

Floods and landslides in Brazil kill at least 18 people

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People stand in a flooded street after heavy rain in Caieiras, Sao Paulo, Brazil [File: Carla Carniel/Reuters]

Brasilia, January 31 (RHC)-- At least 18 people have been killed during torrential rains in Brazil's Sao Paulo state that caused landslides that buried houses. The downpours, which began on Friday, killed at least 11 people on Sunday when earth smothered homes in several cities in the state's interior, authorities said.

That included three people in the same family who died when a landslide destroyed their house in the city of Embu das Artes, according to the municipal government, while four other people were rescued by firefighters.

Four children died in Francisco Morato, Sao Paulo state Governor Joao Doria said. Four other people died in Franco da Rocha, according to authorities. Deaths also were reported in Ribeirao Preto and Jau. Three of those killed were swept away by floodwaters.

“Since last Friday, the turmoil caused by the bad weather caused 18 deaths, including seven children,” said the Sao Paulo state government, citing the civil defense body. Overflowing rivers forced 500,000 families to leave their homes, the state government said. Several roads and highways were also blocked.

Doria surveyed the damage by air on Sunday before announcing he was releasing 15 million reais (\$2.7 million) to help the 10 most affected cities and 645 municipalities in Brazil’s most populous state – home to 46 million people. Doria expressed “solidarity” with the families of the 18 victims.

Brazil has been punished with heavy rains since the start of the year, with 19 deaths recorded earlier this month in eastern Minas Gerais, which borders Sao Paulo to the northeast.

In December, at least 21 people died and another 358 were injured during days of rain in Bahia state, which borders Minas Geras to the north. The worst of that flooding came after a pair of dams gave way on December 24.

The flooding has affected the country’s coronavirus vaccine campaign, with the city of Sao Paulo cancelling scheduled vaccinations. The heavy rainfall coincides with La Nina, a phenomenon that typically occurs every three to five years and leads to cooler Pacific Ocean temperatures than normal and affects weather patterns across the world.

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