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Regional Commissions of National Human Rights Councils in Autonomous Regions:  
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***COMPARING THE EXPERIENCES OF REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES/  
ARMM AND MOROCCO***

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CONTENTS: 1.Introduction; 2.The Philippine Commission on Human Rights (CHR); 3.Muslim Mindanao and the Establishment of the ARMM Regional Human Rights Commission (RHRC); 4. Nascence and Mandate of the ARMM Regional Human Rights Commission; 5.The relationship between RHRC and CHR; 5.1.Associative relationship; 5.2.Composition and Selection of RHRC; 5.3.Funding, Support and Reporting mechanisms; 6.RHRC Investigative powers and complaints procedure; 7.Conclusion.

***1. Introduction***

This contribution was prepared for the Moroccan initiative of comparing good practices of Regional Commissions of Human Rights Councils in Autonomous Regions focusing on the relationship between the National Commissions on Human Rights and their respective regional bodies. This paper thus adopts a comparative approach of the Philippine Regional Human Rights Commission (Regional Commission or RHRC) in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). In particular, the relationship between the Philippine Commission on Human Rights and the Regional Commission shall be analyzed taking the Moroccan situation into due account.

National and regional human rights institutions show a varied set of experiences. It is in learning from the weaknesses and strengths identified in a comparative analysis as that instigated by the Moroccan initiative that the challenge of protection and promoting human rights can effectively be tackled and improved. The Philippine Regional Human Rights Commissions differs in many ways from the Moroccan system of Regional Commissions on Human Rights. These differences, but also the similarities, can provide room for mutual learning.

A regional human rights institution in conformity with the Constitution, international human rights treaties, the Paris Principles, and national statutes, has long been demanded by the people in ARMM.<sup>1</sup> The RHRC now represents the independent focal human rights institution within the autonomous region affirming the Bangsamoro right to self-determination. Thereby, the RHRC fulfills the people's demands for regional autonomy.

## **2. The Philippine Commission on Human Rights (CHR)**

The National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) in the Philippines is the Philippine Commission on Human Rights (CHR). It is the rare case of a national human rights institution created by the basic law of a country. The 1987 Philippine Constitution (hereinafter 1987 Constitution) creates in Article XIII, section 17, the CHR as an independent human rights office.<sup>2</sup> A constitutional basis can help prevent the usurpation of functions or the abolition of the office, amongst others. However, problems still arise with regards to the independence and effectiveness of the activities of the Philippine Commission despite the constitutional nature of its mandate.<sup>3</sup> The constitutional provision of Article XIII was implemented through Executive Order No. 163 in 1987 setting up the Philippine Commission on Human Rights.

The CHR represents an independent office with full fiscal autonomy. The 1987 Constitution holds that the "approved annual appropriations of the Commission shall be automatically and regularly released".<sup>4</sup> Notably, however, fiscal autonomy is not guaranteed in practice. Pursuant to the last concluding observations of the United Nations Human Rights Committee, the recent expansion of the CHR responsibilities does not go along with necessary increases in resources and the CHR lacks full fiscal autonomy.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, the CHR is an independent office in the sense of its investigative powers: The CHR has powers to "investigate, on its own or on complaint by any party, all forms of human rights violations involving civil and political rights".<sup>6</sup> It is further requested to provide legal measures to assure the protection of the human rights of all persons,<sup>7</sup> and to recommend to Congress effective measures for the promotion of human rights.<sup>8</sup> The CHR is also asked to monitor the Philippine Government's compliance with its international human rights treaty

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<sup>1</sup> Unpublished draft contribution by Atty. Laisa Masuhud Alamia Executive Secretary, Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao and former Chairperson of the Regional Mindanao Human Rights Commission.

<sup>2</sup> 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines (hereinafter Phil. Const.).

<sup>3</sup> Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center, 'National Human Rights Institutions in Asia-Pacific' 4 FOCUS June 1996 < <http://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/focus/section2/1996/06/national-human-rights-institutions-in-asia-pacific.html>> accessed 25 June 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Phil. Const. (n 2) Art XIII, s 17(4).

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Human Rights Committee 'Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of the Philippines, adopted by the Committee at its 106<sup>th</sup> session (15 October – 2 November 2012)' (13 November 2012) UN Doc CCPR/C/PHL/CO/4.

<sup>6</sup> Phil. Const. (n 2) Art XIII, s 18(1).

<sup>7</sup> Phil. Const. (n 2) Art XIII, s 18(3).

<sup>8</sup> Phil. Const. (n 2) Art XIII, s 18(6).

obligations.<sup>9</sup> This monitoring function is an important power of national human rights institutions as guarantors of human rights within the sphere of governmental activity, where international human rights' institutions cannot reach.<sup>10</sup>

The CHR now has around 14 regional offices of which regions IX, XI and XII fall within the mandate of the regional human rights commission addressed further below. This provides greater physical access to human rights institutions to victims of human rights violations. Similar to the Moroccan approach of regional human rights observatories, the Philippine system includes the fostering of community or, so-called, Barangay human rights action centers to expand the reach of the CHR and to work closer with civil society organizations and actors.<sup>11</sup> The Philippine human rights system relies heavily on such inter-agency cooperation.

On May 3, 2012, with its resolution CHR IV A2012-052, the Commission established a regional office in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, or ARMM, in order to respond to the severe human rights challenges existing in said area.<sup>12</sup> It was also meant to serve as a platform for collective action to achieve concrete governance reforms in Mindanao.<sup>13</sup> The CHR-ARMM regional office and its relation to the RHRC will be discussed in section 5 below.

It should be noted that the CHR regional offices are, similar to the Moroccan Regional Commissions on Human Rights, entrusted to promote human rights at regional levels and to strengthen and reinforce the human rights infrastructure. However, CHR regional offices hold fewer rights and can be considered less independent than the Moroccan Regional Human Rights Commissions.

### **3. Muslim Mindanao and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)**

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is born out of the struggles of the Muslim peoples, who call themselves Moros, towards self-rule and self-determination. These peoples have resisted colonial domination through the Spanish for centuries, which left them ethnically and culturally distinct from mainstream Filipino society. Nonetheless, the Moro territories, and

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<sup>9</sup> Phil. Const. (n 2) Art XIII, s 18(7).

<sup>10</sup> UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Fact Sheet No. 19, National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights* April 1993, No. 19 <<http://www.refworld.org/docid/4794773ed.html>> accessed 25 June 2014.

<sup>11</sup> The Filipino word 'barangay' is the smallest political unit into which cities and municipalities in the Philippines are divided and is the basic unit of the Philippine political system with mostly less than 1,000 inhabitants. It is administered by a set of elective officials, headed by a barangay chairman (punong barangay). Philippine Statistics Authority, 'Concepts and Definitions - Local Government Units' (*Philippine Standard Geographic Codes - National Statistical Coordination Board*) <[http://www.nscb.gov.ph/activestats/psgc/articles/con\\_lgu.asp](http://www.nscb.gov.ph/activestats/psgc/articles/con_lgu.asp)> accessed 15 June 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Strategic Development and Planning Office (SDPO), '2012 Annual Report – Annual Accomplishment Report of the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines' (hereinafter CHR Annual Report) (*Commission on Human Rights*, 2012) <[http://www.chr.gov.ph/MAIN%20PAGES/about%20us/PDF/2012\\_chr\\_annual\\_report.pdf](http://www.chr.gov.ph/MAIN%20PAGES/about%20us/PDF/2012_chr_annual_report.pdf)> accessed 19 June 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

the rest of Mindanao, have been incorporated into the Philippine Republic upon Philippine independence in 1946, after the Spanish had previously ceded the Mindanao region to the United States of America in the Treaty of Paris in 1898.<sup>14</sup>

Land grabbing and social injustices committed against the indigenous peoples of Mindanao led the Moros to rise in protest against the Philippine government. The Jabidah Massacre on 18 March 1968 sparked the formation of the Moro National Liberation Front under the leadership of Nur Misuari, which became to be the first armed resistance movement of Mindanao. Armed conflict and unrest fully unleashed in 1973 and would last for the following four decades. In 1986, President Corazon Aquino (1986 – 1992) sought peace negotiations with the MNLF and oversaw the promulgation of the 1987 Constitution, which called for the creation of autonomous regions for the indigenous peoples in Muslim Mindanao and the Cordilleras. On August 1, 1989, Republic Act No. 6734 was released, otherwise known as the Organic Act of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, creating the ARMM through popular ratification.

Unfortunately, many social groups remained unsatisfied with the situation in Mindanao. A splinter group of the MNLF, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (or MILF) continued to pursue full independence for the Moros through armed resistance and became particularly strong in the years following the establishment of the ARMM. Thus, peace talks were resumed and held, with several interruptions, from 1997 to 2014.

Therefore, the ARMM takes a special status in the Philippines as its inhabitants are recognized as distinct peoples with a common historical and cultural heritage and as holding different ways of life.<sup>15</sup>

#### **4. Nascence and Mandate of the ARMM Regional Human Rights Commission**

The Regional Human Rights Commission of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is a statutory agency created under Article III, section 16, of Republican Act 9095, also known as the expanded ARMM Organic Act, in 2001. Section 16 holds that

“[t]here is hereby created a Regional Human Rights Commission. The chair and two commissioners of the commission shall be appointed by the President upon recommendation of the Regional Governor. The composition of the commission shall reflect the ethnic distribution of the population of the autonomous region. The chair shall be a lawyer and shall be a resident of the autonomous region. The two commissioners shall, preferably, be lawyers

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<sup>14</sup> ‘ARMM History’ (*ARMM Official Website*) <<http://armm.gov.ph/history/>> accessed 27 April 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Dissenting Opinion of Justice Carpio in *Kida vs. Senate*, G.R. No. 196271, Oct 18, 2011.

or, at least, holders of bachelor degrees from colleges or universities recognized by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports of the central government or national government.”

The RHRC was then set up on June 26, 2012, through the enactment of the Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act (MMA) 288 entitled “An Act Operationalizing Section 16, Article III of Republic Act 9094 Establishing a Charter for the Human Rights Commission in the ARMM Providing Guidelines for its Operation, Appropriating Funds therefor and Other Purposes”, otherwise called ARMM Human Rights Commission Charter of 2012.<sup>16</sup>

It was signed into law by Regional Governor Mujiv Hataman on July 3, 2012, and has been welcomed as a landmark regional law both locally and internationally.<sup>17</sup> The RHRC is therefore also a relatively young institution. Impetus for the creation of the RHRC was the civil society-led “Cotabato City Declaration: Working Together for the Protection, Promotion, and Fulfillment of Human Rights in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao” in which Cotabato City, represented by a multi-sectorial gathering of human rights stakeholders, demanded the establishment of a strong human rights mechanisms in the ARMM to become the priority for the Commission on Human Rights, in general, and the newly created CHR-ARMM Regional Office, in particular.<sup>18</sup> The CHR thus played an essential role in facilitating the nascence of the ARMM Regional Human Rights Commission.

The mandate of the RHRC is to “perform within the autonomous region, the functions of the commission on human rights of the central government or national government. Decisions of the commission may be appealed to the Court of Appeals on questions of law.”<sup>19</sup> This means that the RHRC is the regional human rights office in ARMM with sole responsibility for performing the functions of the CHR within the autonomous region. It is thus an independent regional office within ARMM with the same powers and mandates as the national Commission on Human Rights.<sup>20</sup>

The RHRC shall also not be subjected to any instructions from the President, Congress, Judiciary or any ARMM regional government body. As mentioned above, it takes over the functions of the national CHR within ARMM without outside interference, except regarding the judicial review of the legality of its acts or order. Questions of law may be referred to the Court

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<sup>16</sup> CHR Annual Report (n 12) p 46.

<sup>17</sup> Alamia (n 1).

<sup>18</sup> CHR Annual Report (n 12) p 46.

<sup>19</sup> Republic Act No. 9054, An Act to Strengthen and Expand the Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Amending for the Purpose Republic Act No. 6734, Entitled “An Act Providing for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao”, as amended, <<http://www.opapp.gov.ph/sites/default/files/Republic%20Act%20%209054%20Organic%20Act%20for%20the%20Autonomous%20Region%20In%20Muslim%20Mindanao.pdf>> accessed June 15, 2014, Art III, s 16.

<sup>20</sup> An Act Operationalizing Section 16, Article III of Republic Act 9094 Establishing a Charter for the Human Rights Commission in the ARMM Providing Guidelines for its Operation, Appropriating Funds therefor and Other Purposes, Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No. 288 (hereinafter MMA No. 288) s 3.

of Appeals.

The RHRC has five field offices or human rights monitoring centers in 5 provinces and two sub-regional offices in Maguindanao and Basulta.

With the RHRC programs on human rights protection approximately 70 victims of human rights abuses were provided assistance, while the RHRC seminars and trainings relating to human rights promotion addressed a total of 1,872 people in 2013.<sup>21</sup> Such trainings included

In comparison to the Regional Commissions on Human Rights in Morocco, the RHRC has some similarities. The RHRC is entrusted with the functions of a human rights commission within its geographical constituency, the ARMM, and furthermore, assists the national commission in the exercise of its powers. However, unlike in the Moroccan system, the RHRC is in no ways 'affiliated' with the national human rights body,<sup>22</sup> but acts as an independent entity with the same powers as its national counterpart.

## **5. The relationship between RHRC and CHR**

### **5.1. Associative relationship**

The RHRC holds a special status in ARMM. Prior to its operationalization, the Muslim Mindanao Regional Government, together with civil society organizations, collaborated with the National Commission on Human Rights in the setting up of the CHR-ARMM Regional Office under the supervision of the national CHR. However, CHR-ARMM and the RHRC are fundamentally distinct. The CHR-ARMM is by no means independent from the national commission, and, in fact, even 'borrowed' resources from other CHR offices with no regular funding.<sup>23</sup> In the national commission's resolution, CHR (IV) A2012-163, the Commission resolved to maintain both the CHR-ARMM Regional Office alongside the newly set up RHRC, providing for both human rights bodies to co-exist and cooperate, while the CHR keeps track of the developments regarding the relationship between the CHR-ARMM Regional Office and the RHRC.<sup>24</sup>

The Regional Human Rights Commission is an independent human rights institution in accordance with the Principles Relating to the Status of National Institutions, or the Paris Principles, and other United Nations Resolutions regarding the effective functioning of

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<sup>21</sup> RHRC, '2013 Achievement Report' (hereinafter RHRC Achievement Report) published as PowerPoint.

<sup>22</sup> Dahir No. 1.11.19 dated 18 Rabii I 1431 H (1 March 2011) establishing the National Human Rights Council (translated version), original appeared in Official Gazette No. 5922 of 27 Rabii I 1432 H (March 3rd, 2011) <[http://www.cndh.ma/sites/default/files/documents/Dahir\\_No\\_1\\_11\\_19\\_establishing\\_the\\_National\\_Human\\_Rights\\_Council.pdf](http://www.cndh.ma/sites/default/files/documents/Dahir_No_1_11_19_establishing_the_National_Human_Rights_Council.pdf)> accessed 18 June 2014, Art 1.

<sup>23</sup> Alamia (n 1).

<sup>24</sup> CHR Annual Report (n 12) p 46.

national human rights institutions.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the RHRC ought to have all rights, privileges, duties and responsibilities of a national human rights institution.<sup>26</sup> This shall also be guaranteed through the national CHR.

The relationship between the CHR and the RHRC is thence an associative relationship, as specified in section 40 of MMA No. 288. The Regional Commission will act as the primary source of information and advice for the national commission with regards to the human rights situation in the autonomous region. The Regional Commission shall take a mutual, coordinative and complementary stance in relation to the national CHR.<sup>27</sup> It takes the role of contributing to the effective implementation of the national commission's policies, programs, services and activities, but is, furthermore, granted an integral role in the formulation, the actual implementation and evaluation thereof.<sup>28</sup>

While the RHRC is in some ways like a regional office of the CHR in the ARMM, it will, moreover, be independent of the CHR and of the ARMM government to exercise its mandate without the influence of the political situation in the region.<sup>29</sup> Contrary to the Moroccan Regional Commission, the RHRC acts as a regional human rights body independent of the national commission given the special status of the autonomous region in the 1987 Constitution. Both regional human rights commissions in Morocco and the Philippines are involved in the observation and monitoring of the human rights situation in their respective regions, for the promotion of human rights in the region and the implementation of the programs of their respective national commissions. However, the Philippine RHRC is comparable to the status of a national human rights institution due to holding a particular position in the Philippine human rights framework.

## **5.2. Composition and Selection of RHRC**

While the CHR played an important role in the facilitation of the RHRC, the creation of the Regional Commission was advanced through the activism of civil society. Its charter was also enacted through the ARMM Regional Legislative Assembly by the adoption of MMA No. 288. It was thus not set up through the national commission, as it is the case with the thirteen Regional Commissions on Human Rights in Morocco.

The RHRC is composed as a collegial body whereby the Chairperson and both of its two Commissioners are appointed by the President upon recommendation of the ARMM Regional Governor.<sup>30</sup> The national CHR has no influence in the composition of the Regional

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<sup>25</sup> MMA No. 288 (n 20) s 4.

<sup>26</sup> MMA No. 288 (n 20) s 40.

<sup>27</sup> MMA No. 288 (n 20) s 4.

<sup>28</sup> MMA No. 288 (n 20) s 40.

<sup>29</sup> Alamia (n 1).

<sup>30</sup> MMA No. 288 (n 20) s 6 – 7.

Commission. The first appointed Chairperson should hold office for seven years, one commission Member shall be in office for five years and the other for three years, without reappointment.<sup>31</sup> All will be residents of the Autonomous Region belonging to any of the thirteen ethno-linguistic tribes of the Bangsamoro and must have a proven professional competence, mostly lawyers, as specified in MMA No. 288, section 6, and Republican Act No. 9054, Article III, section 16. Also, their salaries are fixed in section 10 of MMA No. 288.

As a collegial body, the Regional Commission is itself responsible for the promulgation of its own policies, decisions and orders for the administration of the RHRC and the execution of its mandate. Decisions shall be rendered en banc bearing the concurrence and signature of at least two of its Members.<sup>32</sup> The Chairperson appoints the staff and employees of the RHRC and its line offices.

If this appointment and selection procedure is compared to the Moroccan system, the independence of the Philippine RHRC becomes apparent. While the President of the National Human Rights Council in Morocco can nominate the President of the Regional Commissions appointed by Royal Decree,<sup>33</sup> the RHRC Chairperson and Members are appointed by the President; the national commission playing no role. Likewise, the National Council assigns the staffs of the Regional Commissions in Morocco.

### **5.3. Funding, Support and Reporting Mechanisms**

Similar to the national CHR, MMA No. 288, section 5, calls for the automatic release of fund from the annual appropriations within the General Appropriations Act (GAA) of the ARMM. This provides fiscal autonomy to the RHRC vis-à-vis CHR; however, efforts still need to be increased to guarantee full autonomy in practice. Insufficiencies of funds, but also the effective use of available funding, prove a problem at both national and regional level to effective human rights protection. The funding of RHRC from the GAA was utilized to about 84% in 2013, as compared to 72% in 2012.<sup>34</sup> This is a point for future improvement.

Furthermore, the CHR is mandated to provide facilities and support to the Regional Commission to support the exercise of their functions. This includes advice and consultancy, capacity building, information and resources, technical and other support.<sup>35</sup>

The Regional Commission shall make public a report on the findings of its monitoring activities regarding the regional government's compliance with the Philippine state's

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<sup>31</sup> MMA No. 288 (n 20) s 7.

<sup>32</sup> MMA No. 288 (n 20) s 36.

<sup>33</sup> Dahir No. 1.11.19 (n 22) Art 40.

<sup>34</sup> RHRC Achievement Report (n 21).

<sup>35</sup> MMA No. 288 (n 20) s 40.



international human rights treaty obligations within the autonomous region.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, it makes public its annual financial statements.<sup>37</sup>

The national CHR provides resources and support to the regional RHRC, while the regional body remains financially and programmatically independent. Funds are allocated from the budget of the autonomous region directly and reporting mechanisms are directed to the public, instead of to the national commission. These institutional arrangements are very distinct from the Moroccan system of Regional Commissions of the national human rights council.

## **6. RHRC Investigative powers and complaints procedure**

The RHRC holds wide investigative powers:

“The Regional Commission shall exercise primary and original jurisdiction to investigate, on complaint or *motu proprio*, cases of human rights violations within the Autonomous Region to include civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.”<sup>38</sup>

Pursuantly, the Regional Commission has primary investigative powers to cases within the autonomous region, which include also economic, social and cultural rights. Noteworthy is that the human rights violations encompassed in the mandate of the RHRC are more far-reaching than that of the national commission. The national CHR, in contrast, can only investigate cases relating to civil and political rights violations. Moreover, the RHRC can consider complaints “in any form or manner by any person”.<sup>39</sup> In 2013, the RHRC had approximately 60 docketed cases all over the region.

Similar to the Moroccan Regional Commissions, the RHRC is entrusted to consider regional cases of human rights violations on its own initiative or following a complaint by any party.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, unlike the Moroccan system, where a complaint requires certain formal criteria to be fulfilled, the RHRC will act on complaints in any form. The primacy of the Philippine Regional Commission’s mandate is further illustrated by the fact that no investigation by any other body can bar the investigation by the RHRC.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to its investigative powers, the RHRC is asked to recommend appropriate administrative, civil and/ or criminal action in concluding its investigations. It can also deputize

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<sup>36</sup> MMA No. 288 (n 20) s 23.

<sup>37</sup> MMA No. 288 (n 20) s 41.

<sup>38</sup> MMA No. 288 (n 20) s 12.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Dahir No. 1.11.19 (n 22) Art 29.

<sup>41</sup> MMA No. 288 (n 20) s 12.

lawyers, medical organizations or government agencies to provide assistance in the exercise of its investigative functions.

The Regional Commission is furthermore permitted to make use of a number of preventive and legal measures, such as orders directing government officials, mandatory protection orders, restraining orders or general writs of injunction. Especially, such orders directing government officials or employees in control of the premises of a government agency or office within the Autonomous Region, particularly referring to installations, police and military detention facilities or secret detention places, to permit the inspection of said premises, are relevant in ARMM. In 2013, for example, a number of investigations, documentation and field monitoring activities were related to jail visits, *ridos* (clan wars) in Maguindanao and incidents relating to internal displacements.<sup>42</sup>

The RHRC may also punish for contempt any person for the violation of its lawful orders. In the exercise of its powers, the RHRC does not need to refer to the President of the National Commission, as is the case in the Moroccan system.<sup>43</sup> In a manner more extensively than the Moroccan Regional Commissions are mandated to do, the RHRC is, for instance, also authorized to compel the attendance of witnesses, the production of evidence or to issue subpoenas. The Regional Commission has thus very sweeping investigative and protective powers, independent of the CHR.

## **7. Conclusion**

As previously mentioned, the Moroccan and Philippine systems of human rights protection are in many ways distinct, but converge in some sense. For the purpose of this paper, it will be important to highlight some of the best practices of the Philippine system that might be useful in application to the Moroccan case.

First, the strong inter-agency cooperation is an important component of Philippine human rights protection at regional and local levels. It provides geographical proximity of relevant human rights institutions to victims of human rights violations and allows closer monitoring of the human rights situation in the region, municipality, barangay or village.

Community human rights action centers also enable greater collaboration with civil society actors fostering the promotion of human rights in the region. For example, in March 2013, the RHRC could form the Bangsamoro Human Rights Network (BHRN) of over 70 organizations and individuals who are jointly committed to improving the human rights situation in Muslim Mindanao. Furthermore, it developed the municipality human rights profile (MHRP) template

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<sup>42</sup> RHRC Achievement Report (n 21).

<sup>43</sup> Dahir No. 1.11.19 (n 22) Art 29.

in cooperation with the help of civil society organizations and UNHCR in May 2013. Visits have been conducted to 83 out of 118 municipalities, of which 70 responded and 36 provided partial data. In these efforts, 21 ARMM Line Agencies, security sector organizations and NGOs participated and submitted further data.<sup>44</sup> The RHRC also largely cooperates with international actors, such as UNHRC, OHCHR or the EU. Generally, such approach enlarges the system and resources for human rights work.

Second, the RHRC holds far-reaching and autonomous regional powers. A regionally independent commission allows for the adaption to the local and regional human rights situation that might differ significantly within a country. As noted previously, however, the ARMM is a very particular case being an autonomous region with otherwise largely autonomous institutions and thus, cannot be directly equated to the Moroccan system of Regional Commissions on Human Rights. Deferring more autonomous powers to its regions, especially relating to investigative and protective powers, might nonetheless be conducive to the protection and promotion of human rights regionally.

On March 27, 2014, the Philippine government signed a comprehensive peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front that is supposed to bring a final peace to the region. Many hope that the dire human rights situation in Mindanao defined by armed conflict, internal displacement, violence against women and the lack of development opportunities, will improve with the passage of the new Bangsamoro Basic Law and the installation of a more autonomous government, the Bangsamoro. The new political arrangement will most likely influence the current human rights mechanisms in place and it will thus ought to be seen in the next months how the human rights infrastructure might develop in Mindanao.

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<sup>44</sup> RHRC Achievement Report (n 21).