



VOICES FROM THE SOUTH

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Towards a World Without Empire: The Imperative of Interfaith Solidarity

With its roots connected to the “International Ecumenical Conference on Terrorism in a Globalised World” that was held in September 2002, the *People’s Forum on Peace for Life* is an interfaith movement for peace and justice, which resists imperialism, economic globalization and militarism—in all their forms and in all places of the global North and South. In October 2014, the network gathered in Davao City, the Philippines for an international interfaith encounter and peace festival, which also marked the network’s 10th anniversary.

This month’s *Voices from the South* highlights the opening address of Carmencita Karagdag, Coordinator of Peace for Life, at the peace festival. Here Carmencita presents the history of the movement, paints a picture of the challenges ahead, and challenges people of faith to resist a world where religious divides are exploited and exacerbated in order to advance the agenda of global economic and military domination.

By Carmencita Karagdag
Coordinator, Peace for Life



Friends, I am pleased to welcome you to the southern Philippine island of Mindanao, which is home to our Moro sisters and brothers and also to the Lumads and other indigenous peoples who have been system-

atically despoiled of their lands and resources. The people of Mindanao have also endured brutal military campaigns through centuries of colonial depredation and now, neocolonial plunder under the guise of globalization.

This international interfaith encounter began with a solidarity visit to a local Muslim community, where we engaged in animated and insightful discourses on the urgency of building feminist and

youth alliances for interfaith engagement—in resistance to wars and fundamentalisms—as we people of different faiths, spiritualities and convictions work in solidarity with one another to realize a new world without empire.

Culminating our interfaith encounter is this morning’s peace festival, which is being held in commemoration and celebration of Peace for Life’s 10 years of prophetic witness and engagement. But more importantly, this peace festival is another occasion to affirm, lift up and celebrate people’s victories no matter how small, in Mindanao and elsewhere in the world, as moments that foster an ethic and spirituality for overcoming empire and all forces of evil.

The People’s Forum on Peace for Life traces its beginnings to the groundbreaking International Ecumenical Conference on Terrorism in a Globalized World held in September 2002 in response to the naming of the

The Karibu Foundation is an independent foundation that supports voices from the Global South that provide alternatives to the dominant paradigms of power, distribution, and development.

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The *People’s Forum on Peace for Life* is a faith-based movement and forum for peace and justice, engaged in building interfaith solidarity and mobilising the power of spirituality against the life-threatening forces of global hegemony.

Their mission is to challenge empire and strive for a new world nurtured by peoples upholding human dignity and human rights.

Visit www.peaceforlife.org for more information.



Philippines by President Bush as the second front of the war on terror. It was a conference of “ecumenicals” that expressly for the first time came to grips with the reality of a US global empire. It was clear to them from the outset that institutional limitations would not permit established ecumenical bodies to meet the new challenge of the times.

Even the strongest Christian response would be inept against the imperial hegemon which feeds on religious animosities and “fear of the other” to propel its project of world dominion. Early on we knew that the challenge of empire resistance demanded no less than action and solidarity with social movements and other faith communities.

Ten years ago here in Davao, therefore, the first People’s Forum on Peace for Life was held, formally inaugurating a new movement that will mobilize resistance to an expanding global empire based

on the imperatives of faith, religious belief and convictions.

Under the theme, “Sowing Seeds of Peace in the Era of Empire: Christians in solidarity with Muslims”, the Forum sought to address the challenge of peace in the context of today’s world where religious divides are exploited and exacerbated, where religion is misused and appropriated to advance the immoral agenda of global economic and military domination.

We have since involved ourselves in people’s issues and struggles through people’s forums, peace festivals, interfaith encounters, solidarity missions, peace pilgrimages, and immersion programs across the globe..

In these spaces for discourses and solidarity building, we have delivered the powerful message that people of faith are challenged as never before to reclaim religious space for transformative ac-

tion which, if left uncontested and abandoned solely to religious extremists, can only give free rein to the very forces that would in the end destroy life and demolish hard-won gains of human civilization.

We have thus planted the seeds of new radical thinking, faith-based resistance and genuine solidarity.

Let me conclude by drawing your attention to the theme of our interfaith encounter and peace festival, “Towards a New World without Empire: the Imperative of Muslim-Christian Solidarity”.

This theme strongly resonates with the compelling call in the conference statement issued in the Davao inaugural forum ten years ago:

“We dare to live our hopes that a new world is not only possible but is already being built through people’s movements, through solidarity among people of the South and the people of different faiths and convictions, and through our common struggles to realize for all humanity and all creation peace for justice and life.” ■

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