		PAGALUNGAN	PIKIT
Evacuation Center	# of Families	1502	893
	# of Dependents	9012	388
House-Based	# of Families	105	1601
	# of Dependents	630	6803

Map of Provinces in Maguindanao and North Cotabato © IOM 2015

ARMED CONFLICT BETWEEN PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE SPECIAL ACTION FORCE AND ARMED GROUPS ERUPTS IN MAMASAPANO

BACKGROUND

Due to the continued tension between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), since 9 February 2015, again a firefight has erupted between these groups at around 5:00 pm on Saturday, 13 February 2015 in the Barangays Buliok and Kalbugan, Pagalungan, Maguindanao Province. The conflict has affected thousands of civilians from the villages of Buliok, Kalbugan and Bagoinged, Pagalungan, Maguindanao, where internally displaced persons continue to flee their homes to avoid being caught in a cross fire.

The military has decided to step into the situation in Pikit (North Cotabato) and Pagalungan (Maguindanao), where a group from the MILF has been battling it out with BIFF rebels to protect civilian lives and properties, as confirmed by the Armed Forces Chief of Staff, Gregorio Pio Catapang. Mr. Catapang, who visited the region last Wednesday 18 February, attended the turnover by the MILF of 16 firearms taken from slain Special Action Force troops during the 25 January Mamasapano clash. He also has announced that the Philippine Army's 6th Infantry Division will send soldiers to intervene and to stop the hostilities.

Since last week, MILF members and BIFF gunmen have been clashing in remote areas of Pikit and Pagalungan, causing displacement and sending thousands of people fleeing to safety. At least seven Pikit villages have become virtual ghost areas when BIFF gunmen came in and torched houses. The BIFF also occupied about the same number of villages in Pagalungan, a town adjacent to Pikit.

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO IDPS

In *Pagalungan:*

- 120 sacks of rice extended by the Local Government Unit;
- 300 packs (3 kilos of rice, sardines, noodles) extended by the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Humanitarian Emergency Assistance and Response Team (ARMM-HEART);
- 2 rolls of tarpaulin provided by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD);
- 12, 50 pieces of tarpaulin distributed by UNHCR;
- 16 pieces of tarpaulin from the Mindanao Children's Library Foundation, medical mission by the Department of Health-ARMM, Province and Rural Health Unit in Pagalungan; and
- The Local Government Unit constructed a toilet at Old Market Evacuation Center.

IOM'S INTERVENTIONS

- IOM has supported DSWD by rolling out the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). These DTM rollouts help to identify the needs and concerns of the displaced families.
- Tomorrow, Tuesday 24 February, IOM together with the ARMM-HEART, OCHA and UNHCR, will conduct a rapid needs assessment in Sultan sa Barongis, a town in Maguindanao. There have been reports of displacement in this town, but the cause of these movements has yet to be confirmed.

Displaced Families in Fort Pikit Mahad © IOM 2015

Displaced Families in the Poblacion Training Center, Pikit © IOM 2015

References:
INQUIRER.net http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/673971/army-to-send-troops-to-intervene-stop-biff-milf-clashes

IOM IN COTABATO

Since the opening of the Cotabato Office in 2008, IOM has become one of the biggest humanitarian actors – leading emergency response for affected populations – in Mindanao. IOM Cotabato is currently implementing peace building and gender mainstreaming activities in partnership with Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA), Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC), and Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), INGOs, NGOs, and civil society organizations.

For more information, please contact:
Mr. Besim Ajeti, IOM Cotabato Head of Office
Telephone: +63644211366 | Email: bajeti@iom.int Internet: www.philippineresponse.iom.int