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NDI CONDEMNS POLITICAL MASSACRE IN THE PHILIPPINES

WASHINGTON, DC – The National Democratic Institute (NDI) today condemned the Nov. 23 massacre of more than 50 Filipinos in election-related violence on the Philippine island of Mindanao. NDI expresses its deepest condolences to the families of the victims.

NDI said in a statement, “Those responsible for this violence must be brought to justice. This was a brutal attack on Filipinos who were peacefully participating in the political process and were exercising their fundamental rights under Filipino and international law.”

The attack occurred when representatives of candidate Esmael Mangudadatu were traveling to a local election office to file his candidacy papers for governor of Maguindanao province. More than 100 men abducted the members of group, which included Mangudadatu’s family members, staff and journalists. Authorities have confirmed that 46 bodies have been recovered. Mangudadatu’s wife and two sisters were among the dead.

“With the fall of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, the people of the Philippines have demonstrated their commitment to democratic governance and political participation,” NDI said. “The international community should support Filipinos in their efforts to revitalize the country’s democratic process.”

“As next year’s national polls approach, candidates and voters throughout the Philippines must feel confident that they can safely exercise their rights to freely participate in the elections.”

NDI has been involved in democratic development in the Philippines since 1986. In 2003 the Institute began conducting programs in Mindanao that have sought to improve community-police relations, enhance skills of women political leaders, and assist local government institutions to mitigate conflict.