

4 Strategic Prayers in the Wake of Philippines Earthquake

Tuesday was a national holiday in the Philippines. What would have been a day of rest and rejuvenation for many, spent at home or in shopping malls, quickly turned into a day of devastation and terror spent in the streets.

Tuesday morning, a earthquake rocked islands in the center of the Philippines, killing at least 85 people.

The majority of the damage exists in the islands of Cebu and Bohol. All IMB personnel are accounted for and safe.

Lily Rose,* an IMB representative living in Cebu, says the earthquake shut down the entire city. Rose was sitting at her dining room table on the first floor of her two-story house when the quake hit.

“My thoughts at first were, ‘Oh my, an earthquake!’” Rose said. “I intended to continue working at my dining table, but it continued to shake and the windows and walls were rattling. I could hear some things falling inside and outside.”

When Rose walked out to her patio, her neighbors were already in the street. The earthquake began at 8:12 a.m., and many had just gotten out of bed.

Earthquakes are not common in this area, and Rose said buildings in her city are not built to sustain earthquakes. Rose drove around town Tuesday afternoon to survey the damage. Several buildings in her immediate area were damaged, but few have major damage, she said.

Also on Tuesday, aftershocks—many with a magnitude of 4.5—continued to shake the homes in Rose’s neighborhood. The

aftershocks, she said, terrify her neighbors.

"Pray for the fear," she said. "Many here have little experience with earthquakes. This is very unsettling for folks."

Fifteen people were killed in Cebu City, the Philippines' oldest and second-largest city. Rose has not heard of any injury to national believers in her city.

Tuesday marks the beginning of Eid ul Adha, the Feast of Sacrifice, a Muslim festival commemorating Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac. The earthquake striking on a national holiday was a blessing in disguise, Rose said.

"We are all thankful that it was a holiday and no students were out and about," Rose said. "Classes would have been in session at the time of the quake."

Businesses and malls also would have been opened, but never opened because of the earthquake.

"I'm heading to bed," Rose reported at 10:50 p.m. local time, 10:50 a.m. EST. "We are still having aftershocks, so not sure how much I will sleep. These have changed from shakes to jolts."

Though many escaped tragedy in the island of Cebu, many islanders in Bohol were not as fortunate. The BBC reported at least 69 of the dead were killed in Bohol. One person died in the island of Siquijor. Many roads and bridges in the area are heavily damaged.

Pat Melancon, Baptist Global Response's managing director of disaster response, reports that BGR teams are currently on the ground responding to the event through assessment activities and assistance. (BGR is a key IMB partner in human needs and disaster relief ministries.)

"The initial phase of this response will involve determining

what can best be done to address the four life-line sectors of water, food, shelter and health,” Melancon said.

“The teams’ activities will focus upon meeting urgent needs in the context of each community for a few days or weeks up to many months, depending upon the local situation,” Melancon continued.

The earthquake damaged historic churches in Bohol and Cebu. Cebu City is home to The Basílica Minore del Santo Niño, the oldest and most revered church in the Philippines. The church was the entry point for Catholicism into the Philippines in the 16th century.

Though Catholicism and a general belief in God exist in many areas in the Philippines, many do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The Virgin Mary is worshipped, and animism is mixed in with Catholicism.

IMB representative Bill Harris* served in the Philippines with his wife for more than 14 years.

“Though we have had missionaries living in Cebu for probably 30 plus years now, response to the Gospel [and] IMB has been difficult and limited,” Harris said.

Harris asks for prayer during this time of disaster.

“[Pray] that the Cebuanos of central Philippines would see the true Jesus,” Harris said.

Pray for:

- Disaster relief teams who are assessing the damage.
- Safety from the continuing aftershocks.
- An end to the fear engulfing many Filipinos.
- Opportunities for missionaries and national believers to share the gospel.

*Names changed.