



PRESS RELEASE

Department of National Defense – Republic of the Philippines

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Statement of the Secretary of National Defense on the planned march of some groups to Marawi City

Yesterday (23 July 2017, Sunday), several cabinet members led by the Sec. Delfin Lorenzana and Sec. Silvestre Bello III were invited to Iligan City to conduct a dialogue/meeting with Marawi residents, Lanao LGUs, civil society organizations, the Marawi sultanate, and NGOs. Also in the meeting were Sec. Guiling Mamondiong of TESDA, Sec. Abdullah Mama-o, Presidential Adviser on OFWs, and Sec. Abulkayr Alonto of Mindanao Development Authority. The meeting was prompted by the plan of displaced Marawi residents to march to Marawi and return to their homes today, July 24.

The dialogue was very cordial and productive. Marawi residents were able to raise a lot of concerns that need to be addressed by the government agencies. They were encouraged to speak and ventilate their concerns in order to help all parties bridge the gaps in terms of cultural, religious, gender and social differences.

The displaced residents' foremost wish, however, was to go back to their homes in Marawi. Hence, the planned march today to dramatize their concern. They cited their hardships in the evacuation centers and the alleged looting and destruction of their homes.

The military command in Marawi under LtGen. Carlito Galvez, Jr., however, has pleaded with them not to go back yet as there is still intense fighting in the Marawi Central Business District where the Maute-Daesh has chosen to make their last stand. To highlight what he was talking about, Gen. Galvez said that the day before, the AFP sustained nine killed and 43 wounded in action, in one of the most intense fighting yet in the conflict. During the dialogue between the LGUs, the military, and the residents late yesterday afternoon, the residents agreed to postpone their march to a later date.

We, at the Department of National Defense reiterate our respect for the right of every Filipino to freely express themselves through a peaceful assembly or march. These rights are important to the Filipino democratic way of life and enshrined in our constitution. We therefore, thank the residents for postponing their activity to a later date, when their safety and well being can be more assured.

To the displaced residents of Marawi, we want you to know that we are as anxious as you are to conclude the military operations in Marawi so that you can go back to your homes, and we can start the rebuilding and rehabilitation of Marawi. We ask for a little more understanding and patience as we deal with the remaining Maute/Daesh fighters who continue to put up stiff resistance.

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