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Mindanao (Philippines)

**Grassroot networks that help
people fleeing fighting in
Marawi are acting in an
increasingly dangerous
situation - They need our
support now!**

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Three weeks ago war began in Marawi, in the province of Lanao del Sur (island of Mindanao) between the government army and two fundamentalist groups, the clan Maute and Abu Sayyaf, identifying with the Islamic State. Almost 100 per cent of the population of this city, 95 per cent Muslim, has fled from very destructive fighting.

Our association, ESSF, has for a long time been supporting a network of some fifty associations, Mindanao Humanitarian Action Network (Mihands), which mobilises in the event of a catastrophe (typhoons, military conflicts ...). As early as 29 May, we took up an appeal by this coalition. [1] At the beginning of June, we sent them a first direct aid of 3,000 euros. We also endowed a solidarity fund in the Philippines with 6,000 euros in support of these activities, but this must be reconstituted in order to be able to meet other needs later. In the light of developments, we urgently need to help strengthen the capacity of the Mihands network.

The battle of Marawi began on 23 May in a police operation which encountered unexpected resistance from the fundamentalists. Since then, the situation has continued to deteriorate.

Maute and Abu Sayyaf have committed massacres, especially against Christians. The Philippine presidency has imposed martial law throughout the island, under which many human rights violations can be committed. The culture of impunity has reached a peak with President Duterte's "war on drugs" (which killed some eight thousand people). The army is present throughout the region; any displacement is dangerous, censorship of information is the rule.

Solidarity networks should not only help refugees. They must also protect those who have witnessed human rights violations and are threatened to prevent them testifying.

The vast majority of the Muslim population of the Philippines (the Moros) lives in the southern part of the archipelago. For decades, movements have struggled for the right to self-determination: the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). It is only recently, however, that a Salafist current, identifying with the Islamic State, has emerged. Today it is conducting actions of great violence, and possesses considerable firepower. The shock is profound. It makes solidarity more difficult. Most displaced persons are Muslim. They must be welcomed in areas of Christian population. They are in no way responsible for the crimes of the Maute clan and Abu Sayyaf, but may nevertheless face reactions of rejection or fear.

One of the founding principles of the Mihands network is the promotion of solidarity among the "three peoples" of Mindanao: the Lumads, the Moros and the descendants of the Christian "settlers" from the North and South of the archipelago who came to settle in the South. It is a great asset to intervene today in the neighbouring provinces of Marawi, in such a confrontational context.

Moreover, the national political situation is very unstable. The Philippine Archipelago is historically stowed in the United States and occupies a key geostrategic position in East Asia. President Duterte seeks to establish privileged ties with China and Russia - which Washington, the Filipino elites and the high command of the army can hardly accept. It is possible that the battle of Marawi, in turn, opens a regime crisis and / or leads to the imposition of martial law throughout the country.

Insecurity is likely to spread to Mindanao, or elsewhere. The responsibilities of the Mihands network, as well as other solidarity movements, are increasing accordingly. They must already take into account a possible worsening of the

situation, prepare themselves to help communities in danger while continuously measuring the risks incurred by their militant teams.

It is very important, in such a situation, to help them politically, by starting to understand the gravity of the current crisis - and, of course, to support them financially.

We try to offer, through our site [ESSF](#), ongoing information on the crisis in Marawi, the solidarity actions in progress and the general situation in the archipelago.

We are urgently calling for financial solidarity. The international donations we collect will be forwarded to Mihands.

To Donate

By Paypal - go to ESSF home page [here](#) on right hand side

By Cheque

In euros only and payable in France to the order of ESSF to: ESSF 2, rue Richard-Lenoir 93100 Montreuil la France

By Bank transfer:

Bank: Credit Lyonnais Agency of the Croix-de-Chavaux (00525) 10 boulevard Chanzy 93100 Montreuil la France
ESSF Account No. 445757C

National Bank References (NIBs): Bank: 30002 Caller ID: 00525 Account number: 0000445757C Key: 12 Payable to: ESSF

International bank details: IBAN: FR85 3000 2005 2500 0044 5757 C12 BIC / SWIFT: CRLYFRPP Payable to: ESSF

In France, these donations give rise to tax deductions. We need your address to send you a tax receipt (address usually indicated on the cheques).

We will keep you regularly informed about the situation and use of the solidarity fund.

PS:

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[1] See [Emergency Crisis in Marawi City, Mindanao \(Philippines\): Urgent Call for Humanitarian Aid](#).