

Mayor Beng Climaco reiterated yesterday the city government's policy on "no permit, no rally/caravan" within the territorial jurisdiction of Zamboanga City.

Mayor Climaco issued the statement anew following the planned peace rally or caravan in Zamboanga City by a group of civil society organizations supporting the peace process and the draft Bangsamoro Basic Law.

"The public is advised to stay calm but remain vigilant. Our police and military forces as well as the local government are on top of the situation. We are firm in our resolve to ensure the security, peace and order and tranquility of the City," the chief executive said in a public advisory yesterday.

The Philippine Information Agency (PIA) regional office 9, meanwhile, announced on the social media that the Mindanao Alliance for Peace was scheduled to hold a Peace Caravan yesterday, Feb. 10, from Pagadian City to Zamboanga City. "It's for peace not for War. Keep Calm and Vigilant."

As this developed, Climaco said she immediately communicated with the Chief of the Government Negotiating Panel Miriam Coronel-Ferrer, Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) Secretary Teresita Quintos-Deles and General Carlito Galvez to reiterate the city's policy.

"The members of the civil society organizations were asked to return to their respective places of origin as I am firm in carrying out this policy," Climaco said, stressing that classes were not called off neither work in government and private sectors was suspended as the situation did not warrant for such action.

According to the mayor, the heightened visibility of police and military personnel was part of the security measures the authorities have put in place.

City Police Director Sr. Supt. Angelito Casimiro told a hastily called press briefing in City Hall yesterday afternoon that as early as 7 a.m. they received information that a big number of people allegedly members of the Mindanao Alliance for Peace were coming to the city to conduct a peace caravan.

Knowing that the group did not have a permit for such activity, Casimiro said police and military personnel were sent to the boundary between the city and Sibugay province to dialogue with the group not to proceed with their planned caravan in the city.

The military, on the other hand, confirmed the deployment of armored vehicles as part of preventive measures as requested by the police.

However, the deployment of armored vehicles sent some people to panic that parents rushed to schools and fetched their children.

Rear Admiral Leonardo Yoma, commander of Joint Task Force ZamBaSulta, lamented that the people's anxiety was not based on facts as he belied rumors of impending attack on the city.

He advised people not to spread malicious txt messages and instead have them verified with the authorities.

“People are coming in the guise of a peace rally but in the end it is unpeace for our children. Spare the children of Zamboanga. We have suffered so much,” Climaco declared. — Vic Larato