



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

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DO NOT ENVY THE VIOLENT OR CHOOSE ANY OF THEIR WAYS

A Pastoral Statement

“He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight.” (Psalm 72: 14, NIV)

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) strongly condemns the twin bombings at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, Sulu, last Sunday, January 27, 2019. The twin explosions killed at least 27 people, mostly churchgoers, and wounded 100 others. Of the fatalities, 13 were civilians, five were soldiers and two were Coast Guard personnel. The terror attack was considered the worst in recent years. The following day, another explosion was reported in Cotabato City that left at least 8 persons wounded. On Wednesday, January 30, a grenade was reportedly thrown inside a mosque in Zamboanga City that killed at least 2 and injured 4 others around 20 minutes past midnight.

We solemnly pray for and commiserate with the victims and their families even as we also call on authorities for the immediate apprehension of the culprits.

These sequence of violence in Mindanao despite Martial Law only shows no less that martial law or military rule is not the apposite way to attain lasting peace. Martial Law in Mindanao is only proven futile in securing peace in the region. Eighteen (18) months after Martial Law was declared in Mindanao, 75% of AFP troops have been positioned, thousands of checkpoints setup and billions of funds funneled to intelligence operations. The government under Pres. Duterte inexcusably failed to avert violence and quell terrorism in Mindanao.

The bombings happened days after the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), proving that discontent in Moro areas is far from over. We fear that these incidents will be used as a justification by the government to pursue intensive militarization of Moro communities in Mindanao and we are anxious that such will be used also to justify the declaration of Martial Law in the entire nation.

We pray that these incidents will not be used as a pretext for further militarization that would only lead to more human rights abuses and further violence. We call on our government to seriously address the root causes of unpeace and discontent among our people instead of just holding on to military solutions.

Quadrennial Theme: **“Spirituality for These Critical Times”**

Member: National Council of Churches in the Philippines • Christian Conference of Asia • World Council of Churches • World Alliance of Reformed Churches
• World Methodist Council • Christian Peace Conference • United Evangelical Mission (UEM)


We pray furthermore that violence of any form will be put to rest. The UCCP is in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in the Roman Catholic Church and with Muslim brothers and sisters who are directly affected by the atrocious attacks as we are also in solidarity with other religious groups and communities that seek for peace, justice and truth. In these challenging and changing times, we need to decisively put our acts together against the forces of darkness that sow violence. We demand justice for the victims of the bombings in Mindanao!


As peace instruments, the Bible exhorts us, *“Do not envy the violent or choose any of their ways.”* (Proverbs 3: 31, NIV).


THE UCCP COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

January 2019

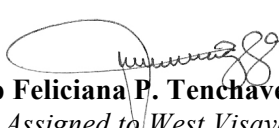

Bishop Melzar D. Labuntog
General Secretary

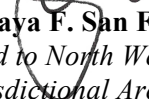

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