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THEMATIC PROTECTION

BULLETIN

CLOSING THE GAPS

Ensuring Liberty and Freedom of Movement to IDPs of the Marawi Humanitarian Crisis

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BACKGROUND

- The armed confrontations between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Pro-ISIS militant groups in Marawi City has forcibly displaced a total of 78,466 families (359,680 individuals). Internally Displaced Persons come from 98 percent of the total population of Marawi City and residents from nearby municipalities who were compelled to leave due to severe food shortage and/or constriction of local economies.
- About 95 percent of the total displaced population have sought shelter with relatives or to community-based evacuation centers, while about 5 percent have gone to evacuation centers.
- A large number of the displaced population have left behind vital identity documents in their haste to flee the fighting in Marawi City.
- Loss of identity documents in the course of displacement tend to heighten protection risks including difficulties in accessing public services, such as education and health care, livelihood opportunities, limits to freedom of movement and heighten risk of harassment, exploitation or arbitrary arrest and detention. Lack of documentation also risks curtailing the ability to voluntarily opt for available durable solutions after displacement.
- A portion of the displaced population opted not to acquire birth and other civil registration documents for political reasons prior to displacement, and as a result, do not possess identity documents which will allow them access basic public and social services.
- To prevent elements of Pro-ISIS militant groups from infiltrating evacuation centers and host communities, the government has implemented a “No ID, No Entry” policy.



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IN FOCUS: FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

- In international law, the government may regulate freedom of movement in accordance with the applicable domestic legal framework to the extent necessary to address existing security concerns, such as through setting up checkpoints .
- Verified Protection concerns linked to the implementation of current security regulations at checkpoints have been communicated to competent authorities.
- In several locations, the IDPs who are not in possession of identity documents have reported being confronted with the following problems:
 - Adult males and male youth are afraid of going in and out of their evacuation centers / host communities freely.
 - IDPs are questioned by security sector personnel in checkpoints and are at risk of being misidentified, especially if they have facial resemblance to circulated photos of identified terrorists or have the same family names as suspected members of extremist groups.
- In an effort to address this protection issue, the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) met with barangay chairpersons and advised them to issue certifications of identity to their constituents. This initiative was cancelled later on due to the absence of security features embedded in the certification, which render such certification easy to misuse or tamper with.
- The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) approved an En Banc Resolution on 21 June 2017 to issue voter’s certification free of charge in Mindanao taking into consideration the declaration of martial law and the peace and order situation in Mindanao. Some IDPs from Marawi have availed of the certification.
- Joint Task Force Ranaw has requested government agencies that the identity documents they plan to issue to IDPs in particular, carry security features that are easily verifiable by the security sector.
- PhilHealth is set to issue identification documents to its members and prospective members who are displaced due to the Marawi Crisis, in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and in coordination with the Joint Task Force Ranaw, Philippine National Police, and Armed Forces of the Philippines. UNHCR, Catholic Relief Services and other members of the Protection Cluster are providing support to this endeavor.

CLOSING THE GAPS

- In order to close the gap, duty bearers shall:
 - Ensure that internally displaced persons are accorded full and equal enjoyment of their freedom of movement.
 - Ensure that all agents of the State strictly comply with existing protocols at checkpoints so as not to unduly restrict the exercise of freedom of movement of IDPs.
 - Reinforce and broaden issuance of identity documents for those who are not in possession of such, especially among the IDPs.
 - Ensure that consultation processes are facilitated, in which IDPs are able to fully participate and express their views and concerns including, *inter alia*, freedom of movement.

DISCLAIMER

The Thematic Protection Bulletin aims to provide a starting point for information and analysis that can help protection agencies, policy makers and other stakeholders concerning instances of forced displacement or solutions (repatriation, resettlement, integration). The number of people displaced / affected may differ from the number in need of humanitarian assistance. To the extent possible, the terminology used in the Bulletin reflects the *UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* and other sources of international law and practice. The information reported in the Thematic Protection Bulletin has been received from members of the Protection Cluster across Mindanao. Consequently, unreported cases of forced displacement and solutions are not reflected. Updates will be provided as and when more information is received from members. Although efforts are made to verify the data, the UNHCR Mindanao, Philippines takes no responsibility for the incompleteness or inaccuracy of the information. The information provided in this Thematic Protection Bulletin does not necessarily reflect the views of UNHCR or any individual member of the Protection Cluster. Photos featuring children were taken with their consent.