



Protection ALERT

Armed confrontations and displacement in Marawi City

31 May 2017, Issue No. 2, Page 1

Incident Summary

Firefights broke out in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur on the afternoon of 23 May 2017, following the ambush of a military vehicle by members of the Maute Group, a local armed group that has engaged in armed clashes with government troops since early 2016, and which has reportedly pledged allegiance to the Islamic State. Following the declaration of Martial Law throughout Mindanao on the night of 23 May, clashes have continued, with the Armed Forces of the Philippines launching surgical air strikes in the barangays of Basak Malutlut, Gadungan, and Bangon. As of 29 May, nearby areas such as the municipality of Marantao have also reportedly been affected.

Displacement Updates

According to government estimates as of 30 May, around 14,313 families (estimated 71,115 persons) have fled Marawi either towards the northbound highway heading to Iligan City and Cagayan de Oro, or the westbound road going to the nearby municipalities of Marantao and Balindong. Based on data reported and being continuously updated by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), this number includes 2,261 families (estimated 10,809 persons) who are currently staying in evacuation centers and 12,052 families (estimated 60,306 persons) home-based IDPs in Region X and in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), including Marawi City.

Protection Assessment

As thousands continue to flee Marawi, access to food and other basic items such as drinking water and medicines remains the biggest challenge for those who are now in collective centers (holding areas) and evacuation centers as well as those staying with host families. Since most of the displaced families fled without their belongings, kitchen utensils are seen as a particular need during the current Ramadhan season. In addition, market prices of commodities in Iligan City and surrounding areas were observed to have increased due to the influx of IDPs, raising concerns regarding access to basic needs for the most vulnerable, including those who have been separated from their families. Local government units in most areas hosting IDPs have provided initial assistance.

Validation and registration of home-based IDPs are currently being conducted by barangay officials in the respective host communities. Cultural sensitivities such as the prevalence of *rido* (clan feuds) may pose additional challenges in the tracking and registration of home-based IDPs. Especially considering that many IDPs rely on the resources of their relatives and extended networks, family tracing and reunification are also of vital concern.

Reported concerns regarding physical safety, including safe passage for civilians trapped in areas affected by firefights and freedom of movement for those without identity documents (given strict identification checks implemented in some areas), are being verified by protection partners. As of 30 May, the Regional Human Rights Commission is also monitoring and validating reports of civilian casualties and damage to property.

Initial protection concerns have been identified in evacuation centers, such as: (1) inadequate coverage from heat and rain, coupled with insufficient latrines/basic water and sanitation facilities to cater to the growing number of IDPs, which could trigger health risks; (2) lack of privacy and increased risk of gender-based violence, which may result from the absence of partitions in sleeping quarters and lighting in pathways and areas around portable toilets; and (3) psychosocial issues that could be addressed through the establishment of child-friendly and women-friendly spaces, as well as feeding areas for lactating mothers.

IDPs' access to information is also a key concern. Emergency responders, through the coordination mechanisms that have been activated (see below) are working to improve the collection, validation, and dissemination of displacement data in order to effectively address protection and other needs, including through the provision of targeted assistance.

Most humanitarian actors currently have limited direct access to many of the affected areas. Emergency response is being coordinated from Iligan City, in cooperation with ARMM and Region X authorities and the security sector.

Humanitarian Response

All response clusters, including the Protection Cluster, have been activated at the sub-national level; local authorities have stepped up assistance and relief efforts for the influx of evacuees in Iligan City and surrounding areas. Assistance hubs established by the ARMM regional government in Iligan City (in coordination with Region X authorities) and in the municipality of Malabang in Lanao del Sur are in full operation.

The Regional Coordination and Command Center (RCCC), which was officially activated on 27 May, is holding daily coordination meetings among ARMM and Region X response actors to discuss key issues per cluster and share updated information.

As of this report, the Department of Health – Region X is preparing to conduct health-related information dissemination sessions and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) interventions among the displaced population.

On 29 May, the ARMM government transmitted an official request for augmentation of humanitarian assistance to international and non-government actors through the Mindanao Humanitarian Team (MHT). UNHCR Philippines deployed a field team to Iligan City to support the government-led coordination mechanisms and conduct protection monitoring in some of the evacuation centers, and has provided core relief items (plastic tarpaulins for temporary shelter) for distribution through ARMM-HEART and partner NGO, Community and Family Services International (CFSI).

SOURCES: Regional Coordination and Command Center (RCCC), ARMM-HEART, DSWD-ARMM, DOH-Region X, CFSI

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