

Death toll from southern Mexico's big earthquake rises to 96

The death toll from Mexico's 8.1 magnitude earthquake rose to 96 on Monday as more victims were confirmed in the hard-hit southern states of Oaxaca and Chiapas and residents worked to repair shattered homes and small businesses.

The Foreign Relations Department said 95 people had died nationwide in Thursday's quake. Then Chiapas state civil defense director Luis Manuel Garcia Moreno said the number of deaths there had risen from 15 to 16.

Oaxaca Gov. Alejandro Murat said in a statement that the toll in his state increased to 76, and officials have reported that four people were killed in the Gulf coast state of Tabasco.

As funerals continued for the disaster's victims, teams of soldiers and federal police with shovels and sledgehammers fanned out to help demolish damaged buildings across the southern city of Juchitan, which was hit particularly hard.

Volunteers, many of them teens from religious or community groups in surrounding towns that came through in better shape, turned out in force to distribute water and clothing or lend a hand.

At a leafy technological school turned into a shelter, a couple hundred people have been sleeping in classrooms or on thin mattresses laid out under trees since the quake last week.

Everyone cited fear of aftershocks as their reason for staying, including those whose homes were still standing. But Juchitan awoke Monday after its first night without an aftershock, and that was enough for some to contemplate going home.

The military served them a breakfast of eggs and beans before most set off to work on repairing their homes or make sure their belongings weren't being stolen.

Later in the day at least one more tremor was felt.

The previous day in Ixtaltepec, about 20 minutes north of Juchitan, residents

directed heavy machinery operators clearing rubble while others did what they could with pry bars and rope.

Benito Chinas' house and the small store he ran out front were leveled by the quake, and his daughter traveled from her home in Veracruz to help out. She was organizing what little remained of her father's possessions — a few bottles of cooking oil — under a tarp to protect it from rain.

"Everything that I worked so long for is gone," said Chinas, 83. "I don't have the strength anymore, and at my age how am I going to start over?"

Mexico's Foreign Relations Department said the quake and Hurricane Katia, which struck the Gulf coast state of Veracruz on Friday, have forced the country to withdraw an offer of aid for Houston after it was hit by Hurricane Harvey in August. At least two deaths were blamed on Katia.

The U.S. had thanked Mexico for the offer and said only logistical aid was needed. The Mexican Red Cross said 33 of its volunteers were helping out in Houston.

Mexico said it would now dedicate relief efforts to its own disasters.

About 5,000 homes in Chiapas were destroyed by the quake, and Murat said about 11,000 homes were damaged or destroyed in Oaxaca.

Source: <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/death-toll-mexico-quake-rises-95-49768115>

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