



CITIZENS' DISASTER RESPONSE CENTER

72-A Times St., West Triangle, Quezon City, Phils
Telefax no. (632)929-9822
Tel no.(632) 924-0386 / 928-7860
e-mail: cdrc@mydestiny.net
rpil_cdrc@mydestiny.net
website: www.cdrc-phil.org

No. 10. Julv 04. 2006

Thousands flee as clashes start anew in Maguindanao and Bukidnon

Shariff Aguak, Maguindanao

At least 17,392 persons or 3,065 families were forced to seek temporary shelter in their relatives' house and other safer places as conflict between government militia and a Muslim armed group strike once again.

The hostilities happened between the members of the Citizens' Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) from the Army's 6th Infantry Division and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on June 28 last week. The fighting broke in Shariff Aguak town in Maguindanao initially displacing 5,070 persons or 875 families from five barangays.

MILF spokesman Eid Kabalu claimed up to 40 militiamen had been killed and 30 injured. On their part, 2 guerillas were killed and 10 injured, he added.

Kabalu earlier accused the militiamen of attacking MILF positions in three villages in Shariff Aguak with mortars and gunfire late Wednesday, prompting the guerillas to retaliate. Military and police officials claim otherwise. The police blamed MILF commanders Jamil Ombra and Sajid Pakiladato for the attack.

"The situation on the ground is still very intense because no measure has been imposed to resolve the problem," Kabalu said. He added that a directive issued by MILF chair Ebrahim Murad stated that unless attacked by government militia allegedly controlled by Maguindanao Governor Andal ampatuan, their guerillas were told to stop firing effective Sunday evening.

Uprooted once more

Most of the subsistence farming villagers lost count of the number of times their families had to leave their barangays because of the clashes between government forces and Moro armed groups.

Regional Secretary Ruby M. Sahali-Tan of the Department of Social Work and Development-Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (DSWD-ARMM) reported that at least 5,755 persons or 1,025 families from three barangays in Datu Unsay, 6,567 persons or 1,165 families from five barangays in Mamasapano, and 5,070 persons or 875 families from five barangays in Shariff Aguak have sought temporary refuge in safer places. Nine evacuation centers have been established by the DSWD to accommodate 2,949 families or 11,996 persons. Other evacuees opted to stay in relatives' homes.

Malaybalay, Bukidnon

Fighting between the NPA rebels and the Armed Forces of the Philippines 26th IB, started sometime last June 9 where two soldiers were killed. After the armed clash, series of pursuit operations were launched by the AFP, combining ground and air assault. MG 520 helicopter-bombers and ground mortars pounded the targets. Until June 20 pursuit operations and bombings continued in the forests of Bukidnon.

Interviews with the evacuees revealed that people have fled the area since fighting sometimes crosses right in the middle of the village. Aside from this, food supply had been scarce as they are not allowed to attend to their farms. They also fear for their lives as they may be caught in crossfire.

After nearly a week of fighting, the people with their village leaders decided to go down to the center of barangay Zamboanguita, with reasons for their safety and lack of food supply. The evacuees came from the sitios of Barangays Zamboanguita, St. Peter, Busdi, Kulaman, which is 3 to 4 hours from the center of Zamboanguita.

Barangay Zamboanguita and Busdi is 50 kilometers from the center of Malaybalay. It can be reached by motor vehicles or buses through rough roads. The sitios of the barangays in these areas are already within the Pantaron Range of Mountains bordering Agusan del Sur.

The people camped in the elementary school in Zamboanguita then some were transferred to the barangay hall because classes have to continue. During the first week of evacuation, the barangay leaders donated 10 sacks of rice and other needs for the evacuees, followed by the assistance from the Municipal government. Supplies are very dear with 1 sardines being shared by the whole family.

With the prolonged encampment in evacuation center, many have been sick with flu, stress related-tensions, children exposed to the environment caught cough and colds. Before any diseases become severe, immediate attention is needed.

A call for an end to the conflict

Unless the root causes of the armed conflict is seriously addressed -- a lasting peace will never be achieved for the displaced peoples of Mindanao. That is why, the Citizens' Disaster Response Center (CDRC) strongly advocate peace-building

initiatives throughout the country --- so the people could go back to their land and children could play without fear of falling bombs or flying bullets.

In the meantime, CDRC calls for the support to on-going peace talks between the government and armed groups to catalyze the return of displaced families in war-torn villages. Relief assistance from the DSWD-ARMM needs augmentation for food and non-food relief to arrest further deterioration of the affected families' conditions.

The assistance being sought is relief delivery of mainly food supplies to tide them over for a week and medical consultation with medicines to arrest developing diseases in the evacuation centers.

Majority of these internally displaced persons have a difficult time figuring out how and what to feed their hungry families. The raging armed conflict in their homeland has damaged their farms and crops and halted other means of livelihood --- leaving them with no food stocks or money to buy them meals.

Donations may be sent through CDRC, with address at 72-A Times St., West Triangle Homes, Quezon City. Donors can easily reach CDRC at 929-9822 or 928-7860.

References:
CDRC-Mindanao Field Office (CDRC-MFO) (07/03/06)
Department of Social Work and Development-Disaster Response Operations Monitoring and
Information Center (07/04/06)
Philippine Daily Inquirer (07/04/06)