

Crowd hurls mud and insults at Spain's King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia in Valencia

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Spain's King Felipe VI, center, walks amidst angry Spanish flood survivors in Paiporta, near Valencia, Spain [David Melero/AP]

Madrid, November 4 (RHC)-- Hundreds of residents of a Valencia suburb badly hit by last week's deadly floods have protested during a visit by Spanish King Felipe, Queen Letizia, and Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, with some demonstrators throwing mud at them.

Chanting "Murderers, murderers!" on Sunday, they vented anger over what has been widely perceived by local residents as tardy alerts from the authorities about the dangers of Tuesday's flooding, and then a late response by the emergency services when disaster struck.

"Please, the dead are still in the garages, the families are looking for their relatives and friends. Please come, we only ask for help ... All we wanted was to be warned and we would have been saved," yelled one resident, Nuria Chisber, the Reuters news agency reported.

At one point in the visit to the stricken suburb of Paiporta, Felipe, wearing a simple dark raincoat, distinguishable from distance by his height and grey hair, held to his shoulder a man who was crying.

Online footage showed his wife, Letizia, crying as she hugged some residents. Her hair and face had traces of mud and one of her bodyguards had blood on his face, apparently from a hurled object. Bodyguards had opened umbrellas to try to protect the royals.

Spanish national broadcaster RTVE reported that the barrage aimed at the royals included a few rocks and other hard objects and that two bodyguards were treated for injuries.

The network said the monarchs and officials called off another stop on Sunday at a second hard-hit village, Chiva, about half an hour to the east of Valencia city.

The death toll from the country's worst flash floods in modern history edged higher to 217 on Sunday – almost all of them occurring in the Valencia region, with more than 60 of them in Paiporta alone.

The central government has said issuing alerts to the population is the responsibility of regional authorities, while the Valencia authorities have said they acted as best as they could with the information available to them.

Dozens of people were still unaccounted for, while some 3,000 households had no electricity, officials said.

Valencia's regional leader Carlos Mazon, who also visited Paiporta amid insults from protesters, posted on X: "I understand the public anger and of course I will stay to receive it. It is my political and moral obligation. The King's attitude this morning has been exemplary."

Thousands of additional troops and police joined the disaster relief effort over the weekend in the largest such peacetime operation in Spain.

The October 29-30 floods engulfed streets and lower floors of buildings, sweeping away cars and pieces of masonry in tides of mud. The tragedy is Europe's worst flood-related disaster in a single country since 1967, when at least 500 people died in Portugal.

[SOURCE: AL JAZEERA, NEW AGENCIES]

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