

Cyclone lashes New Zealand's northern island

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Wellington, February 14 (RHC)-- New Zealand has declared a state of emergency in several regions, including its largest city of Auckland, as Cyclone Gabrielle roared ashore at high tide, bringing powerful winds, dangerous storm surge and torrential rains.

Emergency officials warned residents in low-lying areas to evacuate ahead of the storm's arrival, which follows record rainfall last month that caused extensive flooding and left four people dead.

One official in New Zealand told local media: "I can't stress enough that. Please, have a plan to leave your home if you see water levels rising around you or if you're worried about land stability around your property. Don't wait to be told to leave."

This comes as raging wildfires in Chile have killed at least 26 people, displaced thousands and scorched some 1,400 square miles of forests.

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