

Nearly 150 people killed in Philippines in the wake of Typhoon Trami

Dante Pastrana
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Massive flooding and landslides in the Philippines killed nearly 150 people in the wake of Severe Tropical Storm Trami. The storm headed on to Vietnam, wreaking similar havoc. The latest disaster follows massive storms earlier this year exacerbated by climate change and refusal of capitalist governments to prepare adequately for natural disasters.

Trami, named Kristine in the Philippines, originated as a low-pressure system west of Guam on October 19. On October 22, the Japanese Meteorological Agency (JMA) upgraded the system to a tropical storm, naming it Trami. On October 24, the now severe tropical storm made landfall in Luzon, the largest island of the Philippines, located in the north, with winds between 89 to 117 kilometers per hour.

Heavy rainfall, however, caused most of the damage with landslides reported in Catanduanes Province and heavy flooding in Albay Province where 413 mm of rain fell in just 17 hours. This was the highest recorded rainfall in that province in over 18 years, equal to approximately two months of rain in just a single day.

Similar record rainfalls were reported in other provinces. In Camarines Norte Province, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration or PAG-ASA recorded the highest 24-hour rainfall in nearly a century with 528.5 mm of rain. In the city of Naga, government officials estimate 700 mm of rain. This caused floods in the Bicol River Basin, the worst since 1969. Naga reported flood waters reaching as high as 1.8 meter. Floods in Quezon Province reportedly reached even higher at three meters.

The Visayas Islands in central Philippines and Mindanao Island in the south were not spared. Flash floods were reported in the city of Bacolod on Negros Island. Strong waves were reported to have destroyed

50 houses in Zamboanga del Norte Province of Mindanao.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) of the Philippines reported that over 5.9 million people were affected by the storm, which battered the capital, Manila, 73 provinces, and 828 cities and towns. Over 575,000 people were forced to evacuate with nearly 200,000 of those unable to reach or find shelter in the government designated evacuation centers.

According to the council, confirmed casualties reached 145 dead and 37 missing, indicating that the death total could rise. At least 115 have been injured. More than 111,000 houses have been damaged across the country. The impact of the latest natural disaster, just as others in the past, has disproportionately impacted the poor.

Government officials reported damaged or destroyed public infrastructure, including three bridges and 32 public school buildings, amounted to over \$US16 million. The agricultural sector suffered more severely with damages totalling over \$US24 million, affecting 35,900 fishermen and farmers. Over 31,000 hectares of land were also affected.

In the wake of the storm, 122 cities and towns remained without electricity and 22 without water services as of last Tuesday evening.

Trami is the 11th storm to strike the Philippines in 2024. This includes Typhoon Yagi in September, which killed 844 people across Southeast Asia. Nine more are expected before the year ends, including Super Typhoon Kong-rey, known in the Philippines as Leon, which hit the country last week.

Increasing sea surface temperatures and higher subsurface sea temperatures caused by climate change are engendering stronger typhoons and storms that

carry more moisture and move faster. This accounts for the massive amounts of rain dumped on regions in such short periods, a phenomenon seen in storms around the world.

While natural disasters cannot be prevented, typhoons and monsoon rains are common occurrences in the Philippines. It is a sign of the criminality of the capitalist government of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr and past administrations that little has been done to prepare for these weather events.

In July, the Marcos government boasted of having spent over \$US8.5 billion to address flooding, including completing 5,000 flood control projects, including 656 in Metro Manila, the national capital region, alone.

The recent floods, however, have put paid to such claims. Al Jazeera reported the government's so-called big-ticket projects have been drastically delayed. This included the Metro Manila Flood Management Project which was started in 2017. Aimed at rehabilitating 36 pumping stations and constructing 20 new stations, only two of the old stations have been refurbished and none of new stations have been built.

In addition, the 60-kilometre Central Luzon-Pampanga floodway, meant to drain stormwater away from Metro Manila on which construction had been scheduled for 2024, has now been delayed by three years.

Like other capitalist governments around the world, the Philippines bourgeoisie ignores the needs of the working class and poor, rejecting any measures that impact the profit interests of the bourgeoisie. The ruling class falsely claims that so-called free market solutions are adequate.

According to the World Risk Index, for the past 16 years in a row, the Philippines has topped its list of countries struggling to cope with natural disasters. The international engineering group GHD estimated that floods and storms will cost the country over \$US124 billion by 2050, a price that the ruling class expects workers to pay.

For 2025, the Philippine congress earmarked \$US13.9 billion for flood control efforts, though how this money will actually be spent is unclear given the delays in current infrastructure improvement plans. Meanwhile, Marcos approved a \$US35 billion 10-year spending program to “modernize” the Philippine

military. That will be used to turn the armed forces from a tool primarily aimed at suppressing workers at home into a body capable of waging war overseas.

Manila has taken on the role of attack dog for US imperialism against China in the South China Sea. Encouraged and overseen by Washington, the Philippines has stoked tensions and carried out provocations in the region that have led to clashes with the Chinese Coast Guard.

Such a clash could become the pretext for war, as Washington seeks to eliminate the Beijing as an economic competitor and subordinate China to its imperialist interests. The Philippines is being placed on the front lines of a future war, with Marcos and the Philippine military offering up the working class as cannon fodder.

A planned and internationally coordinated approach to mitigate, manage, and avoid the catastrophic impacts of storms and other natural disasters as well as to address climate change is impossible under capitalism. This can only be accomplished through socialism.



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