

At least 42 killed in severe floods in northern Turkey



Destroyed buildings in Kastamonu after flash floods swept across the Black Sea region [AFP]

Kastamonu, August 14 (RHC)-- The death toll from severe floods and mudslides in coastal Turkey has climbed to at least 42, the country's emergency and disaster agency said. Families of those missing after

Turkey's worst floods in years anxiously watched rescue teams search buildings on Saturday, fearing the death toll from the raging torrents could rise further.

"This is unprecedented. There is no power. The mobile phones were dead. There was no reception. You couldn't receive news from anyone," said Ilyas Kalabalik, a 42-year-old resident of Bozkurt.

About 45 cm (18 inches) of rain fell in less than three days in one village near Bozkurt. Torrential rains that pounded the Black Sea provinces of Bartın, Kastamonu and Sinop on Wednesday caused flooding that demolished homes, severed at least five bridges, swept away cars and rendered numerous roads unpassable.

Turkish disaster agency AFAD said 34 people were killed in Kastamonu, seven in Sinop, and one in Bartın. Nine people remained hospitalised in Sinop and one person was missing in Bartın province, according to the agency.

Some residents in Kastamonu said on social media there were hundreds more missing, a statement also made by an opposition lawmaker. About 2,250 people were evacuated across the region, some lifted from rooftops by helicopters, and many were being temporarily housed in student dormitories, authorities said.

The devastation came just as the disaster-hit country was gaining control over hundreds of wildfires that killed eight people and destroyed swaths of forest along its scenic southern coast.

Scientists say such natural disasters are becoming more intense and frequent because of global warming caused by polluting emissions. Experts in Turkey, however, say interference with rivers and improper construction also were contributors to the massive damage in Turkey's floods.

Geologists have said construction narrowed the river bed and the surrounding alluvial flood plain of the Ezine stream in Kastamonu's Bozkurt district, where the damage was most severe. Residential buildings were built along the waterfront.

Some longtime residents of the region said this year's flooding was the worst they could recall. "I am 75 years old and have never seen anything like this," Batin province resident Adem Senol told the Anadolu state news agency.

"The water rose higher than the level of our windows, it broke down our door, even a wall," he said. "It was a powerful stream, enough to sweep away houses." Emergency services said waters briefly rose in some parts as high as four metres (13 feet) before subsiding and spreading across a region stretching more than 240 kilometres (150 miles) wide.

Images on social media showed bridges collapsing under the force of the rushing waters and roads buckling from mudslides. Nearly 200 villages were still without electricity, authorities said.

Footage captured on a phone showed one man standing on top of his car as it was being swept along by the current. He then vanished in the swirling waters when his vehicle hit a wall.

Weather services predicted rains to continue to lash the affected area for the remainder of the week.

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