

Deadly landslide strikes southern Peru amid heavy rainfall

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A train of pack animals, carrying tourists, climbs a rainy, mud-caked mountain in Peru. Tourists travel to visit Rainbow Mountain in Cusipata, Peru, as the region experiences heavy rainfall, leading to flood warnings and a deadly landslide [Rodrigo Abd/AP Photo]

Lima, February 7 (RHC)--A landslide in southern Peru has left at least 40 people dead and five more missing, as torrential rain washed through the region on Monday. Twenty more people were treated for minor injuries, according to a bureau for Peru's Ministry of Health in the mountainous town of Secocha,

where the landslide took place.

Located on the banks of the Ocoña River in Camaná province, Secocha is among the areas in the department of Arequipa facing high water levels as heavy rain continues to fall. As of Monday morning, the Ocoña was flowing at a rate of 585.6 cubic metres per second, with the Peruvian government warning that the swollen river could affect nearby population centres.

To address the aftermath of the landslide, the Ministry of Health has announced on Twitter that it would send “two brigades made up of doctors, nurses and mental health professionals to the area”, as well as 150kg of medicine to the region.

The Peruvian army has also deployed helicopters to the region, transporting humanitarian aid, drinking water and sandbags to the emergency site. “Search and rescue efforts continue,” the Ministry of Defence said in a tweet that called out misinformation surrounding the landslide. With some media reports setting the death toll as high as 36, the ministry wrote it recommended that members of the public “obtain information from official sources”.

The Associated Press news agency reports that Wilson Gutierrez, a civil defence official in the Mariano Nicolás Valcárcel municipality, had previously said in an interview with radio station RPP that 36 people had died in an isolated area called Miski. RPP News also reported that some of the dead had been struck by falling rocks as they travelled by truck along the Urasqui-Secochoa highway.

The landslide strikes amid ongoing antigovernment demonstrations in Peru, many of which are concentrated in southern regions like Arequipa. The protests were sparked in December when then-President Pedro Castillo attempted to dissolve Congress ahead of his third impeachment hearing. The move led Congress to impeach Castillo, who has since been detained on charges of rebellion and conspiracy.

His former vice president, Dina Boluarte, was sworn in as Peru’s president that same day. The demonstrations against Castillo’s detention have continued for more than two months, with protesters calling for Castillo’s release, Boluarte’s removal, the dissolution of Congress, new elections and a revised constitution.

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