



**Perry Diaz**

# *PerryScope*

By Perry Diaz  
Sacramento, California

*Perry Diaz . . . .*

## *Moro-moro in Maguindanao*

SACRAMENTO, CALIF., Dec. 12 (*PinoyGlobal*) - “Moro-moro”

is a Spanish-era “comedia” (comedy) which depicts a battle between Christians and Moors (Moros). The comedy ends with the Christians always winning and the Moros always losing. A moro-moro is usually a part of a town fiesta since the 17th century. However, it is seldom being played today except by politicians warring for power . . . and personal gains.

Last December 5, 2009, in the aftermath of the Maguindanao massacre, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo imposed martial law in the province of Maguindanao. And with lightning speed, the leaders of civil society, the media, the Catholic Church, and opposition political leaders were furious, and rightly so.

The constitution allows the imposition of martial law only when there is rebellion or invasion. There was none. What happened was neither rebellion nor invasion -- it was mass murder. The perpetrators should then be charged with multiple murder, not rebellion. And how could the government prove rebellion when none was committed?

So what exactly President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo had in mind when she declared martial law in Maguindanao? Many people were of the opinion that Gloria imposed martial law as a means to an end. Indeed, she is renown for her penchant for Machiavellian machinations -- a grand master of the political chess game.

Bangsamoro Ancestral Domain

In 2008, Gloria attempted to create a Bangsamoro ancestral domain through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). But sensing that the Supreme Court might reject the MOA, she canceled the treaty.

Her unilateral action infuriated the MILF. Immediately, elements of the MILF went on the offensive and struck at government forces as well as civilians. Civilian casualties were heavy and more than 200,000 were displaced. That was the first moro-moro war in Maguindanao.

In my article, “The War Gloria Has Been Waiting For” (August 2008), I wrote: “I am beginning to suspect that the real objective of Gloria was to create a “war,” not the peace that she had been parroting for the past weeks. It’s beginning to sound like a broken record. Indeed, this could be the war that Gloria has been waiting for to put in place a scenario that would ultimately end in a martial law.”

The moro-moro eventually died down. But it proved that Gloria could easily start a war with the Muslims anytime for any reason. Indeed, it was a good “dry run” for a future moro-moro -- the war that she has been waiting for.

Maguindanao Massacre

Then the Maguindanao massacre happened. It sent shock waves around the world. The alleged perpetrators were

members of the powerful and feared Ampatuan clan who have ruled Maguindanao for decades. They maintained a private army of more than 3,000 men armed with government firearms and munitions. They were deputized by Gloria's government to fight "enemies" of the state... and anyone who criticizes the Ampatuans. It was recently revealed that witnesses were willing to come forward to identify the mass graves of at least 200 critics who were allegedly killed by the Ampatuans and their private armies.

### Unholy Alliance

It is a known fact that Gloria was -- or still is -- a close friend and political ally of the Ampatuans. A few days after the massacre, Gloria's spokesperson, Lorelei Fajardo told the media, "I don't think the President's friendship with the Ampatuans will be severed. Just because they're in this situation doesn't mean we will turn our backs on them." Fajardo even cast doubts that the Ampatuans were involved in the massacre when she said, "It doesn't mean that they are no longer our friends, if ever they indeed committed the crime."

In my recent article, "Arroyo-Ampatuan Unholy Alliance" (November 2009), I asked, "But why didn't she divorce herself from her alliance -- or is it 'unholy alliance'? -- from the powerful Ampatuan clan? Is she scared that if she abandoned them, they would retaliate by unraveling the 'secrets' of how they helped her win in Maguindanao in 2004 and deliver a 12-0 sweep of her senatorial candidates in 2007? That would certainly open a can of worms and could cause a political storm that would destroy her politically and further tarnish her checkered image beyond redemption."

### Martial Law

In my opinion, Gloria imposed martial law in Maguindanao to achieve two things, to wit:

1) Protect the Ampatuans by indicting them for "rebellion" instead of "multiple murder" charges. But it would be hard to convict them for "rebellion" simply because there was no rebellion. The catch is: if the Ampatuans were charged with rebellion and found not guilty -- which is very likely -- that would absolve them of murder, and consequently would inhibit the government from prosecuting them for murder.

2) Martial law can be extended to other provinces like Agusan del Sur where 75 people were abducted a few days ago by gunmen, and in Basilan island where members of the Al Qaeda-linked Abu Sayaff dumped in a park the severed head of one of three persons they kidnapped a month ago. With martial law in place, Gloria can then suspend the elections in these parts of Mindanao which would then give her an excuse not to proclaim the new president, vice president, and 12 senators elected in the 2010 elections. Since she is expected to win a congressional seat and consequently become the new speaker of the House of Representatives, Gloria would be next in line to become acting president. This would give her time to pursue Charter change to amend the constitution to put in place a parliamentary form of government of which she will head as prime minister.

### Moro-moro

A few days ago, the second moro-moro war in Maguindanao started when government security forces were attacked by armed men believed to be part of the Ampatuans' private army. If the moro-moro escalates into an all-out war it could draw other militant groups -- MILF, Abu Sayaff -- into the conflict which would then propel Gloria to rule by martial law for a long time. Is this the moro-moro that Gloria has been waiting for?