

You are in: [World: Monitoring: Media reports](#)[Front Page](#) Monday, 1 May, 2000, 19:32 GMT 20:32 UK[World](#)**Separatists warn of 'all-out war'**[Africa](#)[Americas](#)[Asia-Pacific](#)[Europe](#)[Middle East](#)[South Asia](#)[From Our Own Correspondent](#)

Rebel warning follows suspension of talks

[Letter From America](#)

As the West focuses on the fate of the hostages on the island of Jolo in the southern Philippines, the country's own media is concentrating its attention on the protracted dispute in neighbouring Mindanao.

[UK](#)[UK Politics](#)[Business](#)[Sci/Tech](#)[Health](#)[Education](#)[Entertainment](#)[Talking Point](#)[In Depth](#)[AudioVideo](#)

Peace talks between the government and the country's largest Muslim rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) ground to a halt on Sunday, and renewed fighting looms.

"The MILF will concentrate on the defence of all its camps and positions," MILF Vice-Chairman for Military Affairs Al Haj Murad said, according to the Manila Times.

"All our fighting forces are taking up stations."

Talks suspended

On Sunday, a MILF leader said talks with the government had been suspended after two days of heavy fighting around the camp in violation of a 1997 ceasefire agreement.

"The Moro Islamic Liberation Front hereby unilaterally declares that the ... peace talks (are) indefinitely suspended," said a Front declaration signed by Murad.

The two sides opened formal negotiations in January to try to end a 28-year separatist rebellion which has killed more than 120,000 people. The talks, now in recess, were to have resumed later this month.

However, in an interview with GMA-7 TV, MILF Political Affairs Vice-Chairman Ghadzali Jaafar explained the possible

Search BBC News Online

[Advanced search options](#)[Launch console for latest audio/video](#) [BBC RADIO NEWS](#) [BBC ONE TV NEWS](#) [WORLD NEWS SUMMARY](#) [BBC NEWS 24 BULLETIN](#) [PROGRAMMES GUIDE](#)**See also:**[01 May 00 | Asia-Pacific Hostage drama highlights bitter conflict](#)[20 Feb 00 | Asia-Pacific Philippines peace talks off](#)[23 Feb 99 | Asia-Pacific Philippine dream of Islamic state](#)**Internet links:**[President Estrada](#)[Mindanao](#)[Moro Islamic Liberation Front](#)[GMA TV](#)[Mindanao Times](#)[The Manila Times](#)

The BBC is not responsible for the content of external internet sites

consequences of the break-down.

"While there is still time, government leaders should try to salvage the peace talks because once war escalates ... Mindanao will burn for several days, several weeks," he said.

He added that if the Philippines military did not halt its attacks on the group's base at Camp Abubakar, near Cotabato city, the result would be a marked increase in the level of violence on the island.

"If Camp Abubakar is attacked, explosions will occur in other parts of Mindanao," Jaafar said.

Military targets MILF camp

Reports said Philippines army and marines started attacking MILF checkpoints along the Narciso Ramos Highway in central Mindanao at the weekend.

They say the highway is part of the perimeter defence of the sprawling camp, the MILF's biggest base on the island.

Rebel sources said some 2,000 troops, backed by artillery and rocket-firing helicopter gunships, were involved in the attack on the camp.

The military has said about 300 MILF fighters and more than 30 soldiers died in clashes which started in mid-March after the rebels seized and briefly occupied a town hall in Lanao del Norte province.

The MILF said 32 of its fighters had been killed and 56 wounded while inflicting scores of casualties on the military.

Solutions, not PR

The Mindanao Times said in an editorial that the government was concentrating more on the public relations aspects of the issue than on resolving the problem.

The paper said that in order to try to counter negative publicity in the West, the city administration in the Mindanao capital, Davao, had paid for a half-page advertisement in a British tabloid newspaper.

The ad was aimed at dispelling an impression that the city was the kidnap capital of the Philippines, it said.

"Davaoenos do not need crazy solutions like city officials launching a 'white propaganda' campaign," the paper wrote.

"Likewise, the president should not wage his own 'white propa'

“
Once war escalates ...
Mindanao will burn for
several days, several
weeks
”
MILF spokesman
Ghadzali Jaafar

in order to advertise Mindanao as a Land of Promise in the international media.

"The first thing that Mr Estrada should do is to increase the budget for agriculture in order to fulfill his election promise of making Mindanao the country's premier 'food basket'."



Testing times for President Estrada

BBC Monitoring, based in Caversham in southern England, selects and translates information from radio, television, press, news agencies and the Internet from 150 countries in more than 70 languages.

[✉ E-mail this story to a friend](#)

Links to more Media reports stories



[^^ Back to top](#)

[News Front Page](#) | [World](#) | [UK](#) | [UK Politics](#) | [Business](#) | [Sci/Tech](#) | [Health](#) | [Education](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Talking Point](#) | [In Depth](#) | [AudioVideo](#)

[To BBC Sport>>](#) | [To BBC Weather>>](#)

[© MMIII](#) | [News Sources](#) | [Privacy](#)