

INFORMATION BULLETIN

CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO: HURRICANE MITCH

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The Disaster

Tropical storm Mitch, the 13th and strongest storm of the 1998 Atlantic hurricane season, that had strengthened Monday 26 October to a Category 5 hurricane with sustained winds of 170 mph. lost some intensity yesterday and remained on top of the Honduran islands of La Bahía. Heavy rains and strong winds provoking sever floods are still affecting the Atlantic coasts of Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico and Belize are foreseen to continue an other 72 hours. Due to its erratic movements, it is very difficult to predict where its final landing will be. Although the situation is more stable in Nicaragua, Panama and Costa Rica, the consequences of the storms during the past days are still affecting the population, specially in the Pacific coasts. The number of deaths in the affected areas have gone up to 11, hundreds of homes are estimated to be ruined and more than 120.000 persons have been evacuated.

HONDURAS

Today 7 persons have been reported dead while 45 330 are evacuated and sheltered in different localities. However it is difficult to ensure the total damages as many areas have already lost communication. It is estimated that more than 1 million persons are under risk while Mitch remains stationed over the island of Guanaja (Islas de Bahía). The threatened population in these islands is of 25 000 persons. The hospital in the neighbouring island of Roatan has been partially destroyed. Hundreds of tourists and residents are being evacuated by helicopter. The authorities have announced that the evacuees will have to stay very long in the temporary shelters.

Strong winds and rains are causing the overflow of all rivers that born in the river Meredón affecting areas traditionally vulnerable such as La Ceiba, Tela, Puerto Cortés, Progreso, Pimienta, San Manuel, La Lima. Electricity and water supplies are being affected. Also in Tegucigalpa, intensive rains are causing mud slides in very poor quarters from where people are also starting to be evacuated.

NICARAGUA

The northern part of the Nicaraguan Atlantic region has been suffering from strong storms caused by Mitch. Two persons have been reported dead and at least 1 500 hectares of crops have been ruined in the Nicaraguan Pacific departments of Granada, Rivas, Leon and Chinandega where 2 weeks of permanent flooding due to regular rains had been reported. Also 5000 persons of 10 communities were isolated due to the overflow of the river Malacatoya. Now, as a result of the inter tropical convergence effects caused by the new storm Mitch the situation for more than 2.500 families in the area has become unbearable. The loss of crops and infrastructure are threatening the survival of these people during the next three months until harvest can be restored. Local flights have been suspended.

COSTA RICA

In Costa Rica where last week three persons died, two disappeared and more than 1000 were evacuated, the National Emergency Commission maintains a general alert. Still strong rains are expected specially in the province of Guanacaste (northern Pacific and border with Nicaragua) where shelters and relief items are