



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

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A Call for Prayers and Sobriety for Such a Time Like This

*"All those gathered here will know that
it is not by sword or spear that our God saves."
(1 Samuel 17:47)*

Let us pray that the situation in **Marawi City, Lanao del Sur** and in our **school** there does not escalate and that it will be resolved as soon as possible.

We condemn the burning of the **Dansalan College**, an institution that welcomes people of all faiths and has served the **Maranaos** and the people of Marawi for a long time. We also condemn the assaults on every institution serving the public, and remember the right of families of all creeds to safely access education and healthcare.

Reports remain sketchy at this time. **Let us not fuel the fire and fear by sharing unverified information**, in social media or through word of mouth. We should be careful and act responsibly to not sow panic, confusion or anger. A thorough analysis of the forces at play is required to understand the deep-seated roots of the conflict.

The **Dansalan College** was started in 1950 and inspired by missionary **Frank Laubach**. The teachers employed by missionary Laubach used his **"each one, teach one"** method where the students were expected to teach others what they learned. Since then, the college has offered a range of services to the community.

Dansalan College reflects the importance and impact of interfaith relations. The student body is made up of approximately **95% Muslim students**, while the staff is **80% Christian**. Having worked together from the very start, education, especially for the young, continues to be the goal of both the school and the community.

The **Laubach Hall**, the **Science Laboratory**, the **Library** and the **Yellow House** of the college were **burned** yesterday. Let us pray for the safety of our personnel led by **Dr. Fidelinda Tawagon**, the students and all residents of the city, whatever their creed.

Let us not also fall into the trap of portraying these tragic events as a **religious war**. This will only increase tensions, and may further fan the flames of **Islamophobia**. The **Maute Group**, responsible for this attack, must be held accountable.

It is unfortunate that these events are being invoked as a reason for declaring **Martial Law** across the entire islands of Mindanao. In a radio interview this morning, Secretary of National Defense **Delfin Lorenzana** justified the imposition of **Martial Law** across the region by stating that there are other groups, like the New People's Army, that need to be dealt with as well. By making reference to their 'extortion activities' across the region, Secretary Lorenzana appears to extend his justification beyond the acts of rebellion upon which the declaration of Martial Law must be based. It must be remembered that this is the same Secretary who immediately issued an all-out-war, without even waiting for the President to announce such a shift in policy.

This decision and the move to escalate the conflict beyond the immediate attack in **Marawi City** is another attempt at seeking a military solution, which we have seen fail time and time again. This approach does not resolve the root causes of the conflict embedded in the deep structural drivers of the oppressive socio-economic system of Philippine society. **As long as these root causes remain unaddressed and unresolved, there will always be fertile ground for violence.**

We do not believe that putting the whole of Mindanao under Martial Law is an appropriate solution to this situation. The executive branch of government has enough powers and resources to deal with this matter without resorting to draconian measures across the island. This is overkill.

Let us pray that the government and the military will not use the Martial Law as a reason to undermine the on-going **peace talks** with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front or the National Democratic Front of the Philippines.

We stand with our brothers and sisters of the **Bangsamoro** as they resist the pull of violent extremism and move towards lasting peace in the implementation of their agreement through the **Bangsamoro Basic Law**.


We stand with all our Muslim sisters and brothers, who adhere to Islam as a faith of peace, as they enter the holy month of **Ramadan**.

We stand with those preparing for talks in the Netherlands in the coming week as the Government of the Philippines and the NDFP negotiate towards greater economic justice and equity for all.


Above all, let us pray for God's intervention for the transformation of all violent conflicts in our land, so that we can turn all our energies towards the well-being of our people and our land.


Let us pray and work for a true and lasting peace.



Bishop Reuel Norman O. Marigza
General Secretary



Bishop Elorde M. Sambat
Bishop Assigned to North Luzon Jurisdictional Area


Bishop Emergencio D. Padillo
Bishop Assigned to Middle Luzon Jurisdictional Area


Bishop Joel E. Tendero
Bishop Assigned to South Luzon Jurisdictional Area


Bishop Jaime R. Moriles
Bishop Assigned to East Visayas Jurisdictional Area


Bishop Jezer E. Bertoldo
Bishop Assigned to West Visayas Jurisdictional Area


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Bishop Hamuel G. Tequis
Bishop Assigned to South East Mindanao Jurisdictional Area