



## PEACE BUILDING INITIATIVES FOLLOWING RECENT MINDANAO TERRORIST ATTACKS

Following the bombing of the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, Sulu, on Sunday 27 January, and the grenade attack on Masjid Al-Islam in Barangay Talon-Talon, Zamboanga City, just a few days later on Wednesday 30 January, The Stabilisation Network (TSN) and our local partners conducted two special events as a way of building community resilience and demonstrating unity in countering violent extremism (CVE) in southern Philippines.



Figure 1 : Guests at the TSN/GMW event including Professor Alih Aiyub (TSN and NUCP), Wahida Abdullah (TSN Philippines Focal Point and President GMW), Dr Grace Rebollos (former President Western Mindanao State University), Sheik Salman Sakili (Ulama Council of Zamboanga City), Sharif Adzhar (Superintendent Department of Education), General Sukarno Ikbala (Founder of Salaam Police Support Unit), Father Angel Calvo, and Danilo Sagara (WAVE co-founding partner and Regional President of Mayor Rodrigo Roa Duterte - National Executive Coordinating Committee)

### Interfaith Dialogue

TSN and Gagandilan Mindanao Women (GMW), founders of the CVE network Women Against Violent Extremism (WAVE), hosted an interfaith dialogue among different religious leaders from Zamboanga City. This special event was designed to highlight the harmony and unity of Muslims and Christians in

Zamboanga, and to share peace building ideas for the respective faith communities to implement in the wake of the recent terrorist attacks.

Professor Alih Aiyub, TSN Adviser and Secretary General of the National Ulama Council of the Philippines (NUCP), one of the co-founders of WAVE, said the interfaith dialogue was important to both exchange notes and ideas, but also jointly denounce terrorism, and call for sobriety and vigilance. Professor Alih stated “we must be united as Christians and Muslims to protect and preserve human lives and dignity, respect and uphold the rule of law and human rights and adhere to the teachings of Islam and Christianity to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves”.



Figure 2 : Zamboanga residents (both Christian and Muslim) gather at the Al-Islam Mosque after completion of the Friday Unity Prayers

### Friday Unity Prayers

TSN, together with NUCP and the co-founding partners of WAVE, organized a Friday congregational prayer at Masjid Al-Islam in Barangay Talon-Talon, Zamboanga City, where the terror attack took place only a few days before.

WAVE members joined other groups in fostering a strong message as Christians organized themselves as a human barricade to guard the mosque so that local Muslims could conduct a symbolic Jumaah Unity Prayer.

Khatib Sheikh Zayd Ocfemia, President of As-Sunnah Foundation said “our religion Islam teaches us to be tolerant, moderate and loving. Even in the face of persecution, we are commanded by Almighty Allah to have patience because As-Sabirin are blessed and triumphant...and to repel evil with what is good.” Delivering a special sermon as part of the Unity Prayers, Sheikh Zayd reminded the congregation about the Madinah Charter of Prophet Muhammad on how



Muslims, Jews and Christians coexisted and cooperated to make their City safe, peaceful and prosperous.

TSN Philippines Focal Point, Wahida Abdulla, who also resides close to the Mesjid Al-Islam in Talon-Talon, was instrumental in arranging the Unity Prayers and coordinating the efforts of volunteers. Wahida said she had received tremendous support from the local community and goodwill from both Christian and Muslim organisations.

Figure 3 : Madzgani Mukarram (L), Provincial Director of Lanao del Sur Marawi, and Mosque leader Junior Gonzales (R), a retired local police major, speaking at the Unity Prayer Event

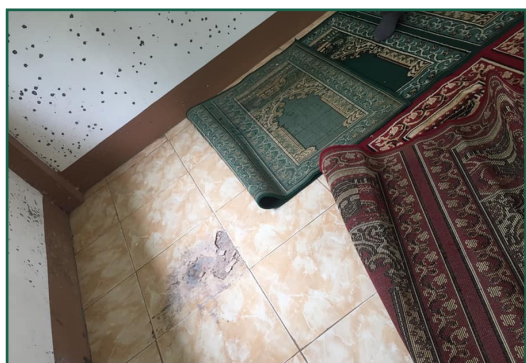


Figure 4 : Damage inside the Al-Islam mosque caused by grenades thrown by terrorists on Wednesday 30 January 2019.





Figure 5 : Khatib Sheikh Zayd Ocfemia, President of As-Sunnah Foundation, delivering the sermon at the Unity Prayers

## Protecting Christians

Reciprocating Friday's event, on Sunday 3 February, the WAVE network arranged for a group of Muslim women and children (and also many men) to provide a symbolic human chain of protection outside the Metropolitan Cathedral in Zamboanga City.

The success of a plebiscite held on January 21 to create a Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) improves the chances for peace and countering violent extremism in the southern Philippines. Any major setback to the peace process in Muslim Mindanao as a result of tit-for-tat terrorist attacks against Christian and Muslim communities—given BARMM is the culmination of more than two decades of negotiations—would almost certainly trigger discord in the Moro nationalist movement and strengthen the hand of violent extremist groups, some of which are aligned to Islamic State.



Figure 6: Women, men and children from TSN's WAVE network provide the symbolic guard outside the Metropolitan Cathedral, Zamboanga City, Sunday 3 February. The banner states 'Peace and Respect for All' (Photo TSN).



Canberra  
Jakarta  
Manila  
Amman  
London  
Washington



# THE STABILISATION NETWORK

