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SOI: [1.1/TAS](#) DOI: [10.15863/TAS](#)

## International Scientific Journal Theoretical & Applied Science

p-ISSN: 2308-4944 (print) e-ISSN: 2409-0085 (online)

Year: 2019 Issue: 06 Volume: 74

Published: 26.06.2019 <http://T-Science.org>

QR – Issue



QR – Article



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## THE PROBLEM OF MORO MUSLIMS

**Abstract:** This article is devoted to the current state, historical and socio-political processes taking place in the life of the Christian and Muslim population, especially the Muslim community of the Moro tribe, living in the island part of the Philippines. The desire of the Muslim population of Moro to create an independent statehood, as well as the actions they carried out in this direction, caused inter-ethnic tensions and differences in the Philippines. This article aims to reveal the true causes of these processes. In an article in particular on the basis of statistical and factual material discussed the attitude of the Government of the Philippines to the Muslims, the status of Muslims in this country, the success achieved by the Muslim Moro in their long struggle for independence and barriers to the movement of independence, roots of ethno-religious differences between Muslims and Christians and ideological struggle, socio-political processes arising as a consequence of this, the prospects of the liberation movement, Moro Muslim ethnic minority constituents, as well as the prospects of an agreement with the Government on this issue.

**Key words:** Philippines, Moro Muslims, ethno-confessional differences, socio-political processes, ethnic minorities, liberation movements, uprisings, agreements, the causes of conflicts, ideological struggle, the status of Muslims, the desire for independence, the separatist movement, the Moro Liberation Front, Muslim Mindanao autonomy.

**Language:** English

**Citation:** Azimov, H. Y. (2019). The problem of Moro Muslims. *ISJ Theoretical & Applied Science*, 06 (74), 519-521.

**Soi:** <http://s-o-i.org/1.1/TAS-06-74-60> **Doi:**  <https://dx.doi.org/10.15863/TAS.2019.06.74.60>

### Introduction.

In the XIII century Islam penetrated the islands in the Philippines. This event is associated with the establishment of maritime trade relations by the Arabs through South-East Asia. Islam was predominantly spread in the territories of Mindanao island of the Philippine State, and this island from XIII to XVI century, i.e. until it became colonized by Spaniards had been under the ascendant of Muslim sultans. [1]

As a result of the defeat of Spain in 1898 in the US-Spanish war, the Philippines came under the control of the Americans. In 1899-1913, the Muslims of this region revolted against the United States. This event went down in history as the "Moro rebellion". On July 4, 1946, the Philippines also gained its independence along with many countries in the region. Catholics who came to the top of the government pursued a policy of resettlement of citizens of the new Philippines belonging to the Catholic religion to the territory of Mindanao, where Muslims lived. In response, the Muslim minority, called by the Spaniards as "moro" or "moor" in the

territory of Mindanao, began to claim their rights.[2] As a result of the indifference of the authorities to these requirements, the national liberation movements gradually acquired their essence. Over time, they became the causes of the outbreak of armed conflict.

### Main part.

By 1996, the government of the Philippines created an autonomous territory for Moro Muslims, that is, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao – ARMM. This step meant that some of the requirements of the Muslims were met. But, Moro Muslims which is constitute a minority in the territory of Mindanao still have not abandoned the requirement for independence. They continue to provide armed confrontation against the government. [3]

According to estimates, the population of the Philippines has reached about 100 million people. According to the National Statistics Committee, 93% of the population are Christian, 6% are Muslim, and the remaining 1% are from other religions.

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In other words, Muslims make up the largest portion of the religious minority population in the Philippines. Currently, most of them, as already mentioned, live in Mindanao. Muslims make up 20% of the 16 million people living in it. This serves as a unifying factor for ethnic groups living in the territory of Islomba such as Maguindanao, Maranao, Tausug, Samal and Yakan. [4]

Religious holiday of Muslims is now officially announced as a day off. They seek to create Sharia institutions to resolve differences within Muslims, as well as to solve problems associated with ethnic roots. Accordingly, sharia law constitutes a certain part of national legislation in the region, including criminal law. [5]

This fact can be interpreted as one of the measures that the government is carrying out in this latter time in order to prevent separatist movements which may occur in the country. And also, it can be explained by the fact that 2000 Muslim religious schools and madrassas operate in Mindanao and other parts of Philippines. [6]

In spite of, Mindanao is less developed than other territories of the Philippines in socio-economic terms, it is rich in underground and surface natural resources. But the armed confrontations occurring in the territory does not allow their development.

The separatist movements in Mindanao have continued for a long time. According to some sources, the death toll of the Moro rebellion has been exceeded more than 120 thousand people since 1970. According to data provided by Reuters, as a result of the troubled state during that period, about 2 million people were forced to leave their places of permanent residence.

In 1972, Moro National Liberation Front was established under the leadership of the Philippine University professor Nur Misuari. [7] He also joined the armed forces in their ranks. The organization's task was to create an independent Muslim state in the south of the Philippines. Until 1996, as a result of the merciless suppression of the uprisings of this organization, several tens of thousands of people were killed on both sides. [8]

Military-political conflicts in the Philippines are in the center of attention of the international community, in particular the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). In 1976, a commission to reconcile the Muslims of Moreau and the state of the Philippines was established in Tripoli under the leadership of the OIC. However, due to the lack of agreement by the parties, the negotiations turned out to be ineffective. By 1996, the leadership of the Philippines eventually allowed Moro Muslims to build their autonomy, which led to the creation of an autonomous Muslim region of Mindanao. According to some sources, the population of the autonomy is about 5 million people. This is the only autonomous region in the Philippines.

The first head of the autonomous region, Nur Misuari, was forced to resign by 2001 due to the deterioration of the socio-economic situation in the region.

In the summer of 2001, Moro's liberation front attacked the residence of the Philippine military in Jolo island. Despite the fact that the Filipino soldiers were killed on him, the army settled the attack in a short time. Most members of the Moro Liberation Front were arrested and sentenced to imprisonment. Nur Misuari, who escaped to Malaysia, was soon captured by the Philippine National Security Service and sentenced to life imprisonment. [9]

The inability to compromise in the reconciliation process of 1976 caused the division of the Moro national liberation front into two parts. Second leader of MNLF, Salamat Hashim founded Moro Islamic liberation front. Today, the Moro Islamic liberation front, which has about 12,000 troops, also announced that its task is to create an independent Islamic state in the south of the Philippines. However, unlike MNLF, MILF is a more radical Islamic group.

After long negotiations between the government and the MILF, a 1997 truce was signed on the cessation of hostilities. But since 2001, Philippine President Joe Esther has launched a large-scale campaign against the MILF. This led to the cancellation of the 1997 peace agreement between the government and radical Islamist groups. The military confrontations between the government and Islamist groups continued for a long time, and finally in 2008, the government and the MILF reached a new agreement. In accordance with this, measures were envisaged such as further expanding the territories of the Muslim autonomous region in Mindanao, increasing the participation of the representatives of local population in management, improving the region's infrastructure and increasing autonomy revenues from oil and gas, applying special amnesties to MILF members and other activities. However, the agreement was not implemented because of the denial of Catholic politicians.

As a result, the armed and political new struggle between the parties in 2008 has continued. One of the sad consequences of this was reflected in the fact that people are forced to leave their places of residence.

Another radical Islamist group in the Philippines is the Abu Sayyaf group. It was formed in 1991 as a result of the creation of its team after the withdrawal of certain members from the MNLF organization headed by Abduradzhik Abubakar Djandjoloy. It is announced, that the main goal of the Abu Sayyaf group is the creation of a large Islamic theocratic state not only in the Philippines, but also in Southeast Asia. [10] In the past, the Abu Sayyaf team has carried out many terrorist attacks in the Philippines. The United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and other countries record it as a group linked to Al-Qaeda

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international terrorist organization based on their nature and scope.

### Conclusion.

As a conclusion, it can be stated that the resolution of these ongoing conflicts in the Philippines is of great importance not only for this country, but also for the entire region of Southeast Asia. As, other

separatist movements in the region and participants of ethno-confessional conflicts are closely watching the struggle of Moro Muslims towards the realization of their rights.

In this sense, it can be said that the problem of Moro Muslims is becoming a reflection of the political situation not only in the Philippines, but also in the entire region of South-East Asia.

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