

OPENING REMARKS

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As-salamu 'alaikum!

"The Search for Peace in the Southern Philippines in the 1980's." This is the theme of this 1979 Seminar. This theme has had a positive response because everyone is in favor of peace in the Southern Philippines. Everyone is in favor of peace in Cambodia, Northern Ireland, Southern Africa, the Middle East, Afghanistan and in all the troubled areas of the world. All of us are in favor of peace, but we feel so hopeless and helpless about what we can do to promote and establish peace.

That is one reason why this theme has been chosen – to give us a chance to listen to one another, to learn from one another – in order that we may work with one another in seeking peace in the 1980's and beyond – in seeking peace in the coming generations for our children and grandchildren.

We have tried to provide you with various position papers on how peace can be realized in the Southern Philippines. We have invited speakers with various viewpoints, backgrounds, convictions, and experiences to share with us their thoughts about the search for peace in the Southern Philippines. You will not agree with everything that is said, but we hope you will *listen* to what is being said with an open mind and a recognition that only by understanding one another can we hope to find the path to peace.

Certainly, it is much better to listen and learn from one another in a seminar such as this, than it is to take up weapons and try to eliminate everyone who does not agree with us. Certainly, we cannot hope in one short

seminar to hear and consider all the options, alternatives, and plans for peace in this area, but we can make a beginning as we gain new ideas and insights as to how each of us can work for peace in our respective occupations and communities when we go home from this Seminar. If this Seminar achieves the goal of getting all of us to *think peace*, to *talk peace* and to *be involved in peace efforts* as we leave here, then it will far exceed the hopes of those who have planned, worked, and supported this 1979 Peace Seminar.

The road to peace is filled with all kinds of roadblocks, detours, and delays. Everyone is in favor of peace, but many times we are even unaware of our own selfish interests, political, religious, and social interests, some of which are beyond our control, contribute to divisions, misunderstandings and continued violence and fighting. Only when we all can learn to put public interest and the common good above these conflicting self and vested interests can we hope to find a formula for peace. Only when we give priority to the rights of the next generation will we begin to sincerely search for peace in this generation.

Which is more advantageous for everyone – peace or war? The answer seems so obvious and simple – of course peace is better! In war everybody *loses* – some more than others. In peace, everybody gains – some more than others. Why then do we still have fighting and violence in a seemingly endless cycle of attack and revenge and attack? There has to be a better way. Peace is the only way.

Those who are responsible for continuing and fighting are only prolonging the struggle and the suffering. One problem is that it is often the innocent who gets hurt the worst and suffers the most. It also often is the next

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generation that will continue to suffer setbacks from what is happening now.

When we look at the vast sums spent on armament on a world scale and a national scale, and compare this to the needs of the masses, it seems to be sheer madness to continue the conflict on any scale. If the funds spent on military activity by all sides could be used for constructive, instead of destructive purposes, we could see the eradication of poverty, ignorance, and sickness. Will this dream ever come true or will the nightmare of brother-killing-brother continue? Will we ever see the weapons of war converted to weapons of peace?

I remember the night of the Battle of Marawi on October 21, 1972. I never heard so much gunfire in all my life, before or after that time, as I did in a few short hours on that night. I remember thinking to myself, "How stupid! Just think how many books, how much food and medicine could be brought with the money that is being spent to buy all these bullets as men try to kill one another."

I am aware that there are no simple answers in the search for peace. I do want to share one insight which comes from the "Conference on Peace and Human Rights - Human Rights and Peace" which was held in Oslo, Norway, in December last year.

1. The right to peace is one of the fundamental human rights - every nation and every human being, without distinction has to live in peace. The respect for this right, as well as for other human rights, is in the common interest of mankind and constitutes an indispensable condition for the progress of all nations, large and small, in all areas.

2. The fundamental human rights and peace are indivisible, in such a way that any threat to one constitutes a threat to the other.

3. Human rights and peace are interdependent, both internally and internationally,

in the sense that action that promotes human rights should be combined with the promotion and maintenance of peace.

This was the first attempt of an international conference to relate the popular concern for human rights with peace. I hope it will not be the last. I would even suggest this as a fitting topic for a future seminar, because without peace, all other rights are placed in jeopardy and made uncertain and unattainable. Vice versa, without human rights, peace cannot last long before human wrongs provoke outbreaks of resentment and rebellion.

Therefore the search for peace deserves and demands the very best efforts of everyone. The search for peace requires the cooperation of all people - rich and poor, privileged and under-privileged, government and private, scholars and illiterates, farmers and land-owners, young and old, lawyers, doctors, religious leaders, teachers, soldiers, rebels, - if we are to find permanent peace in which to raise our families and have full opportunity for life in the world.

At times, the search for peace seems futile and elusive, like looking for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. First, each one of us must learn to recognize in what way we are part of the present problem. Then and only then, can each one of us hope to become a part of the solution. Then only by all factions working together in the regional, national, and international interests can we hope to find what we all want - peace in the Southern Philippines in the 1980's and in the following decades. Perhaps, we should repeat that we are interested in peace, not only in the Southern Philippines, but in promoting peace throughout the entire Philippines, Southeast Asia, Asia, and the other five continents and islands of the seas. The final goal of our search for peace is truly "Peace on Earth. Good will to men!" Or as Gandhi said, "There is no way to peace. Peace is the way." May this Seminar help to guide us on the way to peace.