



National Council of Churches in Australia

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from the National Council of Churches in Australia

Churches in the Philippines Prepare for Elections Bloodshed

“The first automated election system, in the May 10 national elections in the Philippines, implemented with haste, is a recipe for social chaos and political crisis”, says Reverend Rex Reyes JR, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP).

Despite fears of fraud and violence through the election process, the NCCP in partnership with Act for Peace, (the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia), is training communities to reduce the likelihood of election violence. This includes voter education seminars for church trainers, establishing anti fraud groups for poll day monitoring and education on the controversial automated system.

Mr Alistair Gee, Executive Director of Act for Peace said, “The reports we are getting of the likelihood of fraud and continued bloodshed in the elections are deeply disheartening. Whatever the outcome of the elections, the new government must devote serious attention to the peace process.”

The elections will take place on the backdrop of the Mindanao massacre and ongoing conflict, extrajudicial killings, abductions and militarization of the countryside and urban areas.

According to official figures 33 people have been killed and 31 others wounded in political violence during the three-month election campaign.

“Those who advocate for alternative politics are met with harassments - killing of their supporters, smear campaigns, subjected to harassment and intimidation, and other threats. Politics in our country is dominated by a powerful few. It is almost always the case that the rich, powerful and traditional politicians emerge as the winners through guns, goons and gold...Seldom is the instance when genuine representatives of the poor and the marginalized set foot on the corridors of power as elected officials,” says Reyes.

Mr Gee said, “Standing in solidarity with our partner NCCP, we challenge the elected leaders to keep their promises; give justice to those who have had their fundamental human rights denied and violated; and address the root causes of the insurgency...Peace in Mindanao has not been high on the agenda of any of the leading presidential candidates, but the winner will be responsible for continuing the peace process.”

For Media Interview:

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About Act for Peace: *Act for Peace is the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia. We empower war-torn communities to protect refugees, reduce poverty, prevent conflicts and manage disasters. Our project partners are currently assisting over one million people in the world's worst conflict areas, including Sudan, Somalia, Zimbabwe, the Middle East, Burma and Sri Lanka.*

www.actforpeace.org.au

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