

TYPHOON PHANFONE BATTERS PHILIPPINES, THOUSANDS HIT

Relevant for: Geography | Topic: Important Geophysical Phenomenon - Tropical Cyclones

Moving to safety: Residents wading through a flooded highway in Ormoc City in Philippines on Wednesday. AFP

Typhoon Phanfone pummelled the central Philippines on Christmas Day, bringing a wet, miserable and terrifying holiday to millions in the mainly Catholic nation.

The police said six people were missing as the typhoon leapt from one small island to another for the second day — crumpling houses, toppling trees and blacking out cities and towns, including in popular resorts like Boracay.

At the height of the festive season on Wednesday, tens of thousands were stranded at shuttered ports or evacuation centres, while the rest of the region's population cowered in rain-soaked homes.

Though weaker, Phanfone was tracking a similar path to Super Typhoon Haiyan, the country's deadliest cyclone on record which left more than 7,300 people dead or missing in 2013.

More than 16,000 people spent the night in improvised shelters in schools, gyms and government buildings as the typhoon first made landfall on Tuesday, civil defence officials said.

"It was frightening. The glass windows shattered and we took cover by the stairs," Ailyn Metran said after she and her four-year-old child took refuge at the state weather service office in Tacloban city, where her husband worked.

More than 25,000 people remained stranded at ports on Christmas Day with ferry services still shut down, the coast guard said. Scores of flights to the region also remained cancelled, though the populous capital Manila has so far been spared.

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