



**PROCEEDINGS 2026-36**

Islamic Studies Program

# Halal Compliance in the Philippine Correctional Facilities and Security Institutions

Proceedings of the Validation Meeting on the Results and  
Policy Recommendations

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16 April 2026

Room 104-B, Ground Floor, Virata Hall, UP Institute of Small Scale Industries  
Building, E. Jacinto St., University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City

*Maria Zain G. Daclis*



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03-04 June 2025

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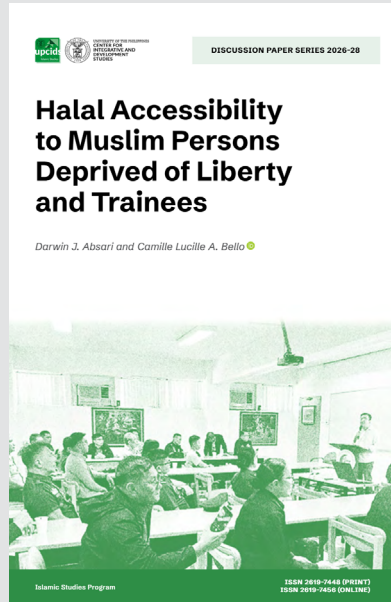
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### **PROCEEDINGS**

Proceedings of the Seminar-  
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## Halal Accessibility to Muslim Persons Deprived of Liberty and Trainees

*Darwin J. Absari and Camille Lucille A. Bella*



Islamic Studies Program

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### **DISCUSSION PAPER**

Halal Accessibility to Muslim  
Persons Deprived of Liberty  
and Trainees



# About the Proceedings

The University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS), through its Islamic Studies Program (ISP), in collaboration with the University of the Philippines Institute of Islamic Studies (UP IIS), convened a validation meeting on 16 April 2026 to review the findings and policy recommendations of the study titled “Halal Accessibility to Muslim PDLs and Trainees.” This study forms part of the broader project, “Halal Compliance in Philippine Correctional Facilities and Security Institutions.” It examines current halal compliance practices in selected correctional and security institutions and proposes policy measures to better support Muslim inmates and trainees in fulfilling their religious dietary obligations.

The meeting was held at Room 104-B, Virata Hall, Institute of Small Scale Industries, E. Jacinto Street, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City. It was attended by key stakeholders from the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), Philippine National Police Training Service (PNPTS), Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), Bureau of Corrections (BuCor), MIOM Thinking Ummah, the House of Representatives, the Philippine National Police (PNP), and Blue Mosque and Cultural Center (BMCC).

This document records the proceedings of the meeting, including the presentation of findings, validation of results, and additional input from participants. The activity aimed to gather feedback from relevant stakeholders and partner institutions, as well as to solicit recommendations to further refine the study’s policy proposals toward improving halal compliance and religious accommodation in government institutions.

The meeting began with an introductory lecture by UP CIDS Convenor, Asst. Prof. Darwin J. Absari. His presentation provided an overview of the development of halal in the Philippines, including the historical context of Muslim-Christian relations from the colonial period to the post-independence era. He also discussed the current landscape, highlighted key findings of the study, and outlined proposed ways forward to develop policy recommendations that are grounded, practical, and responsive to institutional realities.

The second part of the meeting focused on an open exchange of ideas and recommendations among stakeholders and partner institutions. The insights generated from these discussions will be incorporated into the final study findings.

This validation meeting forms part of an ongoing initiative launched in 2024 by UP CIDS-ISP and UP IIS. The initiative seeks to address the need to bridge religious and cultural diversity between Muslim and non-Muslim communities, deepen discourse on halal as a way of life, and advance policy recommendations to strengthen the halal ecosystem in the Philippines.

These proceedings were documented and prepared by Ms. Maria Zain G. Daclis, Program Staff, UP CIDS-ISP.

# Introduction and Background

## Project “Halal Compliance in Philippine Correctional Facilities and Security Institutions.”

*Asst. Prof. Darwin J. Absari*

*Convenor, UP CIDS-Islamic Studies Program*

*College Secretary, UP Institute of Islamic Studies*

Asst. Prof. Darwin J. Absari, Convenor of the UP CIDS–ISP and College Secretary of the UP Institute of Islamic Studies (UP IIS), welcomed the participants and expressed his appreciation for their presence in the meeting. He thanked representatives from the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), Philippine National Police Training Service (PNPTS), Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), Bureau of Corrections (BuCor), MIOM Thinking Ummah, the House of Representatives, the Philippine National Police (PNP), and Blue Mosque and Cultural Center for taking part in the study titled “Halal Compliance in Philippine Correctional Facilities and Security Institutions.”

Asst. Prof. Absari then introduced UP IIS, explaining its establishment during the height of the conflict in Mindanao under Martial Law as a think tank to support the national government in crafting policies and programs for Muslim Filipinos. The Institute is mandated to bridge cultural gaps between Muslims and non-Muslims and to encourage greater Muslim participation in national life. He also provided background on UP CIDS, which was founded in 1985 under the leadership of the late Eduardo Angara as the policy research arm of the University of the Philippines. He highlighted that UP CIDS operates various programs across constituent universities, producing research and publications that inform policymakers nationwide.

Transitioning to the objectives of the meeting, Asst. Prof. Absari explained that the Islamic Studies Program (ISP) of UP CIDS focuses on issues affecting Muslim communities and develops research initiatives that can provide inclusive policy development. A key area of engagement over the past three years has been halal in the Philippines. He noted that halal has gained increasing attention in recent years, with growing support from both government and private sectors. As a result, more establishments—including hotels, restaurants, hospitals, and other service providers—are offering halal-compliant products and services. Recognizing its global economic potential, the government has also begun investing in the halal industry to contribute to national development and support Muslim communities.

Halal is more than just the absence of pork; this is what Asst. Prof. Absari emphasized as he recalled that, upon listening to various conferences and forums about halal, they only revolved around food and the absence of pork. He explained that halal is deeper, that it is an important principle of Islam. It is a lifestyle that is connected to the bigger concept of Islamic purification. In Islam, purification is half of faith. He noted that no matter how often you pray, if you eat haram, those prayers will be useless.

Drawing from history, Asst. Prof. Absari shared how halal was practiced by the ancestors in Mindanao. For them, halal is a mechanism to avoid corruption. Before they examine the food, they inquire first where the money used to buy the food came from. Asst. Prof. Absari stressed that halal begins with lawful earnings. To illustrate this, he shared examples: inherently permissible food, such as chicken, becomes haram if obtained through unlawful means, such as theft. Similarly, food purchased using money gained through dishonest practices—such as overcharging passengers—would also be considered haram. He added that halal is usually discussed in terms of how food is cooked or the process it undergoes to make sure that it does not have pork. However, no one is asking about how the food is acquired or where the money comes from. This broader understanding forms part of the advocacy of UP IIS and UP CIDS-ISP, which aim to deepen the discourse on halal and improve how it is operationalized in institutional settings.

Connecting the discussion to the objective of the meeting, Asst. Prof. Absari taught that it is important to improve the discourse on the true meaning of halal to improve knowledge and inculcate sensitivity to both Muslims and non-Muslims. He added that there are incidents wherein Muslims were given pork, which resulted in altercations and even death. He cited an incident that

reached the national news, wherein a policeman who is a Muslim shot his fellow non-Muslim police officer. During the Senate inquiry into the incident, it was found that the reason for the shooting was bullying. The Muslim policeman was made to eat pork by the police who were shot. Asst. Prof. Absari also shared that there have been cases of bullying and discrimination among trainees in the security sector and persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) in correctional facilities. There are accounts that there are Muslim trainees and inmates who were served foods that are not pork-free, as well as being taunted by fellow inmates or trainees to eat pork. He further explained that to help solve these issues and ease these challenges, the UP CIDS ISP decided to conduct a study, “Halal Accessibility to Muslim PDLs and Trainees.”

Asst. Prof. Absari provided a brief background about the conduct of the study, wherein they went to the Philippine Coast Guard, Philippine National Police Training Institutions, and the New Bilibid Prison, to assess the halal process in food preparation, identify challenges, to recommend policies that could help the government institutions develop more inclusive policies that accommodate Muslim religious practices. This collaborative process, he noted, is essential to refining the research and ensuring that the resulting policy recommendations are both comprehensive and responsive to institutional realities.



# Historical Background

## A Lecture on the Prejudice Between Muslim and Non-Muslims during Spanish, American, and Japanese Invasions

*Asst. Prof. Darwin J. Absari*

*Convenor, UP CIDS-Islamic Studies Program*

*College Secretary, UP Institute of Islamic Studies*

Before presenting the results of the study, Asst. Prof. Absari explained that bullying and discrimination are a result of prejudice and miseducation. To expound this, he gave a brief lecture on the historical context of the prejudice between Muslims and Christians.

According to Asst. Prof. Absari, there were no significant religious conflicts in the Philippines prior to the Spanish period. Islam arrived after the influences of ancient Chinese and Indian civilizations, entering through the southern regions and gradually spreading northward. He emphasized that the introduction of Islam made substantial contributions to Philippine civilization, particularly in the areas of language, psychology, and spirituality. To illustrate this influence, he cited several commonly used words with Islamic roots. For instance, “opo” is said to have originated from Malay, while “*salamat*” derives from the Malay word “*selamat*,” which in turn traces back to the Arabic term “*salam*.” Similarly, the word “*simbahan*” comes from the root “*simba*,” connected to the Malay “*sumba*,” itself derived from the Arabic “*samba*.” Asst. Prof. Absari further noted that many Islamic legacies remain unrecognized in Filipino culture. One notable example is the concept of “*kapwa*,” a core Filipino value that reflects shared identity, interconnectedness, and empathy. According to him, “*kapwa*” may be conceptually related to “*tawhid*,” the Islamic doctrine emphasizing the absolute oneness of existence.

Asst. Prof. Absari then discussed the important events following the arrival of the Spaniards. According to him, when Islam reached Luzon and Visayas, the Spaniards came and encountered Muslims. With the grudges of being ruled by Muslims for nearly 800 years in Spain, the encounter resulted in a bloody war. He also briefly elaborated on Spain's long history of conflict with Muslims who governed Spain for nearly eight centuries. Asst. Prof. Absari also explained that Spain was able to bring civilization to Europe because of the knowledge of the East, which came from the Muslim scholars who were in Spain. He continued to detail that slowly, Islamic Spain was divided into various kingdoms, creating a bloody war during the last 300 years of the stay of the Muslims in Spain. Ending the presence of any Muslim rule is the Reconquest, a crusade to take back the lands of Spain from the hands of the Muslims. He mentioned that in the last part of the reconquest, there was an Inquisition. The Spanish monarch set up an Inquisition to impose Catholicism as the national religion. In that context, Jews, Orthodox Christians, and Protestants were punished. The last part of the Inquisition involved the forced conversion of Muslims to Catholicism. Those not in favor were asked to leave the country. Asst. Prof. Absari also noted that, as the inquisition in Spain was not yet finished, the Spaniards had already reached the Philippines. So, when the Spaniards encountered Muslims in the Philippines, their hatred from the past was poured on them. Spaniards called the Filipino Muslims "*Moro*", similar to what they called Muslims in Spain, the "Moors".

Aside from the animosity of the Spaniards from being ruled by the Muslims in Spain, Asst. Prof. Absari also remarked that another factor in this is that the Muslims were leading inter-island trade, which is one of the reasons why Spaniards came to the Philippines. With this, the Spaniards saw the Muslims as a hurdle to their mission. As a result, Spain created a policy to enslave the Muslims, take their property, and force them to convert to Christianity. He added that the Spaniards used the Christianized natives to fight the Muslims. To get the sympathy and support of the natives, the Spaniards instilled in their consciousness that Muslims are savages. Jesuit priests would also preach that if you can kill a Muslim, you will go straight to heaven. That is why there is a religious theater play called "*Moro-moro*", which is part of the mind-conditioning strategy of the Spaniards, depicting the triumph of Spaniards over villainous Muslims.

Asst. Prof. Absari also discussed how the Muslims responded to the wrongdoing of the Spaniards through the Christian natives. He shared that when the Muslims saw that the military strength of the Spaniards came from the native converts, they attacked Christian settlements, grabbed the men, left

the wives and children, then burned the houses and plantations. Men were brought to Mindanao to be sold as slaves to Europeans or hired in various economic activities. He remarked that this is the reason why Filipino ancestors have traumas and a mindset that Muslims are hostile. On the other hand, Muslims also have fear and a negative frame of mind toward Christian natives. Unfortunately, because of this, Filipinos were not just divided; Muslims and Christians harbored hatred and prejudice toward each other.

Asst. Prof. Absari further added that after the Spaniards left the Philippines, there has been no healing that has happened. During the American occupation, because the Muslims continued to fight, the Americans used the same strategy as Spain, where they used the Filipino constabulary to fight the Muslims. He noted that the phrase “a good moro is a dead moro” became a symbolic campaign of the Philippine Constabulary to recruit members against the Muslims who resisted American rule. Asst. Prof. Absari explained the plan of the Americans, which is to promote national unity by sending Christian settlers to Mindanao to have an interaction with the Muslims. However, the Americans' concept of unity is to assimilate the Muslims into the bigger Filipino way of life but subordinate to the Christians.

Delving more into the historical background, Asst. Prof. Absari further discussed that the American occupation was briefly disturbed by the Japanese invasion. This is when Muslim and Christian natives truly unite to fight against the Japanese. He emphasized that General Douglas MacArthur was able to escape to Australia through Mindanao, in areas controlled by Muslims. Then, Muslim guerrillas reached Manila to fight the Japanese, making it possible for General MacArthur to return to the Philippines. He added that the Mindanao area was actually liberated a few months before the return of General MacArthur. He remarked that this shows that, despite centuries of fighting and hatred, unity is still possible against foreign invaders.



# Historical Background

## A Lecture on Contemporary Studies

*Asst. Prof. Darwin J. Absari*

*Convenor, UP CIDS-Islamic Studies Program*

*College Secretary, UP Institute of Islamic Studies*

Asst. Prof. Absari subsequently discussed the contemporary history of Muslim and Christian relations. He explained that when the Japanese invasion ended, the Americans returned, reinstated the Commonwealth government, and finally gave the Philippines its independence in 1946. However, due to the said independence, despite the protests of the Muslims, Sulu and Mindanao were integrated as part of the Philippines. Asst. Prof. Absari also shared that even though independence was attained, the Philippines still pursued the colonial policies of the Americans, which were not sensitive to the religious beliefs and culture of the Muslims. He added that the framework is still through the lens of the Spaniards and Americans, with hatred and prejudice. Although there are still problems because the national policies do not conform to Muslim traditions (e.g., polygamy), Muslims have started to adjust within the context of the bigger Philippine national life. Until old wounds were scratched during the uprising led by Datu Hadji Kamlon against the Philippine government.

Asst. Prof. Absari continued that before the declaration of Martial Law, many Muslim men showed interest in becoming soldiers. During this time, being a soldier gave Muslim men another purpose in life in terms of livelihood, where they also obtained respect and security. With the influx of Muslims in the military training facilities, the problem of how to respond to their dietary requirement as well as a proper venue for praying became a challenge, as well as the issues of bullying amongst the trainees.

He added that on the onset of Martial Law in 1972, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) uprising also began, resulting in all-out war in Mindanao. With the Muslims fighting the government in many areas in Mindanao, the anger toward the Muslims became deeper. Fortunately, there are also Muslims in the security sector who were able to bridge the cultural gap and were able to educate their Christian fellow soldiers.

Not all wars in Mindanao were caused by the rebels and government, clarified by Asst. Prof. Absari. Some were caused by the abuse of soldiers. This is the reason why Muslim men look into the Filipino soldiers as a continuation of the American and Spanish colonization. This conflict ended in 1996 through the Final Peace Agreement that stated the integration of MNLF combatants into the Armed Forces of the Philippines. He added that there were 5,720 MNLF combatants, including officers who entered the Philippine Army, Philippine National Police, and other security sectors. And because of their considerable population, they were given prayer spaces, and their dietary requirements were met. Muslim trainees were allowed to volunteer in food preparation to ensure that the cooking process was halal. Asst. Prof. Absari emphasized that during this time, Muslim trainees were respected and embraced by the institution despite the conflicts in the past. Unfortunately, this was not sustained, which resulted in the challenges of the present.

# Presentation of the Current Status

## Result of the Study and Ways Forward

*Asst. Prof. Darwin J. Absari*

*Convenor, UP CIDS-Islamic Studies Program  
College Secretary, UP Institute of Islamic Studies*

Asst. Prof. Absari briefly reiterated the objective and methodology of the study. He explained that to assess the halal accessibility to Muslim trainees and PDLs, the ISP conducted research, visited selected training and correctional facilities, and interviewed key stakeholders.

For everybody's appreciation, Asst. Prof. Absari shared the current practices across the institutions based on their research. He shared that the Philippine Coast Guard uses informal verbal assurances and separates food items but lacks formal halal certification and a dedicated kitchen. On the other hand, the Philippine National Police provide non-pork meals in predominantly Muslim training centers with utensil segregation. The New Bilibid Prison has designated Muslim focal persons overseeing halal compliance and maintaining longstanding institutional recognition of dietary needs. In addition, the New Bilibid Prison has a handbook and adheres to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). In terms of prayer spaces and leniency in allowing Muslim trainees and inmates to practice their religion, it is noted that all institutions provided means and facilities for prayers; in fact, the New Bilibid Prison has a mosque inside its vicinity. There are a few minimal issues noted, such as the unintended serving of food with pork to a Muslim PDL due to an accidental mix-up from the food provider, which was addressed promptly.

Aside from the key institutional gaps, which include lack of unified policy on halal, the absence of formal halal certification and dedicated kitchen, insufficient staff training on halal principles, shared cooking spaces that risk contamination, and limited awareness among commanding officers about halal

restrictions extending beyond eating itself, Asst. Prof. Absari highlighted that being isolated from the bigger Muslim community is one of the gaps to also look at. He shared that while he was interviewing at the New Bilibid Prison, a Muslim inmate died. When he inquired why the body was still at the facility, the Muslim personnel informed him that none of the groups or organizations that he contacted had helped. In response, Asst. Prof. Absari contacted his brother, who happens to be the administrator of the Blue Mosque and Cultural Center (BMCC) in Taguig City, and requested the facilitation of the burial of the Muslim PDL who died. Immediately, the body was transported to the Blue Mosque. With this, Asst. Prof. Absari noted that it seems that the Muslim community forgot about their brothers and sisters inside the correctional facilities. He also acknowledged that while there are groups that teach Islam inside the correctional facilities, these should also be screened to avoid extremist teachings that could instill a negative mindset among Muslim PDLs.

Asst. Prof. Absari also shared that while the discrimination in the Institutions is gone, there is still bullying among the trainees in non-Muslim areas. He recounts that he heard issues such as taunting a fellow Muslim trainee to taste pork, usually triggering fist fights inside training camps. However, in terms of management, strict implementation of measures to ensure halal food is served to the trainees is observed.

In terms of ways forward, Asst. Prof. Absari shared that the study recommended adopting standardized policies, mandatory cultural sensitivity training, designated prayer spaces, qualified Muslim focal persons, and coordination with accredited halal providers. He explained that halal provisions should become a policy instead of just a practice of inherent respect from the security sectors, with a considerable number of Muslims and non-pork-eating non-Muslim trainees. He also added that orientation on halal and cultural diversities should come at the beginning of the training, which will allow the institutions to have clear data on the population of Muslims and non-pork-eating trainees and to plan for their needs and encourage the non-Muslim trainees to have mutual respect for the religious and cultural diversity. Asst. Prof. Absari also recommended that, instead of waiting for the Muslim PDLs and trainees to request prayer spaces, if the need is evident, the institution can proactively provide one. This will also encourage the Muslim PDLs and trainees to practice their faith, contributing to the process of them becoming better individuals.

On the issues of Muslim trainees abusing the considerations being given to them, such as using the allowed time to prayer to loiter around the training facility, Asst. Prof. Absari recommended utilizing the role of the Salam Police by embedding into their program the implementation of dialogues to the recruits, making sure that they understood that the considerations being given to them should not be abused. To assist the correctional and training facilities to be halal compliant, Asst. Prof. Absari also offered assistance by bringing in halal certifiers to provide initial assessment and recommendations to address issues and challenges in preparing halal food, and even an orientation to the assigned cooks.

Another recommendation discussed by Asst. Prof. Absari is the provision of psychosocial Islam to the PDLs. He reiterated that radical teachings of Islam should be screened to avoid inculcating negative mindsets. He explained that this will help the PDLs to look at their prison cell as a grace and opportunity to reform and to have ample time to deeply learn Islam. After the PDLs served their time, Asst. Prof. Absari also explained the importance of monitoring their integration with their communities. He also added that he actually coordinated with the BMCC to welcome the inmates first after they leave prison and before joining their community.

Other recommendations discussed by Asst. Prof. Absari are the coordination with Muslim organizations to identify assistance that can be extended to the Muslim PDLs, which may be in the form of food, legal assistance, and many others. For correctional facilities with a large number of Muslim PDLs, he recommended the hiring of additional Muslim personnel.

Asst. Prof. Absari closed his presentation by inviting everyone, especially those who are from the Bureau of Corrections and Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, to share their experiences, comment on the findings of the study, and add some input on the ways forward to create a holistic policy recommendation.



# Discussion with Stakeholders and Partner Institutions

*Facilitated by Asst. Prof. Darwin J. Absari*

*Convenor, UP CIDS-Islamic Studies Program*

*College Secretary, UP Institute of Islamic Studies*

Following the lecture and presentation of Asst. Prof. Absari, an open forum was conducted to provide participants with the opportunity to share their experiences and views about the results of the study. Asst. Prof. Absari first inquired of the participants from BuCor and BJMP to share their practices and challenges in catering to the dietary and religious needs of their Muslim constituents.

The BJMP representative shared that the food preparation for the Muslim PDLs is separate and is prepared by designated cooks who are also Muslim PDLs. They also observe separate storage of meats and utensils. They added that there are also allotted areas for praying to support the PDLs in practicing their faith and allow food donations to the PDLs during Ramadan. They expressed their warm agreement with the recommendations of the study and would highly appreciate it if their chaplain could be provided with a checklist for halal compliance. Asst. Prof. Absari responded to this by suggesting that in future interventions, the conduct of meetings with the chaplains should not just cascade these halal compliance requirements, but also ensure that the teachings being shared with the inmates are not radical, which in the future, will make the PDLs have a hard time living in a Christian-dominated community.

Capt. Alicman Borowa from the PCG Chaplain Service Operating Unit shared his experiences in recommending policies advancing the welfare of Muslim trainees. He emphasized that while the institution has a significant number of Muslim trainees and maintains a non-discriminatory stance, a key challenge

lies in the limited understanding of Islamic practices among commanders who approve policies. He noted, however, that well-justified proposals are generally well received.

As an example, he recounted his proposal to include the hijab as part of the uniform for female trainees. To support this, he drew parallels to historical practices, citing women during the time of Jesus—particularly Mary—who wore veils for modesty. With this justification, the proposal was approved, and the institution eventually procured hijabs as part of the official uniform. He added that when superiors clearly understand the reasoning behind a proposal, they are more inclined to approve it.

He also shared an experience involving a deceased Muslim trainee who had two wives, which highlighted gaps in institutional knowledge. In response, the chaplain recommended policies on succession, inheritance, and estate settlement, which were subsequently adopted by the PCG's policymaking bodies. Similarly, when a proposal arose to prohibit polygamy among Muslim personnel, the chaplain justified opposing it, and the institution followed this recommendation.

Given this pattern of openness, Capt. Borowa expressed confidence that the PCG will also adopt future policies, such as those related to halal practices. He further noted that, as of the past two years, the PCG comprises members from 28 different religions. In this context, he supports the inclusion of an "Introduction to Islam" module in the training curriculum, believing it will promote greater understanding and harmony.

Among the PCG's best practices, he highlighted the conduct of a Ramadan Camp, which provides non-Muslims with an opportunity to better understand observance of Islamic practices. The institution also makes a conscious effort to inform Muslim trainees when food is not pork-free during events and to include non-pork options—such as during boodle fights—so that Muslim trainees can participate fully and feel included.

Taking off from providing the non-Muslims a better understanding of Islamic observances and way of life, Asst. Prof. Absari shared that he knew a well-known priest preaching a misconception about eating halal food. He said, this preacher advises his followers that consuming halal food will convert them into Muslims because of the prayers that were cast over the food. Against this misconception, Asst. Prof. Absari explained that in other countries, halal

food is being patronized by many non-Muslims because it is clean and healthy. He added that in advanced countries such as Singapore and China, halal food is being looked at scientifically for its cleanliness. Unfortunately, in the Philippines, Filipinos are still blinded by the misconception that halal foods are only for Muslims, and it will convert them into one.

Representatives from BuCor shared their current practice in fostering the welfare of their Muslim constituents. In BuCor, they have two separate kitchens, one for the general PDLs and the other one is for non-pork-eating inmates. Though there are separate kitchens, the food preparers come from one catering agency procured by BuCor. The representatives shared that when it comes to segregation of food preparation and utensils, their chaplain observes this process to avoid contamination. They also require the caterer to submit halal-certified processed meat and canned goods. One of the challenges they encounter is when the caterer runs out of stock. When this happens, BuCor consults the Muslim community for alternative food options. Asst. Prof. Absari noted this and recommended that instead of having one caterer for all, it might be better to have a separate caterer for halal to avoid the shortage of halal food options. The BuCor representative answered that this is not possible since their funding for catering is lumped into one budget allocation; thus, they cannot procure additional suppliers or food caterers. As a recommendation to solve this, Asst. Prof. Absari suggested that BuCor explicitly indicate in their procurement contracts that suppliers must be able to provide halal food options at all times. He also offered to connect the caterer to a pool of halal meat suppliers to improve their supply chain.

Various representatives of correctional institutions also shared some of the efforts of their chaplains. Some of these are facilitation of requests to be allowed to hold Islamic observances, especially during Ramadan, provision of space for prayers, conduct of Iftar, and others even requested a land to be used as a burial ground for Muslims. With this, Assistant Professor Absari stressed the importance of chaplains and the need to map out the efforts and to identify what still has to be done.

Asst. Prof. Absari also highlighted the importance of collaboration to improve the way of living of the PDLs. He explained that there is a problem with the way of thinking of Muslims or how they look at the PDLs. He emphasized that Islam does not hate criminals; Islam hates crime. Thus, policies should be based on this framework. He added that though the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) could not attend the validation meeting, they will be invited to collaborate because it is also part of their mandate.

Representatives from the Salam Police of Camp Crame were given the opportunity to share their current practices and concerns. They clarified that the Salam Police primarily focus on community visibility, while the chaplain oversees the management of the *masjid*. They expressed experiencing a sense of discrimination due to the absence of a mosque within Camp Crame, especially given the presence of both Catholic and Evangelical churches in the area. As an interim measure, they use the Salam Police Center as an alternative space for prayer. Although philanthropists from various embassies have offered support for the construction of a mosque, no land has yet been allocated for this purpose.

Regarding the development or adjustment of policies to accommodate Muslim religious practices, Asst. Prof. Absari cautioned against approaches that might inadvertently create division. He emphasized the importance of fostering unity in diversity, underscoring that programs related to well-being, livelihood, and other services should remain inclusive and avoid segregation. Such initiatives, he noted, should encourage interaction and contribute to national healing between Muslims and non-Muslims. Accommodating religious needs, he stressed, should always be framed within the broader goal of national unity. A representative from the New Bilibid Prison in Muntinlupa suggested that the kind of Islam to be taught inside the facility should be centered on repentance and purification. Asst. Prof. Absari agreed. He further added the need to develop a module on Islam as a psychosocial intervention.

After considering the recommendations, Asst. Prof. Absari informed the group that he would coordinate a visit to their facilities, accompanied by a resource person from halal accreditation bodies, to help assess areas for improvement. He also mentioned that UP IIS could develop a training module on the history of Islam and halal as a way of life. This module would aim to educate not only Muslims and non-Muslims, but also policymakers responsible for crafting relevant regulations.

The meeting concluded with participants requesting to be included in a group communication channel to receive updates on the project's progress and to remain involved in future initiatives, particularly those related to achieving halal compliance in their training and correctional facilities.

# Photo Documentation



Figure 1. Assistant Professor Absari welcoming all the participants to the validation meeting and briefly discussed the objectives of the “*Halal Compliance in the Philippine Correctional Facilities and Security Institutions*” project.



Figure 2. Assistant Professor Absari giving a lecture about the historical context of the Muslim and Christian relations and Halal in the Philippines.



Figure 3. Capt. Borowa sharing the current practices in the Philippine Coast Guard and how they foster to recommend policies for the benefit of their Muslim trainees.



Figure 4. Asst. Warden JINSP Imee Cadampog sharing the process of how the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology ensures that the Muslim PDLs were served pork-free meals.



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Established in 1985 by University of the Philippines (UP) President Edgardo J. Angara, the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) is the policy research unit of the University that connects disciplines and scholars across the several units of the UP System. It is mandated to encourage collaborative and rigorous research addressing issues of national significance by supporting scholars and securing funding, enabling them to produce outputs and recommendations for public policy.

The UP CIDS currently has twelve research programs that are clustered under the areas of education and capacity building, development, and social, political, and cultural studies. It publishes policy briefs, monographs, webinar/conference/forum proceedings, and the Philippine Journal for Public Policy, all of which can be downloaded free from the UP CIDS website.

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