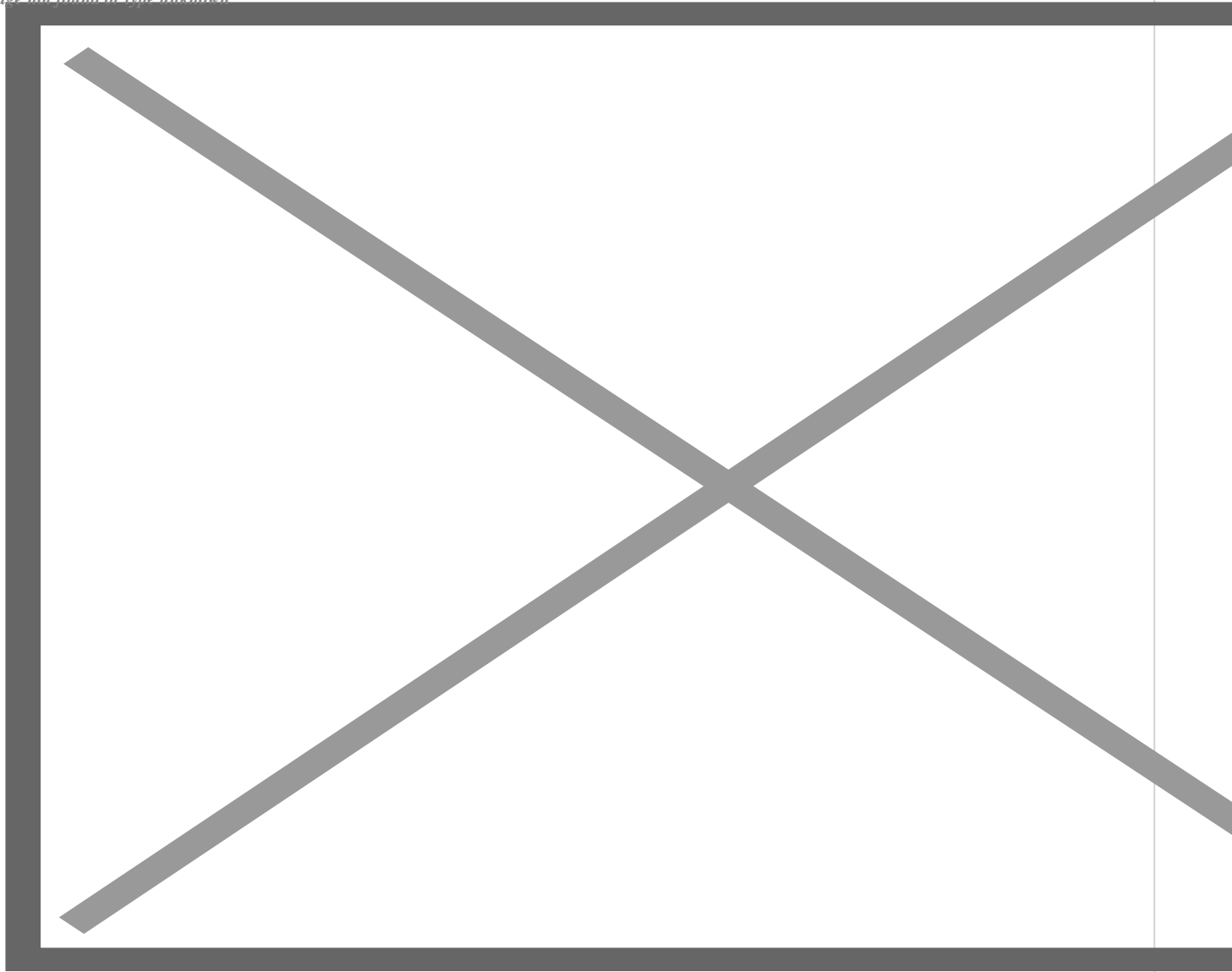


Death toll from Cyclone Batsirai rises to 120 in Madagascar

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The disaster relief agency said that of the deaths, 87 had occurred in one area, the Ikongo district in southeast Madagascar [Rijasolo/AFP]

Antananarivo, February 12 (RHC)-- The death toll from Cyclone Batsirai in Madagascar jumped to 120, with tens of thousands needing shelter after their homes were destroyed. The state disaster relief agency said of the deaths, 87 had occurred in one area: the Ikongo district in southeast Madagascar. It said earlier this week it was still collecting details about what has happened in Ikongo.

The agency said the cyclone left about 124,000 people with their homes damaged or destroyed, and some 30,000 more displaced and camping at 108 sites. The cyclone hit the Indian Ocean island late on Saturday, slamming the southeastern coastline before receding late on Sunday.

Batsirai was Madagascar's second destructive storm in two weeks, after Tropical Storm Ana killed at least 38 people. The German private aid organisation Welthungerhilfe said it could take up to five more days to reach all of the affected villages from Batsirai because of road closures caused by the landslides. Residents of communities are still trapped by high water. Rescue teams from Germany, France and other countries are helping local efforts.

Two weeks ago tropical storm Ana caused severe damage in Madagascar, Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia. The island nation of Madagascar, with a population of nearly 30 million, was already struggling with food shortages in the south, a consequence of a severe and prolonged drought.

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