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Headline: 'Odette' casualties 2nd-biggest among world's natural disasters in 2021 – German reinsurer

Byline: Ben O. de Vera

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FILE PHOTO: Residents of Ubay in Bohol province dig through piles of debris to find anything they can use to rebuild their homes destroyed by Typhoon Odette (international name: Rai), which battered the Visayas and Mindanao regions in December 2021. INQUIRER/LEO UDTOHAN

FILE PHOTO: Residents of Ubay in Bohol province dig through piles of debris to find anything they can use to rebuild their homes destroyed by Typhoon Odette (international name: Rai), which battered the Visayas and Mindanao regions in December 2021. INQUIRER/LEO UDTOHAN

MANILA, Philippines — Typhoon Odette, which flattened six Philippine regions in December, had inflicted the second-biggest number of fatalities among the world's natural disasters in 2021.

In a January 10 report, global reinsurer Munich Re listed the strong August 14, 2021, earthquake in Haiti as last year's deadliest natural catastrophe with 2,248 deaths. It was followed by the onslaught of Odette (international name: Rai), which killed 408 people.

Also in the top five in terms of fatalities was the massive flooding in central China's Henan province in July 2021, which took 302 lives; 272 were killed in Australia, Indonesia and Timor-Leste due to tropical cyclone Seroja in April 2021; and the winter storm, as well as cold wave frost that swept the United States and Mexico in February 2021, recorded 235 fatalities.

In a statement, Munich Re described the aftermath of the super typhoon in the Philippines as a "humanitarian catastrophe."

"Many of the weather catastrophes fit in with the expected consequences of climate change, making greater loss preparedness and climate protection a matter of urgency," Munich Re said.

"Scientists anticipate that the proportion of severe storms and of storms with extreme rainfall will increase because of climate change. Even though events cannot automatically be attributed to climate change, analysis of the changes over decades provides plausible indications of a connection with the warming of the atmosphere and the oceans. Adapting to increasing risks due to climate change will be a challenge," said Ernst Rauch, Munich Re's chief climate and geoscientist as well as head of its climate solutions unit.

About 9,200 people died due to natural catastrophes worldwide in 2021, up from around 8,200 in the previous year.

In terms of economic cost inflicted by natural disasters, the onslaught of hurricane Ida in the US and Canada from August to September 2021 ranked No. 1 with \$65 billion in overall losses. It also had the biggest insured losses among natural disasters that struck across the globe last year, with \$36 billion.

Globally, natural calamities like earthquakes, floods, storms, and wildfires destroyed a total of \$280 billion worth of assets, of which only \$120 billion or less than half in value had been insured, Munich Re said. Losses last year rose from \$210 billion in 2020 and \$166 billion in 2019, the German reinsurer's estimates showed.

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