

## **Our patience has run out, says Najib**

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**By Reuters**

A standoff between Malaysian security forces and armed Filipinos ended in violence on Friday, with two police officers and up to 12 members of the Philippine group killed as Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak declared his patience had run out.

Najib, quoted by state news agency Bernama, confirmed the Malaysian police deaths and said that 10 to 12 Filipinos had been killed after their group tried to break through a security cordon around a village where they had been holed up for more than two weeks.

About 100 followers of the Sultanate of Sulu in the southern Philippines landed in the eastern Malaysian state of Sabah last month demanding recognition and payment from the Malaysian government.

Both the Philippine and Malaysian governments had repeatedly urged them to return home.

Most of the group was still at large after fleeing the fighting and Malaysian police declared a curfew in the area.

Najib said he had now given Malaysian security forces a mandate to take "any action" against the group.

"Do not test our patience, our patience has reached the limit," he was quoted as saying earlier.

"We have a plan to remove them, they should have surrendered and left," said Najib, who must call national elections by April and has come under pressure from the opposition for allowing the bizarre standoff to drag on.

Three Malaysian police officers were wounded in the shoot-out, police said.

The Philippines only confirmed one death among the group, saying that 10 had surrendered while the rest had fled towards the sea.

A spokesman for the armed group, Abraham Idjirani, told reporters in Manila that the men had moved to another location to continue their fight and urged Malaysia to hold talks.

The confrontation had threatened to reignite tension between the Philippines and Malaysia. Ties have been periodically frayed by security and migration problems along their sea border.

The group is demanding recognition from Malaysia and renegotiation of the original terms of a lease on Sabah by the Sultanate to a British trading company in the 19th century.

Malaysian officials have said the group's demands will not be met.

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