

Death toll in Florida condo collapse now 78 amid search for cause

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Exhausted members of the search and rescue team observe a moment of silence at site of the collapsed Champlain Towers South building in Surfside, Florida [Miami-Dade Fire Rescue/via Reuters]

Miami, July 10 (RHC)-- The death toll in the collapse of a Miami-area high-rise condo building jumped to 78 on Friday, a number the mayor called “heartbreaking” as recovery workers toiled to find victims in the rubble.

Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava told a media conference the work to recover victims was “moving forward with great urgency” in order to bring closure to families who have spent an agonizing two weeks waiting for news.

“This is a staggering and heartbreaking number that affects all of us very deeply,” Levine Cava said of the latest death toll. Another 62 people remain unaccounted for.

Paraguay’s foreign minister said in a radio report that the sister of Paraguay’s first lady was among the dead. Several Latin American citizens were reported in the building when it collapsed. No one has been found alive since the first hours after building fell on June 24.

“We know that there will be long-term impacts for the teams on the front line,” Levine Cava said. “They have given so much of themselves in these first two weeks.” Rescue workers and emergency support teams from Florida and several other states have laboured in 12-hour shifts, 24 hours a day for 16 days in physically and emotionally taxing work amid oppressive heat and in dangerous conditions.

Miami-Dade Fire Chief Alan Cominsky said taking care of the mental health and wellbeing of the first responders is a priority. He said it is critical that the first responders communicate with each other. “It’s important for us to talk,” he said.

The painstaking search for survivors shifted to a recovery effort this week after authorities said they had come to the conclusion that there was “no chance of life” in the rubble of the Champlain Towers South condo building in Surfside.

Investigators from the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) have been searching for clues to the building’s collapse. “NIST has made significant progress in tagging and transporting pieces of forensic evidence from the pile,” Levine Cava said.

“They’ve now collected over 200 pieces of evidence and they recently deployed scientists from the physics measurement lab in Washington to assist with the analysis.”

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/263436-death-toll-in-florida-condo-collapse-now-78-amid-search-for-cause>



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