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Philippines

Marawi solidarity continues

- News from around the world -

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The Philippine government officially declared on October 23 that the battle of Marawi was over and that this historic Muslim city had been fully recaptured after five months of fierce fighting against the jihadist group of the Maute clan and its allies.

Two of the top Filipino jihadist leaders who had declared allegiance to ISIS were killed in the final phase of the fighting: Isnilon Hapilon, from the Abu Sayyaf group, and Omarkhayam Maute.

The official end of the fighting does not mean a return to normal.

Much of the city of Marawi has been destroyed. The same military tactic was applied as during urban confrontations in other countries - destruction of buildings where enemy snipers could position themselves, intense saturation bombing... Many residents of Marawi reproach President Duterte for having refused any contacts (through the MILF - Moro Islamic Liberation Front) with the jihadists, for a possible evacuation of the city that would have avoided the worst.

Some 600,000 people have had to flee the war and no one knows when they will (or will be allowed to) return home. While some areas of the city are habitable, such as in the university district, others are devastated. According to initial estimates, the reconstruction would cost \$ 1 billion ... Most of the refugee population will remain so for a long time to come.

Martial law, which has been indiscriminately imposed throughout Mindanao Island in the name of counter-terrorism, had been extended until December. Will it be lifted? Before a decision is made in this regard, the situation must be "evaluated", the authorities have announced. However, the conditions that allowed the emergence of a new jihadist wave in Mindanao still exist.

For five months, the government forces concentrated their human and material resources against the Maute clan group and its allies. The Communist Party of the Philippines took the opportunity to take the initiative militarily, including seizing weapons depots. It is in Mindanao that its guerrilla, the New People's Army (NPA) is the strongest. However, forest and mining lobbies have taken over the island, threatening the ancestral territories with mountain dwellers, which creates favorable conditions for the geographic expansion of the NPA.

Rodrigo Duterte had announced that government forces would be mobilized against the NPA as soon as they were done with the jihadists. The moment may have come.

The situation in Mindanao continues to be eminently precarious, from various viewpoints.

Solidarity with the victims of Marawi's war remains, therefore, of complete relevance - to all those who still cannot return home or to those who can, but face the difficulties of reconstruction.

The Mihands coalition continues its solidarity activities under the dangerous conditions of martial law.

We have received 14,659 â,- and the costs (mostly bank fees) amounted to 351.85 â,-

Marawi solidarity continues

To date, ESSF has sent â,- 14,212 for solidarity Marawi.

Let's continue!

Pierre Rousset
ESSF
To send donations

Cheques
cheques to ESSF in euros only, payable in France, to be sent to:
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We will keep you informed of the state of the permanent solidarity fund and how it is utilized.