

At least 265 dead in floods, landslides as rain batters East Africa



Nairobi, December 5 (RHC)-- Two months of relentless rains have submerged villages and farms and sent rivers of mud crashing into houses across East Africa, with at least 265 killed, according to an AFP tally, as meteorologists warn of more to come.

The extreme downpours have affected close to two million people and washed away tens of thousands of livestock in Kenya, Somalia, Burundi, Tanzania, South Sudan, Uganda, Djibouti and Ethiopia. With a tropical storm headed for Somalia and more rain forecast across the region in the coming weeks, fears are rising over waterborne diseases and the prospect of hunger as crops are destroyed.

In Burundi, 38 people died on Wednesday night after heavy rains triggered landslides that swept through hillside communities in the northwest of the country, according to a provisional police toll on Thursday.

"It happened in the night, when everyone was at home, and landslides hit three very steep hills and buried everything in their path," a witness told AFP. "Whole families were buried alive in their homes or in the fields. It was terrifying."

Kenya has been hard hit with 132 killed and 17,000 displaced, schools, roads, and health centers flooded, and water systems clogged across the country, government spokesman Cyrus Oguna said in a statement on Tuesday.

The "weather forecast has indicated that the current rains are not expected to cease until the end of December 2019," the statement said.

In South Sudan, the UN refugee agency UNHCR said nearly a million people have been affected by floodwaters which submerged whole towns, compounding an already dire humanitarian situation after six years of war.

Flooding has also affected 570,000 people in Somalia, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The European humanitarian agency ECHO meanwhile warned of a tropical storm due to hit northeastern Somalia on Friday, bringing the threat of more flash floods.

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