

Rescue efforts underway after deadly earthquake in Turkey, Greece

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Powerful earthquake struck Turkey's Aegean coast and north of Greek island of Samos on Friday, killing at least 26 people. (Photo: Internet)

Ankara, October 31 (RHC)-- Rescue teams have ploughed through concrete blocks and the debris of eight collapsed buildings on Saturday in search of survivors of a powerful earthquake that struck Turkey's Aegean coast and north of the Greek island of Samos on Friday, killing at least 26 people.

More than 800 people were injured from the earthquake that toppled buildings in Izmir, Turkey's third-largest city, and triggered a small tsunami in the district of Seferihisar and on Samos.

The earthquake, which the Kandilli Institute said had a magnitude of 6.9, struck at 2.51pm (11:51 GMT) in Turkey. Its epicentre was in the Aegean northeast of Samos.

The earthquake was followed by more than 400 aftershocks, according to Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, or AFAD.

Early on Saturday, onlookers cheered as rescuers lifted a teenager out of the rubble of a destroyed eight-storey apartment building. Friends and relatives waited outside the building for news of loved ones still trapped, including employees of a dentist's surgery that was located on the ground floor. Two other women were rescued from another collapsed two-storey building.

Two teenagers were killed on Samos after being struck by a collapsing wall. At least 19 people were injured on the island, with two, including a 14-year-old, airlifted to Athens and seven hospitalised on the island, health authorities said.

The small tsunami that hit the Turkish coast also affected Samos, with seawater flooding streets in the main harbour town of Vathi. Authorities warned people to stay away from the coast and from potentially damaged buildings.

People stood near rescue workers, waiting for their family members to be retrieved from the debris. There would be regular applause from onlookers as someone was pulled out but from time to time, rescue workers would request silence to be able to hear people trapped under the rubble.

A Turkish mother and three of her children were pulled from under the rubble of a collapsed building where they had been trapped for almost 18 hours.

Speaking from Izmir, Al Jazeera's Sinem Koseoglu said the situation was chaotic across the district as rescue workers continued to look for more people missing under the rubble. "About 100 people have been rescued across Izmir so far," said Koseoglu, adding that many people are still waiting for missing members of their families.

The effect was felt across the eastern Greek islands and as far as Athens and Bulgaria.

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