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## **Military offensives in Mindanao victimize 23,000 civilians**

Up to 23,000 people have been forced to evacuate from various towns in Basilan and Sulu due to relentless AFP operations against armed Moro forces.

In Sulu, more than 2,700 families have already evacuated from the towns of Parang, Maimbung and Indanan. In Basilan, up to 1,800 families have been forced to leave their homes in the towns of Al Barka, Sumisip and Ungkaya Pukan. Most of the victims are children and elderly folk. They are seriously short of food and many of them have fallen ill.



The massive evacuations in Basilan and Sulu are the result of a large-scale offensive currently being launched by the AFP. Up to 5,000 soldiers had already been deployed to Sulu and 4,000 in Basilan in mid-August. It is estimated that up to `1 billion will be spent by the government monthly in its war in Mindanao.

The Moro people, especially the victims of the all-out war in Mindanao have roundly condemned the deployment by the regime of additional troops in Sulu and Basilan. Said MNLF interim vice chairman Hatimil Hasan, what Sulu needs is economic aid, not bullets, bombs and troops. Groups wishing to send aid to the affected areas, such as the Sulu Red Cross, likewise fear that many civilians would be caught in the crossfire, as what happened last August 9. The Moro people and the Bangsamoro Development Agency also condemned the order by Task Force Thunder under Brig. Gen. Juancho Sabban to impose a food blockade in Basilan. **AB**

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