

Honduras says trees slowed hurricane

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Honduran President Manuel Zelaya credited the country's forests and mangrove swamps with sapping some of Hurricane Felix's strength.

"The forests are obstacles for the advance of hurricanes," Zelaya told The New York Times Thursday.

Hurricane Felix, which came ashore Tuesday with 160 mile-an-hour winds, struck one of the most forested areas of northern Nicaragua and southern Honduras.

The Rev. Jose Andres Tamayo, a leading Honduran environmental advocate, said the trees secure the ground and offer a buffer from the storms. He said environmental degradation is one of the reasons that even normal rainstorms can cause deadly floods and mudslides.

The newspaper said Zelaya acknowledged that hurricanes had become more dangerous with the deforestation that has ravaged other parts of the country. Studies show that Honduras has lost more than a third of its forest cover since 1990.

"We're trying to correct this, but it will take a decade or more," Zelaya told the newspaper.

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