

Over 2,000 still buried after Papua New Guinea landslide

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This handout photo taken and received on May 26, 2024, from the International Organization for Migration shows people digging at the site of a landslide at Yambali Village in the region of Maip Mulitaka, in Papua New Guinea's Enga province. (Photo by AFP)

Yambali, May 27 (RHC)-- Papua New Guinea has called for international help in rescue operations after a landslide destroyed a remote highland village in Enga province, leaving "over 2,000 people buried."

The Yambali village was almost wiped out when a chunk of Mount Mungalo collapsed on Friday, smothering dozens of homes and the people sleeping inside them. "The landslide buried more than 2,000 people alive and caused major destruction to buildings, food gardens and caused major impact on the economic lifeline of the country," Papua New Guinea's national disaster center said in a letter to the UN resident coordinator's dated Sunday, which was obtained by AFP.

According to the letter, the main highway to the large Porgera gold mine was "completely blocked." "The situation remains unstable as the landslip continue to shift slowly, posing ongoing danger to both the rescue teams and survivors alike," the disaster center said.

Noting that the scale of the catastrophe required "immediate and collaborative actions from all players," including the army, and national and provincial responders, the center called on the UN to inform Papua New Guinea's development partners "and other international friends" of the crisis.

Locals said the landslide may have been triggered by heavy rains in recent weeks. Papua New Guinea is one of the wettest countries in the world, and research has found that climate change could exacerbate the risk of landslides as it is shifting rainfall patterns.

"The landmass is still sliding, rocks are falling from the mountain," UN migration agency official Serhan Aktoprak told AFP.

UN Development Program official Nicholas Booth said it was hard to estimate the casualty figure because many people fleeing tribal violence have moved into the area in the past few years.

Papua New Guinea has experienced multiple earthquakes, floods and landslides since the start of the year, depleting the resources of emergency services.

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