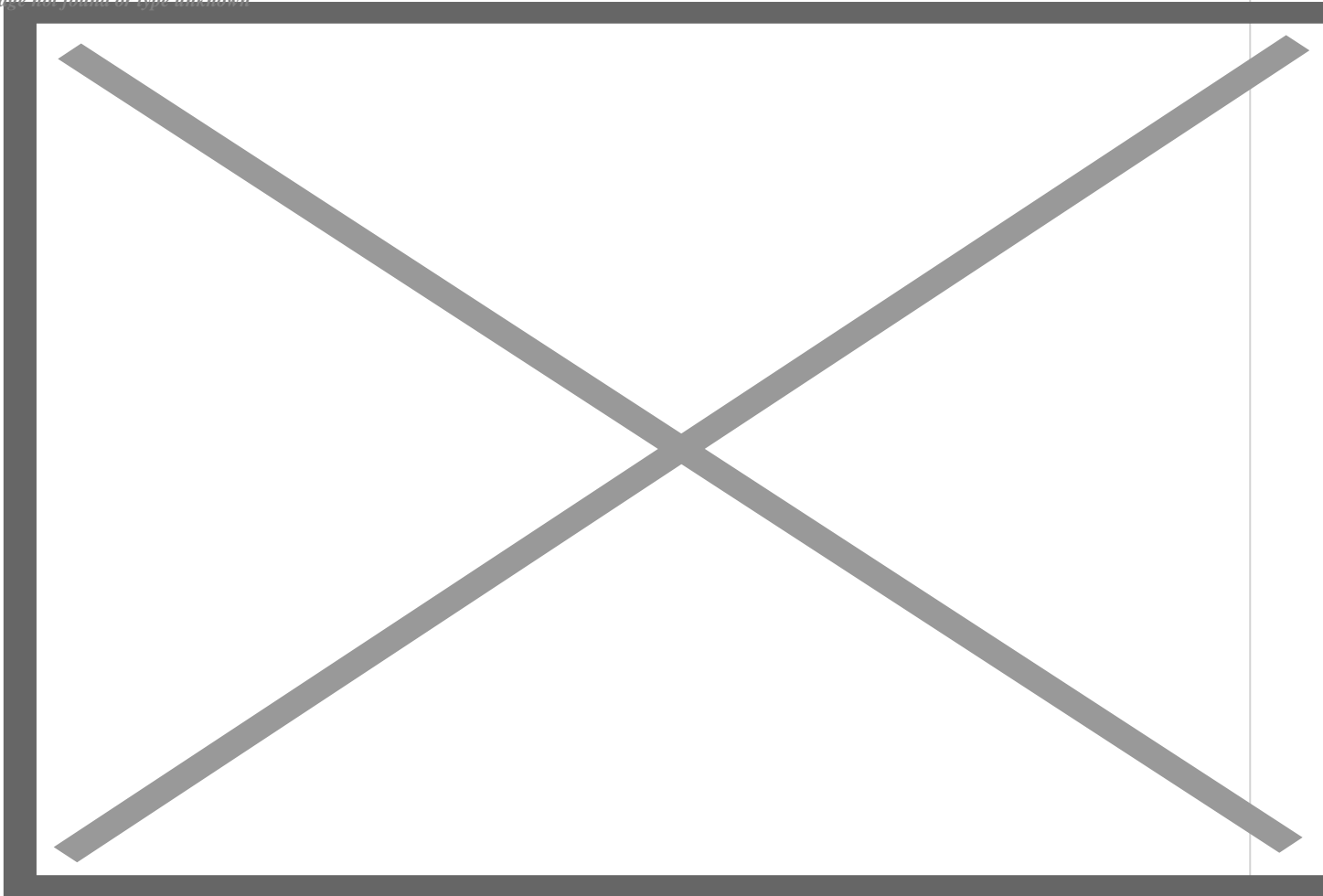


At least 150 killed in Halloween crowd crush in South Korea

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A man covers the dead in Seoul's Itaewon entertainment district after a stampede during Halloween festivities on Saturday [Jeon Heon-kyun/EPA-EFE]

Seoul, October 30 (RHC)-- At least 150 people were killed and 100 hurt in a chaotic stampede in South Korea's capital Seoul after thousands gathered on a narrow street to celebrate Halloween. Choi Seong-beom, chief of Seoul's Yongsan fire department, said the death toll could grow as emergency workers continued to transport the injured to hospitals across Seoul following the crowd crush in the entertainment district of Itaewon on Saturday night.

Choi said 74 of the dead were sent to hospitals while the bodies of the remaining 46 were still on the streets after the incident occurred at 10:20pm (13:20 GMT). Officials said it is believed many people were crushed to death after a large crowd began pushing forward in a narrow alley near Hamilton Hotel, a major party spot in Seoul.

More than 400 emergency workers and 140 rescue vehicles were deployed to treat the injured, Choi Cheon-sik from the National Fire Agency said. Police confirmed dozens of people were given cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on the streets, while others were taken to nearby hospitals.

"The area is still chaotic so we are still trying to figure out the exact number of people injured," said Moon Hyun-joo, another official at the National Fire Agency. Footage on social media showed multiple people, both rescue officials and private citizens, simultaneously performing CPR on people lying scattered in the street. Videos showed dozens of people covered with blue plastic sheets at the roadside.

The Seoul metropolitan government issued emergency text messages urging people in the area to swiftly return home. Some local media reported the incident occurred after a large group of people rushed to an Itaewon bar after hearing an unidentified celebrity visited there.

South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol called for officials to ensure swift treatment for those injured and a review of the safety of festivity sites. Local media said about 100,000 people flocked to Itaewon for the Halloween festivities, which were the biggest in years following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions in recent months.

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