

More than 1,100 households were displaced from their homes due to a firefight between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and an armed group that lasted for nearly a month. The fighting was halted through a temporary ceasefire, but tensions remain high. Photo courtesy of CCAA-ERN.

Persistent clan rivalries and horizontal violence challenge the new Bangsamoro Parliament

Critical Events Monitoring System (CEMS) Bulletin
1-31 October 2026

The Bangsamoro Parliamentary Election (BPE) brought a period of heightened tensions and uncertainty across the region. Its aftermath has been marked by a resurgence of violence in the region's familiar hotspots. The post-election period of October saw a new wave of armed violence, with deadly clashes, ambuscades, and shooting incidents reported across several towns. These occurred in the weeks leading up to the inaugural session of the Bangsamoro Parliament and the selection of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) Chief Minister on 30 October.

Deadlier violence in the post-election period

From 1-30 October, the Climate Conflict Action's (CCAA) Critical Events Monitoring System recorded a rise in fatalities from armed violence, despite a relatively lower number of incidents. Following the incidents of collective violence that erupted in Cotabato City on election day, October tallied 47 fatalities from 79 violent incidents, representing a 38% increase in deaths compared to September (Table 1). These were driven largely by horizontal

conflicts, particularly individual and clan feuds, as well as competition over illicit economic activities, including the illegal drug trade and cigarette smuggling.

A closer look at September shows a decline in recorded incidents following the 14 September elections. The second half of September recorded 26 incidents,19 of which were gun-related, compared with 48 incidents during the first half.

Table 1. Conflict incidents and deaths, September-October 2026

	1-30 September	1-31 October
Incidents	74	79
Deaths	34	47

Data source: Critical Events Monitoring System

Surge in identity and political clan feuding

Much of the violence stemmed from recurring clan feuding and conflicts that escalated in the aftermath of election day, escalating into rido. From 1-30 October, CEMS recorded 16 incidents of personal grudges and clan feuding, mostly concentrated in Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao del Sur.

A major armed confrontation erupted on 30 September in Sultan sa Barongis, Maguindanao del Sur, between members of the 105th Moro Islamic Liberation Front's (MILF) Base Command and an armed group linked to criminal activities in the town. The firefight persisted until a temporary ceasefire took effect only on the third week of October. The clashes affected two barangays, displacing around 1,100 households and resulting in one death and ten others wounded.

In neighbouring Ampatuan, a firefight erupted between two families on 15 October due to a longstanding rido which resulted to around 40 families displaced.

Other clan feuds also erupted in other parts of the region, particularly in Butig, Marawi City, and Malabang in Lanao del Sur. In Sumisip, Basilan, two people were killed in an ambush on 4 October, which triggered a gunfight. Although the 14 September polls have concluded, violence from the elections have escalated into a rido. In Taraka, Lanao del Sur, a shooting incident took place on 3 October, in retaliation for the killing of an individual by two United Bangsamoro Justice Party (UBJP) supporters during the first BPE.

Meanwhile, attacks against local government officials were also a feature this period, despite the postponement of the Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections. A barangay chairman of Marogong, Lanao del Sur was killed by his own nephew, whose father reportedly intends to challenge him and run for barangay chairman in the 2028 elections. In Datu Odin Sinsuat, two separate shooting incidents targeted a barangay chairman, while a barangay councillor was shot dead in another incident. Both incidents were reportedly politically-motivated and linked to the 2028 elections. On 24 October, a barangay councillor was shot dead in Sultan Mastura.

The security forces also continue to conduct military operations against the extremist Dawla Islamiyah. On 15 October, a suspected DI sub-leader and three other alleged gunrunners were killed during a serving of a warrant of arrest that escalated into an armed firefight in Brgy. Tapayan, Sultan Mastura.

Teduray communities remain under threat

The Teduray non-Moro indigenous peoples (NMIP) also continued to be victims of targeted attacks linked to the protection of their ancestral land, despite the awarding of their Certificate of Ancestral Domain on the same month. On October 17, one of their leaders, who was also a barangay councillor in Datu Hoffer Ampatuan, was shot dead. A day later, two more Tedurays were shot in Datu Unsay.

Women and children within the NMIP communities continue to bear the disproportionate burden of violence, facing intersecting vulnerabilities arising from their indigenous identity, gender, and age. Reports of gender-based violence within the NMIP communities have increased at an alarming rate since 2023. These concerns have been heightened once again by the disturbing incident on 27 October, when a ten-year old girl was found naked and tied to a tree in Brgy. Romongaob, South Upi.

[1]Although the election was held on 14 September, the Commission on Elections officially designated the election period from 16 July to 29 September 2026.

Deadly shadow economy

Illicit economic activities are increasingly emerging as a source of deadly violence across the region. On 26 October, four individuals, were killed in an ambush in Brgy. Tulunan, Datu Anggal Midtimbang, allegedly linked to the illegal gun trade.

Meanwhile, the violence that marked election day continued to cast a shadow over Cotabato City, where a series of deadly shootings has compounded lingering security concerns. On 22 October, two Philippine Coast Guard Officials were killed, and another wounded when they were ambushed by armed men linked to the smuggling of cigarettes. The following day, three individuals were killed and another injured in a shooting incident in Timako Hill, Cotabato City. Although the two incidents were unrelated, the perpetrators were reported to have links to a prominent family in Cotabato City with political influence and illegal businesses in the city.

Conclusions and implications

The spate of violence in the region, the province where the Bangsamoro government sits no less, highlights the persistent interplay of clan rivalries, and political competition across the region. The figures reinforce CCAA's earlier warnings about the limitations of the temporary security deployments which were immediately withdrawn as soon as election day concluded. Following the withdrawal of additional security forces, longstanding rivalries and illicit economic activities continued to drive armed confrontations across the region, which could intensify ahead of the 2028 presidential elections.

The election of Abdulraof Macacua as Chief Minister in the Bangsamoro comes at a critical juncture, where the new Bangsamoro Parliament assumes office with an opportunity to advance the region's envisioned autonomy and development but inherits a fragile security and political environment. The political arrangements that secured Macacua's seat unmask a troubling reality: that his election was a political triumph for the entrenched traditional clans, with the political backing of the central government.

Addressing horizontal violence will be among the major challenges confronting the new Parliament. They also face the challenge of balancing the formal institutional authority and the continuing influence of the MILF mainstream, the principal counterpart of the national government in negotiating the terms of the exit agreement. Ultimately, both the new regional leadership and the MILF should be under scrutiny. While the MILF played a significant role in the struggle for Bangsamoro autonomy, they should not be exempt from accountability over unresolved corruption scandals within its leaders, and its members must be fully decommissioned. Both must be held accountable if the Bangsamoro aims to address persistent violence and achieve meaningful autonomy and inclusive governance. ●

Climate Conflict Action

Climate Conflict Action Asia (CCAA) is a peacebuilding organization dedicated to promoting sustainable and lasting peace by addressing the interconnected challenges of climate and conflict. Our work builds upon the legacy of our former identity as International Alert Philippines. Together with local communities, we monitor, analyze, and understand the dynamics of conflict, peace, and development in the Philippines to inspire action and solutions.

CEMS
CRITICAL EVENTS MONITORING SYSTEM

ERN
EARLY RESPONSE NETWORK

CCAA manages the Critical Events Monitoring System (CEMS), an SMS-based reporting system that captures conflict incidents and tensions in communities that may lead to the eruption of violence. It is used by Early Response Network (ERN) in various localities in the Bangsamoro who share real-time information and work with key stakeholders in coordinating quick context-specific responses.