

Displacement in Carmen, North Cotabato (AFP vs JMWA)

Incident Date: 08 November 2017

Issue No. 01 dated 28 November 2017

INCIDENT BACKGROUND

After the series of tactical operations conducted by the joint forces of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front – Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (MILF-BIAF) against pro-Islamic State (IS) groups in the province of Maguindanao (see *IDP Protection Assessment Report: Armed conflict and Protracted Displacement in Central Mindanao – AFP and MILF vs. JMWA*, Issue No. 1 dated 10 October 2017), another operation was launched in North Cotabato province on the 8th of November.

Around 164 families (820 individuals) were forcibly displaced from Carmen, North Cotabato and found refuge in Barangay Liwali, in the municipality of Aleosan in the same province, when the AFP launched airstrikes in two remote villages of Carmen against members of an IS-supporter group who were reportedly sighted amassing in the area. The armed group involved is the Jamaatul Muhajeerin Wal Ansar (JMWA), a breakaway faction of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) led by Esmael Abdulmalik (alias Commander Abu Turaife) who has reportedly pledged allegiance to the Islamic State. JMWA members were reportedly sighted in the forested borders of Barangay Tonganon and Bentangan – boundary barangays between the municipalities of Carmen and Aleosan.

Following continuous AFP airstrikes against the JMWA on 11 and 18 November, the number of families displaced by the fighting in Aleosan and Carmen has increased to 268 (estimated 2,372 individuals) as of this report.

CURRENT SITUATION

The Local Government Units (LGUs) of Aleosan and Carmen are currently assisting the IDPs through the distribution of food packs and the conduct of feeding sessions for children. Some heads of families expressed concern regarding access to their livelihoods, which are mostly based on farming. Some of the IDPs have tried to access their farms during daytime, placing them at considerable risk amidst the current security situation. Many residents of these areas have been repeatedly displaced, and the current situation raises concerns regarding the displacement possibly becoming protracted and leading to increased vulnerability, particularly for those who have no other source of subsistence.

PROTECTION ISSUES AND RESPONSE

ISSUES	RESPONSES	WAYS FORWARD
PHYSICAL SECURITY AND INTEGRITY		
<i>Threat to life, safety and security</i>		
<p>Civilians were only informed to vacate their respective houses after the first series of airstrikes was launched by the AFP.</p> <p>Aerial bombardment and mortar shelling were launched in the forested part of the border of Carmen and Aleosan, North Cotabato.</p> <p>Displaced families related that they were not aware of the presence of an IS-inspired group in their area, and that they experienced extreme fear during the airstrikes.</p>	<p>IDPs have been accommodated in designated spaces for temporary shelter in the municipality of Aleosan. The Municipal LGU (MLGU) distributed food packs and made efforts to inform the IDPs about the situation in their communities of origin.</p>	<p>Follow-up protection monitoring needs to be carried out to keep track of the status and protection situation of IDPs, especially since some of them have expressed an intention to return to their places of origin to retrieve their belongings.</p>
<p>The situation remains volatile because of the presence of armed elements in the affected areas.</p>		<p>Advocacy and follow-ups with the LGUs of the host municipality, in coordination with that of the municipality of origin, to sustain the provision of timely and accurate information to IDPs regarding the security situation in their home communities.</p>
<i>Threats to liberty and freedom of movement</i>		

The primary source of livelihood of most of the displaced families is farming. The situation is especially difficult for them as this month is harvest season. They are currently unable to access their farmlands due to the security restrictions.	The IDP leaders discussed with the barangay officials to assist them in negotiating with the military to allow them access to their farmlands to harvest their crops. At the initial talks, it was agreed that the farmers should wear white shirts when they visit/return to their farms to ensure that they will not be targeted. However, some officials are not amenable to this idea considering that the armed group is still in the area.	Follow-up with the Barangay officials and MLGU on the status of the petition, and on the security measures that would be taken to ensure the safety of those who would access their farms. Advocate with other humanitarian actors for the provision of alternative livelihood sources and/or continuous provision of basic assistance while displacement persists.
BASIC NECESSITIES OF LIFE		
<i>Access to Food Aid and Nutrition</i>		
Displaced families have expressed their concerns about the lack of food supply. According to them, the several food packs they have already received are insufficient for their families' needs.	MLGU will try to source out funds for additional food rations.	Follow-up with the MLGU and conduct further protection monitoring missions to check on the IDPs' situation and needs.
<i>Access to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene</i>		
The evacuation camps have no bathing cubicles/area. Potable water is also lacking, which could lead to health risks.		UNHCR continues to advocate with the barangay officials, Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office (MSWDO), and Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (MDRRMO) officers for measures to address the lack of adequate water and sanitation, should there be a need for the IDPs to stay in the evacuation camps for a longer period.
<i>Access to Shelter</i>		
There is no privacy in the evacuation camps. Some IDPs do not have available tarpaulins to put up temporary shelters, and are using scrap pieces of wood and bamboo as flooring materials.	Referred to the BLGU and MLGU and requested for possible provision of non-food items such as plastic sheets and blankets.	Follow-up with the MLGU.
<i>Access to Health</i>		
Due to the substandard living conditions in the evacuation camps, children and elderly persons have started to catch common illnesses such as colds, fever, cough and diarrhea.	The Rural Health Unit (RHU) of Aleosan deployed medical personnel to attend to the health needs of the IDPs. Together with the MSWDO, they conducted feeding sessions for children.	Monitor health needs during follow-up missions and refer any persistent health-related concerns to the RHU for appropriate response as needed.
ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL PROTECTION		
<i>Access to Education</i>		
Families whose children are enrolled in schools located in the affected barangays are unable to attend school because classes were temporarily suspended. Parents of displaced children are hoping that their children can temporarily join the classes in schools near the places where they are currently staying.		Conduct follow-up protection monitoring to check if the children still cannot access their schools. If needed, refer to local education authorities and/or to other humanitarian actors who may be able to implement alternative learning interventions.
<i>Protection of Persons with Specific Needs</i>		
The specific needs of vulnerable individuals such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, newborn		UNHCR continues to advocate with the barangay officials, MSWDO, and MDRRMO officers for prioritization

babies, mothers, and young girls do not receive targeted attention or responses.

and provision of the necessary assistance.

PERSONS OF CONCERN

No. of Fam	No. of Persons +/-	Location (Origin)				Location (Current)				
		Province	Mun	Barangay	Sitio	Province	Mun	Barangay	Sitio	Exact Location
167	1,478	North Cotabato	Carmen	Bentangan		North Cotabato	Aleosan	Lawili		Lower Salinangan
30	266	North Cotabato	Carmen	Tonganon		North Cotabato	Aleosan	Lawili		Upper Salinangan
45	398	North Cotabato	Carmen	Tonganon		North Cotabato	Aleosan	Lawili		Purok 4
26	230	North Cotabato	Carmen	Bentangan		North Cotabato	Aleosan	Lawili		Purok 6
TOTAL										
268	2,372									

SOURCES:

Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office of Aleosan
IDP Leaders

DISPLACEMENT IN CARMEN, NORTH COTABATO

(AFP vs. JMWA)



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Philippines

 **2,372**

NUMBER OF PRESENTLY
DISPLACED INDIVIDUALS



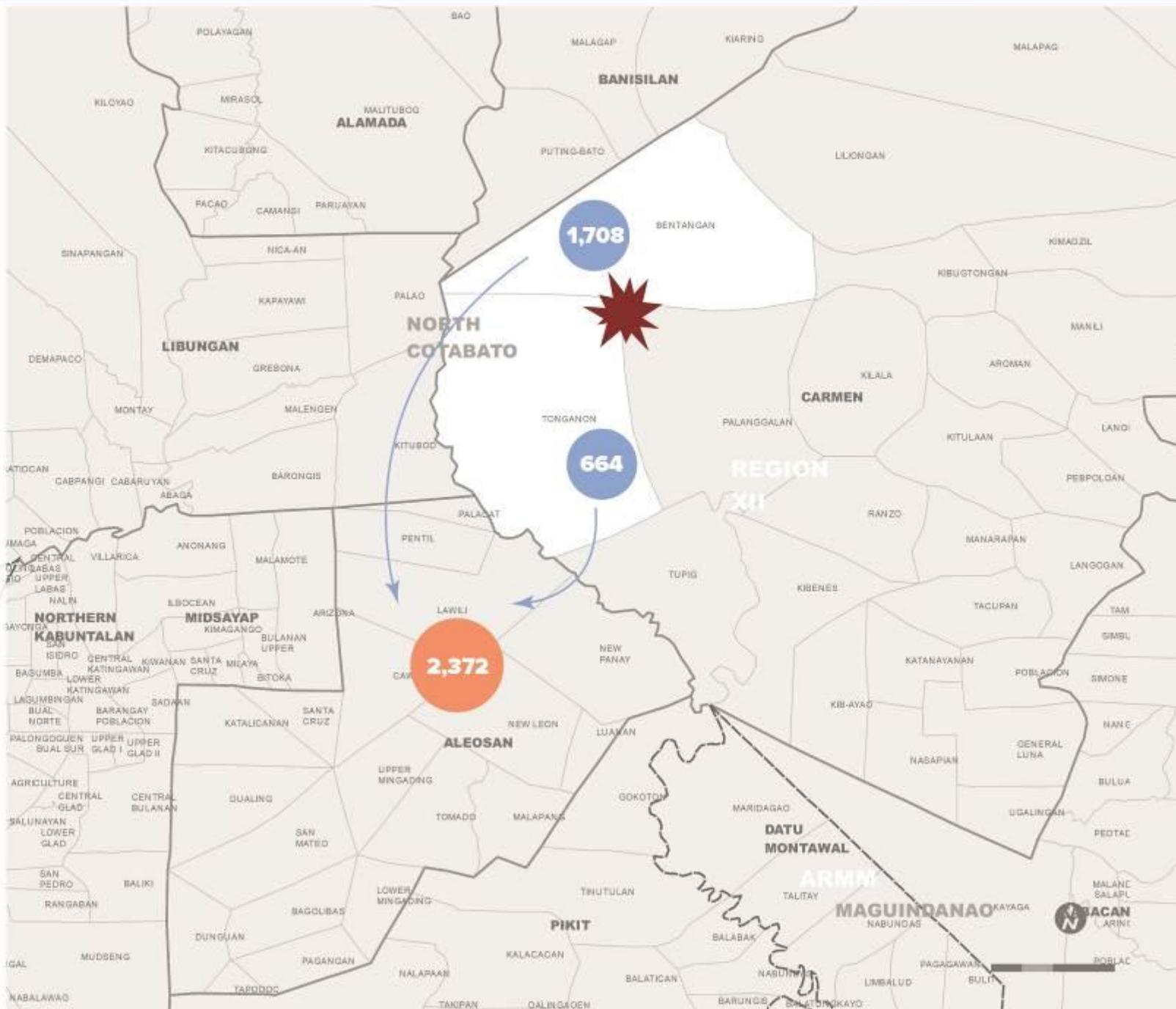
268

NUMBER OF PRESENTLY
DISPLACED FAMILIES

LEGEND

-  Conflict
-  Municipal boundary
-  Barangay boundary
-  Provincial boundary

LOCATION MAP



The IDP Protection Assessment Form (IDPPAR)

The IDP Protection Assessment Form aims to provide a starting point for information and analysis that can help humanitarian agencies, policy makers and other stakeholders concerning instances of forced displacement or solutions (repatriation, resettlement, integration). The number of people displaced/affected may differ from the number in need of humanitarian assistance. To the extent possible, the terminology used in the Dashboard reflects the *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* and other sources of international law and practice. The information reported in the IDP Protection Assessment Forms has been received from members of the Protection Cluster across Mindanao. Consequently, unreported cases of forced displacement and solutions are not reflected. Updates will be provided as and when more information is received from members. Although efforts are made to verify the data, the Protection Cluster takes no responsibility for the incompleteness or inaccuracy of the information. At the end of every month, this data is compiled and distributed through the '**Protection Dashboard**'. The information provided in this IDP Assessment Report does not necessarily reflect the views of UNHCR or any individual member of the Protection Cluster.

The Protection Cluster

In the Philippines, the protection cluster has been established by the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) Circular No 5 series of 10 May 2007 (Institutionalizing Cluster Approach in Philippine Disaster System). The cluster approach is part of a global response aimed at providing more timely and consistent help to the internally displaced and other affected people in complex emergencies and disasters. The Protection Cluster in Mindanao meets in Cotabato, Iligan, Davao and other cities on a regular basis. Currently there are over 100 participating agencies including from the Government, State, Civil Society, national and international NGOs and agencies, as well as the United Nations. For more information, please visit the Protection Cluster website <http://www.protectioncluster.org/philippines/> or e-mail us at PHICOPRC@unhcr.org

