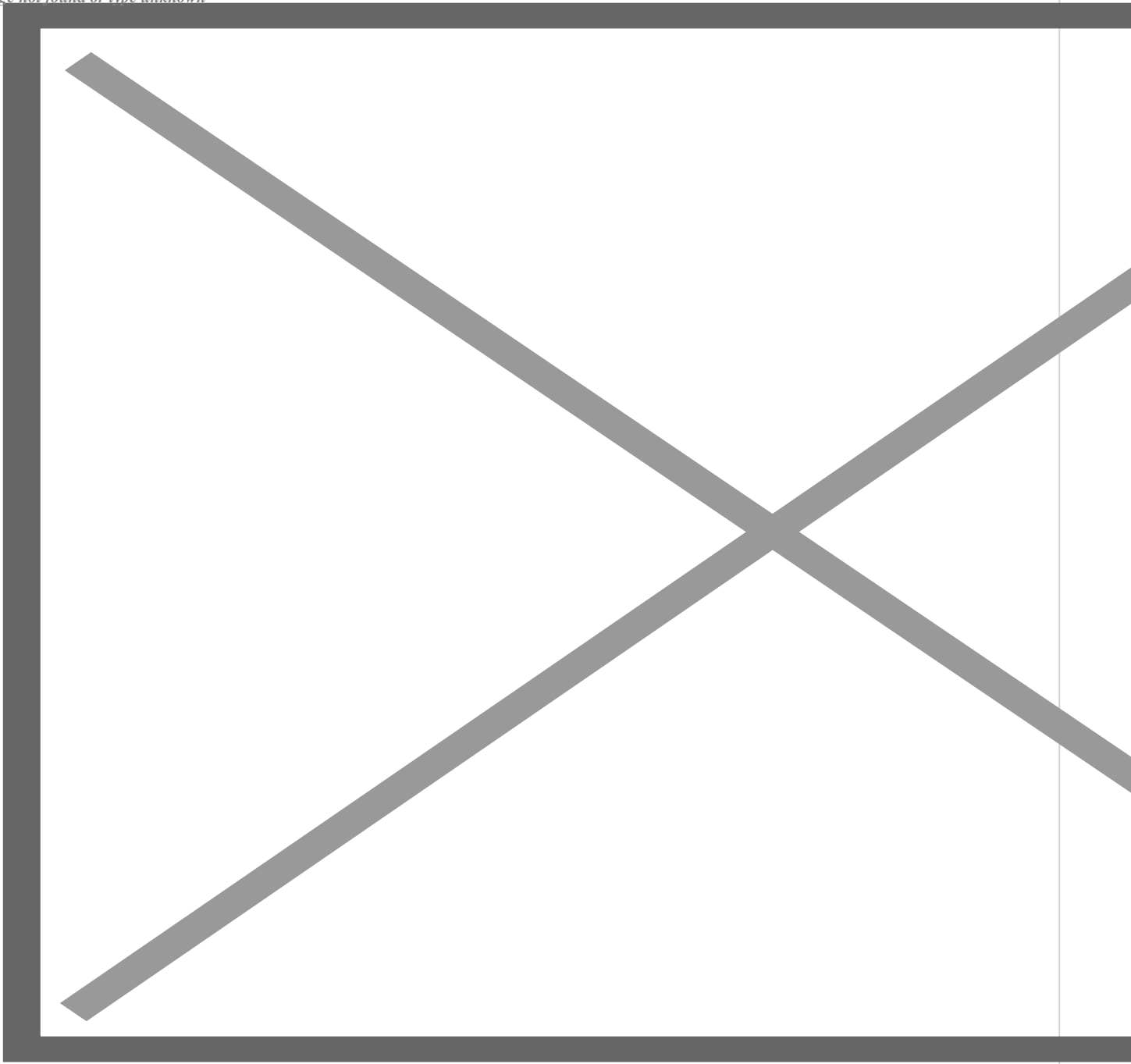


Lula calls for joint action to face disasters in Brazil

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Brasilia, February 21 (RHC)-- Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has called for joint action between the federal, state and municipal governments to confront the disasters caused by the rains on the northern coast of Sao Paulo.

After flying over the areas affected by the weekend storm, Lula spoke of building houses, on safe land, for families that were damaged by the downpours in the region. "You (mayor of the city of Sao Sebastião, Felipe Augusto), you just have to find safer land so we can (say) to the people: You are going to have your nest back to take care of your family," the Workers' Party founder affirmed.

He asked for prayers for the victims, with 36 dead and 40 missing to date, and for the downpours to subside in the region. "I believe that a good prayer with a lot of faith always helps people to obtain what they want," he declared.

He also highlighted the joint work of the federal, state and local governments. "I wanted to show you a scene that you have not seen in Brazil: a governor, a president and a mayor, sitting at the table, working on a common issue that affects us all."

About 500 people, including police, firemen and members of the Armed Forces, are participating this Monday in the rescue and identification of the victims. Sao Sebastiao is the most affected locality and where 35 of the 36 lives lost were reported. The other was located in Ubatuba.

In an Army helicopter, Lula made the tour accompanied by Ministers Márcio França, Port and Airports; Alexandre Padilha, Institutional Relations; Simone Tebet, Planning and Budgets; Paulo Pimenta, Secretary of Communication (Secom); Waldez Góes, Integration and Regional Development and Renan Filho, Transportation.

He later met in Sao Sebastião with the governor of Sao Paulo, Tarcísio de Freitas, and Mayor Augusto. The storms caused flooding, landslides and cut sections of the Rio-Santos, Mogi-Bertyoga and Tamoios highways.

According to the Civil Defense, the volume of rainfall in the last 24 hours exceeded that expected for the whole of February in three of the four cities on the northern coast (Sao Sebastião, Ilhabela, Caraguatatuba and Ubatuba), a region heavily hit by the rainfall.

The São Paulo government confirmed that more than 550 people had to leave their homes on the coast because of the inclement weather. According to official records, 228 people were left homeless and 338 homeless.

Due to the infernal situation, Governor De Freitas decreed a state of calamity in Ubatuba, Sao Sebastiao, Ilhabela, Caraguatatuba (all on the north coast), besides Bertyoga.



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