

30 November 2021

Zayed Award for Human Fraternity
Nomination Committee

Dear Zayed Award for Human Fraternity,

Greetings of Peace! I am submitting the nomination of **Rev. Luis Daniel Pantoja** who has shown exemplary service for the pursuit of justice and peace.

When the 9/11 bombings created an intense distrust between Muslims and Christians, Rev. Pantoja, who was living and serving as Minister of the Gospel in Canada for two decades decided to go back to the Philippines in 2006 with the intent of listening to the people of the land.

Motivated by the love of God, he lived with a Muslim *datu* (leader) for six months in the heart of the territory of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). This was the time when armed conflicts between the MILF and the Government of the Philippines (GPH) was at its height. The MILF has a contingent of about 200,000 armed combatants and were fighting for the cessation and independence of the Muslim Mindanao territory from the Republic of the Philippines.

Rev. Pantoja started his engagement in the GPH-MILF peace process by spending the first six months building relationships among the MILF leaders, combatants, and the people in the community. He sought to understand the armed conflict from their worldview. Because of the trust that was built, he was invited to share peace and reconciliation training among the people, which led to personal and institutional relationship between the MILF and the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC), the national alliance of Evangelicals in the country.

Through him, the PCEC gained understanding of the MILF's perspective which also led to PCEC's support of the GPH-MILF peace process. The peace process resulted into a negotiated agreement and then the ratification of a Philippine law in 2018 that created the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, thus ending the decades-long conflict in the southern part of the Philippines. Throughout the peace process, Rev. Pantoja has been active on the ground dialoguing with soldiers on both sides to reduce skirmishes, strengthening networks of civil society to support the peace talks, and advocating to the government and religious leaders at local and national levels.

Aside from his engagement in the GPH-MILF peace process, Rev. Pantoja also listened to indigenous peoples who were often caught in the crossfire. Using a restorative justice approach, he led the reconciliation of an indigenous community and a multinational company who has been in conflict for decades. The process resulted in reparations for indigenous communities who live in the lands where multinational companies are based, and into an agreement that was founded on the spirituality and culture of the indigenous peoples. This focus on historically-marginalized communities continue until now.

Through Peacebuilders Community Inc. (PBCI), the organization that Rev. Pantoja founded, indigenous communities are inviting him and his team to develop social enterprises that are grounded in their indigenous identity. The social enterprises are part of PBCI's holistic approach to peacebuilding especially in a context where basic needs are not met. The grounding on indigenous worldviews is to honor the wisdom of the people who have shown resilience in the midst of marginalization.

I have firsthand knowledge of Rev. Pantoja's engagements as I was the National Director of PCEC during such a period of the peace process, and continues to serve as PCEC National Director Emeritus.

Truly yours,



Bishop Efraim Tendero
Global Ambassador
World Evangelical Alliance

Herewith I certify, that Bishop Efraim Tendero is acting on behalf of the World Evangelical Alliance and that I endorse his nomination of Rev. Pantoja.

Bonn, Nov 30, 2021,
Bishop Dr Thomas Schirmacher, Secretary General and CEO, World Evangelical Alliance

