

Philippines struck by 2 major typhoons in a week

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One of the most powerful typhoons of the year made landfall in the Philippines on Sunday evening, the second major storm to strike the country in the past week. The two typhoons combined have caused hundreds of deaths as well as widespread evacuations and destruction.

The most recent storm, named Typhoon Fung-wong (or Uwan in the Philippines) was the 21st for the year. It passed over the northern island of Luzon, the country's most populous. Winds reached speeds of 185 kilometers per hour with gusts of up to 230 kilometers per hour. The Philippine government expected 30 million people to be affected by the storm.

Typhoon Fung-wong has been described as a super typhoon. Approximately 1.4 million have been displaced and floods and landslides have left at least three million residents without power. At least one thousand homes have been damaged and eight people killed. After passing over the island, the storm turned north and is now heading towards Taiwan.

Ivy Villamor, a resident of Sinbanali near the capital of Manila, told the *New York Times*, “We did not want to be swept to sea, so we rushed here [to an evacuation center]... The winds howled, and the rains were nonstop. Like it was the end of the world.” She described the sounds as “probably louder than an airplane.” She had evacuated to an elementary school in the city of Bacoor.

Only a few days earlier on November 4, another major storm, Typhoon Kalmaegi (or Tino locally), struck central Philippines around Cebu Island. Sustained winds reached 183 kilometers per hour while gusts hit as high as 220 kilometers per hour. At least 224 people were killed during that storm, many drowning in floods. Another 109 people remain missing. More than 500 have also been injured. The

storm came after the region was already devastated by a September 30 earthquake that killed 79 people and displaced thousands more.

The powerful storm then struck central Vietnam, killing five more people, as well as impacting Laos, Cambodia, and Northeastern Thailand. Even before Kalmaegi hit Vietnam, the country's central region had experienced record rainfall, resulting in the deaths of 50 people last week. In Bach Ma in Hue, 1,739 millimeters of rain fell in a 24-hour period on October 26–27, the second-highest amount on record globally and equal to the average rainfall that tropical Vietnam receives in an entire year.

The intensity of such storms is increasing and come at an unusual time of the year, with typhoon season running from July through October. In the Philippines, Kalmaegi brought about a month's worth of rain in the span of 24 hours. Mely Saberon, a resident of Talisay City on Cebu, told the BBC, “We don't have any home anymore. We weren't able to salvage anything from our house.” She continued, “We didn't expect the surge of rain and wind. We've experienced many typhoons before, but this one was different.”

Flooding in the Philippines has also been particularly bad this year. In August, torrential rain in Quezon City surpassed 121 millimeters in a one-hour period, setting a record-high for the city.

The devastation caused by these typhoons and heavy rains is being compounded by climate change, which itself is a product of capitalism and leads to more intense storms and other weather-related disasters.

As global temperatures increase, this leads to warmer oceans and atmosphere. This warming causes greater rainfall and faster wind speeds during storms, which also increases the risks of flooding and landslides. For every one degree Celsius that the temperature rises, the

atmosphere is able to retain 7 percent more water vapor.

Ben Clarke, an extreme weather researcher at the Grantham Institute on Climate Change and Environment in London, told Reuters, “The sea surface temperatures in both the western North Pacific and over the South China Sea are both exceptionally warm.” Speaking on the first of the recent typhoons, he continued, “Kalmaegi will be more powerful and wetter because of these elevated temperatures, and this trend in sea surface temperatures is extremely clearly linked to human-caused global warming.”

The UN World Meteorological Organization has stated that 2024 was the hottest year on record, with average global surface temperatures rising to 1.55 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels. Governments have done nothing to address this, as the major capitalist powers responsible for climate change base their policies on the profit interests of big business, not science and human need.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts with “high confidence” that the chances of typhoons strengthening to category four or five increases by 10 percent if the temperature increase is limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius. This rises to 13 percent if temperatures increase two degrees and 20 percent if temperatures reach four degrees.

Despite their posturing, governments have no intention of addressing climate change while also having no plans to implement any measures to mitigate the effects of natural disasters.

The Philippine government of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr has expressed phony concern for public welfare while declaring a state of emergency. According to presidential press officer Claire Castro, Marcos ordered the government to “ensure medical teams are present in all evacuation centers to monitor the evacuees’ health.” She added, “The president immediately ordered road repairs to prevent delays in aid delivery.” At least 71 roads, mostly in central Luzon, remained impassable as of Monday afternoon.

These are empty words, meant to distract from the complete lack of planning and widespread corruption involving disaster management projects that exists in the Philippines. Over the past 15 years, Manila has allocated some 1.47 trillion pesos (\$US24.9 billion) for flood control projects in a country that routinely sees

typhoons. Much of this money has been diverted into so-called “ghost projects,” in which infrastructure projects are supposedly carried out but no work is actually completed.

This widespread corruption, involving kickbacks to government officials in addition to the theft of billions, combined with increasing social misery, led to large protests on September 21. The Marcos government is conscious of this growing anger and opposition and is attempting to deflect it. However, nothing will be done to address these attacks on workers and the poor. As with climate change, the lack of any significant planning is ultimately not simply the result of corruption, but the capitalist system itself.



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