

Three typhoons rock the Philippines, militant students strike

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Student protest in front of Ateneo de Manila University, Nov. 17.

As if extrajudicial killings, the worst COVID-19 infection rate in Southeast Asia and a renewed government effort of red-tagging weren't enough, the Filipino people were struck by three typhoons within the space of three weeks.

- **October 25:** Typhoon Molave (called Quinto in the Philippines) made landfall at San Miguel Island and tore across Luzon for two days.
- **October 31:** Super Typhoon Goni (or Rolly) struck the Bicol region, very close to where Molave made landfall.
- **November 11:** Super Typhoon Vamco (or Ulysses) hit the Quezon region on Nov. 11, just north of where the first two typhoons made landfall.



PHILIPPINES

Typhoon Vamco (Ulysses) and Super Typhoon Goni (Rolly) Snapshot

As of 19 November 2020

President Rodrigo Duterte declared a state of calamity for the entire Luzon, after a series of typhoons, including Typhoon Vamco (locally named Ulysses), ravaged the country's largest and most populous island.

While the affected areas continue to reel from the consequences of "Typhoon Goni and three preceding cyclones in October," Typhoon Vamco has further hampered response efforts and caused further destruction.



TYPHOON VAMCO (ULYSSES)

3.67M PEOPLE AFFECTED **73** DEATHS
277.7k PEOPLE DISPLACED **67k** HOUSES DAMAGED OR DESTROYED

SUPER TYPHOON GONI (ROLLY)

2.14M PEOPLE AFFECTED **25** DEATHS
71.3k PEOPLE DISPLACED **189k** HOUSES DAMAGED OR DESTROYED

COVID-19 AND WATERBORNE DISEASES

The Department of Health (DOH) issued a press release stating that they are on heightened surveillance and warned the public against possible outbreak of water-borne and foodborne illnesses, influenza-like illnesses, leptospirosis and cholera. (DOH, 11 November 2020) "The DOH also reiterated its call on the precautionary measures against spread of COVID-19 among the displaced population."

COVID-19 movement restrictions in Cagayan were放宽ing access of humanitarian actors at the onset of flooding. On 14 November, the national government requested the provincial authorities in Cagayan, and in other typhoon-affected areas, to lift strict COVID-19 health protocols to allow relief, search and rescue teams and media outlets immediate access to areas affected by Typhoon Vamco.



REGION II (CAGAYAN VALLEY)

Floods and landslides wreaked havoc in the northern provinces of Cagayan and Isabela on 13 November due to the rains brought by Vamco (Ulysses) and previous tropical cyclones and depressions.

The already swollen Cagayan River in northern Luzon rose quickly, inundating low-lying communities when authorities released water from Magat Dam, one of the largest in the country, to prevent the dam from reaching its critical spilling level. Local authorities called it the worst in the region in four decades.

CENTRAL LUZON & NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

Large swaths of Region III (Central Luzon) and the National Capital Region (NCR) were submerged in floods in scenes reminiscent of Tropical Storm Ketsana/Ondoy in 2009. In Manila City (NCR), the mayor reported that 40,000 houses were either partially or fully submerged.

REGION V (BICOL)

Heavy rains from Vamco affected the Bicol provinces where flooding incidents were reported in 37 municipalities. Catanduanes, which was the worst hit province by Typhoon Goni, experienced flash floods and landslides. The provincial governor lamented that response efforts are back to zero as house repairs and temporary shelters were again destroyed.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Sources: PSA, DSNE, DROMC, NDRRMC/OCD, FAGASA, DOH, UNOSAT

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Following the destruction of these three storms, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [reports](#):

- 73 deaths
- 24 injured
- 19 people still missing
- 283,656 people are in evacuation centers
- 82,900 people remain displaced
- 50 villages remain isolated
- Over \$165 million in infrastructure damage across 8 regions
- Only 60 out of 316 municipalities have had power restored

Many of the working and oppressed masses of the Philippines have accepted that [help is not coming](#). Despite the millions of U.S. dollars poured into military and police aid, none of it will be utilized for disaster relief or rescue.

Some of the most calamitous consequences of the storms were those that were avoidable and unnecessary — those that can be traced back to the actions, or lack thereof, of the Philippines government.

President Rodrigo Duterte's persecution and subsequent [shutdown of the ABS-CBN news service](#) meant that entire regions, where ABS-CBN was the only news service available, went without any prior warning of the incoming typhoons.

The budget for the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council has been dramatically slashed over time, specifically by 4 billion Philippine pesos (or more than 82 million USD) in 2020. [Writer JC Punongbayan also comments](#) on the funds allocated for the government's war on activists:

"But, at the same time, he said they won't likely touch the P19.1 billion that will be allocated for the National Task Force to End Communist Local Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) — an anti-insurgency committee engaged in red-tagging and propaganda. That P19 billion is no joke, and the whole amount will be much better repurposed to augment disaster relief efforts, as well as the COVID-19 response."

NDRRMC budget slashed by P4b in 2020

Budget of National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) in billion PHP.



In 2016, P18.9 billion was added for the Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Recovery Plan (CRRP) in the aftermath of Typhoon Yolanda.

Source: Department of Budget and Management

Students strike back

Youth and student groups called for a national academic strike against the criminal negligence of the Duterte administration. Students at University of the Philippines campuses, the Ateneo de Manila University, the University of Santo Tomas and many more submitted pledges to withhold all submissions of enrollment requirements until their demands are met.

The demands:

- National academic break and semester end
- Urgent calamity aid and pandemic response
- Ouster of the Duterte administration
- Fair wages for university staff and faculty

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque threatened: “Babagsak po kayo,” or, “you

will fail." Duterte [threatened to cut off funding](#) to the University of the Philippines, red-tagging the university in the process: "Sure. UP? Fine. Stop studying. I will stop the funding. You don't do anything except recruit communists. You study, and then you criticize the government. You are so lucky. Don't threaten me, because I will oblige you."

Alongside the student protests, at least 134 faculty members of the University of Philippines-Diliman [issued a statement](#) calling for the end of the semester.

The situation is very fluid. One way to follow developments is to tune into the hashtag #YouthStrikePH on all social media platforms. Whatever happens, this action led by youth and students, bringing together the workers and faculty of the universities and surrounding communities, is a remarkable example of mass action.

