

# Monthly Mindanao DISPLACEMENT Dashboard

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The Mindanao Displacement Dashboard is a monthly publication of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Mindanao, Philippines. This publication aims to provide an overview of the protection environment of displacement incidents in Mindanao for each month. Displacement incidents were collected with the support of Protection Cluster members in Mindanao.

## MAGUINDANAO AFP vs BIFF ARMED CONFLICT UPDATE

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) continue Law Enforcement Operations (LEO) against the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in Central Mindanao. These operations continue to cause fear and prevent many people from being able to return and restart their lives in their communities in Maguindanao province. As of end July, there are approximately 505 families (estimated 2,905 persons) residual caseloads of this displacement incident. Though the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) authorities have declared that all evacuation centers that catered to all LEO-related displacements are now closed, IDPs still find themselves either back in these informal sites or hosted by relatives and friends as they don't feel secure in their villages due to sporadic clashes between the AFP and the BIFF.

Two of the four incidents of armed encounters reported during this period displaced people from their already fragile communities. On 10 July,

a firefight between the AFP and the BIFF took place in the municipality of Datu Salibo that resulted to the displacement of approximately 100 families (estimated 500 persons) until the next day from Sitio Gadong, Pagatin. Some families moved to evacuation locations and to their relative's homes away from the area when the AFP's advised people to vacate their homes as they were expecting more encounters that may carry on for days in the area. Displaced families returned to their villages after three days. Another reported firefight occurred on 24 July in the municipality of Guindulungan when troops from the AFP 1st Mechanized Brigade and Scout Rangers attempted to enter Barangay Bario Muslim, Guindulungan municipality. According to IDPs who were interviewed, the gun fire came from the AFP troops, noting that there was no retaliation from the BIFF. IDPs also reported mortar fire by the AFP targeting surrounding marshlands about 4 kilometers away. This has left a tense atmosphere in adjacent villages. This incident caused 86 families (estimated 430 persons) from Sitio Proper of Bario Muslim to flee to Lower Sampao. The IDPs returned to their villages four days later.

## GPH/MILF PEACE PROCESS UPDATE

The deliberations on the Basic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BBL) will resume in August. The Senate Committee on Local Governance headed by Sen. Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. continues to craft a substitute bill with a deadline of 10 August. On 29 July the Bangsamoro Transitional Commission (BTC) rejected the House Bill 5811, or the draft Basic Law for the Bangsamoro and called on Senate and House leaders to pass the original draft of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL). The BTC legal experts expressed that the amendments to the original BBL has reduced the Law to providing less autonomy than Republic Act 9054 that created the current Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The MILF leadership continues to emphasize that even if the BBL will not be passed with the present administration they will continue to advocate for the passage of the BBL with the new administration and are open to improvements in the law as long as it will be in accordance with the agreement made in the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) and Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB).



Families displaced from the AFP's Law Enforcement Operation built makeshift shelters along the highway of Barangay Tee in Maguindanao for fear of returning to their villages where pursuit operations against the BIFF is still believed to be conducted. Recent rains have also flooded these informal settlements. © UNHCR/E.Monato 2015

## ZAMBOANGA DISPLACEMENT SITUATION

After 23 months since the conflict causing displacement, approximately 28,000 IDPs remain in need of a durable solution. Prior to and during this month, various meetings with the City authorities and assertions from humanitarian actors to delay forced movements of IDPs, the City authorities proceeded with the forced movement of the over 300 remaining IDP families in the Grandstand. A social preparation was conducted to inform IDPs of the deadline set by the authorities to empty the evacuation center. IDPs reported they were being pressured and intimidated to vacate the grandstand. After over a year and a half of being prevented to return to their places of origin, approximately 127 families were allowed to return to Lupa-Lupa (Rio Hondo) where they were living prior to the conflict however, they were not provided basic shelter or other assistance. While IDPs welcomed this as a positive step of allowing return to places of origin, the circumstances and conditions to which the IDPs were allowed to return were not in line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, to return voluntarily, in safety and in dignity. There are no sanitation facilities and water is inadequate for this and surrounding communities. The returnees have started constructing makeshift houses. Living under the bridges littered with garbage, the temporary shelters are at-risk of being flooded at high tide. Some emergency shelter materials have been provided by NGOs and

the City is creating an action plan to try to rapidly change the living conditions of these IDPs.

Approximately 80 families from the Grandstand were transferred to Mari-ki Elementary School prior to the completion of their permanent shelters and some families went to Mampang and Kasanyangan. Some of these families have had to relocate since the conflict three times.

Conditions in transit sites, particularly Mampang continue to be worrying, lacking power and regular water. IDPs also report that they are living in fear in Mampang and Kasanyangan transit sites because of drugs and criminality. Improvements and shelter construction in Kasanyangan, the main location for IDP permanent shelter, remains at a standstill. The City authorities continue to describe the lack of availability of the correct wood materials for construction, legal issues related to road access and water as the main obstacles to proceed.

The Protection Standby Capacity Project (ProCap) Senior Protection Officer who helped co-lead the Protection Cluster response and provided support in achieving durable solutions for the displaced in Zamboanga ended her assignment in July, one month early than her intended presence until end of September. This highlights the need for continued international protection oversight in Zamboanga.

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## UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF IDPs (SR) VISIT TO MINDANAO

The Special Rapporteur, Dr. Chaloka Beyani, visited Zamboanga, Maguindanao, Tapanan and Davao in Mindanao during the third week of July. The visits provided an insight into the human rights concerns of IDPs and for persons at-risk of displacement. In Zamboanga, the SR raised concerns about the families recently forced to leave the evacuation site they had been living for the past year and one half without being provided shelter or other assistance. Rehabilitated and permanent shelter sites constructed by the National and City authorities were also visited. In Central Mindanao/Maguindanao, the SR expressed concern of not being provided clearance to access IDP and return communities. The SR was not permitted to meet with the Moro Islamic Liberation Forces (MILF), the leaders of the majority of IDPs in Maguindanao and of the rebel party to the peace process in their main camp in Darapanan. The Government of the Philippines (GoP) cited security concerns as the reason for the lack of access to these areas. In Tapanan, in the Province of South Cotabato, the SR met with the Bishop of the Diocese of Marbel, church leaders and Civil Society Organizations supporting rights of indigenous peoples and indigenous people's leaders from the surrounding communities whose livelihoods and ancestral lands are threatened by ongoing and potential large-scale mining and logging activities. After receiving information from the media of a protest taking place against authorities trying to force IDPs to return to their places of origin, the SR proceeded to Davao City to talk with IDPs staying in the United Church of Christ (UCCP) Haran Compound. Several groups of indigenous people have been staying in the church compound in Davao since March this year expressing fear to return because of the presence of the AFP and paramilitary groups in their communities. Some authorities raised severe sanitation concerns in the overcrowded church compound and that IDPs were being told to stay in the compound against their will. After review of the conflict and extraction related IDP situation in Mindanao, the SR travelled to Tacloban to assess the government response to displacement from typhoon Haiyan. After his field visits, the SR had a series of meetings with government and non-government actors in Manila. He met with the Humanitarian Country Team and donors and emphasized the continued need to support the government to ensure rights of IDPs are protected and durable solutions are obtained.

The SR highlighted the disparity between the government's responses to conflict versus disaster-affected IDPs. He noted the overlapping roles of government agencies that added to an ineffective response. The SR also highlighted the lack of focus on the most vulnerable population, the indigenous peoples, who are potential victims of government involved extraction and business projects. His final report will not be completed and shared with the GoP until June 2016, however his rather detailed mission note that was shared with the UN and the government provides a description of issues to immediately address to improve the government's responsibility to ensure the human rights of IDPs are protected. The SR completed his mission to the Philippines on 31 July.



In his visit in the ARMM region, UN Envoy for IDPs Chaloka Beyani met with government and humanitarian actors to discuss the plight of the IDPs affected by natural disasters and armed conflict, many of whom have been displaced multiple times. © ARMM Bureau of Public Information/2015

## GINGOOG CITY PRE-EMPTIVE EVACUATION

The local government unit of Gingoog City in Misamis Oriental ordered a pre-emptive evacuation of 66 families (estimated 313 persons) because of strong winds that affected three barangays on 2 July. The strong hazardous winds left two houses damaged while no one was reported injured in the incident. According to the 15 July National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC) report, the displaced families returned to their homes in their barangays.

## AFP-NPA ARMED ENCOUNTER IN KIBAWÉ, BUKIDNON

According to an NDRRMC incident report, on 16 July, an armed encounter between troops from the AFP and members of the New Peoples' Army (NPA) took place in Sitio Balagon, Barangay Panimula, in Kibawé, Bukidnon. The firefight resulted to 56 families (estimated 265 persons) who fled their homes in the villages of Pinamual, Kisawa, and Sampaguita. Current situation of their displacement or return has yet to be verified.

## DISPLACEMENT DUE TO FLASHFLOODS IN MINDANAO

Incessant heavy rains caused flooding affecting a large number of communities in Central Mindanao and displacement in two regions. On 30 July, flashfloods triggered by heavy rains affected three barangays in Tulunan, North Cotabato and displaced 10 families (estimated 50 persons) from Barangay La Esperanza who temporarily evacuated to higher grounds in the barangay. The families returned home a day later when the flood water subsided. On 31 July, another 10 families (estimated 50 persons) were forced to flee from their homes which were partially damaged by a flashflood in Barangay Sto. Domingo in the municipality of San Fernando in Bukidnon. All the displaced families returned to their homes the next day. No casualties were reported in both incidents.

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The *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* note that “internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.”



**Durable Solutions** - UNHCR with Protection Cluster members continue to identify communities that are subjected to protracted displacement over the course of the year to ensure all IDPs are identified and the appropriate attention and resources can be obtained to support finding a durable solution to their displacement.

## CURRENT NUMBER OF IDPS IN NEED OF DURABLE SOLUTION



## CLARIFICATIONS

**Typhoon Pablo displacement** - A large number of IDPs remain displaced from Typhoon Pablo in December 2012 in Eastern Mindanao, Region XI who are still in need of a durable solution. Many of these families remain in temporary shelters where local authorities have been slowly obtaining access to land and constructing permanent housing for these IDPs. As of March 2015, there are still an estimated 76,568 IDPs in need of a durable solution in this region.

**Forced Returns from Sabah** - Filipino nationals continue to be forcibly returned from Sabah, Malaysia to the Island province, Tawi-Tawi and to Zamboanga City. After the standoff between the Royal Army of Sulu and the Malaysian Security Forces in March 2013, a large number of Filipinos living and working in Sabah are arrested, detained and forcibly returned to the Philippines. Reports obtained from the ARMM DSWD describe that each week hundreds of individuals, many separated from their families living in Sabah, are forced to depart Sabah by boat and arrive in Tawi-Tawi or Zamboanga. While there are no exact figures of the number of persons arriving at this time, it is estimated that over 50,000 persons have been forcibly returned to the Philippines since March 2013. According to the DSWD, many of these individuals are vulnerable and are in need of assistance and many more immediately return to Sabah where their families reside and where they have found employment.

## NUMBER OF INCIDENTS CAUSING DISPLACEMENT IN 2015

	TOTAL IN JULY 2015		TOTAL SINCE JAN 2015	
	INCIDENTS	DISPLACEMENT (persons)	INCIDENTS	DISPLACEMENT (persons)
<b>ARMED CONFLICT</b> incidents with displacement	3	1,195	28	230,908
<b>NATURAL DISASTER</b> incidents with displacement	3	413	5	57,563

## DISPLACEMENT MOVEMENT IN JULY 2015 (see details in boxes)



## LEGEND

