

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

THIRTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

House Bill No. 5369



Introduced by Rep. **ABDULGANI "Gerry" SALAPUDDIN**,
Rep. **HUSSIN U. AMIN** and Rep. **HERMILANDO I. MANDANAS**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

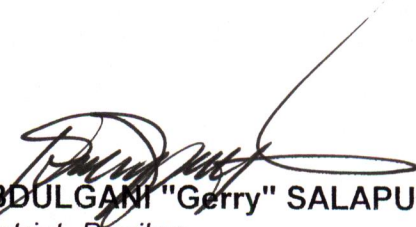
This bill seeks to create a separate and distinct autonomous region for the Sulu Archipelago and the historical Sultanate of Sulu.

The Sultanate of Sulu, established in 1457, has had a long and colorful history. It predates the arrival in 1521 of Spaniards in the Philippines, colonization in 1565 of Cebu under Miguel Lopez de Legaspi, and the founding of Manila in 1571 as a Spanish outpost. In fact, the Sultanate was the most advanced unit in the Philippines in the hundred years before colonization by the Spaniards. It had its own laws and courts. At that time, its capital, Jolo, was already a bustling trading city; in contrast, the biggest settlements, Manila, Cebu and Vigan at that time, were nothing more than large barangays. The mariners and traders of Sulu were both feared and respected throughout the Malay world. The Sultan of Sulu was Lord of the Sulu Archipelago and northern Borneo.

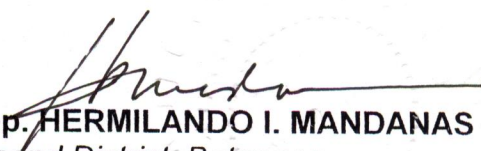
The long history of the people of the Sulu Archipelago has left an indelible mark in their culture and tradition. While they share the same religion as the Maranaos, the Maguindanao, and other Muslims in Mindanao, they are a people apart, with their own tongues, customs, traditions and ways of thinking, in the same way that Tagalogs, Cebuanos and Ilocanos, while Christians, have different traditions, customs and dialects.

The historical background and cultural structure under the Sultanate has proven to be enduring, effective, and endearing to the needs of the people of the Sulu Archipelago, due to the respect, love and reverence they have for the Sultan and the institutions of the Sultanate. The people look upon the Sultan as a revered leader who wields enormous influence. Thus, interweaving the institution of the Sultanate into the social and political fabric, and economic environment of the Sulu Archipelago, consisting of the present provinces of Sulu, Tawi-tawi and Basilan, would boost development of the region. This is consistent with Section 15, Article X of the 1987 Constitution, providing for the creation of autonomous regions for areas sharing common and distinctive historical and cultural heritage and social structures.

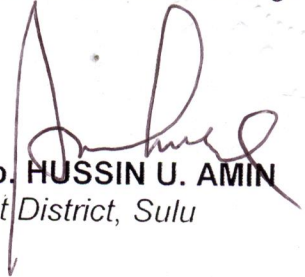
In view thereof, approval of this bill is earnestly sought.



Rep. ABDULGANI "Gerry" SALAPUDDIN
Lone District, Basilan



Rep. HERMILANDO I. MANDANAS
Second District, Batangas



Rep. HUSSIN U. AMIN
First District, Sulu

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THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

Second Regular Session

House Bill No. 5369

**AN ACT CREATING A SEPARATE AND DISTINCT AUTONOMOUS
REGION FOR THE SULTANATE OF SULU, AMENDING FOR THE
PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9054, AS AMENDED, PROVIDING
APPROPRIATION THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the
Philippines in Congress assembled:

Section 1. *Creation of the Autonomous Region of the Sultanate of Sulu Archipelago; Amendment of Republic Act No. 9054.* – Republic Act No. 9054, entitled *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,* is hereby amended with the creation hereof of a separate and distinct Autonomous Region of the Sultanate of Sulu Archipelago, subject to a plebiscite to be held in the provinces of Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-tawi, in accordance with Section 18, Article X of the Constitution. All other provisions of Republic Act No. 9054 as far as consistent herewith shall apply to the provisions of this Act.

Section 2. *Plebiscite.* - The creation of the Autonomous Region for the Sultanate of Sulu Archipelago shall take effect and amendments to Republic Act No. 9054 shall be deemed ratified when approved by a majority of the votes cast by the constituent units of the Autonomous Region of the Sultanate of Sulu Archipelago, in a plebiscite which shall be held not earlier than ninety (90) days or later than one hundred twenty (120) days after the approval of this Act: Provided, That only the provinces and cities voting favorably in such plebiscite shall be included in the Autonomous Region for the Sultanate of Sulu Archipelago. The provinces and cities which in the plebiscite do not vote for inclusion in the Autonomous Region shall remain in the existing administrative regions: Provided, however, That the President may, by administrative determination, merge the existing regions.

Section 3. *The Sultan of Sulu as Revered and Eminent Traditional Leader.* – In accordance with the customs, practices and culture of the people, the Sultan of Sulu is hereby designated as the Revered and Eminent Traditional Leader of the Autonomous Regional Government of the Sultanate of Sulu Archipelago.

Section 4. *Transition Government.* –

A. Executive Department

55 (1) Until after the regular officials of ARSSA shall have been
56 elected and qualified, the President shall appoint, upon
57 recommendation of the Sultan of Sulu, the interim Regional
58 Governor, interim Regional Vice-Governor, and the three interim
59 Deputy Governors for Christians, Indigenous Cultural
60 Communities and Muslims, who shall serve as the executive
61 officers of ARSSA and shall exercise the regular powers and
62 duties as defined in Republic Act No. 9054.

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64 (2) The incumbent local officials such as governors, vice governors,
65 members of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan, mayors, vice
66 mayors, members of the Sangguniang Bayan and all other
67 elective local officials, shall continue to discharge their official
68 functions until expiration of their respective terms of office.
69 Provided however, that they shall be under the administrative
70 supervision and control of the Regional Governor. They shall
71 also be eligible to run for re-election as provided under the Local
72 Government Code.

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75 B. Legislative Department

76 (1) Under the conditions set forth in Section 3, Paragraph A, the
77 legislative powers of ARSSA shall be vested in the interim
78 Regional Assembly, which shall be composed of the incumbent
79 members of the regional assembly from the provinces of
80 Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-tawi, and an additional eight (8) interim
81 members, representing the legislative districts, to be appointed
82 by the President upon recommendation of the Sultan of Sulu,
83 distributed as follows:

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85 a. Sulu Four (4);
86 b. Basilan Two (2); and
87 c. Tawi-tawi Two (2).

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90 (2) The interim Regional Legislative Assembly shall choose and
91 select the Speaker in accordance with its internal rules and
92 regulations and shall exercise the powers and duties provided
93 under Article Vi, Republic Act No. 9054, and may enact laws
94 concerning regional security, regional postal service, regional
95 elections of officials, regional trade and tariffs, regional auditing
96 system, and regional air, land, and water transport and
97 communications, thereby amending Article IV, Section 3 of
98 Republic Act No. 9054.

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101 Section 5. *Seat of Regional Government.* – The seat of the regional
102 government of ARSSA shall be at Jolo, Sulu, until after the Regional
103 Legislative Assembly has determined the permanent seat of the autonomous
104 government.

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106 Section 6. *Appropriations.* – The sum of P200 million is hereby
107 appropriated from the unprogrammed budget of the national government in
108 addition to the prorated budgetary share of the provinces of Sulu, Tawi-tawi
109 and Basilan in the existing budget of the Autonomous Region in Muslim
110 Mindanao, to defray the initial operations of ARSSA, including construction,

111 renovation or lease of buildings, transportation and communication expenses,
112 and salaries. Any deficiency shall be taken from the contingency fund of the
113 President.

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115 Section 7. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, presidential decrees,
116 executive orders or parts thereof inconsistent herewith are hereby repealed or
117 modified accordingly.

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119 Section 8. *Effectivity Clause.* - This Act shall take effect after fifteen
120 (15) days following its complete publication in at least two (2) national local
121 newspapers and one (1) newspaper of general circulation in the Autonomous
122 Region.

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124 APPROVED.