

# Albania Quake Rescues End With Toll at 51

With all dead believed to have been found, Albanian officials turned their focus to helping the 4,000 made homeless and remedying a flawed construction industry.



People mourning Saturday in Durrës, Albania, at the funeral for members of the extended Lala family who died in Tuesday's earthquake. Credit...Malton Dibra/EPA, via Shutterstock

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TIRANA, Albania — The search-and-rescue operation for earthquake survivors in Albania has ended, the prime minister said Saturday, with the death toll at 51 and no more bodies believed to be in the ruins.

The 6.4-magnitude quake, the country's deadliest ever, struck on Tuesday and was centered slightly west of the capital, Tirana. Hundreds of aftershocks, some

with a magnitude of more than 5.0, have shaken already damaged buildings and terrified residents.

Prime Minister Edi Rama said preliminary figures showed that more than 1,465 buildings in the capital, Tirana, and about 900 in nearby Durres had been seriously damaged by the quake. About 2,000 people were injured.

The 51st victim was a 20-year-old woman who died on Saturday. She had been struck on the head by falling bricks in Tirana. Most fatalities occurred in the coastal city of Durres and the nearby town of Thumane.

In Durres on Saturday, President Ilir Meta, Mr. Rama and hundreds of residents attended the funeral of nine members of an extended family who were killed when a four-story villa collapsed. One young man survived and has been sent to Italy for medical treatment.

Preliminary figures estimate that the disaster made at least 4,000 people homeless. About 2,500 people from damaged homes have been sheltered in hotels, while others have been taken to neighboring Kosovo or have moved to eastern areas of Albania.

The prime minister has pledged that by next year all the homeless will be in "stronger homes."

Shoddy construction and corruption in Albania's building industry have been blamed for much of the damage. A bill has been drafted that would sentence all investors, architects, and supervisors to seven to 15 years in prison for violating construction norms.

The government has set up a fund to compensate families of the dead, with each family getting one million lek (almost \$9,000); it also includes special pensions for older people and scholarships for children. Government and private calls for donations have collected about 15 million euros (about \$16.5 million) in three days.

Pop stars of Albanian origin, including the singers Dua Lipa, Rita Ora, and Bebe Rexha, have made appeals on social media. Ms. Ora said she would help build a home for a homeless family and "directly help these families as much as I can!"

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Source:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/30/world/europe/albania-earthquake.html>

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