

Philippines marks five years since its deadliest storm

November 8 2018



In Tacloban, the worst-hit city, residents painted gravestones, laid flowers and lit candles at a cemetery in memory of the thousands of typhoon dead

Philippine survivors of Super Typhoon Haiyan recalled their terror and loss while gathered Thursday at a mass grave for thousands killed five

years ago in the country's worst storm on record.

Then the strongest [storm](#) to ever hit land, Haiyan left more than 7,360 people dead or missing across the central Philippines with its tsunami-like storm surges wiping out communities and triggering a global humanitarian response.

In Tacloban, the worst-hit city, residents painted gravestones, laid flowers and lit candles at a cemetery in memory of the typhoon dead, shedding tears as they recounted how they themselves had survived.

"I felt like it was the end of the world. It was like I was in a washing machine, a whirlpool. I was so afraid," Amelita Gerado, 49, told AFP, describing the giant wall of seawater that swamped her home.

"There is still pain, a scar, but we are recovering," said the woman, whose brother-in-law was among those killed in Tacloban.

The city government has declared November 8 a "day of remembrance and gratitude" to mark the devastation wreaked by the 2013 typhoon, which highlighted how little-prepared the disaster-prone Southeast Asian nation was for disasters of that magnitude.

An average of 20 typhoons and storms lash the Philippines each year, killing hundreds of people and leaving millions in near-perpetual poverty.



The Tacloban city government has declared November 8 a "Day of Remembrance and Gratitude" to mark the devastation wreaked by the 2013 typhoon

But Haiyan remains the most powerful, with gusts exceeding 305 kilometres (190 miles) per hour at first landfall.

Storm surges higher than trees crashed into densely populated areas, leaving corpses strewn across streets and washing ships to shore.

Survivors and aid groups say rehabilitation has been slow, especially for the million families who lost their homes.

Of the target 205,128 permanent houses for those living in so-called

danger zones, only 100,709 have been built, President Rodrigo Duterte's government said.



Super Typhoon Haiyan was the country's most powerful storm on record, with gusts exceeding 305 kilometres (190 miles) per hour at first landfall

"We are addressing issues that cause the delay, which include limited availability of titled lands for resettlement, slow processing and issuance of permits," Duterte's spokesman Salvador Panelo said on Wednesday.

Relocation sites built about an hour away from the low-lying coastal city also lacked a steady supply of electricity, drinking water, and jobs, authorities added.

For many whose relatives remain missing, the absence of their loved ones' remains is also a lingering challenge.

In the Tacloban cemetery on Thursday, survivors wrote names on white crosses stuck on top of a [mass grave](#) as a way to find closure.

"We just put gravestones here even if we are not sure their bodies are here, just so we have somewhere to light candles. I want to honour their memory," said Michael Ybanez, who lost his mother, sister, a nephew and a niece in the tragedy.



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