

Over two thousand dead after powerful earthquake rocks Morocco

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Marrakesh, September 9 (RHC)-- A strong and shallow earthquake has struck Morocco, killing and wounding hundreds of people and damaging buildings, from villages in the Atlas Mountains to the historic city of Marrakesh.

At least 820 people died in the disaster, most in Marrakesh and five provinces near the earthquake's epicentre. Another 670 people were sent to hospitals with injuries.

Moroccan television showed scenes from the aftermath as many people stayed outside fearing aftershocks. Anxious families stood in streets or huddled on the pavement, some carrying children, blankets or other belongings. Emergency workers hurriedly looked for survivors in the rubble.

Other images shared online showed people running and screaming near the 12th-century Koutoubia Mosque in Marrakesh, one of the city's most famed landmarks. Moroccan media reported the mosque suffered damage, but the extent was not immediately clear. Its 69-metre (226-foot) minaret is known as the "roof of Marrakesh".

The United States Geological Survey measured the quake at magnitude 6.8 when it hit at 11:11pm (22:11 GMT) on Friday. The USGS said the epicentre was 18km (11 miles) below the Earth's surface. Such shallow quakes are more dangerous.

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