

# Mounting displacement in the Bangsamoro

CRITICAL EVENTS MONITORING SYSTEM (CEMS)-  
EARLY RESPONSE NETWORK (ERN) BULLETIN

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*Residents of Brgy. Pimbalkan, Mamasapano experience constant displacement as a result of recurring armed clashes involving MILF groups in their area. Source: CCAA Photo Bank.*

The displacement of thousands due to clan feuding, extremist violence, and random shooting incidents characterized the month of May 2024 in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Violence continued to disrupt lives in the conflict to peace transition, even as the BARMM populace set their sights on the first Bangsamoro parliamentary elections scheduled for May 2025.

### Deadly intra-MILF feuding continued to displace thousands

The deadly feuds during this period involved warring factions of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the towns of Mamasapano, Shariff Saydona, and Rajah Buayan in Maguindanao. Hundreds of residents were displaced by fighting between two MILF commanders, one of whom is from Mamasapano; and the other from the neighboring municipalities of Shariff Saydona Mustapha and Rajah Buayan. Attempts to mediate a truce between the warring commanders of the MILF have failed, and violence has spilled over to the highways of the SPMS box.

Another flashpoint involving an MILF commander of the 118th Base Command and a surrendered commander of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in Barangay Pimbalkan in Mamasapano forced more than 5,000 residents to flee. Two houses were razed to the ground and farm animals killed due to land and political conflicts. The fighting has continued for two months now.

### Deadly clashes with extremist groups and communist rebels leave seven dead and more than 250 residents displaced

The military launched air and ground attacks against Dawla Islamiya (DI) fighters in the marshlands of Maguindanao del Sur in mid-May, displacing more than 250 from their homes. More residents from Datu Salibo town were also forced to flee following a military airstrike in May 27. Additionally, at least one BIFF member was killed in a military operation in Datu Salibo town.



Residents flee their homes in the middle of the night during an armed conflict that erupted between two MILF commands in Brgy. Pimbalkan, Mamasapano, Maguindanao del Sur in May 2024. Photo courtesy of DXMS Radyo Bida Cotabato City.

In Maguindanao del Sur, 15 members of the BIFF, including two from the faction of slain BIFF leader Kagui Karialan, surrendered to the Army on May 6.

Meanwhile, in Tawi-Tawi, a sub-leader of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) was killed in a police operation on May 29, and a clash with the ASG left one SAF trooper dead. In Butig, Lanao del Sur, the military continues their surveillance against forces of DI and allegedly members of the New People's Army.

In nearby Sultan Kudarat province, four members of the New People's Army were killed in clashes with the military, in Daguma and Lebak municipalities, on May 15 and May 29 respectively.

## Shooting incidents and summary executions

Shooting incidents were also a cause for concern in the Bangsamoro region, with at least 31 occurring during the month, leaving at least 25 dead and five injured. More cadavers were found dumped in various locations, a growing feature in violent incidents in BARMM.

Many of the shooting victims appeared to have been summarily executed, and in six instances, the corpses were discovered in different bodies of water. CCAA's CEMS reporters express that some of the victims had come from areas outside of BARMM and were swept by the river into Cotabato City.

Of the shooting victims, one was a member of the police, and the local barangay peacekeeping team. Another was a former municipal councilor. A barangay treasurer was also among the victims.

On May 20, the home of a non-Moro indigenous person (NMIP) was also shot at by an unidentified armed group, although no one was harmed. This follows the killing of a Teduray NMIP leader and an Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative of Brgy. Tuayan in late April in Datu Hoffer Ampatuan town, adding to the growing list of non-Moro IPs being killed and targeted in the BARMM.



*A woman was shot dead in Malabang, Lanao del Sur in May 2024. Shooting incidents have been a constant feature in the municipality since the start of the year. It is important to note that Malabang plays a crucial role as an economic hub and a convergence point for surrounding municipalities. Source: CCAA Photo Bank.*

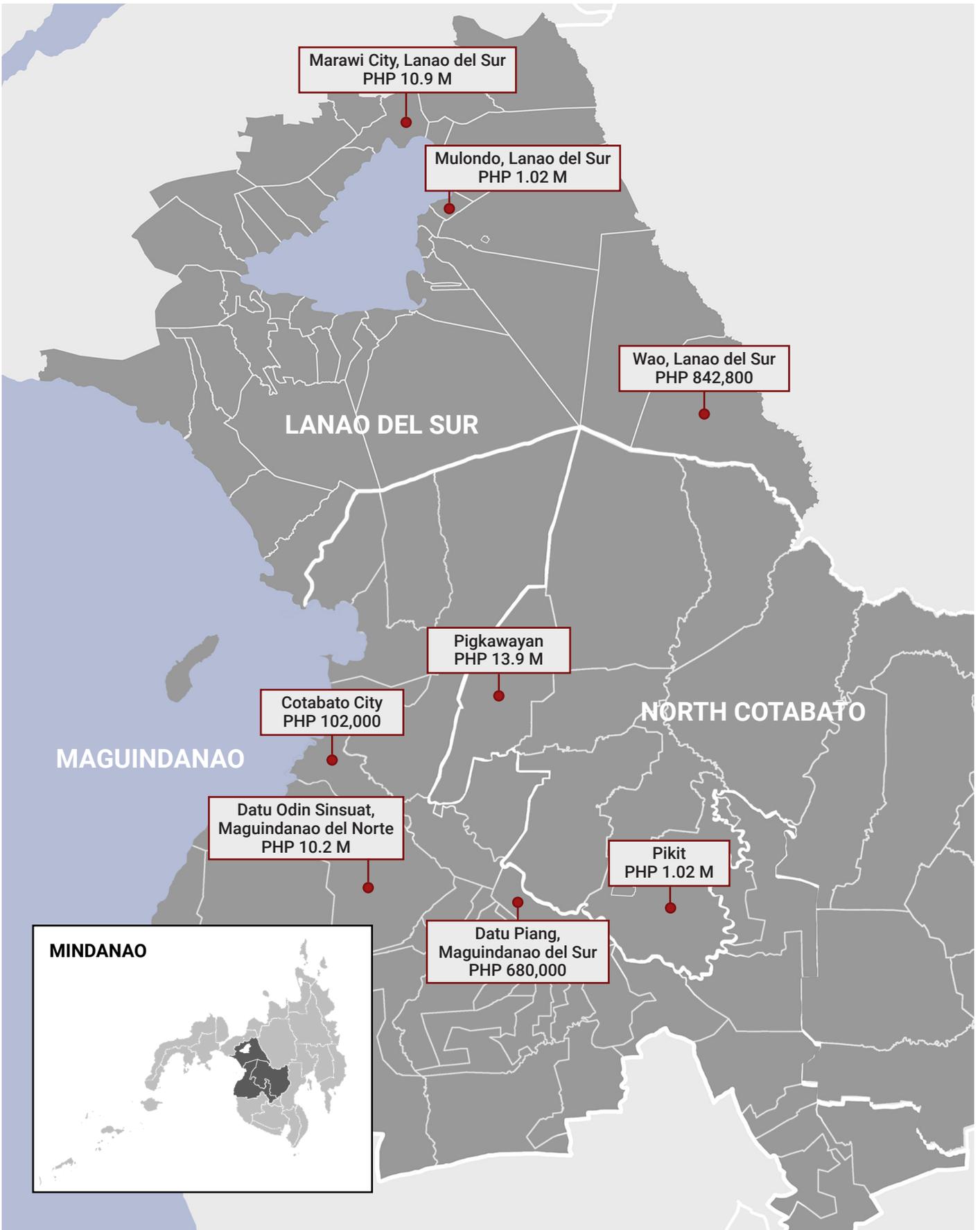
Three incidents involved robbery, with the dead being either the perpetrator or the victim. Three of the shootings were believed to be drug-related incidents, while motives behind 21 of the shootings were unknown or still under investigation. Four of the murder victims were unidentified.

Most of the shootings occurred in urban areas in the BARMM such as Cotabato City and Datu Odin Sinsuat in Maguindanao and Marawi City and Malabang in Lanao del Sur.

## Casualties from the illegal drug trade

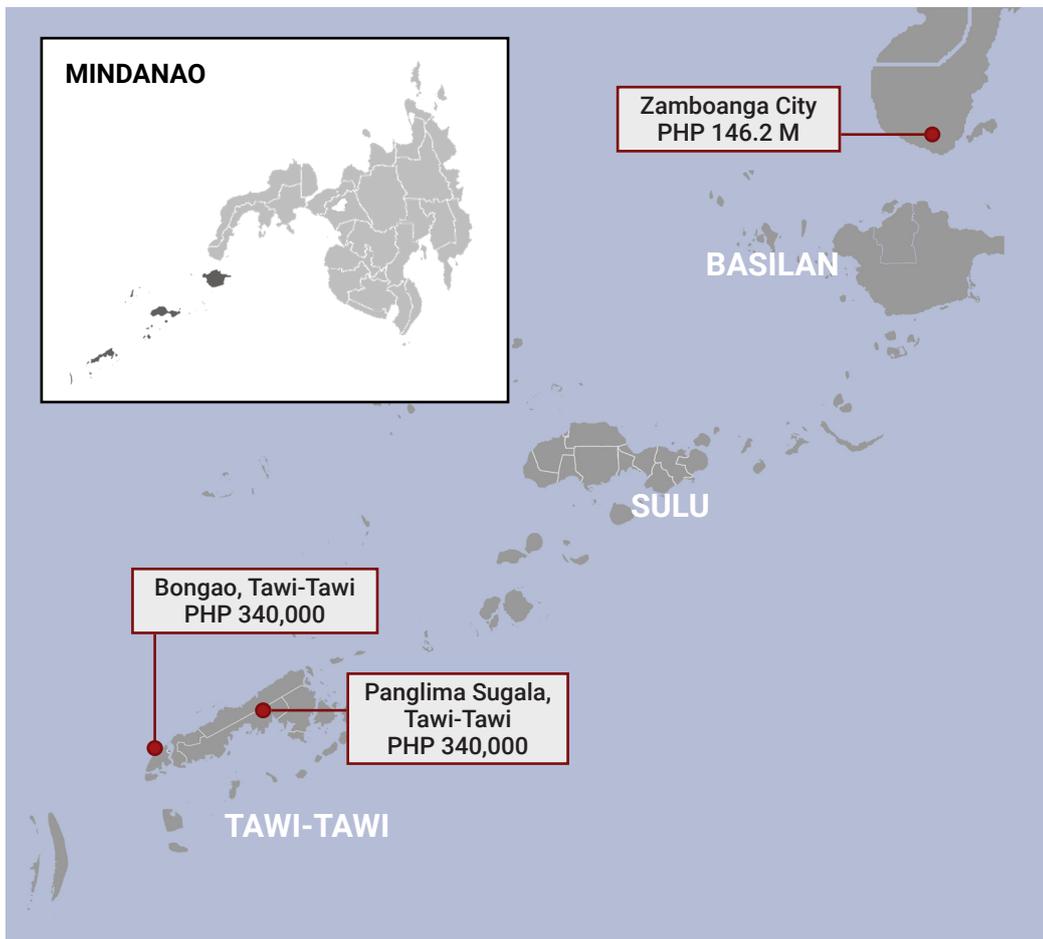
Anti-illegal drug operations in the region also yielded a much higher amount of illegal drugs: from at least 64.7 million pesos' worth of illegal drugs confiscated from February to April, the amount of methamphetamine seized in May alone was worth

Map set 1. Drug confiscations in the Bangsamoro in May 2024.



Map produced by Council for Climate and Conflict Action Asia. June 2024.

**Con't. Drug confiscations in the Bangsamoro in May 2024.**



on May 13, was also believed to have links to the DI and BIFF. An individual apprehended in Mulondo on May 7 was also suspected of having connections to the DI. It is alleged that this person shared their earnings with the terrorist group and was found in possession of one million pesos' worth of shabu. The police were also hunting down his five accomplices.

**Conclusion**

A year ahead of the first Bangsamoro parliamentary elections in May 2025 has seen a remarkable rise in deadly violence. The conflict-to-peace transition has

at least 185.5 million pesos (around 27 kilos of shabu or suspected shabu).

Two were killed and at least 34 suspects were arrested in anti-illegal drug operations in the same month. The most number of arrests made and buy-bust operations conducted were in Marawi City (five instances), followed by Wao municipality in Lanao del Sur (four instances).

One of the suspects arrested in Wao, from whom 408,000 pesos' worth of shabu was recovered

not alleviated the fears of communities in the Bangsamoro who continue to experience violent extremism, fighting among and between armed groups and the authorities, clan feuding, and shootings. Large amounts of illegal drugs remain a problem, putting into question the effectiveness of the government's strategies. Will the Bangsamoro Transition Authority be able to provide its people with security as it prepares to hand over the reins of government to the region's first elected Parliament? ●

The Critical Events Monitoring System (CEMS) is an SMS- and high frequency radio-based reporting system that captures conflict incidents and tensions in communities in real-time. It is used by the Early Response Network (ERN), an independent group of men and women in various localities in the Bangsamoro, who share real-time information and work with local governments, key agencies, the security sector, and religious and traditional leaders in coordinating quick and context-specific responses to tensions, violent conflicts, disasters, and displacement, as they happen. The CEMS is managed by the Council for Climate and Conflict Action Asia (formerly International Alert Philippines), a local organization focused on understanding the drivers of conflict and its interaction with climate risks for policy formulation, community action, peacebuilding, and development.

