



Tropical Cyclone Freddy and devastating effects in Malawi

LIMBE, Blantyre - Malawi received continuous heavy rainwater within five days of 11th to 16th March 2023 which has caused disaster in many districts in the southern region. The heavy rains which started on Friday 11th March 2023, which affected Malawi and other neighbouring countries (Mozambique and Madagascar), were due to cyclone Freddy.

The 12 districts in the southern region of Malawi have been heavily affected. The heavily hit districts, as given by the office of the president and cabinet, include Blantyre, Chikwawa, Chiradzulu, Mwanza, Neno, Thyolo, Zomba, Mulanje, Mangochi, Machinga, Nsanje and Phalombe. This cyclone Freddy has been the most devastating cyclone that Malawi has ever experienced.

Hundreds and hundreds of houses have been completely washed away and those living near Chilobwe, Ndirande, and Chilomoni mountains in Blantyre District have suffered badly. Their houses have been completely erased and hundreds of dead bodies covered with mud. For example, in Blantyre, many have their entire families wiped out. For instance, one family lost six members at once just for a single day and others are nowhere to be found. This unrelenting cyclone Freddy that has been battling southern Malawi has killed more than 438 people in our country, others with various serious human injuries.

Currently, dead bodies are still being unearthed from the mud and the number of dead people will continue to rise. The cyclone has also damaged roads, bridges, and livestock and crops have been washed away, living families homeless and without food and shelter.

Currently, the president of Malawi has declared Malawi a nation-of-state disaster. The Catholic Church through the Episcopal Conference of Malawi and the government of Malawi is appealing for assistance in order to help our brothers and sisters, the victims of this disaster who have been heavily affected and are living in miserable conditions.

Thousands of people who have lost their houses and properties have occupied school blocks, churches, mosques, and camps. Some confreres in our entity have been affected directly: houses and fields for cultivation are washed away. Malawi is currently also affected by widespread cholera, and this cyclone has added salt to the very grievous wound. There is fear that if care and support are not given to the people who have occupied schools, mosques, churches, and camps, we may experience another disaster.

Malawi, especially people from these 12 heavily hit districts is in dire need of help spiritually, physically, and materially. The effects of this cyclone, in the long run, are that we will experience severe famine as our maize fields have been washed away. The Montfort Missionaries, Anglophone Africa Delegation joins the government, church organizations, the bishops of Malawi, and other organizations of goodwill to appeal for support so that we can reach out to the desperate people who have nowhere to lay their heads, no food, in need of psycho-social help and other basic needs.

Fr. Damian Abraham SMM

Bvumbwe Parish