

*Preliminary report says Haitian
earthquake kills more than 300*



Heavy damage caused by quake in Haiti??

Port-au-Prince, August 14 (RHC)-- At least 300 people have been killed after a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck southwest Haiti, the country's civil protection agency said, hours after the quake reduced buildings to rubble and sent terrified residents running out of their homes in search of safety.

In a tweet on Saturday afternoon, the agency also said "hundreds" of people were injured and are considered missing.

The earthquake struck on Saturday morning some 12 km (7.4 miles) northeast of Saint-Louis du Sud, on Haiti's southern Tiburon Peninsula, at a shallow depth of 10 km (6.2 miles), the United States Geological Survey (USGS) reported.

"The first interventions, carried out both by professional rescuers and members of the population, made it possible to extract several people from the rubble. Hospitals continue to receive the injured," the civil protection agency added.

Haiti's new prime minister, Ariel Henry, has declared a one-month state of emergency after what he described on Twitter as a "violent quake" that caused loss of life and "enormous damage" in various parts of the country.

He said he would mobilise all available government resources to help victims and appealed to Haitians to unify as they "confront this dramatic situation in which we're living right now". "We will make the necessary arrangements to assist those affected by the earthquake," Henry also tweeted. "The government will declare a state of emergency. We will act quickly."

Jerry Chandler, who heads Haiti's civil protection agency, earlier on Saturday told reporters that the earthquake had killed at least 29 people, but that toll was widely expected to rise. The USGS said "high casualties are probable and the disaster is likely widespread".

The European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre (EMSC) also reported a quake in the region, saying it was of 7.6 magnitude, while Cuba's seismological centre said it registered a magnitude of 7.4.

The USGS issued a tsunami warning, saying waves of up to 3 metres (nearly 10 feet) were possible along the coastline of Haiti, but it soon lifted the warning.

Shocks were felt throughout Haiti and in neighbouring Caribbean countries, including Jamaica and Cuba.

"Lots of homes are destroyed, people are dead and some are at the hospital," Christella Saint Hilaire, who lives near the epicentre, told the AFP news agency. "Everyone is in the street now and the shocks keep coming," she added.

Residents shared images on social media of frantic efforts to pull people from the ruins of caved-in buildings, while screaming bystanders sought safety in the streets outside their homes.

"Houses and their surrounding walls have collapsed. The roof of the cathedral has fallen down," resident Job Joseph told AFP from the hard-hit city of Jeremie on Haiti's far western end.

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