

Guatemala requests international aid as volcano death toll rises to 109



Guatemala City, June 9 (RHC)-- The Guatemalan Foreign Ministry has called for international aid as death toll from the powerful eruption of a highly active volcano near the country's capital rose to 109. The search and rescue efforts have been suspended for the time being due to bad weather conditions and high-temperature sediments fallen in the areas affected by the activity of the Fuego Volcano, according to the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction (CONRED).

David de Leon, a spokesman with CONRED, explained that the conditions are not adequate to ensure physical safety of those who were engaged in search and rescue in the disaster area. So, after 72 hours of search and rescue under adverse conditions, the decision to suspend the operations for the time being has been taken.

The Fuego Volcano, located about 40 kilometers west of the capital of Guatemala City, exploded last Sunday. Following the eruption, the country's president Jimmy Morales declared a state of emergency in Chimaltenango, Escuintla and Sacatepequez, the three hardest hit provinces. The congress gave the president green light to use 192 million quetzals (approx. 25.66 million US dollars) from an emergency

fund to assist those affected and to repair infrastructure damage.

According to a preliminary report from CONRED, the eruption is "the strongest one recorded in recent years". Volcanologists said eruption records for Fuego Volcano, one of the country's most active volcanoes, date back to 1542. At its fiercest, the volcano could spray ash all the way to Guatemala's southern neighbors of El Salvador and Honduras.

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