

More than 20 dead, hundreds displaced as cyclone slams southern Brazil

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Brasilia, September 6 (RHC)-- A cyclone has devastated southern Brazil, with flooding in several cities leaving at least 22 people dead and displacing hundreds more. Authorities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul said on Tuesday that more bodies are being found as flood waters recede. Governor Eduardo Leite said that about 60 cities were affected by the storm.

Estimates for the number of people forced from their homes vary. The Associated Press estimates 1,650 have been displaced, while the news agency AFP cited a higher statistic: 3,700. In addition to 21 lives lost in Rio Grande do Sul, one death was confirmed in the neighbouring state of Santa Catarina, according to Reuters.

Tuesday's cyclone is the latest in a string of extreme weather events to heap misery on Brazil, underscoring the risks of storms driven to greater frequency and intensity by climate change.

In June, a cyclone in southern Brazil killed 13 people and displaced thousands from their homes. In February, landslides and flooding triggered by torrential rainfall killed at least 65 people in the state of Sao Paulo.

Leite said that Monday's flooding marks the state's highest death toll ever from a climate-related event. He stated that 15 of the reported deaths occurred in the city of Mucum.

Videos on social media showed the town overwhelmed by rising water. "There are still people missing. The death toll might climb higher," Mayor Mateus Trojan told Radio Gaucha. "The town of Mucum as we knew it no longer exists."

"I express my solidarity with the population of Rio Grande do Sul, which is experiencing the heavy rains that have already caused the death of at least four people," Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said in a social media post earlier in the day.

"The head of civil defence goes to the state to help remedy the problems caused by heavy rains. We will do everything to help the Gaucha population through this moment."

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