

Flooding Prompts State of Emergency in Chilean Desert Region



Santiago de Chile, March 26 (teleSUR-RHC) Chile's Atacama desert is well known for being one of the driest regions in the world, however heavy rains in the Andes caused flash floods that have left at least two people dead and 24 missing in the arid region, according to authorities.

Nearby valleys and towns are flooded, and thousands of people are without power or running water, encouraging Chile's government to declare a state of emergency in the region, which is now under military control.

The heavy rains caused the river that runs through Copiapo – Atacama's capital – to overflow, forcing mass evacuations because of fears of mudslides.

Meanwhile, authorities said northern coastal towns were hit especially hard, and the country's interior minister described the situation as "critical." President Michelle Bachellet canceled all her engagements in order to fly to the affected region.

Authorities also say 38,000 residents are without power and 48,000 are without drinking water, while roads and communications have also been affected.

The calamity in the Chilean desert region takes place at the same time that the South American country struggles with huge wildfires in the drought-stricken Araucania region, where firefighters have been battling the flames for more than a week.

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