



PROTECTION ALERT

ARMED CONFRONTATIONS IN MAGUINDANAO AND NORTH COTABATO

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DISPLACEMENT UPDATES

According to government sources, as of 16 October, around 138 families (690 individuals) from Barangay Alonganen, Datu Piang, Maguindanao (30 families; 150 individuals) and from Barangay Buliok, Pikit, North Cotabato (108 families; 540 individuals) have fled to neighboring barangays. The displaced population coming from Barangay Alonganen have sought refuge with relatives and friends in Barangay Balong in Datu Piang, while the IDPs from Barangay Buliok have gone to the evacuation center in Barangay Poblacion in Pikit.

INCIDENT BACKGROUND

The displacement was triggered by several interrelated incidents. Based on reports from protection partners, firefights broke out between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front – Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (MILF-BIAF) and the Jamaatul Muhajirin wal Ansar (JMWA) on 28 September 2017 following an assault by the MILF-BIAF on the JMWA strongholds in Barangay Tee and Barangay Andavit, both in the municipality of Datu Salibo, Maguindanao. The members of the JMWA were subsequently able to escape to the neighboring Barangays of Pagatin, Pinditen, Inaladen and Pandi, also in Datu Salibo.

In coordination with the MILF, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) launched military operations against both the JMWA and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in the municipalities of Talitay, Talayan, Guindulungan, Datu Salibo and Rajah Buayan, all in Maguindanao, and in the municipality of Midsayap in North Cotabato on 10 October.

A few days later, on 16 October, government forces facilitated a pre-emptive evacuation of residents in Barangay Kalbugan, Pagalungan municipality, and in adjacent communities along the marshy portions of the municipalities of Sultan sa Barongis (SSB) and General Salipada K. Pendatun in Maguindanao and the municipality of Pikit in North Cotabato, as the MILF-BIAF mobilized forces in these areas in pursuit of the JMWA. Families in the adjacent interior barangays have also started packing up their belongings in fear that the armed confrontations could escalate.