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Isti'adhah
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Musa's du'a
Amma baad

Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabaratuh.

Mister Speaker, Members of the Parliament, ladies and gentlemen, our internally displaced sisters and brothers who are watching our proceedings today—

Good afternoon.

I have the honor to present to this august body the report of the Special Committee on Marawi, the result of public hearings held in Marawi City and here in Cotabato, public consultations across Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, as well as in Metro Manila, field visits, and examination of vital documents. This summarizes all of the national, local, regional, and non-governmental interventions initiated in the aftermath of the Marawi siege, articulates the sentiments and crucial concerns raised by the internally displaced, and outlines our recommendations, as a Committee, to the Bangsamoro Government as well as other government instrumentalities to address them.

We all remember what happened in Marawi on May 23, 2017. We are also already aware that even after the city was declared liberated, the crisis continued. By June this year, three years later, thousands are still displaced. Rehabilitation has just begun, but the pace of reconstruction has remained slow. The difficulties faced by displaced Mēranaws — in their daily lives and their livelihoods, in dealing with the past and looking forward to the future — are compounded by the outbreak of COVID-19.

It is because of this context that the Special Committee on Marawi, or SCM, now finds it even more urgent that we submit our report to this body, in the hopes that it would hear the voice of our people, and act quickly on their behalf.

Our colleagues may remember that the SCM was created after multiple Members of the Parliament filed resolutions to look into the status of the Marawi response. This is in recognition of the plight of those displaced and affected by the Marawi Siege, and in keeping with the mandate of the BTA to supplement the National Government's efforts on Marawi Rehab, as provided in the BOL. We follow the lead of the National Government; we understand that they are calling the shots. We know that by law, our jurisdiction over Marawi Rehab is limited; but we also know that we cannot simply do nothing for those displaced and affected.

As a review, the SCM was created in September 2019, and was duly constituted the following month in October. It was tasked to “look into the status of the Marawi recovery, reconstruction, and rehabilitation efforts.” From the beginning, it was clear to us that our work will complement the efforts of the Task Force Bangon Marawi—and to do that, we understood that we needed accurate and complete information on the status of Marawi and its residents. That is what we undertook to collate in the months of labor of the SCM, interrupted only by the

restrictions on mobility and the impossibility of holding gatherings in light of the pandemic. In total, we were able to conduct six exhaustively deliberative committee meetings, three informative public hearings which were spread out over seven days, and numerous public consultations. We held field visits. We talked to experts. These, along with the data and evidence we gathered, form the basis of the committee report we present today.

Let me, at the outset, apologize to our colleagues, Mister Speaker, for we will not be able to cover this report comprehensively in this remarks. The report is over one hundred pages, so we deem it best to limit the discussion to its key highlights.

We must also make clear that this document is not meant to encompass all that needs to be said and all that had been done in relation to Marawi. This is a long document—but considering the multitude and gravity of the issues faced by our people, and considering the fact that even as we speak here more concerns are developing and emerging, even a hundred pages or double that will not be enough. We only have what was presented and submitted to us, and what was the result of the collective wisdom of the Committee.

But even so, we hope to do right by the people of Marawi by providing them a stronger platform for their grievances and lending whatever machinery we have as a Parliament and as an autonomous government to address their urgent and perennial concerns.

We also apologize to our IDPs for the delay. We had planned to submit this report in March or April at the latest, but our timetable was delayed by the outbreak of COVID. But we are here now, and we are passing on what you have told us. The SCM carries your voices with us, and today we will make sure you will be heard.

And in these remarks and in this report, we hope we do justice to our people by putting the spotlight on the matters and issues they raised during our interactions. We highlight here the most noteworthy and urgent ones according to the people of Marawi: issues involving land, property rights, and shelters, including concerns regarding property ownership, the military reservation, clearing and demolition, taxes, housing, and temporary shelters; core necessities, including utilities, livelihood, education, and health; public works; and other issues, including data issues, questions with regard to inclusion, scope, and priority, transparency, transitional justice, inquiries on the handling of the war, and security.

Issues

Land, Property Rights, and Shelters

One of the most crucial cluster of issues we encountered are concerns over land, property, rights, and shelters. As it is, land has been a complicated issue for the Marawi residents even before the siege. Aside from competing ownerships, we have overlapping claims, encroachment, and reliance on traditional institutions of property ownership and possession. This has been pointed as one of the causes of delay in the rehabilitation efforts.

This problem cannot be discussed without mentioning the concerns raised regarding clearing and demolition. Some of those who consented to demolition were worried to see that the contractors left no visible markers or physical boundaries on their land. They wanted to do this themselves, but the way *Kambisita* was designed (i.e. the period within which IDPs from the most affected area (MAA) were allowed to briefly visit their properties but no repair,

construction, or fencing was permitted), prevented them from doing so. Now all they are holding on to is the assurance of the local government that the exact boundaries will be followed since these are in the registered titles. But that's a problem because that would only work if you are a homeowner with a registered title and with no overlapping claims.

In relation to this, there also appears to be a problem with respect the proceeds of the sale of the debris from the MAA. Our people were told that these were consolidated into a Trust Fund and will go to the homeowners. But at the time this issue was brought to the attention of the Committee, no guidelines on the distribution has been released.

Our people are also very concerned with the construction of the Camp Ranao military reservation, as well as what they were told is only an "outpost" in Kapantaran, which is in the Most Affected Area. There are fears that more residents will be displaced in the future, and that even a supposed "outpost" may stir resentment and disturb the long-term stability of the city.

Real property tax is a problem. A tax amnesty was implemented in 2018, and in 2019, the usual discounts and installment schemes were offered. Despite these concessions, some of the IDPs are still unable to pay. Rehabilitation has barely started, they are still unable to return and profit from their lands, and yet they are being asked to pay taxes for these. Still, we recognize that for the Marawi LGU, it is a delicate balancing act between raising the revenues required of them by law and accommodating the realities of the IDPs.

Social housing and private residential housing also pose problems for our IDPs. Many of those we talked to have serious concerns regarding the permanent shelters, which are for the most part located far from the city center. This is a usual problem in large-scale housing projects, but our IDPs are asking now: will moving to shelters end up costing more, since their livelihood and place of employment is in Marawi's center? How are their children going to go to their preferred schools and colleges, given expensive transportation costs? Based on our discussions, it is also unclear who will be allowed to avail of the permanent shelters, how they can finance these, and whether availing of a permanent shelter means they will have to give up their properties in the city center. This becomes important questions especially since the TFBM declared prioritization in the availment for those whose properties are located in reclaimed areas and where government infrastructure will be built. There has to be more information on what sort of housing assistance IDPs can expect, and what the plan is now for private housing and building structures.

And finally under this cluster, we cannot forget that temporary shelters have their share of problems. IDPs are grateful for this assistance, but their experience is that the temporary housing units are too small for the average Mëranaw family. We hear of the need to sleep in shifts, or outside the unit, or even asking neighbors and relatives to allow other members to sleep in their homes especially during inclement weathers. The cramped spaces have also forced the Mëranaws to disregard their religious and cultural norms, piercing through their sense of *maratabat* and self-esteem as a society.

Other Core Necessities

Lacking in the shelters, and now also in the sectors in the MAA where residents are allowed to return gradually, are the core necessities for comfortable, or even just dignified, living. They

talk of inadequacy of water supply. There is a problem with solid waste management. Electricity is an issue. Livelihood assistance and health services are likewise raised.

Utilities

There is a severe shortage of water – potable or otherwise – in the temporary shelters, and the situation in the MAA is likewise dire. This has contributed to sanitation and hygiene problems in the shelters, especially with the inadequacy of sanitation and waste management systems. Imagine, then, the impact of COVID in such a setting—IDPs don't even have enough water for what the authorities require of basic health protocols.

Electrification has also not been completed in some temporary shelters.

From our findings and our interactions with the IDPs and experts, Mister Speaker, we can get a picture of what daily life is like for those displaced by the Marawi Siege. You wake up in a shelter that is most likely too small for your family; where you might not even have access to electricity, much less a decent water supply. You are not sure when you may be able to return to your home in the city center. In fact, you are not even sure if you will be able to return at all—you may not have the land title, or you may be displaced yet again by new public constructions, or someone else may have claimed your land already.

And it's not just the daily lives of our IDPs that are suffering. Their livelihood, education, and health are in peril too.

Livelihood

Three national agencies are involved in providing livelihood assistance to IDPs, along with the regional government, LGUs, and different NGOs. Despite this, not all are reached by interventions of this kind and some IDPs decry the fairness of the process of selection. Some received assistance from all three agencies, while some received from only one, and others still received none at all. This inequity in the livelihood support is causing tensions within our communities.

We were also informed that many IDPs received similar livelihood starter kits to produce or market similar products. While such assistance is much-needed, the local market has been saturated, again causing tensions and prolonging economic recovery even further. The strategy may be to provide as many micro- to small-scale livelihood interventions to as many IDPs as possible, but the problem is the role of former big-time traders, or those who can help make our local economy recover faster, are ignored.

Complaints about overpricing, skill-intervention mismatch, and the quality of the equipment distributed have also been raised.

Education

Moving on to education, while the Department of Education has understandably focused on the 20 public schools destroyed or affected by the siege, not much assistance has been given to the many private schools, *madaris*, and other educational institutions in the MAA so that they have a chance at repairs or reconstruction and, therefore, resumption of operations.

Health

IDPs also reported problems with health services. Similar to education, distance is a big constraint in access. Regular medical missions are not enough for the IDPs, and they are calling for medical clinics in every site, along with affordable medicines. Given the problems with the water supply, inadequate hygiene and sanitation systems, lack of health services, cramped living conditions, and the COVID outbreak, what we have here is a perfect storm waiting to happen.

Other Issues

What we have discussed thus far are issues that affect the daily realities of the IDPs. But there are concerns that permeate the entire situation that the Committee, and us here in the Parliament, also cannot ignore.

Completeness of the List of Beneficiaries

Data is a big problem in the Marawi rehabilitation. Both the *Kathanor* and DAFAC systems – while laudable attempts at databasing – are incomplete, something that is not denied by the authorities that implemented them. The problem is that these lists are the bases for the inclusion in the intervention of the national government agencies. Exclusion in the list spells exclusion in the aid that is due every IDP.

Data on land possession and ownership is also problematic. As intimated earlier, strict adherence to formal documentation alone – land titles, tax declarations, deeds of sale or other forms of transfer – is not reflective of the reality of the complexity of the property arrangements within the Mëranaw society. This has caused anxiety or even tension to those who have been in possession of their lands for generations, prior to being displaced by the siege, but whose claims are not evidenced by documents recognized by authorities.

Inclusion, Scope, Priority

From what we have seen, there also appears to be questions regarding the inclusion, scope, and prioritization for those affected by the Marawi Siege. There is the sentiment that non-Mëranaw hostages who survived or those who are affiliated with the ones who perished in the 2017 siege received more urgent assistance from the government compared to the IDPs.

Transparency

Transparency is another critical issue. IDPs are not provided the clarity that they demand as to the assistance that they are entitled to, the processes, timelines, and targets when it comes to rehabilitation, and the policies that relate to their return to their properties in the MAA including whether, for some of them, its impossibility is a foregone conclusion. So much more can be done to inform and update the IDPs, especially to dispel perceptions of mismanagement and suspicions of corruption.

Inclusive Participation

Related to our people's call for transparency is their clamor for inclusive participation. For instance, the *mujahideen* should be recognized as important partners not just in rehab efforts, but in long-term development and stability of the city.

Still, an even bigger problem that was revealed to us in our public hearings is that wide acceptance of the Bangon Marawi plan seems to be absent — indicative, perhaps, of this lack of ownership by the IDPs is the feeling that inclusive participation even from the stage of its conception fell short.

Transitional Justice and the Handling of the War

IDPs also highlighted the importance of transitional justice in the case of Marawi so that the allegations of looting, vandalism, and trespassing over private properties during the height of the siege – are not simply forgotten.

Many of those affected also have lingering questions regarding the handling of the war. Our people want to clarify what factors led to the siege – beyond the victim-blaming that has pervaded the earlier discourses, investigate violations committed by both sides, and have a full accounting of the dead and the missing.

Emerging Security Issues

All of these compounding problems lead to a Marawi that is exposed and vulnerable to emerging security issues. IDPs have reported renewed recruitment, which is likely driven by frustration over the pace of rehabilitation.

There has also been a reported spike in illegal drug transactions. While never an excuse, perhaps the lack of adequate socio-economic opportunities has forced some to resort to selling drugs.

Recommendations

Given these, Mister Speaker, dear colleagues, how does the Committee propose that we move Marawi Rehabilitation forward? We looked at this question on two levels: first with respect to the Bangsamoro Government, and second, within the overall scheme of the rehabilitation efforts.

We focus first on the recommendations to the Bangsamoro Government. Again, we know that we do not have full jurisdiction over this. We are indeed riddled with limitations and restrictions when it comes to Marawi Rehab. But—and I know I speak for my colleagues as well—that does not mean that we will adopt a wait-and-see attitude especially since these are our people that are continuing to suffer. This is our constituency. This is happening not just in our backyard, but right in our home. And as we know that most matters crucial to the rehabilitation are out of the hands of the Bangsamoro Government, we also devote a portion of the report to bring to the attention of proper authorities what the people of Marawi expect from them.

The Bangsamoro Government might not have a full hand over matters crucial to the rehabilitation, but what it does have is the 500-million-peso Marawi Rehabilitation Fund from the BAA. This amount can be used for the necessary actions we deem immediate. We can also use this to begin those programs classified for the immediate-to-medium term. We also recommend that other fund sources be tapped, particularly the Special Development Fund, as well as the Appropriations for succeeding years, for the more enduring interventions for Marawi.

What do our people need from the Bangsamoro Government?

We need immediate organizational interventions.

We need a dedicated office for the BTA-led Marawi Rehabilitation and Recovery, either through a Coordinating Board composed of the ministries of the Executive, or a Program Management Office. Either option have their strengths and weaknesses. We propose that for this year, we start with a PMO which will facilitate and speed-up the processes for our interventions.

Second, we need to address the data gaps. Data gaps almost always turn to service delivery gaps. We need a centralized, updated, and comprehensive database on household profiles, assistance received, and property ownership of IDPs. We do not suggest reinventing the wheel. Working with the TFBM and the LRA in case of land administration is the optimal track for the Bangsamoro Government so that the existing data they have are enhanced.

We need immediate and direct assistance for the IDPs.

Our people need better access to assistance that are already offered by government agencies, especially for IDPs residing outside Marawi City. Home-based IDPs and those who stay in community-managed evacuation sites in other LGUs, in particular, are being overlooked. They face significant barriers in accessing assistance. Perhaps collaborative partnerships with host communities and LGUs will help ease this problem.

We also need to ensure food security, and prioritize self-sufficiency. We can fill in the gaps by continuing food relief assistance to all IDPs, along with targeted assistance to certain segments in need. Food security should be at the forefront of the Marawi agenda.

These are the absolute priorities. And only because we know that we can only start talking about more enduring solutions to the plight of the IDPs if we are sure that their basic needs, especially when it comes to food, are met.

We need immediate and medium-term interventions.

This next set of recommendations are classified as such not because of lack of urgency, as they are in fact urgent as well, but because their operationalization is, understandably, going to take longer.

In the immediate to medium-term, we need to hasten the establishment of better water distribution mechanisms as well as construction of sanitation and hygiene facilities. We do this either through provision of supplementary water delivery tank trucks or installation of more durable water extraction systems such as deep wells. The sad state of water supply for our IDPs – both in the shelters and in the few barangays in the MAA – is a preventable health crisis waiting to happen. If the Bangsamoro Government is to leave an indelible mark not just in the IDPs but the entire city of Marawi, water is our key.

Likewise, we need to improve our people's access to electricity which we can do by distributing solar powered battery source or lights, and in the long-term, investing in improving the power distribution infrastructure of LASURECO.

We need to prioritize their business and livelihood – one which recognizes the nuance in the levels of competencies and skills of the naturally entrepreneurial Mëranaws and tailor fits interventions according to these factors. We do this by providing different scales of capital and transitional support. Capital can be made available through innovative systems particularly those incorporating the principles of Islamic finance – Islamic microfinance that employs *qard hassan* or *murabahah* for the micro- and small-businesses, and *murabahah*, *mudharabah*, *musharakah*, and their permutations as financial products accessible to others.

We need to continue delivering education services to our learners that not just focuses on public schools but one that does not forget private educational institutions which make up the majority of the education providers in the city. The Bangsamoro Government can, for example, explore the possibility of establishing a School Rehabilitation Trust Fund, perhaps financed by donors through *waqf*, upon which private educational institutions can dip for the repair or reconstruction needs of their infrastructure.

We need to continue providing health services. Mobile clinics that likewise dispense medicine for free or at a subsidy in the shelters and in the opened-up sectors in the MAA can be provided by the Bangsamoro Government.

We need to assist homeowners in identifying property boundaries. Working with the TFBM, NHA, LRA, and the local government of Marawi City, the Bangsamoro Government can provide technical experts – i.e. geodetic engineers – who can assist the property owners in translating the coordinates in their titles into actual boundary demarcations. Without this form of aid – which may expand to subsidizing the fencing needs – community tension brought about by conflicting property delineations may arise or worsen.

We also need medium- to long-term interventions.

Our people need us to support permanent housing development. We present two options for the Bangsamoro Government – greenfield site housing development (or mass housing in less dense areas, which will likely be far from the city center) or brownfield site housing development (or development within the MAA). For the former to work, it must be complemented by an integrated community development – with livelihood and other social infrastructures – and/or a public transport system that makes mobility to and from the city center easy. As for the latter, it can be done by neighborhoods or blocks, or at the individual property-level. A design that accommodates sharers and renters is also recommended by the Committee.

Finally, as much as the Bangsamoro Government is eager to solve the concerns of the IDPs on its own, it must call on other government instrumentalities if a comprehensive and satisfactory Marawi rehabilitation and reconstruction is to happen.

Thus, we make this call to the National Government.

Our people need your help and urgent attention, too. We can begin with improved transparency in the rehabilitation efforts and plans. Three years on, our people’s lives and futures are still uncertain. Surely, greater transparency would only make the TFBM’s job easier. Frequent and regular updates on the process will go a long way in this regard. Maximization of inexpensive communication channels – social media, radio, etc. – for this purpose is within our reach.

To our lawmakers, our people are also anxiously waiting on the immediate passage of the Compensation Law, which we have as a Parliament already urged the National Congress to pass in a resolution. We cannot assign financial value to the losses our people suffered, but recognizing those losses and making sincere efforts to make reparations is an important step towards healing and normalization.

Our people are also counting on our security sector to address emerging security concerns in the aftermath of the Marawi Siege. The many different public perceptions on the plans and pace of rehabilitation is fueling the emergence of new security threats, and our people need our assurance that these are not being ignored.

Finally, we come down to what our people have been saying repeatedly. In so many words, our people have always said – let them go home. There may be justifiable reasons for preventing this in certain areas. We recognize that the TFBM through the mechanism of *Kathagombalay* is slowly opening up the MAA starting with Barangays Tolali and Daguduban.

But as to the rest of the MAA, a full ban may not be necessary. For these areas, we echo their call, let our people return. Experience in other jurisdictions with similar circumstances show that while residing is not yet permitted, other expressions of possession can already be exercised. The same can be said for our IDPs. Perhaps it is time to allow them to freely visit their properties without need of prior authorization/permission – let them clean, clear, fence, and do what they must in their properties – especially those who have already shown incontrovertible proof of ownership. This way, recovery and reconstruction of private properties can begin, particularly since this is not covered by the TFBM's plans anyway. More importantly this process, falling short it may be of the call for the full return of the IDPs, will bring a sense of healing and moving forward, which our people have been waiting for, and unarguably deserve, for years.

As I said, what we've done is give a brief outline of our full report. The details and explanations are better captured in the thick document.

Mister Speaker, dear colleagues: by submitting this report, a major part of the work of the Special Committee is officially done. But let this be clear: our vigilance as representatives of the people of Marawi is far from over. We will continue to work to make sure the people of Marawi get the rehabilitation efforts they need and deserve.

Mister Speaker, dear colleagues, I argue that this is precisely what the Bangsamoro was built to do. The autonomous regional government is well-poised to provide direct, immediate, and tangible assistance to the people displaced and affected by the Marawi Siege. At the same time, it has unique, well-grounded, and evidence-based insights which can supplement the efforts of our National Government in achieving inclusive, genuine, and comprehensive rehabilitation and recovery. We offer these insights through this report in the spirit of sincere and earnest partnership and cooperation, and we hope they are taken well.

And, finally, to our people displaced and affected by the Marawi Siege: we thank you for sharing your stories with us, for inviting us into your homes and lives, for telling us the problems you face and the aspirations you hold. May this occasion be a cause of cautious optimism and hope. We have brought your voices to the Parliament. You have spoken. And we hope, along with all of you, that our leaders may hear.

Thank you very much.

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