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# Critical humanitarian situation in Mindanao - Urgent appeal for financial aid

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## **Description:**

The most important initiative of solidarity taken by our association (ESSF) in 2017 already concerned the island of Mindanao, in the south of the Philippines. It was then a question of responding to the humanitarian consequences of the "Battle of Marawi" between government forces and jihadist movements - more than 600,000 people (mostly Muslim) had to flee the fighting and often found themselves totally destitute.

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**The most important initiative of solidarity taken by our association (ESSF) in 2017 already concerned the island of Mindanao, in the south of the Philippines. It was then a question of responding to the humanitarian consequences of the "Battle of Marawi" between government forces and jihadist movements - more than 600,000 people (mostly Muslim) had to flee the fighting and often found themselves totally destitute.**

The battle of Marawi lasted 5 months. The reconquest of the city by the army has not, however, led to an improvement in the humanitarian situation in Mindanao. The situation is actually more critical than ever, for various reasons: a devastating typhoon, widespread fighting between government forces and the New People's Army (NPA) of the CPP, a new jihadist area, prolongation of martial law throughout the whole island, mountain populations directly threatened by the activities of forestry and mining companies, impossibility for the majority of the inhabitants of Marawi to find decent living conditions ...

This is why we are relaunching our solidarity initiative this beginning of 2018. The funds collected will be sent to:

**Mihands coalition** [\[1\]](#) with whom we have been working for years, specifically asking them to use the collected funds for the victims of humanitarian disasters, whatever their origin (typhoon, military conflicts ...).

**The Tripod association** [\[2\]](#), which is part of the Mihands network, specifically asking them to use the funds to help the mountain population.

*Thanks to the donations we received at the end of 2017 for our permanent Asian Solidarity Fund, we have already been able to send this month of January 4,000 euros to Tripod .* [\[3\]](#) We thank all those who made this emergency aid possible.

## Description of the situation

Typhoon Temblin (international name) Vinta (Philippine name) struck Mindanao last December 22, crossing the northern part of the island from east to west and causing considerable damage: floods, landslides, etc. On December 24, we received a call for solidarity from Mihands, which we immediately published [\[4\]](#)

There is here an effect of climate change. Mindanao used to be hit by violent tidal waves, but not by the great tropical storms (typhoons), which crossed the Philippine archipelago farther north; they have now extended to the south where the people are poorly prepared for their violence. Besides, much of the devastation is due to economic activities, including deforestation (to a large extent illegal). This explains further why Temblin / Vinta has far more victims than what the volume of rains would normally imply.

Figures from late December mentioned 670,000 people affected by the typhoon, 140,000 displaced, 2,600 homes damaged, 60% destroyed, more than 200 dead, many injured. However, the situation in many localities remained unknown. We will be receiving later assessments soon.

**Mining and forestry lobbies** are seizing new lands, contributing to aggravate the consequences of climate hazards.

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Their activities also threaten directly the uprooting of various lumad communities - namely mountain tribes (or mountain ethno-linguistic groups) of Mindanao by penetrating into their ancestral domains.

**The conflict between the army and the CPP** is now total (even if the CP has participated in the Duterte government). Fighting is widespread in much of Mindanao and is often concentrated in mountainous areas. The pressure of the state of war is felt by communities everywhere, especially by the *lumad* communities. In areas where there is no active armed conflict, the population tries to preserve peace by avoiding being dragged into the spiral of militarization.

Martial law has again been extended throughout the island of Mindanao for the whole of 2018. This means practically that the army can do what it wants, even though the 1987 Constitution, drafted after the overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship, officially limits the powers of this exceptional situation. The army continues to look suspiciously upon Muslim refugee families from the Battle of Marawi, the self-organization of popular communities, civic movements, Left forces from all tendencies... In these conditions, the military framework renders the action of humanitarian grassroots networks more difficult.

The various causes of misfortune have superimposed, making the humanitarian situation particularly critical in a big part of Mindanao.

As soon as we receive additional information, we will let you know.

Thanking you for your solidarity,

To send donations **Cheques** cheques to ESSF in euros only, payable in France, to be sent to: ESSF 2, rue Richard-Lenoir 93100 Montreuil France

**Bank Account:** Crédit lyonnais Agence de la Croix-de-Chavaux (00525) 10 boulevard Chanzy 93100 Montreuil France ESSF, account number 445757C

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You can also send money through the association HelloAsso: see its button on the upper right side of ESSF English home page: <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spi...> Or go directly to: <https://www.helloasso.com/associati...>

We will keep you informed through our website of the state of the permanent solidarity fund and how it is utilized.

[1] Multi-Stakeholders Initiatives for Humanitarian Actions against Disasters

[2] Tri-People Organization against Disasters (TRIPOD)

[3] The funds were already sent last year to Tripod. See the 2017 Activities report which will be published soon.

[4] <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spi...>