

At least 169 dead after devastating floods in DR Congo's Kinshasa



Damage inflicted after heavy rains caused floods and landslides on the outskirts of Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on December 13, 2022 [Jude Dibawa/Reuters]

Kinshasa, December 17 (RHC)-- The death toll in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to rise following heavy rain and extreme flooding that have ravaged the country in recent days. At least 169 people have died as a result of destructive rains in the capital Kinshasa, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and officials said on Friday.

The flooding left another 30 people injured and pulverised an estimated 280 homes across the capital of some 15 million people, in which approximately 38,000 residents have been affected. The city's Mont-Ngafula and Ngaliema districts were the hardest hit by the downpours, officials said.

A joint team from OCHA and the government's social affairs ministry visited affected areas on Thursday to inspect the damage. "Today marks the end of three day of national mourning in memory of those deceased," OCHA said in a statement. "The Government has confirmed that it will organize a dignified and secure burial of those who have lost their lives."

An estimated 8.2 million people in at least 20 different nations in west and central Africa have been affected by heavy rains in recent weeks. On Friday, the UN estimated that 2.9 million people had been displaced and more than half a million homes destroyed.

Located on the Congo River, Kinshasa has seen a huge population influx in recent years and many dwellings are shanty houses built on the flood-prone slopes of a city that suffers from inadequate drainage and sewerage. Media reports on the flooding earlier this week showed muddy waters overwhelming entire neighbourhoods.

"We've never seen a flood here on this scale," Blanchard Mvubu, a Mont-Ngafula resident said. "I was asleep, and I could feel water in the house ... it's a disaster. We've lost all our possessions in the house, nothing could be saved."

One man was seen ferrying victims of the flood on his back through submerged streets for a payment of 500 Congolese francs (\$0.24). The provinces of Equateur, Maniema, Nord-Ubangi, Sud-Ubangi, and Tshopo have also been badly hit by flooding since October.

In 2019, at least 39 people died in Kinshasa when torrential rains swept through the city's low-lying neighbourhoods, flooding entire districts, and causing the collapse of buildings and roads.

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