

Philippines floods force tens of thousands to flee homes

December 26 2022



Christmas Day floods have forced the evacuation of nearly 46,000 people from their homes.

Christmas Day floods in the Philippines forced the evacuation of nearly 46,000 people from their homes, civil defence officials said Monday.

Eleven people were killed and 19 others were missing after a week's worth of heavy seasonal rain in the southern and eastern regions of the country, they said, updating earlier official figures.

The flooding hit the south on Sunday, with the disaster dampening celebrations on the mainly Catholic nation's most important holiday.

Rivers overflowed, swamping rural villages and highways as well as the cities of Ozamiz and Oroquieta, governor Henry Oaminal for the province of Misamis Occidental said on government radio.

"The heart of the city was flooded including the public market. Power was cut off and there was no (telephone) signal," he said, referring to Oroquieta, the provincial capital with 72,000 residents.

"We've had floods before, but these are the worst rainfall and [water flow](#) levels we have ever had," he added.

"The waters rose above the chest in some areas, but today the rains have ceased," civil defence worker Robinson Lacre told AFP by phone from Gingoog city, which accounted for 33,000 of the 45,700 people evacuated from their homes.

The coastguard said it rescued members of more than two dozen families in Ozamiz and nearby Clarin town at the height of the flooding.

Photos released by the coastguard showed its orange-clad rescuers cradling toddlers plucked from homes at nighttime in waist-deep floodwaters.

Seven deaths—mostly from drowning—were reported in Clarin and the nearby southern towns of Jimenez and Tudela.

The coastguard also said [strong winds](#) and big waves sank a [fishing boat](#) on Christmas Day off the coast of the central island of Leyte. Two [crew members](#) were killed, while six others were rescued.

Two others, including a [baby girl](#), drowned in the eastern towns of Libmanan and Tinambac after they were hit by floods several days before Christmas, the civil defence office said.

The coastguard said it also rescued 23 fishermen aboard two boats that capsized when hit by big waves off the southern city of Zamboanga on Sunday.

Nineteen people remain missing, most of them subsistence fishermen from the country's Pacific seaboard who went to sea despite rough conditions.

The weather turned bad as the disaster-prone nation of 110 million people prepared for a long Christmas holiday.

Millions of people travel to their hometowns for family reunions during this period.

The Philippines is ranked among the most vulnerable nations to the impacts of climate change.

Scientists have warned that storms are becoming more powerful as the world gets warmer.

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