

Typhoon Mangkhut hits north Philippines, Tropical storm hits Hong Kong & south China

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More than 100 injured in Hong Kong and 2.4 million flee in Guangdong. Heaviest casualties in the Philippines in Benguet province.

Tropical storm Mangkhut continued on its destructive path on Sunday as it hit the southern coast of China, killing two, after leaving at least 64 dead in the Philippines amid landslides and flooding.

The storm, which has been downgraded from typhoon status, battered the heavily populated Guangdong region on Sunday afternoon with 100mph (160km/h) winds, after skirting 62 miles from Hong Kong.

In Guangdong, more than 2.4 million people have been evacuated. The storm made landfall in the the city of Haiyan around 5pm local time, according to China's central meteorological observatory.

China Central Television said Mangkhut, which the China Meteorological Administration called the "King of Storms", triggered storm surges as high as 3 meters. By Monday morning, the Chinese state broadcaster said four lives had already been lost.

Schools have closed until Tuesday, the high-speed rail line has been suspended and hundreds of flights have been cancelled, according to China's state news agency, Xinhua. In the southern province of Fujian, officials have ordered thousands of fishing boats to return to harbour and closed construction sites near the coast.

As the storm brushed passed Hong Kong, high winds smashed windows in the city, tearing off parts of buildings and roofs, while storm surges flooded hotels and restaurants with waters waist-deep. More than 100 people were injured. The neighbouring Chinese gambling enclave of Macau also closed all 42 of its casinos for the first time.

In the Philippines, the total death toll rose to 64. The heaviest casualties were in Benguet province, where 38 people died, mostly in two landslides, and 37 are still missing, the police said. Dozens of people, mostly small-scale miners and their families, are still feared to have been trapped by a landslide in the far-flung village of Ucab in Itogon town in the province, according to the local mayor, Victorio Palangdan. Supt Pelita Tacio said 34 villagers had died.

Four others - including two children - were buried in a landslide in Nueva Ecija, another person died in Kalinga, and one was killed by a falling tree in Ilocos Sur, said Francis Tolentino, an adviser to President Rodrigo Duterte. A pregnant woman was also among the fatalities.

The storm, the strongest in the region this year, was not as ferocious as feared due to the remote

areas where the typhoon hit. However, the full death toll and extent of the destruction is still unknown.

On Sunday, Duterte and government officials flew to the heavily impacted area of Cagayan. He said in a televised briefing : “I share the grief of those who lost their loved ones. Those [are what] we call the unforeseen events. In insurance, this is an act of God. I don’t know how it can be an act of God, but that is the term used by the insurance.”

Tolentino said the search and rescue operation had ended and the focus would switch to rehabilitation and the restoration of power and water supplies.

The category five super-typhoon hit the northern end of the Philippine island of Luzon early on Saturday morning, with the high winds ripping roofs off houses and pulling down trees and electricity pylons, and the rains causing fatal landslides and flooding. More than 5 million people were in its path.

The island is a key agricultural area in the Philippines, producing most of the country’s rice, corn and other vegetable crops, which have been ruined a month before harvest, damaging the livelihoods of thousands in the region.

In Ilocos Norte where the typhoon made its exit, Juan Carlo Tabios, 22, and his family thought they could stay in their wooden bungalow home and ride out the typhoon.

They were forced to evacuate at the last minute when the howling winds started to shake the house at midnight on Saturday. They ran to a neighbour with a sturdier house, where they they heard the typhoon rip their home apart, piece by piece.

“The walls of our home flapped against the strong winds for hours and stopped only when they broke off,” said Tabio. “In the morning, we saw that our home was totally damaged. The kitchen was completely washed out. My room was split open and my clothes and books were soaked.”

Jerome Balinton, a spokesman for Save the Children who was in north-eastern Luzon, said : “The further north we travelled the more extensive the damage, particularly in Cagayan province. House after house had been flattened or badly damaged, with roofs or walls missing. Large trees have been uprooted from the ground and power poles bent right over, leaving power lines strewn across the ground.”

He added : “In some areas where the eye of the storm hit, it seems as if nothing has been left undamaged.”

The typhoon affected 250,000 people in Luzon, according to the government’s natural disaster council. Mangkhut, a Thai word for the mangosteen fruit, is the 15th storm this year to batter the Philippines.

Hannah Ellis-Petersen in Bangkok, **Lily Kuo** in Beijing and **Carmela Fonbuena** in Manila

• « Tropical storm Mangkhut hits south China after dozens killed in Philippines ». The Guardian, Mon 17 Sep 2018 04.39 BST First published on Sun 16 Sep 2018 05.47 BST :
<https://www.theguardian.com/weather/2018/sep/16/typhoon-mangkhut-to-china-as-philippines-death-toll-rises>

'Wiped out' : city in the Philippines in path of Mangkhut counts cost

Farmers among worst affected by typhoon that devastated swathes of countryside near Tuguegarao.

On the main road running through Tuguegarao City, branches and sheets of metal litter the ground. Trees are tangled around road signs, toppled roofs of petrol stations hang precariously and nearby, the city's damaged airport remains closed.

Tuguegarao, home to more than 140,000 people, was directly hit by Typhoon Mangkhut, which made landfall in the province of Cagayan on Saturday morning at 1.40am, packing winds of up to 165mph.

The typhoon has left a trail of damage across the nation's bread basket in the northern Philippines.

As the clean-up began on Sunday, residents were counting the cost of hours of typhoon winds. The storm killed at least 40 people, but the toll is expected to rise as rescue teams reach rural areas still cut off by flooding. The typhoon also laid waste to homes, flooded large swathes of countryside and devastated rice fields.

At a press briefing in the city on Sunday, Rodrigo Duterte, the Philippines president, said he shared the grief of those who had lost loved ones in the typhoon and he was satisfied with the government's response.

On Sunday, Tuguegarao was without electricity and residents were relying on generators. Most spent the peak of the storm inside makeshift shelters or at home, hoping for the best. One resident said she shut herself in her shop until the storm had passed. "I was scared, it was the sound of the wind that scared me, and then I heard a loud crash. It was that tree," she said, pointing to a tree opposite spearing a sheet of corrugated metal. "Thank God we weren't hurt."

The threat from the typhoon is far from over. The Philippine Red Cross said waters were rising in parts of Tuguegarao and some roads were still flooded.

The city was placed under a "state of calamity" by the local government, with reports claiming the storm had caused 51 landslides across the region.

The roads winding north to the city from Santiago were strewn with fallen trees and electricity poles, and the corn and rice fields were drowning in flood water.

Many farmers had rushed to save their crops before the typhoon hit. George Desatel did not have the people to help and said he had lost 70% of his rice to Mangkhut. He was harvesting the remaining crop with help from members of the community.

A petrol pump attendant said : "We have had no electricity here since 8pm on 14 September, before the typhoon hit. It could take weeks or months to fix. This puts me out of work.

"And we are already struggling with funds for food. Maybe the government will help. The problem is with a food shortage, prices will rise."

Jerry Serrano lost the roof to his house to the typhoon. He also lost two acres of corn. "Completely wiped out," he said. He does not work and is concerned where he will get the money to fix his roof. Eight people live in his two-bedroom house. "For me, this is severe," he said. "I have lost my shelter and my protection for my family."

His daughter Maria said : "Who knows if the government will help, for now we will have to stay with neighbours, and hope money to fix the roof comes, but the people most affected by the typhoon are the farmers, they have lost everything."

The country director for the German Red Cross said thousands of houses had been damaged and the number of casualties was still rising : "The impact of Typhoon Ompong [the local name for Mangkhut] is tremendous, not only short term, as most of those communities rely on rice and corn farming as their primary source of livelihood.

"Crops are significantly affected, and the farmers will have to take loans to cope with their loss. Humanitarian needs are high."

Lynzy Billing in Tuguegarao

- The Guardian, Sun 16 Sep 2018 12.26 BST Last modified on Mon 17 Sep 2018 01.31 BST : <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/16/wiped-out-philippine-region-in-direct-path-of-typhoon-mangkhut-counts-cost>
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