD strongly opposes the military intervention from the Turks.

## Difficult future

Even this shallow look at the situation in Syria shows that the subversion of the regime and the defeat of Assad will not necessarily be

followed by democracy and human rights. It is quite plausible that acts of revenge on religious minorities and a long-term denominational civil war, which is currently fuelled by the Saudi-Iranian regional conflict, will take place after the fall of the Assad regime.

In this complex situation, a military intervention could add fuel to the fire and one has to consider that the international fold is not only interested in human rights and democracy in Syria but above all in defining future orbits. So far, Russia and China have been withholding their approval of a UN resolution mainly because of the NATO exceeding their mandate in Libya. While Russia also has its own agenda with his old ally Syria, China mainly refused a UN-resolution because it felt cheated by the US, Britain and France. In the case of Libya, the UN resolution of 1973 was misused to overthrow Qaddafi. However, in today's Libya there is little evidence for human rights and democracy.

In the case of Syria, there is no indication that a civil war will lead to less blood shedding and a more stable, democratic result than in Libya. Therefore a joined diplomatic mission borne by the US, the EU, Russia and China aiming at the cessation of the clashes and facilitation of free elections under international supervision would be a more promising scenario than a humanitarian justified military intervention. The Annan-peace plan could be a last chance if the regime and the opposition took it serious. External forces, like Iran, Turkey and Saudi-Arabia who fanned the flames of the conflict over the last months, would also have to commit themselves to a peaceful solution of the conflict. Until now, the hope for such a scenario is vague, but the alternative would be a long lasting denominational civil war with many casualties and a long term destruction of the country. ■

© Gemya Kurda | Peaceful Protest in kurdish region in Amude, Syria.



## INDUSTRY AGAINST NATURE – PEACEFUL PROTESTS IN THE NORTH OF PERU



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*In 2011 the region of Cajamarca in the north of Peru was the stage for peaceful protests against a new and uncertain mining project. Thousands of Peruvians demonstrated on the streets to speak their minds. Instead of introducing negotiations with the local population, the government reacted by proclaiming martial law over the protest regions.*

Peru is rich in natural resources particularly gold and copper. For decades various mining companies from all over the world have been interested in this South American state. The opportunity of making big money combined with the old saying “a penny saved is a penny earned” leads to an ambivalent situation. Countries such as Peru negotiate contracts with big international

Even the North for instance Cajamarca is not uncharted on the map of gold seekers. Francisco Pizarro motivated his troops to fight against the Inca in Cajamarca by mentioning the gold in that region. Back then, the Inca lost the war due to ignorance about the invasion. Hence the Spanish exploited the country. Nowadays the Peruvian state is to be made responsible by respecting the



© Eric Janotta | Countryside in the south of Peru.

companies based on the wish to improve the national economy. The international stakeholders and the general national economy make a lot of money by exploiting nature. Unfortunately nature gives but seldom (if ever) receives. Mining processes pollute the environment and ecological damages are a common and well known result.

The Andean country has always been in the focus of gold diggers since the discovery in 1526 by the Spanish.

rights and interests of its citizens. In 2011 the people in Peru, mostly in Cajamarca, peacefully protested against a new mining project called “Minas Conga”. It’s run by the Minera Yanacocha Company which is owned by the Newmont Mining Corporation, an US-American company. The new mining project is expected to generate billions of US Dollars in the next two decades<sup>1</sup>. Quite often the local people do not benefit from the economic gains. Moreover, up to 8,000 people living in the districts

1) estimated 15 billion US Dollars within 19 years.

of Huasmín, Sorochuco and La Encañada (all of them part of the region Cajamarca) will be directly affected by the project and will have to be relocated. Misfortune seldom comes alone and realizing “Minas Conga” would also damage the environment in this region. The company wants to mine for gold and copper and therefore it is planning to relocate four lakes in Cajamarca. Objectors of the project expect ecological damages for the water circulation and the water level of the regional rivers. The mining company states that the “Minas Conga” project will not cause environmental damages and promises to create new lakes. However, this is doubtful since no research studies have been conducted to survey the effects on the water, says Sergio Sánchez Ibáñez who is the former head of the department for natural resources in Cajamarca. For the last 20 years the company has been responsible for environmental damages in that region. Similar projects in the past have shown that the water quality of the region, and directly linked to this, agriculture is negatively affected.

It is the right of the local people to protest. In November 2011 up to 6,000 people demonstrated in the streets of Cajamarca. A general strike brought the whole city to a standstill. It stopped all traffic while shops and institutions were closed down. Highways and airports were blocked by the protesters. Although the media called the demonstrators “radicals” and “terrorists” the protests remained peaceful without making any use of violence. These protests were assisted by demonstrators in Lima. People were speaking their minds against the new project and letting the company know that they will not remain silent. Another remarkable peaceful protest took place one week later when more than



© Eric Janotta | The presidential palace in Lima, the capital of Peru.

50,000 [!] people came together at the main square in Cajamarca. The masses made their opinions heard by shouting “Water yes. Gold no.” and “No to Conga!” which illustrated the objection against the mining project very clearly. On banners the demonstrators reminded people of negative effects caused by other mining projects. As a result of the protests, the mining company suspended the project until “tranquility and social peace are reestablished in Cajamarca”<sup>2</sup>.

Contrary to expectations, the demonstrations continued on the ground as the protesters wanted a complete stop of the project and not only a politically motivated delay. On December 4, 2011, the president Ollanta Humala proclaimed martial law over the protest regions for 60 days. This enacted decree meant that no protests were allowed and the Peruvian military enhanced its presence in the region to “protect the public

order”. Being put in this situation, the local population of Cajamarca felt threatened and punished by the government. As silence was not an option, the protesters continued. On December 16, the president repealed martial law in the protest regions due to an end of the demonstrations and the renewal of negotiations between all stakeholders.

Finally the round table convened again and all participants are being given the chance to reach a settlement in the topic “Minas Conga”. The mining company and the Peruvian state want to make a fortune in Cajamarca. As long as this is in harmony with nature, it is permissible. But nevertheless it is to be hoped that the local population of this region is able to assert its position. After all the citizens of Cajamarca are living in this region and have to deal with ecological damages in their daily live. ■

2) Yanacocha informs the public opinion that, „on demand of the government and in the interest to re-establish the tranquility and the social peace in Cajamarca, it was decided to suspend the activities of the project.”

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## CREATIVE, BASIC DEMOCRATIC AND PEACEFUL PROTEST IN GERMANY



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*A variety of movements are taking action in Germany, not only in the last years. In international context, Germany got famous for the peaceful revolution of 1989. Various forms of nonviolent actions and civil resistance can still be found in the united country, struggling for different political issues. The anti-nuclear movement and the movement for free education will be presented as examples in this article to illustrate how activists fight for the realisation of human rights all over the world.*

The anti-nuclear movement was founded in the 1970s to fight the use of nuclear technologies. Since that time a wide protest movement was established itself in Germany, especially in regions highly affected by nuclear power stations or radioactive waste stocks such as Wendland. Irene, an active member of an antinuclear group in Münster<sup>1</sup>, explains that the aim of the movement is the immediate nuclear phase-out and the shutdown of all nuclear plants worldwide – from the uranium mines to the reprocessing plants.

The education movement struggles for gratuitous education that is accessible to everyone and which brings forward the personality development of all students. Furthermore, active participation and self-determination in deciding on the contents and the configuration of the own education are aims of the movement, says Lukas, who has been an activist for free education since he started studying. Student protests have been part of the last decades, but especially in the last years the education protest has intensified with the so called education strike ('Bildungsstreik')<sup>2</sup> in Germany, which unites students, pupils and other actors of the education system. A common principle of most regional alliances is the basic democratic approach, which means the activists try to decide on most issues together without any structured hierarchy. The German 'Bildungsstreik' is also part of an international movement for the right of education.<sup>3</sup>

The education movement has organised huge demonstrations, rallies and protest camps for alternative education with own workshops, lectures and events. Education festivals and networking meetings are taking place and give space to different ideas and free self-organising. Moreover, streets crossings were blocked during demonstrations and lecture halls occupied. Very creative forms of protest that need to be highlighted are the different kinds of flash mobs that occurred in many cities throughout Germany. The education has been symbolically burried, street theatre performances were criticising the rigorous system, books have been hunted and colourful bicycle rallies have been blocking the streets. Different forms of art have been installed or shown in the cities. The traditional march with lanterns on St. Martin's eve for example was turned into a protest by changing song lyrics and crafting lanterns corresponding to the struggle for free education. In the small town Marburg the annual education festival ('Bildungsfest')<sup>4</sup> takes place for the 5th time this year. Lukas, one of the organisers, describes the festival as "an open space for free education. A variety of different events are part of the 3-day lasting festival, that has a different motto every year and invites everyone to contribute a workshop to the festival." Inviting international guests from Russia, Mongolia and China the education festival has also provided the framework for the simulation of climate change conferences during which partnerships for energy transition were established.

Demonstrations, vigils, sit-ins, lecture events and (international) conferences are forms of protest that are often used by anti-nuclear activists. After

© Jerome-drees.de | Thousands of students and pupils united, expressing their demands for better education at one of the Germany-wide demonstration days of the 'Bildungsstreik'.



1) SOFA Münster – <http://www.sofa-ms.de>.

2) Bundesweiter Bildungsstreik – <http://www.bildungsstreik.net>.

3) International Students Movement – <http://www.emancipating-education-for-all.org>.

4) Marburger Bildungsfest – <http://www.bildungsfest-marburg.de>.



© Robin Wood | A climbing action in front of the main station in Münster to promote the International Uranium Conference 2012.

decades of political ignorance regarding the use of nuclear power, the activists adapted other forms of protest. In the Wendland region, to which radioactive waste gets transported for over 30 years now, resistance is part of the residents' everyday life. Every year, huge camps and a variety of direct actions get organised to fight its transportation. Farmers blocked street crossings with their tractors making it impossible for police cars to pass and therefore enabling activists to remain longer on the rails. A very common kind of action within the anti-nuclear movement is climbing. To protest against nuclear transports, activists climb on trees or bridges to make the train stop by physically "hanging" in its way. Increasingly popular forms of protest are sabotage actions on the rails and chaining the own body to the tracks. For Irene it is important to be actively involved and to shape the political fields that you get in touch with. "I can't sit down and do nothing as long as I know that things need to be changed. Therefore, I often take part in demonstrations and organise a lot of actions."

Peace can be defined as 'absence of violence and war'. This is undisputable, but the definition of violence is

controversial. In the context of political protest it is useful to describe it as 'physical or psychological force against living beings' because it highlights the distinction from armed protest, which can potentially cause harm to people. In accordance with this definition the education protests are non-violent in all their activities. The anti-nuclear movement reached consensus on not harming people. Only some actions aim to damage the infrastructure of atomic trains but the activists always make sure that no passenger trains and no persons will be endangered by their actions.

Nonetheless, German political activists are facing harassment and threats. At demonstrations or political actions people get bottled up, arrested and fined afterwards. Especially police brutality is an often-occurring phenomenon, and the intensive use of pepper spray, tear gas and water cannons seems to have increased over the past years. Amnesty International alerts that the German police has problems with holding culprits within their own ranks accountable. During the education strike demonstrations, students suffered under various forms of repression by their educational institutions. These included pupils getting locked in their classrooms by headmasters, suspending students from university buildings as well as initiating criminal proceedings against them.

This happens although the movements

are fighting peacefully for human rights. The education movement postulates the right for education, which states that education should be free, gratuitous and shall enable the full development of the human personality (UDHR<sup>5</sup> art.26, CESC art.13). Furthermore the right to participate in cultural life (UDHR art.27) and the right to get work equally paid (UDHR art.23) are included in the struggle for free education. Human rights are important for the anti-nuclear movement as well. The German constitution guarantees the right for life and physical integrity (German constitution art.2) and activists can also rely on international human rights treaties, which entitle the right for life (UDHR art.1) and the right for physical health (CESC art.12). They denounce the danger that nuclear plants entail for (human) beings, their health and for coming generations. Both movements fight for the realisation of human rights and as borders do not restrict human rights, the efforts of the German activists are integrated into international movements as well. Thus, political activists like Irene and Lukas in Germany can be acknowledged as human rights defenders who struggle peacefully and creatively for the realisation of human rights in Germany and around the world. ■

5) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights – <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>.



© Organising team 'Bildungsfest' 2010 | Education can be multifarious: Students teach themselves how to build a raft and test it on the Lahn in Marburg.

# OCCUPY: FROM WALL STREET AROUND THE GLOBE AND TO MANILA

by Steffen Rudolph

*Starting from New York City's financial district on September 17, 2011, the Occupy-Movement became a world-wide-phenomenon in a couple of months. People all around the globe seem to share frustrations and express their concerns via Occupy. Is Occupy a short-lived side-issue or a legit and fundamental protest-movement of present day?*

## What is „Occupy“?

Regarding the many supporters of Occupy, the movement can be considered as one of the biggest peaceful protest movements in the last decades. Occupy activists hold or try to hold long-lasting gatherings, marches and debates in public places which usually inherit a symbolic significance, such as financial markets, banks and others. The protesters campaign against economic and social inequality, unemployment and corruption. Their aspiration is to cut down the influence of corporations - especially „Global Players“. The famous slogan „We are the 99%“ refers to the growing income inequality and wealth distribution between the prosperous 1% and the rest of the population. According to the activists it is the one percent that writes the rules of an unfair global economy that exploits the majority of the people. The movement is made unique by its sustained visibility in cities and towns. All around the globe, activist groups are setting up rallies and encampments. In some locations these consist of tents, kitchens and entire outdoor communities for the purpose of constant „occupation“. Occupy is a vivid example of a peaceful protest movement which includes different social classes plus traditional and modern forms of protest. Although the movement began on Wall Street and focused on the financial sector, it lacks specific demands.

This enabled local movements to adopt messages and to personalize them beyond the focal Wall Street. The vagueness of the goals has led to the spread of the movement as well as massive criticism. This flexible frame, broad identity and the availability of replicable tactics as general assemblies and encampments have sustained a dynamic evolution.

## Where did it all start?

The Canadian Adbusters Media Foundation was the first to use the term „Occupy“. In a blog-post from July 13, 2011, they proposed a peaceful occupation of Wall Street to protest against the lack of legal consequences for those who brought the global crisis of monetary insolvency. Senior editor Micah White said, they suggested the protest via their email list. Later, it was spontaneously taken up in many countries. It was intended to combine aspects of the consensus decision making of the 2011 Protests in Spain with the use of a symbolic location, like it was done in the 2011 protests on the Tahrir Square in Egypt. The blog-post also showed an image of a dancer atop Wall Street's iconic „Charging Bull“ statue and was titled with the hashtag „#OccupyWallStreet“. The next days the number of times the hashtag was used in social networks exploded. Later, the internet group „Anonymous“ encouraged its readers to participate in the protests and other groups started joining the movement. The beginning of Occupy is an example of a internet-driven, decentralized genesis of a political movement.

## Divulcation: All around the Globe

The protest itself began on September 17, 2011. Hundreds of activists gathered in lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens and peaceful barricades. The movement received little media coverage until September 24, when YouTube footage showed a New York City police pepper-spraying peaceful protesters. Even more attention was drawn after about 700

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people were arrested on Brooklyn Bridge. At that time the spell was broken, the movement started spreading. At the same time state reaction increased. Repression was often the answer. Protest camps were cleared, protesters were arrested and many cases of police violence were documented. In some countries even the formation of protest camps was stopped. The public and the media had a high interest in reporting about the movement but the perception was mixed. Many appreciated the political interest and the dedication of the protesters. Most of them never participated in politics before. On the other hand many politicians and experts criticised the movement, mostly its focus on protest was described as too vague. Some politicians and media reports even called Occupy silly and regard it as a short-lived vogue. That raises a question: If the movement is silly and short-lived, why is the state reaction often so harsh?

## Arrival in the Philippines

Occupy reached the Philippines shores in late November 2011. In Manila, it was convened by a wide range of individuals, civil society actors and also by Catholic bishop Broderick Pabillo. The bishop said "Kilusang 99%" is a social reform movement which is about making the poor the center of development and making the government accountable for the welfare of the majority. He said the protest is mainly addressed to the well-entrenched financial system that has bred social injustice, economic imbalance, corporate greed and the darkest side of capitalism. What is happening now is that

the government is just at the backseat and they just let the market, which seeks profit and not the common good, dictate," he said. "We don't want violence and rebellion but we just want the people who are mostly affected by these problems to be heard". Among the sectors leading the protests are labor groups, farmers and fisherfolk organizations, the indigenous peoples and the urban poor.

Later several demonstrations were held. Mostly the protesters were stopped by the police before they could occupy symbolic places. In December 2011, protesters failed to reach the Chino Roces Bridge in Manila where they had planned to stage a protest camp. Riot policemen used truncheons and water cannons to disperse the 500 protesters. Five of them were arrested and now have to face complaints of illegal assembling and resisting arrest. State reaction was often rigorous when protestants tried to build long-term protest camps or tried to block streets and public spaces. Less or no repression was observed when protestants held demonstrations and gatherings of limited duration. Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) chairman Elmer Labog called the police action "an overkill". "We condemn the Aquino government's repression of our right to hold protests even as it fails to solve the growing hunger and poverty in the country."

In the Philippines state reaction is very harsh in general and almost all media reports are very negatively about the movement. Often times the mostly peaceful protesters are described by the police and the media as "militant" and "leftist". In the Philippines

this means that they could face threats and violence. This so-called „Red-baiting“ is a big topic in the Philippines and was discussed in the "Observer" before.<sup>1</sup> Despite these threats and violent repression, the movement is still vivid in the Philippines and will continue to raise its voice.

## Relevance of Occupy

If Occupy is a short-lived mode or a long-lasting movement cannot be decided now. It is ambiguous at least, if the political and financial system can be changed by these



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protests. The peak of the movement seems to be past. Now it is the question which effects did the movement have? Without dispute, Occupy has given many impulses to start a discussion about the topic. It is also out of doubt that Occupy brought many people in contact with politics, who were not interested in politics before. Maybe this change will be regarded as the legacy of Occupy in the future. ■

1) See Observer, Vol.3, no.2, 2011.

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## PEACE ZONES: WAR-TORN COMMUNITIES' ATTEMPT OF SELF-PROTECTION



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*For too many years civilians on Mindanao have suffered from the hostilities between the military and the armed Muslim separatist movement. Caught in crossfires, being accused of collaborating with one war party or another, being regularly evacuated, living in constant fear and the growing mistrust among mixed communities left behind but one single wish: peace. Eventually, the desperate longing for a peaceful life has mobilized whole communities.*

Since the 1970s, government troops and the Muslim separatist movement have been fighting on Mindanao, southern Philippines. The fragile environment favoured the emergence of other conflicts, such as clan conflicts – locally referred to as “ridos” – terrorism, plain banditry, domestic violence and criminality that act within the war. This resulted in an increase in religious tensions and violence as well as a general worsening of the situation. So far the continuous riots are said to have taken 60,000 lives and driven a million people from their homes (Wörtz: 2005). Civilians are frequently forced to stay for months in evacuation camps under inhuman conditions for the sake of their safety. The long term consequences of the fights are disastrous: Not only are the relationships between Muslim and Christian citizens worsening but also their livelihoods are being destroyed. Many people suffer trauma<sup>1</sup>.

As a reaction to the situation, an increasing number of communities are declaring their territory as peace zones. They are geared towards handling themselves the local conflicts with nonviolent means and the support of nongovernmental actors. Basically, they request a ceasefire from all the local conflict parties on their territory.

### Concept of peace zones

First of all, the establishment of a peace zone begins with consulting the local community. Wishes about the future can be freely expressed by all the members. Meanwhile, negotiations are being entered into with the local armed

parties. The aim is to draw them into officially recognizing the territory as a zone of no violence. If all the parties agree, the declaration of the peace zone is solemnly proclaimed at a so-called declaration workshop. It provides the basis for the communal life and has thus a very strong symbolic meaning.

Important activities to consolidate the peace zone include leadership trainings. Key persons are supposed to be trained in book-keeping and financial management, which should address the need for transparency in financial transactions. Hence, it is aimed for strengthening the confidence of the community to their leaders (Becker: 2009).

Leadership trainings also focus on the basic understanding of democracy. The concept of democracy is indeed very important in a peace zone as it emphasizes the importance of including all the community members on an equal level in the shaping of their community. In order to guarantee the representativity and transparency in the decision-making, multisectoral and multi-ethnic committees are set up (Neumann: 2008). Through this integrative framework, mounting responsibility is assumed by individuals for the succeeding of the peace zone. Alternative conflict resolution mechanisms as well as a team for the monitoring of the ceasefire are also set up to consolidate the zone of peace.

Other vital activities are Culture of Peace Seminars. They encourage the people to face the conflict in the region with a clear understanding of its historical roots. The similarities between Christianity and Islam are highlighted; myths and stereotypes about

<sup>1</sup>) In 2002, a study involving 1,200 children was conducted in the community of Nalapaan, Cotabato. 94% of the children showed symptoms of traumata, whereof 12% were classified as very severe and 2,8% were found to be survivors of torture.



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the “other” are broken down. The objective is clear: fight prejudices and scrape the community together through interreligious dialogue.

In addition, livelihood development projects aim at preventing new conflicts by improving and equalling peoples’ standard of life. A monitoring team regularly evaluates the projects. Many NGO workers agree that this integrated programme is necessary for the continuance of peace zones as people do not talk peace on an empty stomach.

### Vulnerability still remains

Despite the involvement of all community members and the on-going dialogue with conflict parties, peace zones remain vulnerable. They do not have any political power with regards to regional or political decisions and do refuse to

use weapons for their protection. Eventually, they are completely dependent on the willingness of the conflict parties to cooperate. In order to counter this asymmetry between civil society and the armed parties, peace zones focus on networking. By drawing national and international public attention to the area, the armed parties are monitored and thus discouraged from breaking their promises.

Many advocates of the peace zones argue that the peace zones are important initiatives that could eventually bring the long-wanted peace to Mindanao. Many of these people do take the peace zones experience to the table at the national level, yet it is hard to see the connection today between the peace declaration at the local level and the peace process at the national level. Critics especially object that

the community life in a peace zone is more or less disconnected from the national processes and therefore has no influence on the peace negotiations.

### Yet a success?

There are many different types of peace zones in Mindanao. They differ in size, organization, location and in the conflicts they are dealing with. As a result, experiences about success and failure are also diverse. While some zones have never ever experienced fights on their territory, others, such as the community of Nalapaan, in the province of Cotabato, suffered from the violation of their peace zone in 2003 when government troops and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) took up weapons. Although disappointed, the community members all agreed that the success laid in the new trust the people had in one another, the lack of fear in staying together and more importantly, the urge to help and support the members of the “other community” (Iyer: 2004).

Moreover, most communities of peace zones claim that violence in general has decreased. Whenever violations occurred, sanctions have been mostly applied and respected. Finally, the assistance provided by NGOs, the barangay and/or the church has led to improvement in their quality of life in economic terms.

The very fact that peace zones are multiplying all over Mindanao proves that the concept is at least well received among the affected communities. ■

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## THE PHILIPPINES – A COUNTRY WITHOUT HUMAN RIGHTS?



### Dominik Hammann

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*The Philippines are very famous for their extraordinary landscapes, their rare and rich fauna and Manny Pacquiao commonly regarded as the world's best boxer. Yet though non-governmental organizations have continuously pointed to problems of inequality, corruption and violations of human rights throughout the past decade, there's little knowledge about social issues among Western societies. Being aware of a problem marks the first step to tackling it and thus, two Philippine Human Rights Defenders visited Germany to share their experience, to discuss with people, and to encourage them to take actions.*



© IPON | „German and European politics have to put a stronger focus on human rights violations in the Philippines“, Anne Spiegel (mid), vice chairwoman of the German green party during a panel discussion in Mainz.

On the 12th April 2012, Jessielyn Colegado and Danilo T. Gaban arrived in Frankfurt. They brought along a plan for the two-week speaking tour through Germany. The International Peace Observers Network (IPON) organized meetings, interviews and panel discussions in the cities of Leipzig, Berlin, Luneburg, Hamburg, Marburg, Bonn, Essen and Mainz. It was the first time for the two Filipino activists to travel abroad and to speak on behalf of their organizations in front of

an international audience.

Colegado is the vice president of PADATA<sup>1</sup>. She lives in Panalsalan, a small village belonging to the province of Bukidnon in central Mindanao. The 49-year old married mother of five children lives mainly on the earnings of her corn and sugarcane cultivation. She is a founding member and an elected representative of PADATA.

Gaban is the regional coordinator of TFM<sup>2</sup> for Negros and an organizer for nationwide

1) PADATA (Panalsalan Dagumbaan Tribal Association) is an organization of several indigenous groups and families, which united in 2004 to peacefully fight for their ancestral land in the province of Bukidnon. Due to their struggle, the human rights defenders of PADATA face repressions and cases of harassment. Since 2011 PADATA and IPON cooperate to observe the human rights situation and to reduce human rights violations.

2) The nationwide organization of TFM (Task Force Mapalad) was founded in 1999. Its mission is “to improve the quality of life of farmers and farm workers by supporting their initiatives for access to land resources and productivity development” ([www.tfmnational.org](http://www.tfmnational.org)). Because of these initiatives, members of TFM face repressions and cases of harassment. Since 2008 TFM and IPON cooperate to observe the human rights situation and to reduce human rights violations.

protest actions. He supports farmers in administrative matters and advises them in the process of applying for land titles within the government-led land reform<sup>3</sup>. He regularly meets farmer leaders to discuss recent developments and future strategies.

When they left their home country, both activists shared high expectations regarding the speaking tour. While Colegado hoped to improve the security situation of PADATA and its members by sharing the issue with an interested audience, Gaban said: "We want to broaden our network and introduce TFM not only to interested NGOs, but also to politicians and state institutions". Both activists were not to be disappointed. They had constructive talks with NGOs such as the Society for International Development, the Forum Civil Peace Service, the Philipinenbuero, and Amnesty International Germany with agreements on closer cooperation and continuous exchange of information. Moreover, the two activists took the opportunity to address their issues at the German Federal Foreign Office. IPON also tried to encourage the critical audience to support civil society



Asja Caspari | Public discussion with the Society for International Development and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Bonn.

initiatives and organizations and to motivate more people to get further involved in dealing with critical social issues, especially human rights. "How can I effect a change?", and "How does my signature make a difference?" these were the questions to be answered. Many people belief to be powerless in tackling human rights violations and global injustice. IPON sought to reduce doubts and to show ways to make a difference, to play a part in civil society and to improve the situation of human rights defenders. Together with PADATA

and TFM, the human rights organization drafted a letter to Undersecretary Catura of the Philippine Presidential Human Rights Committee<sup>4</sup>. The letter referred to international covenants on human rights and reminded the Philippine government of their obligation to uphold and guarantee human rights to all Philippine citizens. As of now, more than 100 people have signed the letter<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, panel discussions with German politicians on the national and the Federal state level gave the audience and the panelists the chance to explicitly address German politics. In this context, IPON emphasized on the need to strengthen civil society initiatives and to stronger focus on the situation of human rights defenders in the Philippines. And some successes could be noticed. During the panel discussion in Berlin, Christoph Strässer, member of the German parliament for the Social Democratic Party (SPD), promised to bring the issue to the parliamentary board for human rights and humanitarian aid. The same commitment was expressed by Jürgen Klimke, member of the German parliament for the Christian Democratic



IPON | The beginning of closer cooperation? IPON at the office of Amnesty International in Berlin.

3) The Philippine land reform CARP (Comprehensive Agrarian Reform) was initiated in 1988 under the Presidency of Corazon Aquino, mother of the current President Benigno Aquino III, with the intention to redistribute land to the landless. Due to outstanding redistributions and a high degree of political pressure, CARP has been extended several times, lately until 2014.

4) Undersecretary Catura is head of the Philippine Human Rights Committee, the „advisory body to the President in effectively addressing all human rights issues in the country“ (Administrative Order No. 29, 27/01/2002).

5) If you are interested in signing the letter, please contact [aktiv@ipon-philippines.org](mailto:aktiv@ipon-philippines.org).

Union (CDU). Even at the Federal state level, vice chairwoman of the German Green Party, Anne Spiegel, seemed willing to become active and promised to exchange information with Volker Beck and Barbara Lochbihler, her fellow party members on the national and European level. As Ms. Lochbihler was chairwoman of the board for human rights in the European Parliament, Spiegel said that a delegation trip of the Green Party to the Philippines could be considered. Nevertheless, the Philippines demonstrate that merely showing solidarity and goodwill will not change the situation. The island state ratified important international covenants on human rights, such as the ICCPR<sup>6</sup> or the ICESCR<sup>7</sup>. However,

by referring to torture, enforced disappearances and extra-judicial killings, international human rights organizations annually issue alarming human rights records.

Both activists have already returned to the Philippines, but the work and the engagement for the promotion of human rights will continue in Germany. There is hope that the speaking tour will encourage some people to reflect and promote human rights in Germany and that the involved politicians will effectively engage on human rights bases. The voice of the discontent in Germany shall eventually be heard by Philippine decision-makers and lead to adequate actions. ■

6) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights – <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm>.

7) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm>.



© IPON | How can German politics improve the situation of human rights defenders? - Jürgen Klimke (4th from the left), member of the German parliament, promises to address the issue at the parliamentary human rights board.

## IPON STRENGTHENS ITS PRESENCE IN MANILA

*For some time IPON planned to develop and strengthen the work on a national level. Since the beginning of 2012 this consideration was put into practice by setting up a coordination position in Manila. Since January Jan Pingel cares about this new task, which mainly includes the coordination and combination of the work in the regional offices as well as networking and advocacy with stakeholders at the national level. In addition to the core work in Bukidnon and Negros this new orientation intent to increasingly exert influence on decision-makers in Manila and thus support and protect the human rights defenders in the regions more effectively. Predominantly in Quezon City, the heart of the Philippine civil society, Jan Pingel will focus this year on maintain existing networks, build new contacts and put IPON, our partner groups and the cases from Negros and Bukidnon higher on the political agenda and the Philippine human rights discourse.*

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# IPON AND THE INSTRUMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVATION

The International Peace Observers Network (IPON) is a German independent non-intervening and non-profit organisation which aims for improving the human rights situation in the Philippines by sending observers to conflict areas.

The Instrument of human rights observation is based on the idea that, if a country has ratified the UN "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (and/or other relevant international declarations on human rights), it is therefore responsible to enhance, respect, and implement human rights. If a country does not follow these responsibilities independent international observers will document these violations of human rights and bring it to public attention. IPON follows this legalistic approach to human rights. Since 2006 IPON accompanies organisations of human rights defenders (HRD) in the Philippines, starting with the request of the farmers organisation KMBP (Kilusang Magbubukid ng Bondoc Peninsula) in Bondoc Peninsula, Quezon Province. Since 2008 IPON observers are present

in Negros Occidental accompanying the HRD of TFM (Task Force Mapalad). IPON will not intervene in any internal conflict and will not interfere in the strategies of the accompanied HRD. The organisation will only go into a conflict area after a request from a human rights defender organisation and after preliminary studies which include an examination whether the instrument of human rights observation is suitable for the present situation.

The work of IPON is based on four pillars:

**Presence:** The IPON observers will be present at the side of HRD who are exposed to human rights violations because of their work. Their presence is supposed to prevent assaults and enable the unhindered work of the HRD. The presence of international observers is believed to rise the inhibition threshold for encroachments.

**Accompanying:** HRD are accompanied to different ventures like political actions, meetings with governmental institutions, or conferences. In some cases individuals who are especially endangered get company by IPON members.

**Observation:** It can be difficult to get unfiltered information from conflict areas. The possibility to document events in situation makes the reports of the IPON observers very valuable. The documentations always take place in regard of human rights. Because of the legalistic approach the role of the state actors is essential in the critical analysis of the human rights situation.

**Informing action:** The information that has been gathered directly in the conflict area and has been analysed by the observers are brought to the attention of an international public. IPON is in touch with different institutions of the Philippine state and points out their responsibility of implementing human rights. In Germany the reports are handed over to the public. They serve as a basis for the work of organisations, pressure groups and politicians. This way the international pressure on the Philippines to guarantee human rights rises. IPON is convinced that the publication of human rights violations will finally lead to their decrease and prevention.



## Partnergroups in the Philippines:

**PADATA** (Panalsalan Dagumbaan Tribal Association)

**TFM** (Task Force Mapalad)

## Current Project:

IPON highlights Red-Baiting in the Philippine human rights discourse and offers platforms both to state and civil society actors to tackle the issue.



## AIMS AND SCOPE

**OBSERVER:** offers a forum for analysis, strategies and debates regarding human rights observation in the Philippines with a focus on human rights defenders. How does the implementation of the UN Human Rights Charta is performed by Philippine Institutions? Which are the elemental dangers human rights defenders in the Philippines are exposed to? These are some of the possible topics. Comparisons with other countries will expand the handling and perspectives of human rights observation. Each publication has its own thematic emphasis. Guest articles from different disciplines and organisations are welcome.

