

At least 176 people killed in eastern DR Congo floods



Torrential rain in South Kivu province causes river to overflow, leading to significant damage in Bushushu and Nyamukubi villages. Map of South Kivu province, Democratic Republic of Congo

Kinshasa, May 6 (RHC)-- At least 176 people have been killed in flash floods in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, a regional official says. Torrential rain in South Kivu province caused a river to overflow on Thursday and led to significant damage and loss of life in the villages of Bushushu and Nyamukubi, the provincial government said in a statement.

South Kivu Governor Théo Ngwabidje Kasi put the death toll at 176 and said that other people were still missing. A local civil society member, Kasole Martin, said 227 bodies had been found. "People are sleeping out in the open. Schools and hospitals have been swept away," Martin said.

The weather had cleared on Friday, revealing flattened houses and corrugated iron roofs jutting out from beneath thick layers of mud, photos showed. Haggard-looking survivors stood outside a wooden shed in which Red Cross workers in blue scrubs piled bodies on top of each other. Many had lost clothing and

were covered in dirt.

Floods and landslides are not an uncommon occurrence in South Kivu. The last incident of a similar scale occurred in October 2014 when heavy rain destroyed more than 700 homes. Over 130 people were reported missing at the time, according to the United Nations.

Heavy rainfall and floods have led to tragedies in other parts of the country as well. Last month, at least 21 people died and several were reported missing a day after a landslide in North Kivu province. In December, at least 169 people were killed due to rains in the capital, Kinshasa.

The floods add to an ongoing humanitarian crisis in the eastern DRC due to decades of violence from multiple armed groups. The region has been plagued by fighting by at least 122 rebel groups for more than 25 years, according to a recent count by the United Nations. Consequently, millions of people have been displaced, the Norwegian Refugee Council said in a report in June. The DRC is home to more than 5.5 million internally displaced people, the third-highest number in the world. One million other Congolese have also fled the country.

Multiple reports put food shortages at the highest level ever recorded with 27 million people – a third of the country's population – going hungry.

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