

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Issues > Solidarity > Solidarity: ESSF campaigns > Philippines (ESSF) > **Mindanao (Philippines) - Grassroot networks that help people fleeing (...)**

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

Friday 23 June 2017, by [Cedetim/Ipam](#), [ESSF](#), [ROUSSET Pierre](#) (Date first published: 15 June 2017).

Three weeks ago [May 23] 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 [\[2\]](#), 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.

**Pierre Rousset**  
**ESSF**  
**Cedetim/Ipam**

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## **To send donations**

### **Cheques**

cheques to ESSF in euros only, payable in France, to be sent to:

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2, rue Richard-Lenoir  
93100 Montreuil  
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### **Bank Account:**

Crédit lyonnais  
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93100 Montreuil  
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You can send money through Paypal: see the PayPal button on the upper right side of ESSF English home page:

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?page=sommaire&lang=en>

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## Footnotes

[1] ESSF (article 41143), [Emergency Crisis in Marawi City, Mindanao \(Philippines\): Urgent Call for Humanitarian Aid](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article41143):

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article41143>

[2] See on ESSF the key word [Marawi](http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?mot12066):

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?mot12066>