

Haiti Death Toll Surges As Scope of Hurricane Devastation Comes to Light



Port-au-Prince, October 8 (RHC)-- As the death toll in hurricane-hit Haiti surpasses 875, tens of thousands are left homeless and outbreaks of cholera continue to claim more lives.

Latest press reports from the impoverished Caribbean island nation on Saturday point to a trail of destruction sweeping the rural areas of southern and Western Haiti that were cut off by Hurricane Matthew until Friday.

More than 175 people were reported killed in villages clustered among the hills and on the coast of the country's fertile western tip. Rural clinics overflowed with patients whose injuries, including broken bones, had not been treated since the storm struck the hemisphere's poorest nation on Tuesday.

While a million people in the devastated southern regions of the country were in need of assistance following the destructive storm, Haiti's capital and biggest city, Port-au-Prince, was mostly spared.

Aerial TV footage from the hardest-hit towns and villages showed a ruined landscape of metal shanties with roofs blown away and fallen trees everywhere.

A scene of anguish greeted visitors to Jeremie, a town of 30,000 people left inaccessible until Friday, according to an AFP report which added that virtually all of the town's corrugated-iron homes have been leveled with only a few concrete buildings left standing.

"It's probably the hardest hit department and the conditions don't allow for a helicopter to land there," said Haiti's Interior Minister Francois Anick Joseph as quoted in the report. "So we're doing our best to help those affected."

Meanwhile, a senator from the country's severely-hit Sud department, Herve Fourcand, also stated that several localities were still cut off by flooding and mudslides.

He said convoys were headed to other affected areas by land, sea and air, including two helicopters provided by the US military to transport 50 tons of water, food and medicine elsewhere in Grand'Anse.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as much as 80 percent of crops have been lost in some areas of the country.

Furthermore, humanitarian group CARE France also announced in a statement that nearly one million people are in need of urgent assistance adding, "They have nothing left except the clothes on their back."

Haiti sits on a hurricane path, and in January 2010 was struck by a devastating earthquake that demolished much of its capital city and left more than 250,000 dead. Since then, the nation has been struggling to overcome a cholera outbreak.

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