



PHILIPPINE CONSULATE GENERAL  
**P R E S S R E L E A S E**

---

Contact: Maria Elena Maningat      Vice Consul      Passport and Information Sections      212-764-1330 ext 312  
PR-CBR-      -2009      7 December 2009

---

**DFA UNDERSECRETARY SEGUIS BRIEFS INTERNATIONAL CONTACT GROUP  
MEMBERS ON MARTIAL LAW IN MAGUINDANAO**

MANILA - 7 December 2009 – Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Rafael Seguis, who also sits as GRP Peace Panel Chairperson, briefed today members of the International Contact Group (ICG) for the GRP-MILF Peace Talks on the proclamation of martial law in Maguindanao.

This, as the GRP and MILF panels are scheduled to formally resume peace talks scheduled for December 8-9 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Undersecretary Seguis assured the ICG members that the implementation of martial law in Maguindanao is limited in terms of objectives, duration, geographic coverage, and operations.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo issued Proclamation 1959, declaring martial law in Maguindanao, last December 4.

Undersecretary Seguis echoed Press Secretary Cerge Remonde's earlier statement that the objective of the proclamation of martial law "is to arrest the suspects, protect the witnesses, dismantle private armies, ensure press freedom in the area, and of course, stop the rebellion."

He added that it is essential that vital evidence and witnesses be secured and safeguarded right away, before they are lost.

He also reiterated that the declaration of martial law will only be operative for a maximum of 60 days, as specified under the Philippine Constitution, and that it is limited in Maguindanao and not in any other provinces within the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Martial law can be lifted at any time before the expiry of the 60-day period.

Undersecretary Seguis likewise quoted Article 7, Section 13 of the Philippine Constitution which states that: "A state of martial law does not suspend the operation of the Constitution, nor supplant the functioning of the civil courts or legislative assemblies, nor authorize the conferment of jurisdiction on military courts and agencies over civilian where civil courts are able to function, not automatically suspend the privilege of the writ."

President Arroyo submitted a report to Congress on the declaration of martial law in Maguindanao last December 6. Congress will take up the matter in a joint session on December 8.

The members of the ICG are Japan, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Geneva-based Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, US-based Asia Foundation, and London-based Conciliation Resources. END