

# Volcanic eruption in Cape Verde destroys two villages

December 16 2014

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Screengrab from video footage obtained by AFP from TCV (Televisão de Cabo Verde) shows lava from the Pico do Fogo volcano surrounding houses on the island of Fogo in Cape Verde on an unspecified date in December 2014

The biggest eruption of Cape Verde volcano Pico do Fogo in decades has destroyed two villages and threatens a forest reserve Tuesday, officials said.

Some 1,500 people were forced to abandon their homes before the lava flow reached the villages of Portela and Bangeira on Fogo island in the Atlantic archipelago, fire brigade chief Arlindo Lima said late Monday

on national radio.

More than 1,000 people were evacuated from the Cha das Caldeiras region at the foot of the volcano immediately after it first erupted on November 23, while officials closed the airport as the skies darkened with ash.

Lima, who heads civil protection services, said that the lava gained ground on Sunday. "The lava front, (which was) more than 500 metres (547 yards) north of outlying houses in Bangeira a week ago, has swept over much of the village and continues to move forward."

The village of Portela has also been destroyed, according to Lima and local journalists.

Cape Verde is a volcanic archipelago comprised of 10 islands, nine of them inhabited by a population of about 530,000 people. They mostly live by fishing, making garments for export, a thriving tourist trade and remittances from the islands' diaspora.

Volcanic activity is rare, but when its highest peak Pico do Fogo erupted, expert Bruno Faria told state-owned Radio Cape Verde that the initial blast was "much greater than the one in 1995", which showered the island with ash. Residents said that gas was also coming out of the crater.



Screengrab from video footage obtained by AFP from TCV (Televisão de Cabo Verde) shows lava spewing from the Pico do Fogo volcano on the island of Fogo in Cape Verde on an unspecified date in December 2014

"The eruption was very fast. But we are appealing to the people for calm," Interior Minister Marisa Morais told the radio station.

Pico do Fogo, which stands almost 2,900 metres (9,500 feet), quietened down for four days after the first eruption, but started to blow again last weekend.

Authorities have warned inhabitants of Fonsaco village to prepare to leave as the lava advances, while they also fear for the [Monte Velho forest reserve](#), lying in its path.

"There's a whole local economy and a whole way of life that the volcano has claimed in the space of just 22 days," local journalist Arlinda Neves said after Portela and Bangeira were "struck off the map".

"It's more than a century and a half of history that has literally been wiped out," she added, with some of the buildings destroyed dating back to the 1860s.

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