

# From Silence to Accountability: Human Rights Violations in Lanao During Martial Law (1972-1981) and the Transitional Justice Imperative

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## ABSTRACT

This paper looks into the systematic violations of human rights in Lanao, Philippines, from 1972 to 1981 under the Martial Law regime of the late president, Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr., and crafts comprehensive policies that are anchored on the concept of transitional justice. The research documents specific human rights violations in the two provinces of Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte through field research in selected communities, founded on survivor testimonies, family members, relatives and witnesses who lived through this period. Critical findings of the research include: the uncovering of various, almost undocumented human rights abuses; a disturbing lack of knowledge about the violations among the younger generations, resulting in a very dangerous gap within collective memory; a persistent lack of accountability for perpetrators; and a documented absence of adequate measures of compensation for victims.

Based on the applied transitional justice framework, this paper articulates policy recommendations in the following four key areas of transitional justice: right to truth (providing historic documentation), right to justice (accountability mechanisms), right to compensation/ reparations for victims, and guarantees of nonrecurrence/safeguards against future violations. This research has made significant contributions to current literature regarding the impact of Martial Law on Muslim Filipino (Bangsamoro in Southern Philippines) communities because this view has historically been on the periphery of mainstream or the national history. More importantly, this research provides policy recommendations to the local and national administration on how justice may be remedied for the past and how peaceful solutions may be derived for the region.

**Keywords:** Transitional Justice, Human Rights Violations, Martial Law, Marcos Regime, Lanao, Policy Recommendations, Bangsamoro, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

The imposition of Martial Law was started by Ferdinand Marcos through his Proclamation No. 1081 on September 21, 1972 (Agoncillo, 1990) which remain as one of the tumultuous periods in the otherwise rich history of the Philippines. Although much of the history has been documented concerning the violation of human rights conducted within the environs of urban areas as well as political centers, still much of it has not been known concerning the impacts of the imposition of the Martial Law on those areas within the periphery, specifically among those areas predominantly populated by Muslims such as Lanao (McCoy, 2009).

Lanao, consisting of Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte provinces, could not be considered an exempt area when it came to human rights abuses during the time of Martial Law. Unlike other areas which had a systematic documentation process, it can be said that Lanao has been left out through unofficial historiography (Abinales, 2010). This issue is discussed in this research by determining the extent of human rights abuses during the time of Marcos and developing holistic policies related to transitional justice.

Transitional justice offers a mechanism through which societies that have experienced conflicts or periods of authoritarianism can come to terms with past violations of human rights while laying the basis for a long-lasting peace and democracy (Teitel, 2000). The mechanism has four main pillars: the right to truth, justice,

compensation, as well as guarantees for non-recurrence (United Nations, 2010). The mechanism provides a structured pathway to ensure that past grievances are addressed, as well as their recurrence.

The experiences of those who lived through Martial Law provide significant information regarding the reality of that period in history. The accounts provide a glimpse into the limitations of personal freedoms, the fear that existed, and the strength of the Filipino people. The experiences provide information regarding the challenges associated with living under an authoritarian government (Bacalso, 2022), in addition to the strength that people derived in such periods. Preserving such experiences through listening and recording them is essential in ensuring that past experiences are known by future generations (Pascual, 2017).

The importance of this research goes beyond mere historical recording. Notwithstanding the contemporary concerns that the Philippines faces with regard to issues of impunity, conflict, and human rights concerns, it is important to develop an appropriate response as an informed remedy to past abuses (Human Rights Watch, 2020). More specifically, its importance cannot be understated with regard to Lanao, as it further enhances an understanding of the impingement of Martial Law upon the Muslim community.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research design using community-based documentation and policy analysis. The study was undertaken in selected municipalities within the provinces of Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte covering geographical areas found through preliminary research to have experienced grave violations during Martial Law.

As one of the first research-based documentation on the Martial Law experience in Lanao, the current study utilized purposive and snowball techniques in gathering research sites and respondents. The initial research sites and respondents were identified through consultations with local historians and existing records from the HRVVMC, among others (Gowing, 1979; Abinales, 2010). The research concentrated on municipalities that have documented histories of the military presence and human rights violations during the time Martial Law was enforced, in order to ensure there is diversity in terms of the geographical locations in the provinces.

In this manner, the research managed to generate participants not only from 24 municipalities and 2 cities in the Lanao provinces, but across the entire Lanao region. In Lanao del Sur, participants came from 15 municipalities, including Marawi City, while in Lanao del Norte, participants came from 8 municipalities, including Iligan City. The extensive territorial area of this research managed to generate various experiences, from those in lake-side villages who experienced large-scale military operations and evacuation, to those in the highlands who largely experienced military checkpoints, monitoring and a battle ground. The allocation of the research venues came as it did, through the Meranao networks of the survivors.

The collection of the primary data entailed conducting in-depth interviews for Martial Law survivors, relatives of the victims of the human rights abuses during the Martial Law period, community leaders, and government officials. A total of 47 participants were interviewed from January to August of 2025. The participants were obtained via a snowball technique and comprised individuals who had direct and indirect experience of the human rights abuses during the Martial Law period. Likewise, communities involved were those some of the most affected municipalities in Lanao during the said regime.

The interview guides were observed and modified to fit the local context. Interviews were done in the participants' language of choice (Meranao) and recorded to take note of their views. The interviews lasted about 40 to 60 minutes. Some of the issues covered in the interviews include experiences under Martial Law, knowledge of human rights violations in the community, and the effect of human rights violations on families and communities. All participants were fully informed about the nature of the study, how their testimonials would be used, and their rights to refuse to be part of or withdraw from participation in the study whenever they chose to do so. All respondents provided informed consent, and coding systems (e.g., Respondent 01) protected their identities. While some participants requested that certain information not be made known to keep their identities protected or that of their families, some requested that information leading to their identities not be made known.

Other data were sourced from government-generated documents, academic publications, and records from human rights organizations. Special attention was given to HRVVMC documentation and records of compensation to gain an insight into the institutional responses that have been carried out hitherto for violations during the Martial Law period.

Data analysis was done using thematic analysis informed by transitional justice principles. Interview transcripts were coded to identify patterns in relation to the four pillars of transitional justice, namely, truth, justice, reparations, and guarantees of non-recurrence. Cross-case analysis allowed for the identification of common themes and experiences across communities and time. Moreover, recommendations are made after a consultative process involving experts and other local citizens. Finally, this study is aligned with TJRC (2016) pillars in regards to truth, justice, reparation, and non-recurrence, and its scope can be seen as having shifted its attention or level of concentration from a regional macro level to a province level.

## Background of the Study

### Transitional Justice Framework

Transitional justice originated as a defined area of study and research during the 1980s, specifically during a transition from a military dictatorship within Latin America (Arthur, 2009). Today, although it has branched out into different contexts within which a society tries to cope with a large number of human rights abuses, a definition by the International Center for Transitional Justice describes transitional justice thus: "the set of judicial and non-judicial measures that have been implemented by different countries in order to redress the legacies of massive human rights abuses" (ICTJ, 2009, p. 1).

The conceptual framework for transitional justice has some essential core values. The first value for the right to the truth is the recognition of the existence of the right of victims and society to know what has happened during atrocities (Méndez, 2016). First, it involves the provision of facts about what happened during atrocities. Beyond the facts, it also involves understanding the patterns and consequences of violations committed. Truth telling itself may serve a variety of purposes: giving victims acknowledgment, creating a historical record, and laying the groundwork for other transitional justice measures.

Secondly, the principle of justice emphasizes the responsibility of actors who have committed human rights abuses (Van Boven, 2010). The question of criminal responsibility by prosecuting people involved in human rights abuses as well as institutional responsibility through institutional reforms is relevant in this aspect. Various studies have shown that holding people responsible is quite difficult to achieve but is imperative in preventing such human rights violations in the future (Sikkink, 2011).

Thirdly, the right to reparations expresses that the victim is entitled to compensation for the wrong suffered. Specifically, the forms which reparation may take are numerous and include compensation to individuals, collective forms of reparation to communities, measures of rehabilitation, and symbolic forms of reparation such as monuments or apologies. Good reparations policies have both functional as well as symbolic qualities because they serve to meet victims' needs while also showing that their dignity and suffering are recognized. Lastly, the emphasis of non-recurrence is on institution-based reforms and structural transformation that ensures the violation is not repeated (United Nations, 2005). The non-recurrence measures target the root causes and sources of conflict and violence by altering the structures that made it possible for the violation to happen. The non-recurrence measures include constitutional reform, security sector transformation, judicial transformation, among other measures (Duthie, 2012).

### The TJRC Report of 2016 on Bangsamoro

The Listening sessions were conducted by the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC), formed on the basis of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, within 211 communities of Mindanao in 2015-2016. According to TJRC (2016), the root causes of the conflict among the Bangsamoro are "systemic violence perpetrated by the State, mass impunity, and historical neglect, which flow from the imposition of a monolithic Filipino identity and Philippine State by force" (p. 62). Recommendations include the formation of

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National TJRC for Bangsamoro (NTJRCB), which comprises four sub-commissions on historical memory, land, impunity, and reconciliation.

## **Comparative Perspectives: Transitional Justice in Southeast Asia**

Recent literature on memory politics in Southeast Asia, (Loh and Ojendal, 2020) illustrates how authoritarian nostalgia and historical revisionism poses a threat to the quest for truth because of increasingly visible in modern-day Philippines (Thompson, 2019). The loss of intergenerational memory reported in the case of Lanao is echoed by findings from Timor-Leste (Kent, 2016) and Myanmar (Brooten et al, 2020) in particular, where younger generations display little knowledge of past crimes.

The experiences in Lanao can be similarly situated in other Southeast Asia states after authoritarian rule. Indonesia after Suharto and the attempt at reconciliation (Hearman 2018) and the response of Cambodia to the Khmer Rouge's atrocities (Manning 2017) both offer examples of the challenges presented by the disjointed documentation in outlying areas and among ethnic minorities. The experiences in the HRVVMC can be seen in the underrepresentation of Bangsamoro among the claimants as observed in the marginalized groups by Fletcher and Weinstein (2015).

## **The Philippines and the Imposition of Martial Law: National and International Implications**

The Martial Law in the Philippines under the leadership of President Ferdinand Marcos is well documented in books and accounts, although there are major geographical and topical disparities. As noted by Brillantes Jr. (1986): Martial Law was imposed as a sequel to numerous leftist and rightist plots against the government. Finally, in Proclamation No. 1081 dated September 21, 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos proclaimed Martial Law in the Philippines, and later lifted it through Proclamation No. 547 dated January 17, 1981, although he remained in authoritarian style until he was ousted in 1986 (Bonner, 1987).

This 14-year period of Martial Law rule was a major turning point in Philippine history, which saw more control exerted by the government, any form of dissent crushed, and the transformation of society from the old to the new. In fact, President Ferdinand E. Marcos considered Martial Law as a triggering force for progress, which would result in a peaceful and ordered society, as well as the transformation of Philippine society to become a modern nation (Feliz, 1989). However, for most Filipinos, it would be remembered as a dark age in Philippine history, which saw grave human rights abuses such as illegal detention, torture, rape, extrajudicial killings, and crony capitalism (Talamayan, 2021). While it is true that much progress, concerning the infrastructure was attained, it is, however essential to mention that most of these projects had been imaginable with the help of foreign loans, which would be hurdled by future generations (Jose, 1991).

The period was characterized by prevalent cases of human rights violations in the form of arbitrary detentions, torture, forced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings (Amnesty International, 1981). Immediately after the proclamation of Martial Law, Marcos implemented a number of measures to consolidate his rule. He suspended the writ of habeas corpus, shut Congress, and arrested opposition leaders, journalists, and activists (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005). The military was given broad powers to enforce the new order, which resulted in the increasing size and influence of the AFP (Selochan, 1991).

Whilst there are many studies dealing with different facets of Martial Law, such as political origins, economic costs, and human rights (McCoy 2009, Mijares 1976, Rosenberg 1979), most of this literature is focused either upon urban cities or Metro Manila itself, as well as those with political significance who were leaders of oppositions from predominantly Christian provinces (Hernandez 2000).

## **Human Rights Abuses in Mindanao: The Invisible Perimeter-Line**

The experience of the Muslim communities during the period of Martial Law has actually garnered relatively little or few attentions in the literature. This becomes all the more important given the fact that Mindanao, which houses the predominant Muslim population of the country, was among the first places to actually feel the brunt of the implementation of the Martial Law (Abinales, 2010). Its geographical separation and linguistic and

cultural diversions resulted in the remote experience of the Muslim communities receiving little recognition in the literature of the period of Martial Law (Gowing, 1979).

Most studies on Mindanao during the Martial Law era mainly dealt with the context of the Muslim separatist movement and government counterinsurgency efforts (Che Man, 1990; Noble, 1976). Although all those studies conceded that human rights abuses did occur, some of those accounts rarely detailed particular human rights abuses committed against civilians of Lanao. The attention centered on politics and the military could, to some extent, result in the neglect of the experiences of common individuals during the Martial Law era.

This necessity propels the need to do research on Lanao's Martial Law history, since it is central to many significant factors. The Bangsamoro experiences of the Marcos regime and Martial Law are a significant part of Philippine history that has been often times misguided or poorly represented in mainstream historical discourse.

It would be important to note that prior to the declaration of Martial Law, the Bangsamoro community in Mindanao had been suffering most from different forms of human rights abuses, including the Manili Massacre, the Tacubb Massacre, and the infamous Jabidah Massacre (Gowing, 1979). These were pivotal events towards the upsurge of Moro secessionist groups in the Philippines, as numerously documented by McKenna (1998), Abinales (2000), and Majul (1985). Further, these experiences have never been fully documented or acknowledged within the broader Philippine historical context-a context characterized by widespread human rights abuses and deep-rooted discriminations-Quimpo (2016), Buendia (2005), and Gutierrez & Borras (2004). This study allows individuals to understand the worth of local history and appreciate how specific cases of authoritarian governance affect the marginalized.

Note that the Human Rights Violations Victims' Memorial Commission (HRVVMC), established in 2013, is the key government institution addressing human rights abuses during the Martial Law period. However, information obtained from the HRVVMC shows considerable underrepresentation of Muslims as recipients of compensation. In fact, HRVVMC statistics show that only 17 individuals from the Lanao del Sur have received compensation (2021). In 2016, the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) organized consultations with a total of 211 Bangsamoro communities and found that a National Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission with four sub-commissions to cover historical memory, impunity, land dispossession, and reconciliation was necessary (TJRC, 2016). To date, the NJTC has not been fully established, and Lanao provinces continue to be grossly underrepresented, with a meagre 48 persons from both provinces having received compensation (HRVVMC, 2025). This study remedies these essential gaps with a province-by province historical registry of violations of Martial Law in Lanao and a grassroots plan to enact TJRC guidelines.

## **Prevailing Condition in Lanao Under Marcos Martial Rule**

Under Martial Law, the political topography of the Philippines was remarkably transformed (Mijares, 1976). During Martial Law regime, one of the observable situations that were common in Lanao, as experienced by its people, was the varied military operations which happened inside their area. In military operation, military authorities conducted a search and gathering of men in every place they visited. When the military authority arrived, it was necessary that all able-bodied males of that place would assemble at either the playground or at the municipal building. Those suspected of engaging in rebellion and subversion were arrested without warrants, evidence, and witnesses (Robles, 2016) to be brought to either military headquarters.

During the implementation of these operations by the military, all males were arrested and brought to the camp for interrogation as suspects for being against the government (Amnesty International, 1977). The belief that the presence of the military in any area would result in random arrests became a reality for most communities (Orentlicher et al., 1983). Moreover, irrespective of the circumstances, the military compelled all males to cooperate. At the same time, searching for rebels, the military also sought arms and ammunitions. Under the Martial Law setting, President Marcos ordered the arrest and detention of particular individuals on grounds relating to the national security threats (Mijares, 1976). The supposed goal was to cleanse society of lawless elements (Mijares, 1976).

In addition, respondents said that during operations, aside from rounding up men, house-to-house checks were simultaneously conducted. Houses and stores were thoroughly searched as if in some sort of witch-hunt (Mijares,

1976). This showed that during that regime, looting was a usual activity. Other human rights abuses by the military included economic crimes such as looting and extortion.

As time passed on, the Lanao case gradually deteriorated and presented the civilians with more restricted military procedures to further intensify the search for rebels and related concerns. In order for them to achieve their goals, more additional measures have been implemented by the military. They have put several checkpoints and posts to monitor the case and later on implemented a curfew to be able to limit the movement of the people accordingly (Human Rights Watch, 1990). The military has been given a wide range of power to impose the new rule, which then gave way to an increase in the number of the Armed Forces of the Philippines or AFP both in number and influence (Selochan, 1991). As one of the respondents mentioned, "They have set up roadblocks in the place as well as in the municipal hall." Countless numbers of military check points were placed around the place, and this was part of the government's activities to defeat the insurgency (International Committee of Jurists, 1984). The civilians were faced with several military controls over their movements through curfew hours (Human Rights Watch, 1990).

Much like other communities in the country, they suffered victimization based on the military's belief that if there was insurgency in the community, then the community members were necessarily active supporters of the insurgency or insurgents. It must, therefore, be appreciated that people suffered other forms of violations on very flimsy reasons of suspicion (Orentlicher et al., 1983). Moreover, there were checks on vehicles, passengers, and luggage that accompanied the presence of the checkpoints. Abuse through interrogation similarly grew (Orentlicher et al., 1983) as it did for the civilians. The problem grew even more when the military began asking for cedulas (means community tax certificates) and residential identification (Agoncillo, 1990) of the passengers. Thus, People began to fear the military, as one respondent explained.

The civilian attire was also criticized, sometimes warranting military prosecution. This was based on factors such as longer hair among males warranting arrest or intimidation owing to perceived rebelliousness when, in reality, it could not be a crime (Hawes, 1987). Such an aspect showed that military operations were based on stereotypes, where people were suspected based on how they look, whether rebels or collaborators (May, 1992). Such stereotypes were a clear basis for unfair treatment of civilians, creating a greater gap between the military and civilians.

The respondents have reported that the start of the military operations spread fear among the farmers and fishermen who eventually left their craft because of the restricted movements enforced by the military (Human Rights Watch, 1990). The regular presence of the military and these acts contributed to the fear that was deeply rooted in the society (Mijares, 1976). As a result, the peasants and workers were not able to reap the crops they have harvested, resulting in a loss of income (Human Rights Watch, 1990), and to make things worse, farming was no longer an option even if they were able to return due to the restrictions (Human Rights Watch, 1990) and fear.

## Research Findings

The study uncovered pervasive human rights abuses during the Martial Law regime in Lanao, which remain generally unrecorded and unrecognized. These results are presented using the four Transitional Justice pillars, pointing out the lacunae existed in the current strategy.

### The Right to Truth: Widespread Lack of Documentation

One of the most fascinating points that emerged was the lack of recorded human rights abuses within the Lanao communities (Hayner, 2011). This contrasts starkly with other areas where human rights groups and research institutions have conducted a vast amount of research (Amnesty International, 1981), where the plight of the Lanao people languishes invisibly. It was observed that some residents of Lanao were not even aware of the serious human rights violations that had occurred in their communities during the time of Martial Law (Bonner, 1987; Mijares, 1976). This was most evident among the younger generations aging below 35 years old, all claiming to know nothing about the experience of their local communities regarding Martial Law. The middle-aged group also had limited awareness, where most told the researcher that they had only heard something about

this occurring through “rumors” or “stories” that they had never come across anything about this matter in a documented form (González & Varney, 2013).

The study resulted in the finding that there were different experiences of the said regime for different communities in Lanao. There were some communities that had not been greatly affected, where their experience only involved military presence and inspection but did not entail any form of serious human rights violations. There were other communities that suffered from grave human rights violations and injustices. These served as the foundation for the documentation of the said violations of human rights in the province of Lanao.

These included arbitrary killings and summary executions, 35-40%; forced displacements and evacuations, 20-25%; arbitrary arrest and detention, 15-20%; harassment and intimidation, 10-12%; torture and physical abuse, 8-10%. Less frequent but still significant were property violations and economic crimes, 5-7%; gender-based violence, 2-3%; massacres, 2-3%; disappearances, 1-2%; and other violations, 1-2% of the cases documented across various municipalities in both Lanao provinces. Most of the respondents characterized these violations as systematic rather than isolated incidents, inferring that these were coordinated military operations against civilian populations (McCoy, 2009).

Emphasis was placed by some of the respondents on the point that no investigation of any sort had ever been done in their communities (Méndez, 2016). As cited by a survivor in Lanao del Sur, “There was no one to ask us what had transpired. No government representative, no human rights organizations, no researchers. As if we never existed.” The lack of truth-seeking processes in the communities contributed to the “collective amnesia” of the Martial Law period for the respondents (Hayner, 2011).

The lack of documentation has caused profound intergenerational impacts (Duthie, 2012). Children and grandchildren of survivors of Martial Law felt disconnected from their very history. Some were even shocked and unbelieving as they listened to the experiences their families faced. The implication of historical amnesia on both individual healing and collective memory is that communities might be rendered more vulnerable to future violations. In fact, one of the respondents said during the interview, "*Obanga baden panotola so Martial Law na di mapasad sa sawlan*" (If you narrate the story of Martial Law, it will take one month) and added, "*Ayakoden Pangnin ko Kadnan a diden uto kapaparuman ka titho den uto ko marata a kawyaguyag*" (I pray to God that it will not happen again because it was a nightmare). These statements mean that the atrocities of Martial Law have deeply engraved themselves in the hearts and souls of its survivors.

### **Right To Justice: Lack of Accountability**

The study revealed the absence of accountability in human rights violations perpetrated in Lanao under the administration of Martial Law (Sikkink, 2011). In the survey, there were no respondents who reported an occurrence where the military or the government official was made accountable for the violation committed within their communities. As a respondent conveyed, “the law is in their hands, the military law.” This situation seems to have a widening gap in accountability in human rights violations in the peripheral Muslim-majority regions in the country, including Lanao (Abinales, 2010).

There were several reasons for this lack of accountability. Firstly, the geographical remoteness and lack of access to legal institutions made it difficult for victims to file any kind of complaint (Che Man, 1990). A considerable number of people expressed that their area was, in effect, inaccessible to any kind of government or legal services during Martial Law.

Secondly, fear and intimidation ensured that the victims remained silent (Bonner, 1987). Several participants described the atmosphere of fear that existed many years after the official expiration of the state of Martial Law, and the fear of the military continued to state the terms for complaints as well as protests. According to one participant: “Even if we wanted to complain, who would we complain to? The military controlled everything, and we were afraid they might come back.”

Thirdly, socio-economic factors added to the aforementioned challenges. The victims were mostly poor, rural dwellers who could not afford to take their cases to court (Gowing, 1979). The expense of travel, paperwork, and lawyers was out of question for those who struggled to provide for themselves.

The lack of accountability in the past instead has had long-term consequences for the communities in question (Teitel, 2000). A great number of the respondents reported a feeling of abandonment by the state and a suspicion of the government's institutions. Castillo points out, "Justice, as the sum of the actions, will enable people to move on, letting go of the past, since its structure will not be imposed on the present actions and relations." Applying this definition to the context of the given problem, it can thus be said that it creates a way for the process of reconciliation and the reconstruction of the other person in the context of ethics.

### **The Right to Compensation: Limited Access and Awareness**

There are evident gaps in the delivery of reparations to those affected by Martial Law violations in Lanao (De Greiff, 2006). Although the HRVVMC has already processed claims of compensation for victims, the figure is still low compared to the accounts of violation experiences recorded in the region. According to the data gathered from the HRVVMC, only 17 came from Lanao del Sur, while 31 came from Lanao del Norte (Document acquired by the researcher from Human Rights Violations Victims' Memorial Commission, 2025). What is noteworthy is that only one beneficiary from Lanao del Norte was listed as Muslim or Bangsamoro, in contrast to the considerable number of Muslims living there, including those who are said to have been most affected by the violations, based on the findings.

This was brought about by possible factors. Firstly, most respondents were completely unaware of the existence of compensation programs (Van Boven, 2010). This is indicative of serious outreach and information dissemination failures, especially within far-reaching, dispersed communities of poor and often marginalized people. Second, of the compensating programs, some respondents reported applying but never getting any news from the person or office where their papers were submitted to (Méndez, 2011). Thirdly, there were geographical barriers to application centers and follow-up services.

### **Guarantees of Non-Recurrence: Institutional Vulnerabilities**

The study has identified a number of vulnerabilities within the institutions that might allow the repeat commission of human rights abuses (United Nations, 2015). The relevance of these findings cannot be underestimated, particularly within the context of continued security concerns within Mindanao and the periodic proclamation of Martial Law or states of emergency within the Philippines.

Firstly, there is a minimal understanding of human rights of some (not all) forces deployed in the region. Some of the respondents gave recent accounts of their experiences with men in uniform that raise concerns about the training and accountability of these institutions as seen in the recent Marawi Siege. Secondly, the study found that the mechanisms for supervising security operations in the peripheries were somehow weak (McCoy, 2009). Thirdly, the gaps surrounding human rights education and awareness emerged as points of focus for both government and civil society actors (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009). Fourth, the research evidence indicated weak early warning systems for the identification of potential violations before the violations occur (Duthie, 2012). There appear to be weak or limited mechanisms in the communities for reporting any concerns they may have about security operations, as well as for intervention when violations happen. These weaknesses in these institutions indicate that although broad-scale human rights violations, such as the violations inherent in the imposition of Martial Law, are not very probable in the present political climate, the situation that gave rise to these violations in the past remains problematic and not entirely remedied (Teitel, 2000).

### **Policy Recommendation**

Based on the findings of the research and in accordance with the principles of transitional justice (United Nations, 2010), the current section will provide holistic policy guidance on how past human rights abuses in the Lanao region must be addressed and how future abuses must be prevented. The addressees of these policy suggestions are principally the local and national government institutions, but also academic and civil society entities.

### **Building on the TJRC Framework: Lanao-Specific Implementation**

The particular interest of this study in terms of focus is the application of the 2016 TJRC framework and the shift from the national proposal plans to Lanao province-specific processes. Also, while the original TJRC

framework provided a clear description of the core pillars of transitional justice, it did not provide the infrastructure needed to address the unique Meranao context or the specific challenges of intergenerational memory loss that were identified in 2025. By proposing Provincial Transitional Justice Councils, municipal level focal persons, and community-led documentation committees, this research provides the practical how to the TJRC's what, to ensure that the processes for truth-seeking and reparation are culturally tailored and located within established local government structures.

### **Implementation of Right to Truth**

The right to truth requires that there be efforts undertaken systematically in order to document, preserve, and spread information about human rights violations, according to Méndez (2016). This would apply to Lanao both in terms of documenting human rights abuses that took place during Martial Law, as well as implementing a mechanism through which the truth is pursued on an ongoing basis.

### **Community Documentation**

The Local Government Units (LGUs) at the municipal level are encouraged to initiate projects for the documentation of the stories of their communities (González & Varney, 2013). This is because there is a gap in the documentation of the community's past as identified during the study. The provincial government is encouraged to lend its support as a way of creating consistency and quality at the municipal level.

Documentation work should use international best practices in documenting human rights abuses, as well as taking into account the local culture (Hayner, 2011). Well-trained local people should be used to conduct interviews based on standardized methods and protocols that will ensure the dignity and safety of the victims. Particular attention should be paid to documenting abuses committed against particularly vulnerable groups, such as women, children, the elderly, or people with disabilities (United Nations, 2005). The documentation process must be victim-centered, focusing on those who experienced it (De Greiff, 2006). Such an attitude takes cognizance of the fact that truth-telling has been recognized not only as a tool of historical clarification but as a therapeutic tool to validate individual as well as collective suffering. There must be one community documentation committee for each LGU comprising officials of the LGU, civil society, faith-based leaders, and representatives of survivors. The committees must be trained on the various techniques of documentation, trauma-sensitive interviewing, as well as the ethics of engaging survivors (González & Varney, 2013).

### **Academic Partnerships and Research Integration**

LGUs must enter into partnership agreements with educational institutions within the regions to integrate the process of community documentation into their research and extension services (Hernandez, 2000). This way, the expertise of the institutions could be utilized while ensuring the process of community documentation is of academic worth. History and human rights education regarding Martial Law should be integrated into the curricula of universities to use local instances to demonstrate and prove the general patterns and principles of history, as argued by Rosenberg in 1979. Such integration has several purposes: awareness for university students, remembering history, and developing future leaders well-informed about human rights principles.

### **Creation of Digital Archive**

There should be a systematic digital archive repository that will document and create access to these narratives, photographs, documents, and other historical materials relating to Martial Law violations in Lanao. These archives must be built with multiple user groups in mind: researchers, educators, policy thinkers, and community group members seeking information about their own history. The digital archive should incorporate intuitive search functions, resources for multiple languages, and access features for users of a broad range of technical skills and physical abilities. Materials should be organized in both chronological and thematic ways to enable both specific and general kinds of research and inquiry.

Issues of privacy and security are of utmost importance where digital archives hold private personal data (Gonzalez & Varney, 2013). The digital archive must ensure proper security protocols while designing access and usage guidelines for the content. Authors must be able to control the usage and dissemination of their stories.

The archive would also act as a resource for ongoing documentation, whereby the communities will be able to supplement the archive with their documents as more evidence and testimony come to light. This approach to documentation recognizes that the seeking of the truth is an ongoing process and not a one-off event (Méndez, 2016).

## Structured Oral History Program

There must be an organized oral histories program that systematically records the survivors' histories while the survivors can share their histories. Otherwise, the survivors will soon not remember their histories. According to Hayner:

"An oral histories program should be set up to systematically record the histories of survivors while the survivors can provide their histories."

Any oral history program must target the elderly survivors who would otherwise see their accounts lost if they are not immediately documented. The other group to be covered must be the young relatives who might shed some light on the community memory across generations (Duthie, 2012). Interviews must be conducted using the respondents' preferred language. The interview must be further translated and transcribed for wider distribution. Audio and video recordings must be saved together with the transcribed versions because of the aspects of non-verbal communication. Such a program should incorporate training modules for interviewers through topics such as trauma-informed interview methods, cultural competence, and ethics of working with this targeted group (González & Varney, 2013). Supervision should be provided for these interviewers in order to maintain such high standards of work while preventing secondary traumatization.

## Intergenerational Memory Loss and Educational Interventions

This memory gap in the younger generations is a salient discovery, as residents under 35 answered that they do not know experiences of Martial Law in Lanao, while those between 35 and 55 have a fragmented and orally passed-down memory of Martial Law. This structural forgetting (Trouillot 1995) is more pronounced in Lanao in terms of a non-existence of local histories in the national education curriculum, silence in memory because of the experiences of survivors, as well as a lack of historical documentation and a generally indecent location to visit to commemorate historical data.

To fill this gap, there must be the integration of Martial Law lessons within the Araling Panlipunan curriculum. Teacher training annually must provide educators with subject matter mastery, teaching techniques in dealing with sensitive information, and trauma-informed classroom management. Outside the education system, social memory in the Philippines requires community-driven undertakings such as the deployment of mobile museum shows, documentary screenings with subsequent survivors' dialogue, 'ALS' radio programs in Meranao, and online mobilizations on social networking sites targeting youth.

## Advancing the Right to Justice

Justice involves taking responsibility for acts that ultimately call into play criminal responsibility, along with responsibility through institutional reform (Sikkink, 2011). Even though trials regarding Martial Law abuses are confronted with practical and legal challenges, there exist other accountability processes that might offer a response to victims' justice claims.

## Recognition and Acknowledgment

The government must see to it that national, regional, and local institutions acknowledge the violations of human rights committed during the time of Martial Law (United Nations, 2005). In fact, the recognition would be more specific rather than general. Acknowledgement can take many forms, and these include formal statements, apologies, memorial services, and commemorative events (Hayner, 2011). The indication here is that the recognition has to come from people in authority and must confirm the experiences of the victims and confirm the institution's responsibility for failure.

Processes for recognition must therefore be designed in consultation with the community to ensure that their needs for recognition are taken care of (Lambourne, 2014). It is deemed that different communities may have different recognition practices, as per their culture (Lambourne, 2014). Recognition has a number of purposes other than victim recognition (Mendez, 2016). According to Méndez, public recognition can also help create official historical accounts, refute denial and revisionism, and show respect for human rights as an institution that can prevent violations.

### **Regional Truth Commission**

A truth commission for that region can be formed exclusively to examine cases of human rights abuses occurring in Lanao during martial rule (Hayner, 2011; González & Varney, 2013). This would enable it to conduct its investigations with sufficient powers and time free from government influence. The commission can be given the powers of subpoenaing documents, compelling testimony, as well as accessing government records with regards to the operations of Martial Law in the region. The commission is also expected to make findings with regard to institutional responsibility and systemic factors that enabled violations (Teitel, 2000).

The membership of the commission could be composed of people with appropriate expertise in human rights, law, history, and regional issues. Some members could also be drawn or very conversant with the local culture of the affected areas in order to be less culturally insensitive (Hernandez, 2000). The commission's mandate must incorporate recommendation and reform, reparations, and other necessary actions to address past violations of human rights and ensure that such violations do not occur in the future (United Nations, 2010). The final report of the commission must be widely disseminated, serving as the basis for actions taken by government institutions.

### **Lawyer Assistance Programs**

Specialized legal assistance programs should be created to help victims pursue justice through existing legal channels. Criminal prosecutions may be well-nigh impossible after so many years, given either the statute of limitations or evidentiary impediments, but civil remedies and administrative procedures may still be. Services for legal support should include assistance with HRVVMC applications, civil lawsuits against the state or the individual perpetrators, and administrative claims for compensation or benefits. These services should be provided free of cost and include interpretation and translation support, where the clients do not understand English or Filipino.

Programs for legal aid should include lawyers conversant in human rights law, transitional justice, and cultural competency when working with Muslim communities. Training programs should be established to build capacity among local lawyers for handling human rights cases. These support services should also include paralegal assistance, case management, and referrals to other social services. The aim is to provide holistic support that caters to the varied needs of victims outside of pure legal processes (De Greiff, 2006).

### **Providing Assurance for the Right to Compensation**

The need for compensation must be supported by holistic reparative programs that address both individual as well as collective violations of human rights (De Greiff, 2006). Lanao must therefore improve the current process of compensation as well as find alternative ways of dealing with the needs of the affected community.

### **Expanded Compensation Programs**

The compensation program of the HRVVMC must be continued and expanded to address the underrepresentation of victims from Lanao as found (Human Rights Violations Victims' Memorial Commission, 2014). This must include a wider coverage of affected communities through better outreach services. Outreach programs must utilize all available media levels, such as local radio, public gatherings, church groups, and coordination with local groups directly. Information should be provided in the local dialect and should outline eligibility requirements, where to apply, and the kind of benefits one would expect to have (Van Boven 2010).

The application procedures need to be as smooth as possible, so that the applicants do not face much inconvenience, especially older people, illiterate, or any other cases of vulnerable applicants (Méndez, 2011). Mobile application centers are needed to go where the people are, particularly in far-flung areas, as this cuts on costs and also raises the levels of accessibility.

The compensation scheme must broaden its conception of violation and victims in order to ensure that the kind of violations that have been validated in the communities of Lanao are covered (United Nations, 2005). Regulatory and legal modifications may be needed in this process. Amounts payable as compensation must then be considered and adjusted to account for the prevailing economic realities as well as the real value of the injury suffered. Non-financial compensation benefits can then include provision for health, education, and housing, some of which may carry greater value for the victim than money (De Greif, 2006).

### **Community-Based Reparation**

Aside from providing individual forms of compensation, holistic forms of reparations must also include collective responses that would encompass the effects of human rights abuses at a communal level (Roht-Ariaza & Orlovsky, 2009). These responses must be formulated together with members of the affected community. At a community level, some examples of reparations could be infrastructure development, provision of health services, educational programs, economic development programs, and cultural preservation (Lamourne, 2014). The important aspect is that these programs are developed and implemented alongside members of these communities, not imposing anything on them.

The HRVVMC should have coordination with other government agencies and development organizations in the implementation of community-based reparations in an appropriate manner. Community reparations as viewed by De Greiff (2006) should be identifiable as a response to past human rights violations and should not be viewed as a part of development efforts. In this regard, the symbolic dimension helps in the acknowledgment of harm and institutional responsibility while concurrently offering material benefits to affected communities. Programs should integrate monitoring and assessment procedures that would permit effectiveness checks and ensure the programs comply with their intended targets. Citizens have to be included in the monitoring processes to get feedback and recommendations from communities (Roht-Ariaza & Orlovsky, 2009).

### **Simplified Application Processes**

The application processes in any reparations scheme must therefore be made simpler and easier to navigate for victims who have little education, language skills, or experience of the bureaucracy (Van Boven, 2010). Application forms must be simplified and made available in local languages. Visual materials and audio materials must be developed for candidates who cannot read (Méndez, 2011). Other documentation requirements must be set for candidates who do not have documentation due to reasons such as lack of money, displacement because of conflict, or conflict-caused destruction of documents. Assistance centers need to be set up at the local level to provide direct help to applicants (Human Rights Violations Victims' Memorial Commission, 2014). The personnel at this point need to be able to communicate in local languages.

The process of application review must incorporate cultural competency training for personnel to confirm their understanding of the context surrounding Lanao applicants (Abinales, 2010). The criteria must be made similar but flexible according to the forms of evidence available. Processes for appealing decisions should be fully explained and made easily available for those whose original applications were denied (United Nations, 2005). Unbiased appeal systems must be provided to ensure that the selection is fair and within program parameters.

### **Intergenerational Support Programs**

Reparation programs need to acknowledge multigenerational effects arising from violations of human rights, with subsequent measures or policies that must be included to redress the harm intergenerationally. Most violations, especially those committed many decades previously, are being passed through families and communities. In addition, educational scholarships and support programs should be given to the children and grandchildren of victims in order to make up for possible losses in education due to trauma and interruption of family and economic life. This might be in the form of financial and academic support programs.

Services in the area of psychosocial support must include family members who suffer from secondary trauma and/or the intergenerational consequences of violations (Lambourne, 2014). These services must take into consideration the diverse cultures and the ways in which trauma is experienced and expressed. Economic development programs should include elements specifically aimed at overcoming possible economic disadvantages arising out of human rights abuses (Roht-Arriaza & Orlovsky, 2009). These could include microloans, skills training, or assistance with business development directed at families who suffered from past abuses. Cultural revitalization and preservation projects may assist in the revitalization of cultural practices and knowledge that may be interrupted or lost through the occurrence of violations and displacements. Cultural revitalization and preservation projects play both instrumental and symbolic roles within the healing of the community (Gowing, 1979).

### **Establishing Guarantees of Non-Recurrence**

A non-recurrence guarantee, on the other hand, would demand particular reforms that would entail adjustments in the existing structures to cover the underlying reasons for human rights abuses (United Nations, 2015). In the context of the Philippines, it would include efforts to develop its democratic structures, human rights protection regimes, and cultures.

### **Monitoring & Oversight Mechanisms**

Independent monitoring commissions must therefore be created to monitor future proclamations of emergency powers and Martial Law to avoid violations similar to those that took place under the Marcos regime (Teitel, 2000). Although Martial Law is legal from the perspective of the constitution where there is a real emergency, any Martial Law declaration must be accompanied by strong guarantees such as monitoring, regular review, and sunset clauses that mandate periodic renewals (United Nations, 2010). The use of emergency powers should be monitored by international monitoring systems (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009). The role of international observers is important as it gives a different view of whether the use of emergency powers is justified.

Judicial oversight can be enhanced through the following: Ensuring that the jurisdiction of the civil courts is retained despite the emergence of the emergency situation (Sikkink, 2011). Limiting or preventing the use of military tribunals, especially if the military is involved, to military issues only. Early warning systems must be developed to detect the occurrence of human rights violations before they lead to systematic human rights abuses (Duthie, 2012). The systems must comprise community monitoring systems where the community gets a platform to express their grievances whenever human rights are violated.

### **Institutional Reforms**

Any reform of the security sector must take into account the institutional factors that led to the violations of the rule of law imposed by Martial Law. The reform must cover the issues of command-and-control mechanisms, accountability, training, and procedures of oversight (Mayer-Rieckh and de Greiff, 2007). Improvement must come from the reform of the security sector to abide by international best practices regarding democratic security sectors.

The training of military and police troops should incorporate broad human rights education, cultural sensitivity training, as well as focused training modules on the history and experience of Martial Law (McCoy, 2009). The training should be continuous rather than a single event, incorporating periodic human rights standard and legally required updates. The internal mechanisms of security forces need to be improved to ensure that abuses are quickly identified, examined, and dealt with through proper legal action (Human Rights Watch, 2020). External monitoring agencies need to check the efficiency of such internal mechanisms to ensure they work properly.

The hiring and promotion process should incorporate a screening for human rights to preclude hiring people with violations of these rights from filling a position that would give them opportunities to commit further violations (Mayer-Rieckh & de Greiff, 2007). Background verification would need to entail contact with the communities that former employees served. The doctrines of command responsibility must be precisely formulated and enforced to make sure that leaders take responsibility for the violations perpetrated by the troops under their

command (Sikkink, 2011). Well-defined chains of command would thus exclude the situation exhibited in the period of Martial Law where responsibility was diffused.

## **Education and Awareness Programs**

Human rights education must be incorporated throughout the educational curriculum from elementary education to the university level (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009). It must incorporate topics such as the history of Martial Law, the topics of human rights, and transitional justice. Curriculum writers should integrate local views and experiences to ensure the relevance and meaning of human rights education to the students in different parts of the world (Rosenberg, 1979). The experience at Lanao should be documented and integrated into the program to avoid the loss of the local histories.

Teacher training needs to equip the instructor to conduct classes on sensitive subject matter involving Martial Law and human rights abuses (Hayner, 2011). This needs to encompass knowledge and methodologies in teaching the subject matter to the children. It is also clear that community education programs should be able to involve adults who, by circumstance, have no access to formal educational institutions but still must be informed of human rights principles and historical experiences. Community education on human rights can be linked to or incorporated into adult education, livelihood training, and community development programs. Public awareness should be offered through various information media, concerning human rights, what has happened, and what services are available for victims. Campaigns need to be targeted and tailored for different audiences with culturally sensitive messages and formats (United Nations, 2015).

## **Memorialization and Commemoration**

Memorial sites should be put up in the communities that have been affected, providing a permanent place of remembrance and education about violations under Martial Law. These need to be designed in consultation with the communities and reflective of community cultural traditions and preferences. September 21 should be observed every year as the National Martial Law Remembrance Day to remember the collective experience of all Filipinos during this time and to promote historical awareness and human rights education (Méndez, 2016). Historical reenactment and other commemorative activities must be used to promote historical awareness and education on human rights issues, among others.

Healing and commemorative events in the community should also be encouraged. These events must reflect the cultural practices in the particular communities and give avenues to the group to process the trauma (Lambourne, 2014). Funding should be allocated for arts and culture programs that assist in the integration of historical trauma and the creation of collective memory through creative expression (Gowing, 1979). Such programs can range from traditional to contemporary forms of art. Documentation and preservation initiatives must take steps to maintain and preserve historical data such as testimony and artifacts (González & Varney, 2013). Such data may be stored using archives and museums that may be physical and online.

## **Implementation Framework**

Effective implementation of the mentioned recommendations within the policy requires a collaborative process of various levels of the government and society (United Nations, 2010). The following section presents the essential implementation aspects.

## **Institutional Responsibilities and Coordination Mechanisms**

There should be a clear organizational role for the effective implementation. At the national level, the key coordinating agency will be the HRVVMC, which will open a Mindanao Regional Office in either Iligan City or Marawi City. This regional office should coordinate with the Department of Justice, Department of Education, National Historical Commission of the Philippines, and the Commission on Human Rights, which would be supervised by a National Steering Committee convened quarterly.

Both Lanao provinces will establish Provincial Transitional Justice Councils (PTJCs) via provincial ordinances, headed by Provincial Governors and representatives of survivor organizations, religious council representatives,

civil society, and academe. PTJCs will hold meetings regularly and will submit quarterly reports to the National Steering Committee. Municipalities will create Transitional Justice Focal Persons within existing state offices for the following: documentation, assistance in application of the benefits of the HRVVMC, commemorative events, and PTJC liaison.

This will be supported in research and archives by institutions of higher learning like MSU-Marawi and MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology, while faith-based institutions and NGOs will support community outreach and psychosocial interventions. Implementation funding will come from dedicated budget allocations in HRVVMC, DOJ, and DepEd; BARMM annual budget; LGU counterpart funding; and international development assistance.

## Resource Mobilization

Finances play a crucial part in ensuring that there is a successful implementation of transitional justice (De Greiff, 2006). The relevant government should set aside funds categorized under specific budgets that will facilitate the involvement of transitional justice processes such as enhanced operations at HRVVMC, documentation initiatives, and institutional development. The support of the international development community must be solicited to provide technical and financial assistance to transitional justice projects (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009). The Philippines must then seek to partner with the United Nations as well as bilateral donors who have transitional justice expertise.

The documentation, memorialization, and educational components could benefit from partnership agreements with the private sector (Roht-Arriaza & Orlovsky, 2009). The aspect of social responsibility could be a financial source in these programs, in addition to the possible provision of technical knowledge and services by the business organizations. Institutions of higher learning can play a vital part in the program by virtue of research collaborations, volunteer students, and the use of training facilities to document the program. Institutions of higher learning can similarly bring expertise and authenticity to the program, thus improving its efficacy.

## Implementation Timeline

It must implement the program through phases that address both urgent needs as it lays the foundation for long-term change (United Nations, 2010). Phase One (Years 1-2) must cover activities related to immediate victim support, documentation efforts, and the development of policies. This should cover the expansion of compensation programs for HRVVMC, the start of community documentation initiatives, among others (Van Boven, 2010). Phase two of implementation ought to occur between years 3-5, with institutional reforms, education initiatives, and memorialization taking center stage. In respect to the former, this should include security sector reforms, elaboration of curriculum, construction of memorials, and putting in place monitoring machinery.

According to Lambourne (2014), Phase Three (Years 6-10) needs to be a time of consolidation, evaluation, and making transitional justice measures more sustainable. This phase needs to be one of comprehensive program evaluation, knowledge transfer to the local institutions, and integration of transitional justice principles into standard government operations. Implementation should be done in such a way that it remains flexible to accommodate changes in experience, contexts, and even stakeholders' feedback. Review periods should be allowed periodically to check progress and modify the strategies or timelines that need adjustment.

## Monitoring & Evaluation

Full monitoring and evaluation systems need to track implementation as well as outcomes affecting the targeted beneficiaries (United Nations, 2015). The key performance indicators for the initiative would be the number of victims assisted, the type of services offered, the community awareness levels, and the levels of progress achieved on the institutional reforms. Victim satisfaction surveys should monitor the level to which the needs of the target groups can be met by the programs (Méndez, 2011). Such surveys need to be carried out by independent assessors and should incorporate local methodologies.

Community-based monitoring of program implementation needs to be undertaken with the participation of local agencies and actors in monitoring implementation, giving feedback to the implementing agencies in the program

(Hernandez, 2000). Independent evaluation studies must also be carried out periodically to gauge the overall success of the programs as well as make lessons learned (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009). The assessments must contain suggestions for improvement and be shared publicly for increased transparency and learning. Impact assessments can also assess long-term impacts of transitional justice interventions for healing, institutional transformation, and the protection of human rights (Lambourne, 2014). Impact assessments can be conducted using both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

## CONCLUSION

Human rights abuses that happened in Lanao under the Philippine Martial Law regime of President Ferdinand Marcos constitute an important yet ignored part of Philippine history (Bonner, 1987; Mijares, 1976). This study has described the scope and character of these abuses while pointing out that there are crucial gaps in historical inquiry on these issues (Amnesty International, 1981). The results show that while transitional justice actions are imperative, marginalized groups experience particular problems when pursuing these at a justice seeking level (Abinales, 2010).

The recommendations on policy that have been discussed within this article represent a comprehensive approach to dealing with past violations committed whilst constructing a protective mechanism for the prevention of violations in the future (United Nations, 2010). The recommendations are drawn from the universal concept of transitional justice but have been context-specific to the community of Lanao. Implementation of the policy will need the dedication of the relevant government institutions.

The implications of this study go beyond the objective of correcting past injustices committed against the Lanao provinces. It can aid in understanding further the impact of Martial Law upon the Muslims of the Philippines. It will provide a new dimension to studies made about this period. The study can be applied to similar documenting tasks within other marginalized areas.

Furthermore, this research proves that there is a continued need for Transitional Justice measures for societies recovering from a non-democratic regime that has violated human rights. Even if these findings are specific to Lanao, they are by no means universally applicable. It is important for the Philippine government that a country such as this learns from past instances of human rights abuses. The voices of survivors recorded in the course of the research undertaken here also challenge us to look beyond the statistics and the policy recommendations and to remember that behind each and every one of them are people who lived through experiences of unimaginable suffering and trauma. But the courage and motivation to speak out after so many years of being silenced and ignored also serve as an inspiring challenge to act. "Our hope is that the experiences will be recorded and changes will be put into place so that the next generation will not have to go through the same nightmares," as one survivor so eloquently stated.

In addressing the human rights abuses during the period of Martial Law in Lanao, what is called for is more than simple historic recognition. It requires thorough action in the form of documentation, accounting, reparations, and reform. Only in this way might the healing, the justice, and the peace that are so badly needed by affected communities be achieved."

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