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SOCIETY OF JESUS

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PLEASE POST

Subject: Recent Violence in Marawi and the Imposition of Martial Law

The recent terrorist attacks in Marawi City, not to mention so many other reports of ongoing violence in Mindanao, can only be a source of deep sadness. An annual gathering of the moderate *Tablig-i Jema-ah* was infiltrated by the Maute Group. This allowed them to ambush troops from the 1st Infantry Division and the PNP and take control of five barangays near the Provincial jail. There, high-value prisoners were incarcerated. Christian hostages from St. Mary's Cathedral and Dansalan College were taken.

In response, the President declared martial law in all of Mindanao. This too is a source of deep sadness, as well as of real concern and alarm. Indeed we pray for the President and for the nation. But we have to assert that martial law is fraught with danger, as we in this country have so painfully known. It is not a path to be treaded lightly, and becomes particularly worrisome in a context where there are already too many questions about the value of life and basic human rights. We implore our President to respect the provisions on martial law stipulated in the Constitution, and beg that this particular use of it be short-lived and calibrated (not escalating further to other areas). Special vigilance is likewise called for so that the dark atrocities of martial law under Ferdinand Marcos not be repeated once again.

We ask all our Jesuits, collaborators-in-mission, and Jesuit institutions to respond to these sad events with renewed and repeated affirmations of God's love and mercy, and a generous willingness to discern his will for us today. We must continue to commit ourselves to peace founded on justice and recognize the role we must each play in making peace real.

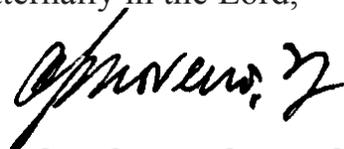
Conflict in Mindanao, we know, is rooted in social injustice. Poverty in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao is the highest in the country. Educational delivery is worst in the country. Conflict in Mindanao is increasingly caused by what Pope Francis has so often decried, and most recently repeated in Cairo: ideology that masquerades as religion. In Mindanao, our Muslim friends decry a corruption of their religion of peace into a Wahabi-Salafi ideology of hatred that victimizes not only Christians but especially Muslims of peace. Even so, many Muslim youth in Mindanao today are drawn to this ideology. It comes with many names: ISIS, BIFF, Abu Sayaf, Maute. Eliminate these, and there will still be many more. They are frustrated by rounds of ostentatious negotiations that do not prosper; they are wearied of their hunger or joblessness; they are fascinated by the idea of a world where their ideology rules supremely and exclusively. All who do not agree, they are taught to hate. Or kill.

This is the heart of the serious conflict in Mindanao that we must address. Before it ever explodes in violence like in Marawi, it brews in the frustration and pain of social exclusion. And martial law and any such hard-fisted solutions do not get to the roots of this problem, let alone benefit the country as a whole.

In the past few years we have discerned much about where the Province should go. Mindanao has figured prominently in that discernment, as a call to reach out to the peripheries. In this present crisis, we are especially concerned about those who have been victimized by the Marawi violence. I make an appeal that we reach out to them in prayer and in concrete alleviation of their needs. Xavier University has graciously and generously offered to serve as a conduit for any help that may be offered. Please join in doing so. The contact details are given on the next page.

The situation in Mindanao calls us anew to deeper reflection and prayer. Perhaps we should kneel before the Crucified Lord and ask: *What have I done for you? What am I doing for you? What ought I do for you?* May he guide all of us in the midst of the many challenges that we are now facing.

Fraternally in the Lord,



ANTONIO F. MORENO, S.J.
Provincial

Relief goods may be sent to:

**Social Development Office
Room 102, Agriculture Building
Xavier University
Corrales Avenue
Cagayan de Oro City**

Please email ypsocdev@xu.edu.ph to inform XU that you have sent goods.

For cash donations, please deposit to

**Account Name: Xavier University
Account Number: 9331-0133-63
Bank: Bank of the Philippine Islands
Branch: Divisoria, Cagayan de Oro**

Please email finance@xu.edu.ph when you have made a deposit and please email scanned copy of the deposit slip