

Flash floods kill at least 58 in Indonesia's Papua



A small aircraft was damaged at Jayapura airport in the flooding © **BADAN NASIONAL PENANGGULANGAN BENCANA (BNBP)/AFP / Handout**

Flash floods in Indonesia's eastern Papua province have killed at least 58 people, an official said Sunday, as rescuers battled mud, rocks and fallen trees in the hunt for survivors.

The death toll was expected to rise as emergency services struggled to reach people in hard-hit areas, with more than 70 people injured and 4,150 evacuated.

The floods — triggered by torrential rain and landslides on Saturday — damaged numerous homes in the northeastern town of Sentani, said national disaster agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho.

“The number of casualties and impact of the disaster will likely increase as search and rescue teams are still trying to reach other affected areas,” he said.

The waters had receded but officials were still trying to evacuate people from areas obstructed by “fallen trees, rocks, mud and other material”, Nugroho added.

In Doyo, one of the most affected areas, a housing complex was littered with huge rocks believed to have rolled down from a nearby mountain, an AFP reporter at the scene said.

Sediment and waste swept by the floods piled up on the pavement.

The non-stop wail of ambulance sirens could be heard, as heavy equipment was used to clear the roads.

The government has announced a 14-day state of emergency, said Jayapura police chief Victor Dean Mackbon.

Video footage showed rescuers administering oxygen to a victim who appeared to be trapped beneath a fallen tree.

Officers rescued a five-month-old baby who was trapped for hours under the rubble, Papua military spokesman Muhammad Aidi said. The whereabouts of the parents are unknown.

A propeller plane lay partly crushed on a runway at the airport of nearby provincial capital Jayapura.

“The rain started last night and went on until around 1:00 am this morning,” said Lilis Puji Hastuti, a 29-year-old mother of two young children in Sentani.

“Our house was flooded with thick mud ... we immediately grabbed our valuables and ran to a neighbour’s (two-storey) house to seek refuge.

“It’s hard to get out of the area because many roads are blocked... I’m worried, sad and scared all at once,” she told AFP.



Displaced residents gather at a temporary shelter in Sentani, near the Papuan provincial capital of Jayapura, as floodwaters triggered by torrential rain swamped the area

BADAN NASIONAL PENANGGULANGAN BENCANA (BNBP)/AFP / Handout

In Sentani, tents have been set up to take in flood victims and treat the wounded.

Papua shares a border with independent Papua New Guinea on an island just north of Australia.

Flooding is common in Indonesia, especially during the rainy season which runs from October to April.

In January, floods and landslides killed at least 70 people on Sulawesi island, while earlier this month hundreds in West Java province were forced to evacuate when torrential rains triggered severe flooding.

The Southeast Asian archipelago of some 17,000 islands is one of the most

disaster-prone nations on Earth, straddling the Pacific Ring of Fire, where tectonic plates collide. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are common.



AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE Agence France-Presse is a global news agency delivering fast, in-depth coverage of the events shaping our world from wars and conflicts to politics, sports, entertainment and the latest breakthroughs in health, science and technology.

Other articles from AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

Source:

<https://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2019/03/flash-floods-kill-at-least-63-in-indonesia-s-papua/>

[Disclaimer]