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## Duterte leads turnover of financial aid to kin of fallen Marawi heroes

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Pia Ranada

MANILA, Philippines (UPDATED) – President Rodrigo Duterte led the ceremonial turnover of financial assistance to families of 101 soldiers and police killed in Marawi City.

The ceremony, held in Malacañang Palace on Tuesday, July 25, was attended by businessmen and top government officials.

Each of the 101 families are set to receive P1.25 million each to be deposited to their bank accounts, according to Malacañang.

Of this amount, the P1 million was donated by an anonymous businessman while the P250,000 was raised by Go Negosyo and the DU30 Cabinet Spouses Association.

Venus Pascual, sister of one of the fallen soldiers, said she is grateful for the financial assistance. She lost her brother, Corporal Pablito Pascual on June 1 when he took a bullet to his left chest during fighting in Marawi.

She hopes the crisis, which has now lasted more than two months, will end soon.

*"Sana matapos na. Kasi 'pag hindi matapos ang dami nang mawawalang buhay. Kawawa naman 'yung mga pamilyang maiiwan. Hope and pray na sana matapos na,"* she said, as she held in her arms her brother's youngest son, Prince. Pascual left two other children.

(Hopefully, it ends soon. Because if not, many more will lose their lives. It will be sad for the families they will leave behind. I hope and pray that it will end soon.)

In his speech, Duterte condoled with the families for the loss of their loved ones.

"May you find solace in the fact that the whole nation condoles with you in these trying times...The Philippines will be forever grateful for their heroism," he said.

Those present at the turnover include members of the Go Negosyo network who contributed to the funds.

These include PLDT's Manuel Pangilinan, SM's Tessie Sy-Coson, Philippine Airlines' Lucio Tan and Michael Tan, DoubleDragon Properties' Injap Sia, and others. Other business executives who contributed were Ayala Corporation's Jaime Zobel de Ayala, Phoenix Petroleum's Dennis Uy, Aboitiz Corporation's Sabin Aboitiz, Cebuana Lhuillier's Jean Henri Lhuillier, and Metrobank Foundation's Alfred Ty, among others.

The DU30 Cabinet Spouses Association was also able to raise P2 million with the help of PLDT's Pangilinan. With the funds, they were able to hand over P20,000 to each of the 101 families. This amount formed part of the P250,000.

The President reiterated his promise to set up a P50-billion trust fund for soldiers' and policemen's families.

### Late Duterte

Duterte made the families of fallen troops and the wealthiest in the country alike wait for two and a half hours before he showed up at the ceremony.

He was scheduled to arrive at 4:30 pm but only showed up a little past 7 pm.

The guests who waited were no small fry. Aside from the country's richest, also present were former president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, United States Ambassador to the Philippines Sung Kim, and various Cabinet officials.

Not least who waited were the mothers, fathers, siblings, and children of the soldiers and police who perished in Marawi City. Many were flown to Manila from provinces all over the Philippines – some came from as far as Jolo, Sulu – to be part of the event.

Mothers moved near the bathroom to feed their babies away from the crowd as they waited for the President.

To ease the wait, Malacañang staff opened the buffet on both sides of the Palace's Heroes Hall. Pangilinan was among those who casually pulled out a chair and huddled with fellow guests while munching on finger food.

Guests vacated their seats to mingle and form small groups.

At least, that can be said for the side of the room filled with businessmen, diplomats, and government officials. The other side, filled with families of the troops, stayed in their seats, for the most part.

There were notable efforts to merge the two groups. Edith Lorenzana, wife of Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, was among those who approached family members of soldiers to speak to them. Later on, she could be seen in a corner dabbing a handkerchief to her wet eyes. – **Rappler.com**

