



STATEMENT OF THE MARAWI RECONSTRUCTION CONFLICT WATCH (MRCW) ON THE STATE OF THE MARAWI REHABILITATION PROCESS

We are the MRCW. We are a multi-stakeholder group of professionals, experts, and network leaders who joined together a year ago to help the government in facilitating the reconstruction and redevelopment of Marawi into a modern, inclusive, peaceful, and sustainable city and community. You probably haven't heard of us because since the start, we agreed to keep a low profile because our aim was not to condemn nor denounce, but to genuinely help out, and probably trouble-shoot problems that may arise and to lobby the government to take steps that will not fuel further anger and frustration among our people.

We are all from Marawi too and most of us are Maranao, which is why we are deeply invested in the reconstruction and rebirth of our beloved city. No one person or leader speaks on our behalf, as each step we take is a collective one.

We have been here in Manila for the past week to get a sense of how things are moving on certain aspects that we brought to the attention of the President and other national line agencies, and most especially to the Task Force Bangon Marawi (TFBM). These include potential conflict issues over land in the rebuilding and rehabilitation process, the progress in the promised compensation bill that can set aside funds for rebuilding destroyed properties, and the possibility of further strengthening local participation in the redesign of Marawi's recovery and rehabilitation.

You will forgive us for being impatient, but it has been two years after promises were made and commitments were given by the President and his subalterns about the speedy rebuilding of the city and our frayed relationships.

Now we know what is really happening, and we discovered that the situation is worse than what we expected. There is no transparency, there is no accountability, and there is no coherence between the actions of government agencies who are each doing their own thing with very little centralized direction and coordination.

In short, it is a total mess. This was laid bare to us by the simple inability of TFBM and the other concerned government agencies to account for their actions even towards the legitimate authorities on the ground and legislative oversight committees.

It also dawned on us that getting a compensation bill passed will be an uphill battle with very little traction among top government and legislative officials. There is nothing in last year or this year's budget for the promised compensation. We are now being told that the blame is being placed on the citizens of Marawi for the incursion of ISIS in 2017, or that we do not deserve financial aid because we are rich anyway. It appears clear to us that we are being treated as second class citizens.

We claim discrimination because the government does not believe that the local community, its citizens, and the private sector is entitled to any compensation for the destruction of its properties. The government ignores the same jurisprudence on "just compensation" that it promises to landowners dispossessed of their lands under agrarian



reform—when it comes to the Maranao from different walks of life who simply desire the same “just compensation” for the destruction of their properties.

We retain some fleeting hope that a compensation bill will be passed because we were enlivened by what we heard from several representatives and senators who are set on fighting for our rights in Congress. However, we now know that we also need to start exhausting all legal means to make government accountable for its actions. We have decided to join the initiative of lawyer’s groups who aim to secure a legal and fair settlement of our just claims.

In the meantime, we merely ask that the following initiatives be given prompt attention by the authorities.

1. Provide urgent government support that will allow for private schools and learning institutions to recover and resume operations – For example, subsidized business permits and the relaxing of some rules and requirements in granting permits to operate, such as the prior completion of libraries and laboratories.
2. Reverse the decision to establish a military camp in the city and instead reserve the proposed 10-hectare land assigned for the creation of the camp for use as places for permanent shelters. Majority of Marawi residents oppose the military’s plan to build the new camp anyway.
3. Establish a modern high-capacity trauma unit in Marawi. Our people are still reeling from the trauma as a result of the conflict. This cannot be healed by one-time psycho-social interventions. Post-traumatic stress disorder takes years to heal.

Lastly, we call on both houses of Congress to sustain efforts in encouraging local people’s participation in their legislative role of expediting the Marawi rehabilitation. We commend the lower house for inviting the people of Marawi to join the first hearing of the sub-committee on Marawi rehabilitation. The MRCW is ready to regularly report on the status of the reconstruction and rebuilding of Marawi and provide quarterly briefings on the violent conflict that may arise in Marawi and beyond during the rehabilitation process.

We challenge Congress to strictly, firmly, and effectively exercise their oversight functions in the protection of the rights of more than 200,000 people who were affected by the siege. We support the Sub-Committee on Marawi rehabilitation at the Lower house in its motion to issue subpoenas to the head of the Task Force Bangon Marawi and heads of agencies under it. They must appear in public legislative hearings, give a full accounting of the funds disbursed, and provide detailed updates on the implementation of programs and activities for the Marawi rehabilitation.

The inexplicable delays and the sheer lack of urgency exhibited by the TFBM is an affront to many Maranaos. We are fearful that the absence of any significant progress in the immediate rebuilding of Marawi City will only fuel a growing sense of despair. Let’s do this now before it’s too late. ###