

Lanao del Sur (Mindanao): At least 4 dead, 45 hurt in explosion during Mass in Marawi

Monday 4 December 2023, by [CABRERA Ferdinand](#) (Date first published: 3 December 2023).

(3rd UPDATE) The explosion occurs while a group, mainly students, gather for a Mass at the Mindanao State University's Dimaporo Gym.

COTABATO, Philippines – At least four people were killed while some 45 others were hurt as an explosion ripped through a gym at the state-run Mindanao State University (MSU) in Marawi City during a Mass on Sunday morning, December 3.

It was earlier reported that there were three dead and nine injured, with the PNP adjusting the casualty count in an 11:15 am report. Photos and videos provided to Rappler suggested it was a powerful explosion.

Masses on this day held special significance for Catholics because it was the First Sunday of Advent, the start of the traditional four-week preparation for Christmas.

Mindanao State University (MSU), in a statement on Sunday, condemned the act, and said it was “deeply saddened and appalled by the act of violence that occurred during a religious gathering at the university gymnasium this morning.”

MSU also said it had suspended classes until further notice and deployed additional security to safeguard the campus. It was also working closely with local government units and law enforcement authorities to investigate this incident and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Brigadier General Allan Cruz Nobleza, police director in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), said an explosion took place while a group gathered for a Mass at the MSU's Dimaporo Gym in Dimalna, Marawi City, at around 7 am.

Many of those in the gym were students who came to attend a Catholic Mass, said Corporal Aliasgar Binaning, a police investigator.

An initial police report confirmed at least three people were killed and nine others were badly hurt in the explosion.

Authorities have cordoned off the area, and the wounded were rushed to the state-owned Amai Pakpak Medical Center.

President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. condemned the incident and blamed “foreign terrorists” for it.

It happened two days after 11 suspected members of the terrorist group Dawlah Islamiyah and their leader were killed in air and ground assault military operations in the mountainous area of Mother Tuayan, Datu Hoffer Ampatuan, Maguindanao del Sur.

The Army's 6th Infantry Division said the air and ground offensives started at around 12:15 pm on Friday, December 1,

Authorities said soldiers found bodies during clearing operations on Saturday morning, December 2.

Brigadier General Oriel Pangcog, 601st Infantry Brigade commander, said the offensive was launched after it validated information that the group was in the area.

Pangcog said it was a surgical strike.

He said soldiers found at least 10 high-powered firearms and explosives.

Major General Alex Rillera, 6th ID commander, said the group was consolidating and had planned on disrupting economic activities across Central and South-Central Mindanao.

The security alert was raised in Maguindanao del Sur in anticipation of retaliatory attacks.

Lanao del Sur Governor Mamintal Adiong Jr. called the explosion a bomb attack.

"Here in my province, we uphold basic human rights, and that includes the right to religion. Terroristic attacks on educational insitutions must also be condemned because these are places that promote the culture of peace and mold our youth to be the future shapers of this country," Adiong said.

He called on the security sector to get to speed up their investigation and bring those behind the attack to justice.

"To the families of those whose lives were lost in this senseless act of violence and terrorism, please accept our deepest condolences and sympathies. We will make sure justice will be served," he said.

FERDINANDH CABRERA- with reports from Froilan Gallardo

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• Rappler. DEC 3, 2023 9:11 AM PHT:
<https://www.rappler.com/nation/mindanao/marawi-explosion-updates-december-3-2023/>