

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Questions

- 1. Please provide references to any recent, reliable overviews on the treatment of homosexual men in the Philippines, in particular Manila.**
- 2. Do any reports mention the situation for homosexual men in Lanao del Norte?**
- 3. Are there any reports or references to the treatment of homosexual Muslim men in the Philippines (Lanao del Norte or Manila, in particular)?**
- 4. Do any reports refer to Maranao attitudes to homosexuals?**
- 5. The Dimaporo family have a profile as Muslims and community leaders, particularly in Mindanao. Do reports suggest that the family's profile places expectations on all family members?**
- 6. Are there public references to the Dimaporo's having a political, property or other profile in Manila?**
- 7. Is the Dimaporo family known to harm political opponents in areas outside Mindanao?**
- 8. Do the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) recruit actively in and around Iligan City and/or Manila? Is there any information regarding their attitudes to homosexuals?**
- 9. Do the MILF target political opponents outside Mindanao?**

RESPONSE

Note: *RRT Research Response PHL33455* was researched concurrently with this response, and also concerns the activities of the MILF and the Dimaporo family (RRT Research & Information 2008, *RRT Research Response PHL33455*, 30 June – Attachment 9).

1. Please provide references to any recent, reliable overviews on the treatment of homosexual men in the Philippines, in particular Manila.

Two sources were located that provided recent, reliable overviews on the treatment of gay men in Manila, and the Philippines. These overviews follow, along with some recent media reports and brief reports providing information on the treatment of gay men in the Philippines, with particular reference to Manila.

Overviews

The US Department of State's 2008 *Country Report on Human Rights Practices* for the Philippines claims that "[t]here was no widespread discrimination based on sexual orientation; however, there were anecdotal reports of abuse and discrimination against homosexuals. In April an organisation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons applied for accreditation in the election of party-list representatives. The Commission on Elections denied their application" (US Department of State 2008, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Philippines*, 11 March – Attachment 1).

An entry in the glbtq ["an encyclopaedia of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer culture"] online encyclopaedia, last updated in 2006, provides the following assessment of the Philippines:

The Philippine Islands are sometimes extolled in the West as a homoerotic paradise, to the point of having been promoted as a sex-positive destination for gay male tourists. However, the perspectives from Filipino glbtq people themselves are much more complex, as traditional tolerance--in certain spheres--has encountered and reacted to gay liberationist, feminist, and conservative thinking from abroad.

...Despite the widespread observance of Catholicism, research undertaken among Cebuano speakers on the island of Negros in the 1950s and 1960s by anthropologist Donn Hart documented the longstanding presence there of gender-variant individuals. In most cases they were the subjects of gossip or amusement, but rarely of overt hostility.

...Modern Conditions

Homosexual activity is legal in the Philippines as long as it is not carried out in public places. Sexual contact by adults with minors under 18 is illegal. There have been attempts to pass legislation banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, but none has yet passed. Gay men and lesbians are not allowed in the military services.

The fact that masculine-appearing men are not stigmatized by same-sex relations, and that bakla [effeminate men or "flamboyant" homosexual] are willing to pay for sex with young males, has given rise to the "call boy" phenomenon. Owing as much to economic conditions as to sexual mores, working as a call boy is generally viewed as an acceptable supplement to family income. The availability of call boys in cruising areas frequented by gay male tourists has contributed to the perception of the Philippines as a gay-tolerant society.

The 1970s saw the popularization of a gay male argot called "swardspeak." Highly sexualized and depending on enunciation and delivery for effect, it became associated with the entertainment industry and bohemian lifestyles. For Filipino gays the Tagalog phrase "pagladlad ng kapa" refers to the coming out process. Literally it means "unfurling the cape."

Progay-Philippines, founded in 1993, is the principal gay rights organization and has a predominantly male membership. It carried out the first gay march in the country in June of 1994. A lesbian rights organization, Can't Live in the Closet (CLIC), also began in 1993 and carries on a number of advocacy, service, and cultural activities.

...In an often-cited travel guide for gay men, Joseph Itiel--while acknowledging local ambivalence in sexual attitudes--nevertheless celebrates encounters with Filipino call boys and companions as indications of a characteristically "easy-going" sexual climate.

However, Filipino poet and essayist J. Neil Garcia warns against assuming parallels between the indigenous gender-crossed identity of the bakla/báyot and the Western concept of gayness. Observing that "gays get laughed at here a lot, but very rarely are they beaten up," he sees this phenomenon as an indication that gay men and lesbians are not taken seriously and thus not perceived as a threat to the social order.

For Garcia, a western-style gay movement has been difficult to establish in the Philippines because of an inherent "class conflict" between the effeminate bakla (who often work in pink-collar occupations) and their masculine partners. Because the latter escape any stigma associated with homosexuality, they do not have as great an investment in issues of gay rights. He cites the example of the first gay rally in the Manila area in June of 1994. While it received tolerant media attention, only 50 attended; weekend parties drew far greater numbers.

...Eduardo Nierras thinks that neither constructionism nor essentialism alone provides an adequate vocabulary for Philippine gays. For gay male identity politics to have relevance in the Philippines, he notes, it must acknowledge (with respect to the West) their "different desires." Anthropologist Michael Tan also refutes the idea that the Philippines are an open society regarding homosexuality. He observes considerable ambivalence, with conservative right-wing values imported along with liberationist views ('The Philippines' 2006, glbtq website, December 31 <http://www.glbtq.com/social-sciences/philippines,2.html> – Accessed 2 July 2008 – Attachment 11).

A September 2005 report compiled by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada states that:

Gay rights activists state that in Southeast Asia, the Philippines "has blazed the trail" in creating greater acceptance of and freedom for sexual minorities since the mid 1990s (IPS 18 Jan. 2002). According to the co-editor of an anthology of gay literature, the Philippines "has among the most progressive attitudes toward and among homosexuals" (Philippine Daily Inquirer 21 June 2003). The executive director of the Philippine section of Amnesty International reported that during the 1980s and the 1990s, gays have begun to find public life "more conducive" (IPS 18 Jan. 2002). The first Gay Pride march in Asia took place in the Philippines in 1994 (ibid.), and today Gay Pride month is used as a forum for communicating key issues of concern to the gay community, including empowerment and social acceptance (Philippine Daily Inquirer 21 June 2003). Since approximately the beginning of the new millennium, gay rights activists in the Philippines have lobbied for the legalization of same-sex unions and the rights of "homosexual-led families" (ibid.). Agence France-Presse reported that "[w]hile a huge section of [Philippine] society remains conservative, open homosexual behavior is increasingly tolerated by the younger western-oriented generation" (AFP 21 Apr. 2005).

However, a 2004 Reuters report points out that "[w]hile homosexuality is accepted as an element in entertainment and comedy on popular television shows, true tolerance is hard to come by" in the Philippines (11 Oct. 2004), where over 80 per cent of the population is

Catholic (BBC 20 Apr. 2005; GLBTQ n.d.; see also Reuters 11 Oct. 2004), and a “paternalistic, often macho culture” presides (ibid.). According to a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) article, most Filipinos largely agreed with the late Pope John Paul II’s stand against homosexual marriage (20 Apr. 2005), and the Roman Catholic Church is, according to the Reuters report, “the single greatest barrier to acceptance of homosexuality” (11 Oct. 2004). According to gay rights groups, about 10 per cent of the 84 million who live in the Philippines are homosexual and are “frowned upon by the influential Roman Catholic Church” (DPA 7 Feb. 2005; see also Philippine Daily Inquirer 21 June 2003). Stereotypes of the “flamboyant” homosexual (bakla in Tagalog) who works as an actor, a hairdresser or a fashion designer predominate (Reuters 11 Oct. 2004).

There is greater tolerance of homosexuality in the large cities than in the rural areas, where the economic base is mostly agricultural and family ties are strong (Reuters 11 Oct. 2004). The president of the Progressive Organization of Gays in the Philippines (Progay) remarked in a Reuters article that “[w]hen the family unit is strong in rural areas, it is very hard for an average Filipino gay to assert an identity” (ibid.).

Homosexual activity is not considered to be criminal under Philippine law, but engaging in homosexual acts in public places can lead to charges of “grave scandal” under the Revised Penal Code (ILGA 31 July 2000; see also GLBTQ n.d.).

While in Southeast Asia generally the instance of hate crimes or public harassment committed against homosexuals is low compared to regions such as Latin America (IPS 18 Jan. 2002), social intolerance of and discrimination against homosexuals exist in the Philippines (Philippine Daily Inquirer 21 June 2003; Reuters 11 Oct. 2004). Abuse within the family is often directed at children who reveal their homosexuality (IPS 18 Jan. 2002; Philippine Daily Inquirer 21 June 2003). Girls, in particular, are pressured into abandoning their homosexuality, and some parents have resorted to having their daughters raped (IPS 18 Jan. 2002). Other forms of intolerance towards homosexuality in the Philippines include discrimination in the workplace (ibid.; Manila Times 4 Mar. 2004).

The Lesbian and Gay Legislative Advocacy Network Philippines (Lagablab) has argued that some companies will not hire “effeminate” male applicants or will ask pointed questions about marital status during a job interview to determine applicants’ sexual preference (Manila Times 4 Mar. 2004). Lagablab also claims that many co-educational private schools prohibit homosexual behaviour and refuse admittance to students who are perceived to be gay (ibid.). However, spokespersons at the Bureau of Working Conditions at the Department of Labour and Employment and at the Personnel Management Association of the Philippines denied that discrimination against gay employees always took place and stated that most employers look at job qualifications and not sexual preference when hiring (ibid.). Nevertheless, at a news conference the newly appointed national police chief contradicted earlier statements welcoming homosexuals into the police force when he discouraged homosexuals from becoming police officers (Manila Times 23 Aug. 2004). In reacting to the police chief’s statements, a spokesperson for Progay noted that homosexuals are hesitant to join the police force for fear of discrimination and can enter the force only by not revealing their sexual orientation (ibid.) (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2005, *PHL100477.E – Philippines: treatment of homosexuals and state protection available (2000-2005)*, 15 September – Attachment 12).

Recent Church statements

Two recent articles in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* report the position of the Catholic Church on homosexuals in the Philippines:

- A June 2008 report quotes Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales, of Manila, stating that “[p]arishes that allow cross-dressing homosexuals to play female saints in religious festivals are insulting the Virgin Mary”. The Archbishop claims that “[i]nstead of pious young women, gay men are paraded, which makes [the procession] ridiculous,” and the report goes on to state that “Rosales said he had taken the leaders of one parish to task for having gay cross-dressers participate in these processions”. According to the report, the Archbishop “told them that’s not right because that’s a procession. You are destroying the purity of the devotion” (Andrade, J. 2008, ‘Cardinal hits gay ‘sagalas’ as insult to Virgin Mary’, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 5 June <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/inquirerheadlines/nation/view/20080506-134826/Cardinal-hits-gay-sagalas-as-insult-to-Virgin-Mary> – Accessed 1 July 2008 – Attachment 13).
- A May 2008 article reports the comments of Malolos Bishop Jose Oliveros, chair of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) Office on Bio-ethics. According to the report, Oliveros claims that “the Church had learned to accept homosexuality as part of reality”, but that “having feelings or an attraction for the same sex was not a sin but engaging in homosexual sex would be”. The *Inquirer* quotes the Bishop stating that “We try to be compassionate and understand homosexuals and guide them towards the right path where they should not act out on their desires” (Andrade, J. 2008, ‘Being gay not a sin, acting on gay desires is – bishop’, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 11 May <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/nation/view/20080511-135929/Being-gay-not-a-sin-acting-on-gay-desires-is--bishop> – Accessed 1 July 2008 – Attachment 14).

Informal sources

Two websites provide assessments of the treatment of gay men, and gay life, in Manila.

An article on the GlobalGayz.com website, last updated in October 2006, states:

Manila, Philippines is one of the few major Asian cities with an overt gay scene that openly contradicts the conservative culture of the country. Despite a homophobic environment that is critical and hostile to queer citizens a lively LGBT community thrives, and it vigorously leans into the face of the political, religious and legal establishment. This energetic and defiant movement manifests itself with political lobbying, social networking, street parades, sexually spicy venues--and a world LGBT conference.

...This wordy listing of Pinoy Pride’s component groups is intended to give offer awareness of the many activist organizations currently operating in the Philippines on behalf of LGBT rights and recognition. This is no meagre third world LGBT effort. The other reason for the listing is to reveal the present and ever-changing progress of the Philippine LGBT community. Pinoy Pride is a new central unity that has been coalescing for several years to become a nationally identifiable organization.

...Throughout Manila are magnificent ancient and new churches, some dating back to the 16th century. Many of the churches are used to meet pragmatic needs—they run schools, which are often next door to the churches. From an early age it’s difficult to escape being a Catholic in this country, as many LGBT folks attest. And equally hard is throwing off the mantle of guilt that comes with the catechism.

It's hard to feel proud of being gay against such strong religious disapproval. So it's little wonder that many gay people follow tradition down the church aisle to sham hetero marriages. Later, after the celebrations and feasts are over, many of these people find their way to a new or previous discreet 'affair-of-the-heart' with a same-sex partner. And as well, a closer look at the private life of 'straight' spouses and singles, according to Bengi and others, will often reveal flirtations and indulgence in homosex for pleasure, whim or oblique affection.

...Gay Manila was a pleasant and startling surprise to me. To the (mostly helpless) horror of the dominant Catholic establishment, Manila sports numerous trendy gay bars, flashy discos and explicit clubs that strut their stuff with mountainous sound systems, light storms, go-go dancers and sex shows.

...the Malate district of Manila which has become the 'in' place for countless gay and straight nightlife bars and clubs and restaurants, especially on the weekends. Traffic comes to a virtual standstill in the area. "It is at once exciting and exhilarating, flamboyant and vivacious, diverse and accepting," claims one magazine (Ammon, R. 2006, 'Gay Philippines: Manila and the ILGA Conference 2003', GlobalGayz.com website http://www.globalgayz.com/g-philippines_manila.html – Accessed 2 July 2008 – Attachment 15).

An article carried on The Pinoy.net website characterises Manila as not "your typical Asian city", with "a strong Western influence", and "the most accepting (and perhaps only) metropolis with a thriving and widely accepted gay population":

Needless to say, Manila isn't your typical Asian city. The culture is rooted deep in Spanish colonialism (which remains prominent in the architecture, language and cuisine), and a strong Western influence is unavoidable on the bustling streets and crowded stores, most of which have signs in English. That's not to mention the swelling Korean community that has altered the face of the city.

One would think these non-native components would strip away a healthy chunk of Manila's identity as one of Asia's oldest and largest cities. But it's quite the opposite. Diversity is a Manila trademark, and something it fosters with pride. It's the only predominantly Catholic city in Asia, an unusual notion considering it's also the most accepting (and perhaps only) metropolis with a thriving and widely accepted gay population (Im, J. 'Can't get your fill of Manila' (undated), The Pinoy website <http://thepinoy.net/?p=1307> – Accessed 1 July 2008 – Attachment 16).

2. Do any reports mention the situation for homosexual men in Lanao del Norte?

No sources were located that mentioned the situation for gay men in Lanao del Norte.

A 1995 article by British activist Peter Tatchell claimed that "[o]n the Philippines island of Mindanao, Muslim militia have been terrorising gay men – beating them up, ordering them to leave the region, and threatening them with castration" (Tatchell, P. 1995, 'The New Dark Ages', [petertatchell.net website http://www.petertatchell.net/religion/dark%20ages.htm](http://www.petertatchell.net/religion/dark%20ages.htm) – Accessed 2 July 2008 – Attachment 17).

3. Are there any reports or references to the treatment of homosexual Muslim men in the Philippines (Lanao del Norte or Manila, in particular)?

No reports were found regarding the treatment of gay Muslims in the Philippines.

4. Do any reports refer to Maranao attitudes to homosexuals?

No reports could be located indicating Maranao attitudes to homosexuals.

A June 2008 report on Maranao culture located on the SunStar.com news website states that the “Maranaos are said to be the most conservative and religious...among the 13 ethno-linguistic Muslim cultural communities”, and that “the Maranaos still follow many folk rituals when it comes to persons and family relations” (Gutoc, S. 2008, ‘Lanao del Sur turns 48’, SunStar.com website, 30 June

<http://www.sunstar.com.ph/static/cag/2008/06/30/life/lanao.del.sur.turns.48.html> – Accessed 2 July 2008 – Attachment 18).

5. Are there reports indicating that the Dimaporo family have a profile as Muslims and community leaders, particularly in Mindanao? Do reports suggest that the family’s profile places expectations on all family members?

Sources suggest that the Dimaporo family is a powerful political clan in Mindanao, particularly in the province of Lanao del Norte and neighbouring provinces in the districts of Central and Western Mindanao. No sources were found specifically stating that the Dimaporo family is renowned as Muslims and community leaders, or that the family’s profile places expectations on all family members. Nonetheless, the family has occupied high political office in Mindanao and federally for decades. Information sourced from i-site, described as ‘the Information Site on Philippine Politics and Government’, states that many members of the Dimaporo family have held local or national political office. Abdullah Dimaporo has been the Congressional Representative for the 2nd District in Lanao del Norte since 1998, and also represented the District between 1987 and 1992. Between 1992 and 1998, he was the Governor of Lanao del Norte, a position subsequently held from 1998 to 2007 by his wife, Imelda Quibranza Dimaporo. Imelda Dimaporo left the position to run for Congress in 2007, but was defeated at election. Their son, Mohammad Khalid Dimaporo, was elected Mayor of Lanao del Norte in 2007. Abdullah’s father, Mohammad Ali Dimaporo, represented Lanao del Norte as Congressional Representative for twenty years between 1949 and 1995, and his uncle, Macacuna Dimapora, represented Lanao del Sur from 1969-1972 and 1984-1986. Abdullah’s grandfather, Mohammad Dimakuta, served as governor of Lanao del Norte (for Abdullah Dimaporo, see: ‘Personal Information: Dimaporo, Abdullah Dimakatu’ 2004, i-site – the Information Site on Philippine Politics and Government, July <http://www.i-site.ph/Databases/Congress/13thHouse/personal/dimaporo-personal.html> – Accessed 1 July 2008 – Attachment 4; for Imelda Dimaporo, see: ‘Personal Information: Dimaporo, Imelda Quibranza’ 2004, i-site – the Information Site on Philippine Politics and Government, July <http://www.i-site.ph/Databases/LGUs/Governors/2001-2004/Mindanao/personal/dimaporo-personal.html> – Accessed 27 June 2008 – Attachment 5; for relatives, see: ‘Relatives in Government: Dimaporo, Abdullah’ 2004, i-site – the Information Site on Philippine Politics and Government, July <http://www.i-site.ph/Databases/Congress/13thHouse/relatives/dimaporo-relatives.html> – Accessed 27 June 2008 – Attachment 6).

A May 2008 report sourced from the *GMA News.tv* website states that the Dimaporo family had taken legal action to prevent the screening of an investigative documentary, part of a series on powerful political clans in the Philippines:

The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) on Sunday said the issuance of a temporary restraining order against the showing of an episode of GMA 7's *Imbestigador* is a "clear case of prior restraint."

...The TRO was issued by a Lanao del Norte court on a motion filed by the Dimaporo clan, one of the families featured in the show that tackles political dynasties. "We do not dispute the Dimaporo family's right to seek redress if they feel the episode is unfair to them. But we assert that any redress they seek should be after the fact and should not involve the airing of an episode that very clearly touches on an issue of public interest," the NUJP statement said.

...He added: "We know too well that this is a ploy often resorted to by public officials who wish to evade controversy. It should not be used as an excuse to cry foul over unfair reportage or to prevent the airing or publication of a potentially damaging report."

...A Lanao del Norte regional trial court issued a temporary restraining order on Saturday, a non-working day, directing GMA-7's *Imbestigador* program to cancel the broadcast of its special report on political dynasties. *Imbestigador*'s episode on political dynasties, which was supposed to be aired late Saturday night, tackles poverty in provinces run by powerful political clans. The report in part focuses on the province of Lanao del Norte, which has been governed for decades by the Dimaporo family.

On Saturday afternoon, GMA Network received the TRO from the Regional Trial Court of Kapatagan, Lanao del Norte. "Very clearly said program if aired on May 12, 2007 will only cause irreparable damage to the good name of herein petitioner considering that said segment of the program did not even try to get the side of the petitioner," the TRO said.

...Imelda "Angging" Dimaporo is the outgoing governor, who is now a candidate for congresswoman in the first district of Lanao del Norte. Her son Khalid is running for governor, in an effort to continue the family's unbroken rule in the capitol. Abdullah Dimaporo, Imelda's husband, is finishing his third term as a congressman of Lanao del Norte's second district. Abdullah is the son of pre-EDSA era political kingpin Muhammad Ali Dimaporo ("TRO vs *Imbestigador* a clear case of prior restraint – NUJP" 2007, *GMA News.tv* website, 13 May <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/42159/TRO-vs-Imbestigador-a-clear-case-of-prior-restraint---NUJP> – Accessed 27 June 2008 – Attachment 2).

A June 2007 opinion piece on the *Minda News* website claims that political power in Mindanao is held by a few large and powerful families, the Dimaporos among them:

Since 1946 when the country was granted nominal independence by the United States, elections in the Philippines have always been an inter-elite arena where contending power blocs periodically seek to resolve tensions and conflicts. The prohibitive cost of running for public office is a major disincentive for those who possess the talent and commitment but not the resources.

...More than a half century of engaging in elections has failed to realize the goal of making it a cornerstone of what most Filipinos only ambiguously refer to as democracy. The term "popular will" is an embarrassing misnomer of a 'choice' actually predetermined by factors beyond the electorate's control and, possibly, comprehension. In other words, the act of choosing rulers is not unlike pointing to an item inside a showcase; voters hardly have the chance to scrutinise the goods up close. Worse, the range of options is limited to elements of the same social classes, or members of the same families belonging to such classes, that alternate themselves in power.

The names of those who won or retained their positions already speak volumes about unchanged economic realities which in turn explain the durability of so-called political dynasties. A rundown of these names is a stark reminder that they or their forebears have dominated Philippine politics for so long a time. In Mindanao, we have, for example, the Plazas of Agusan del Sur, the Amantes of Agusan del Norte, **the Dimaporos of Lanao**, the Lobregats of Zamboanga City, the Zubiris of Bukidnon, the Emanos of Misamis Oriental, and the emerging Duterte dynasty of Davao City with the election as vice mayor of Sara Duterte, daughter of City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte.

Not a few of these personalities – or devils, if you may – cavorted with the Martial Law regime enabling them to expand their economic and political base, the same means they used in buying their way back to positions of power and influence in the post-Marcos setup. This only proves that politics always abides by the Golden Rule: He who has gold rules (Mordeno, H. 2007, 'Someone Else's Windows: Desperate Choices', *Minda News* website, 7 June http://www.mindanews.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2585&Itemid=69 – Accessed 27 June 2008 – Attachment 3).

During the May 2007 elections a rolling back of the Dimaporo clan's political dominance was reported, with Imelda Dimaporo's loss in the first district congressional election, although it should be noted that Khalid Dimaporo went on to win the gubernatorial race in Lanao del Norte. It may also be of interest to note that Abdullah Dimaporo's adversary in the second district election was his stepbrother Marcos:

One after another, famous political families are losing their grip and influence in this year's elections, as indicated by the increasing popular support for their adversaries.

This is the case of the Dimaporo clan, which had previously dominated every local election in the province.

In the effort to continue the family's unbroken rule in the province, the Dimaporos had sought election in every position available but were apparently shut out.

In the gubernatorial race, Khalid Dimaporo is losing in the initial count to Maigo town mayor Rafael Lizarda.

On the other hand, a virtual unknown is leading over Khalid's mother, outgoing Lanao del Norte Gov. Imelda Dimaporo in the congressional race in the first district of the province.

Iligan City councilor Vicente Belmonte Jr. is leading the congressional race with 58,916 votes, followed by Angelique Badelles, daughter of incumbent Rep. Alipio Badelles, with 45,080 and Gov. Dimaporo with only 42,957 votes.

On the other hand, Rep. Abdullah Dimaporo, Imelda's husband, may avert a total political shutout as he seems to be well on his way to his last term as congressman of the province's second district, increasing his lead over another Dimaporo, his stepbrother Marcos (De La Cruz, L. 2007, 'Bad day for Nur, Dimaporos, priests', *ABS-CBN News*, source: *Philippine Star*, 18 May <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/storypage.aspx?StoryId=77592> – Accessed 30 June 2008 – Attachment 10).

6. Are there public references to the Dimaporo's having a political, property or other profile in Manila?

The i-site political information website notes that Abdullah Dimaporo lists among his property holdings three properties in the Manila National Capital Region. The Dimaporo family own two properties in Quezon City, purchased in 1967 and 1982, and one in Pasay City, purchased in 1985. The combined assessed value of these properties is given as 49,000,000 pesos (or A\$ 1,145,375). According to i-site, Dimaporo also owns “various retail stores” in Quezon City, but no monetary value is given (for property holdings, see: ‘Assets and Liabilities – Dimaporo, Abdullah’ 2004, i-site – the Information Site on Philippine Politics and Government, July <http://www.i-site.ph/Databases/Congress/13thHouse/SALS/dimaporo-SAL.html> – Accessed 27 June 2008 – Attachment 7; for commercial holdings, see: ‘Business Interests: Dimaporo, Abdullah’ 2004, i-site – the Information Site on Philippine Politics and Government, July <http://www.i-site.ph/Databases/Congress/13thHouse/business/dimaporo-business.html> – Accessed 27 June 2008 – Attachment 8).

Question 3 of *RRT Research Response PHL33455*, of 30 June 2008 found little information suggesting that the Dimaporos have influence in Manila, other than a long-standing association with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (RRT Research & Information 2008, *RRT Research Response PHL33455*, 30 June – Attachment 9).

7. Is the Dimaporo family known to harm political opponents in areas outside Mindanao?

Question 3 of *RRT Research Response PHL33455*, of 30 June 2008, provides information on the involvement of the Dimaporo family in violence against political opponents, and found that such involvement appears to be limited to Mindanao. According to the response, reports of the involvement of the Dimaporo clan in acts of suspected political violence could only be located for Lanao del Norte and other southern areas, such as the neighbouring province of Lanao del Sur and the province of Zamboanga del Sur in the Zamboanga Peninsula region (RRT Research & Information 2008, *RRT Research Response PHL33455*, 30 June – Attachment 9).

8. Do the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) recruit actively in and around Iligan City and/or Manila? Is there any information regarding their attitudes to homosexuals?

Very little information could be located regarding MILF recruitment in Iligan City, and no sources indicated that they recruit actively in Manila, or anywhere outside Mindanao. Similarly, very little information was found indicating the attitude of the MILF to homosexuals, except references to the “relatively progressive” nature of the Philippine Muslim community (please see Questions 2 & 4 above for further information). An August 2007 analysis from *Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism* provides an assessment of MILF’s recruiting methods and areas of deployment. The report also notes that the MILF “avoids the extremist pronouncements of Islamic fundamentalists”, and suggests that the “Philippine Muslim community while poor, is relatively progressive with many of its leaders schooled in liberal Philippine universities”:

On 12 December 2005, Philippine security forces warned the MILF to stop recruiting and training rebel fighters. Citing intelligence reports, Lieutenant-General Edilberto Adan said the MILF had recruited more than 4,000 new fighters and conducted as many as 80 training exercises on Mindanao Island since January 2005.

...The MILF's forces are largely deployed in Central Mindanao with smaller formations found in other parts of the region. The MILF admits to being weak in Tawi Tawi and Sulu. They have a small presence in Basilan, Jolo, Zamboanga del Norte, and in an enclave in eastern Mindanao. The bulk of the MILF's forces are found in the four provinces: Lanao del Norte; Lanao del Sur; Maguindanao; and North Cotabato. Most MILF are ethnic Maguindanao and Maranao.

...It is likely that the MILF has used its foreign connections to support its own goals. The MILF leadership has shown itself to be quite capable and focused on its particular territorial imperatives. It understands the importance of presenting a public face that is not anti-Christian nor anti-progress, thus it avoids the extremist pronouncements of Islamic fundamentalists.

Its social base is also broader than those of militant Islamists in the Arab world and South and Central Asia. The Philippine Muslim community while poor, is relatively progressive with many of its leaders schooled in liberal Philippine universities.

While some analysts describe the MILF as a fundamentalist group, a definition that identifies it ideologically with Al-Qaeda and similar organisations, it is probably more accurate to describe it as 'reformist' and thus ideologically distinct from the international organisations with which it maintains some links ('Moro Islamic Liberation Front' 2007, *Jane's World Insurgency And Terrorism*, 14 August – Attachment 19).

A February 2007 report sourced from the SunStar.com news website refers to an "alleged report of recruitment by the MILF of young men" in Iligan City (Dela Cruz, L. 2007, 'Armed MILF men hold peace event', Sun.Star.com website, 21 February <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/static/cag/2007/02/21/news/armed.milf.men.hold.peace.event.htm> – Accessed 30 June 2008 – Attachment 20).

9. Do the MILF target political opponents outside Mindanao?

Question 2 of *RRT Research Response PHL33455*, of 30 June 2008, provides information on the recent activities of the MILF, and suggests that they have in the past attacked targets outside Mindanao. The report notes MILF activity in Rizal province, 20 km east of Manila, in 2007; warnings that the MILF would extend its war with a bombing campaign in Manila in 2003; and a series of bombings in Metro Manila on 30 December which killed at least 22 people and wounded around 100 others. The response also refers to 2008 police claims that the MILF was planning to assassinate the President in the city of Baguio in northern Luzon, and reports a 2007 bombing in Manila by the Abu Sayyaf group, with which the MILF has been linked in the past (RRT Research & Information 2008, *RRT Research Response PHL33455*, 30 June – Attachment 9).

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