

Death toll from Philippine storm, landslides climbs to 126

January 6 2019



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The death toll from a storm that devastated the Philippines shortly after Christmas rose to 126, authorities said Sunday, adding landslides caused

by torrential rain were the top cause.

The storm hit central and eastern Philippine islands on December 29 and caused massive flooding and landslides. More than 100 people died in the mountainous Bicol [region](#) southeast of Manila, regional disaster officials said.

While the Bicol region is often hit by deadly typhoons, many people failed to take necessary precautions because the storm was not strong enough to be rated as a [typhoon](#) under the government's storm alert system, according to civil defence officials.

Officials also said that many residents were reluctant to leave their homes during the Christmas holidays.

"In two days alone, Usman poured more than a month's worth of rainfall in the Bicol region," national disaster agency spokesman Edgar Posadas told AFP, using the local name for the storm which had weakened into a low pressure area.

"Our search and retrieval operations are ongoing but the sticky mud and the unstable soil are a challenge."

The [death toll](#) was likely to climb further with 26 people still missing, Posadas added.

More than 152,000 people were displaced by the storm and 75 were injured, according to the national disaster agency.

President Rodrigo Duterte visited the [storm](#)-hit areas on Friday and urged officials to build evacuation centres instead of using schools as shelters for the displaced.

About 20 typhoons and storms batter the Philippines each year, killing hundreds of people.

The deadliest in recent years was Super Typhoon Haiyan which left more than 7,360 people dead or missing across the central Philippines in 2013.

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