

<http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/terrorists-desecrate-eucharist-destroy-catholic-chapel-in-the-philippines>

## **TERRORISTS DESECRATE EUCHARIST, DESTROY CATHOLIC CHAPEL IN THE PHILIPPINES**

**MILITANTS USED HAMMERS TO DESTROY RELIGIOUS ICONS AND ALSO DESTROYED CONSECRATED HOSTS.**



Manila cathedral (Pixabay)

WORLD | JUN. 27, 2017

## Hannah Brockhaus/CNA/EWTN News

MANILA, Philippines — Last week, members of a terrorist group destroyed a Catholic chapel, desecrating consecrated Hosts and religious icons, during a nine-hour long attack on the town of Malagakit in southern Philippines.

The June 21 attack was reportedly carried out by about 300 gunmen of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, known as BIFF, which has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State. In the siege, they also robbed houses and stores at gunpoint, causing the displacement of hundreds of residents.

Residents were also forced to flee after being caught in a firefight between BIFF and government forces, according to Realan Mamon, the police chief of Pigkawayan town, where Malagakit is located.

He told The Associated Press that he had a report that gunmen were occupying a school as well, although it wasn't immediately apparent if people were trapped inside by the fighting or taken hostage.

In the chapel, which is nearby a school also destroyed in the attack, the militants used hammers to destroy religious icons and vital fixtures. They also desecrated consecrated Hosts.

Cardinal Orlando Quevedo of Cotabato decried the act Saturday, saying that he condemns "in the strongest terms possible the wicked desecration of the Catholic chapel of Malagakit in the parish of Pigcawayan."

"If the BIFF wants to have an image as a 'respector' of all religions, it must punish its members who perpetrated the odious desecration in Malagakit and educate all its members in strictly respecting other religions," he continued.

Cardinal Quevedo urged the Catholic faithful of Malagakit to restore the sacred space of their chapel, asking for the prayers of the entire archdiocese for peace and harmony among all believers of all religions.

Some leaders of the town, such as Salvador Almonia Jr., a chairman of Malagakit, have hypothesized that the attack on the chapel was intended to create division between the town's Catholics and Muslims, who currently live together peacefully.

"That was meant to sow anger among us. We will not respond the way the BIFF want us to respond to that despicable act," he said.

The vice governor of North Cotabato, Shirlyn Macasarte-Villanueva, urged Muslim and Christian residents to disregard attempts to sow division between them.

"Let us be sober and continue with the friendship and solidarity that we have. We just have to be vigilant, and we need to help each other prevent a repeat of the incident," Macasarte-Villanueva said Thursday.

The attack follows a May 22 siege on parts of a city on Mindanao in the Philippines, where militants burned several buildings, including the Catholic cathedral and the bishop's residence.

At the cathedral, they took hostages including a Catholic priest and a group of churchgoers, threatening to kill them if the nation's military did not cease its current offensive against them.

They are also said to have freed more than 100 inmates from prisons in the city. The fighting reportedly killed at least 20 people in the city.

The attack was carried out by militants of the Maute group, which was formed in 2012 and pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in 2015. The militants' violence began after a failed army and police raid to capture Isnilon Hapilon, a local Islamist leader.