

## Aftershocks terrify survivors of quake that killed 2,500 (Update)

April 26 2015, by Binaj Gurubacharya And Katy Daigle

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Family members break down during the cremation of an earthquake victim in Bhaktapur near Kathmandu, Nepal, Sunday, April 26, 2015. A strong magnitude 7.8 earthquake shook Nepal's capital and the densely populated Kathmandu Valley before noon Saturday, causing extensive damage with toppled walls and collapsed buildings, officials said. (AP Photo/Niranjan Shrestha)

Shell-shocked and sleeping in the streets, tens of thousands of Nepalese braced against terrifying aftershocks Sunday while digging for survivors in the devastation wrought a day earlier by a massive earthquake that

ripped across this Himalayan nation and killed more than 2,500 people.

Acrid, white smoke rose above the nation's most revered Hindu temple, where dozens of bodies were being cremated at any given time.

Aid groups received the first word from remote mountain villages—reports that suggested many communities perched on mountainsides were devastated or struggling to cope.

Landslides hindered rescue teams that tried to use mountain trails to reach those in need, said Prakash Subedi, chief district official in the Gorkha region, where the quake was centered.

"Villages like this are routinely affected by landslides, and it's not uncommon for entire villages of 200, 300, up to 1,000 people to be completely buried by rock falls," said Matt Darvas, a member of the aid group World Vision. "It will likely be helicopter access only."

Saturday's magnitude 7.8 earthquake spread horror from Kathmandu to small villages and to the slopes of Mount Everest, triggering an avalanche that buried part of the base camp packed with foreign climbers preparing to make their summit attempts. At least 18 people died there and 61 were injured.

With people fearing more quakes, tens of thousands spent the day crowding in the streets and the night sleeping in parks or on a golf course. Others camped in open squares lined by cracked buildings and piles of rubble. Helicopter blades thudded periodically overhead.

Crows screeched as the ground shook with the worst of the aftershocks—magnitude 6.7. Panicked residents raced outdoors.

"We don't feel safe at all. There have been so many aftershocks. It

doesn't stop," said Rajendra Dhungana, 34, who spent the day with his niece's family for her cremation at the Pashuputi Nath Temple in Katmandu. "I've watched hundreds of bodies burn. I never thought I'd see so many ... Nepal should learn a lesson from this. They should realize proper buildings should be built. There should be open spaces people can run to."

Nepal authorities said Sunday that at least 2,430 people died in that country alone, not including the 18 dead in the avalanche. Another 61 people died from the quake in India and a few in other neighboring countries.

At least 1,152 people died in Kathmandu, and the number of injured nationwide was upward of 5,900. With search-and-rescue efforts far from over, it was unclear how much the death toll would rise. Three policemen died during a rescue effort in Kathmandu, police spokesman Komal Singh Bam said.

The capital city is largely a collection of small, poorly constructed brick apartment buildings. But outside of the oldest neighborhoods, many in Kathmandu were surprised by how few modern structures collapsed in the quake.

While aid workers cautioned that many buildings could have sustained serious structural damage, it was also clear that the death toll would have been far higher had more buildings caved in.

Aid workers also warned that the situation could be far worse near the epicenter west of Kathmandu. The U.S. Geological Survey said the quake was centered near Lamjung, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) northwest of Kathmandu.



Nepalese people gather to cremate their family members who died in the earthquake in Bhaktapur near Kathmandu, Nepal, Sunday, April 26, 2015. A strong magnitude 7.8 earthquake shook Nepal's capital and the densely populated Kathmandu Valley before noon Saturday, causing extensive damage with toppled walls and collapsed buildings, officials said. (AP Photo/Niranjan Shrestha)

As planeloads of supplies, doctors and relief workers from neighboring countries arrived at Kathmandu's airport, thousands of Indians lined up outside in hopes of gaining a seat on a plane returning to New Delhi.

One of those fleeing, 32-year-old tailor Assad Alam, said he and his wife and daughter were leaving with heavy hearts.

"It was a very difficult decision. I have called this home for seven years. But you have to think about the family, about your child."

The earthquake was the worst to hit the South Asian nation in more than

80 years. It destroyed swaths of the oldest neighborhoods of Kathmandu and was strong enough to be felt all across parts of India, Bangladesh, China's region of Tibet and Pakistan.

Nepal's worst recorded earthquake in 1934 measured 8.0 and all but destroyed the cities of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Patan.

Rescuers aided by international teams spent Sunday digging through rubble of buildings—concrete slabs, bricks, iron beams, wood—to look for survivors. Because the air was filled with chalky concrete dust, many people wore breathing masks or held shawls over their faces.

Hundreds of people in the western Kalanki neighborhood nervously watched the slow progress of a single backhoe digging into the rubble of the collapsed Lumbini Guest House, once a three-story budget hotel frequented by Nepalese.

Police officer RP Dhamala, who was coordinating the rescue efforts, said they had already pulled out 12 people alive and six dead. He said rescuers were still searching for about 20 people believed to be trapped but had heard no cries, taps or noises for a while.

Most areas were without power and water. The United Nations said hospitals in the Kathmandu Valley were overcrowded and running out of emergency supplies and space to store corpses.

Most shops in Kathmandu were closed after the government declared a weeklong period of recovery. Only fruit vendors and pharmacies seemed to be doing business.

"More people are coming now," fruit seller Shyam Jaiswal said. "They cannot cook so they need to buy something they can eat raw."



A Nepalese woman holds the hand of her relative killed in an earthquake at a hospital, in Kathmandu, Nepal, Sunday, April 26, 2015. A strong magnitude 7.8 earthquake shook Nepal's capital and the densely populated Kathmandu Valley before noon Saturday, causing extensive damage with toppled walls and collapsed buildings, officials said(AP Photo/Manish Swarup)

Jaiswal said stocks were running out, and more shipments were not expected for at least a week, but added, "We are not raising prices. That would be illegal, immoral profit."

The quake will probably put a huge strain on the resources of this impoverished country best known for Everest, the highest mountain in the world. The economy of Nepal, a nation of 27.8 million people, relies heavily on tourism, principally trekking and Himalayan mountain climbing.

With Kathmandu airport reopened, the first aid flights began delivering aid supplies. The first to respond were Nepal's neighbors—India, China and Pakistan, all of which have been jockeying for influence over the landlocked nation. Nepal remains closest to India, with which it shares deep political, cultural and religious ties.

India suffered its own losses from the quake, with at least 61 people killed there and dozens injured. Sunday's aftershock was also widely felt in the country, and local news reports said metro trains in New Delhi and Kolkata were briefly shut down when the shaking started.

Other countries sending support Sunday included the United States, the United Arab Emirates, Germany and France.



Rescue workers remove debris as they search for victims of earthquake in Bhaktapur near Kathmandu, Nepal, Sunday, April 26, 2015. A strong magnitude earthquake shook Nepal's capital and the densely populated Kathmandu Valley before noon Saturday, causing extensive damage with toppled walls and collapsed buildings, officials said. (AP Photo/Niranjan Shrestha)

An American military plane left Delaware's Dover Air Force Base for Nepal, carrying 70 people, including a disaster-assistance response team and an urban search-and-rescue team, and 45 tons of cargo, the Pentagon said.

After the chaos of Saturday—when little organized rescue and relief was seen —efforts were more orderly on Sunday as rescue teams fanned out across the city.

Workers were sending out tents and relief goods in trucks and helicopters and setting up shelters, said disaster management official



Rameshwar Dangal.



An elderly injured woman is taken home through earthquake debris after treatment in Bhaktapur near Kathmandu, Nepal, Sunday, April 26, 2015. A strong magnitude 7.8 earthquake shook Nepal's capital and the densely populated Kathmandu Valley before noon Saturday, causing extensive damage with toppled walls and collapsed buildings, officials said. (AP Photo/Niranjan Shrestha)

Mukesh Kafle, head of the Nepal Electricity Authority, said power was restored to main government offices, the airport and hospitals.

The earthquake also damaged several landmarks, including the nine-story Dharahara Tower, built by Nepal's royal rulers as a watchtower in the 1800s and a UNESCO-recognized historical monument. It was reduced to rubble, and there were reports of people trapped underneath.



In this image made from video, rescue workers pull a survivor from an earthquake damaged building in Kathmandu, Nepal, Sunday, April 26, 2015. A strong magnitude 7.8 earthquake shook Nepal's capital and the densely populated Kathmandu Valley before noon Saturday, causing extensive damage with toppled walls and collapsed buildings. (APTN via AP)



A Nepalese man performs rituals during the cremation of his mother who died in the earthquake in Bhaktapur near Kathmandu, Nepal, Sunday, April 26, 2015. A strong magnitude 7.8 earthquake shook Nepal's capital and the densely populated Kathmandu Valley before noon Saturday, causing extensive damage with toppled walls and collapsed buildings, officials said. (AP Photo/Niranjan Shrestha)



The hand of a dead woman is seen after rescue workers recovered it from debris in Bhaktapur near Kathmandu, Nepal, Sunday, April 26, 2015. A strong earthquake shook Nepal's capital and the densely populated Kathmandu Valley before noon Saturday, causing extensive damage with toppled walls and collapsed buildings, officials said. (AP Photo/Niranjan Shrestha)



Dead bodies of earthquake victims are kept on the bank of Hanumante river for cremation in Bhaktapur near Kathmandu, Nepal, Sunday, April 26, 2015. A strong earthquake shook Nepal's capital and the densely populated Kathmandu Valley before noon Saturday, causing extensive damage with toppled walls and collapsed buildings, officials said. (AP Photo/Niranjan Shrestha)



Unidentified relatives mourn near the bodies of those killed in earthquake at a hospital, in Kathmandu, Nepal, Sunday, April 26, 2015. A strong magnitude 7.8 earthquake shook Nepal's capital and the densely populated Kathmandu Valley before noon Saturday, causing extensive damage with toppled walls and collapsed buildings, officials said(AP Photo / Manish Swarup)



Nepalese people gather to cremate family members who fell victim to Saturday's earthquake, in Bhaktapur, Nepal, Sunday, April 26, 2015. A powerful, magnitude 6.7 aftershock shook the Kathmandu area of Nepal on Sunday, a day after the massive earthquake devastated the region and destroyed homes and infrastructure. (AP Photo/Niranjan Shrestha)



Earthquake injured Nepalese man Suresh Parihar plays with his daughter Sandhya at a hospital, in Kathmandu, Nepal, Sunday, April 26, 2015. A strong magnitude 7.8 earthquake shook Nepal's capital and the densely populated Kathmandu Valley before noon Saturday, causing extensive damage with toppled walls and collapsed buildings, officials said. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)





Bodies of those killed in an earthquake are laid out in line as people try to identify them at a hospital in Kathmandu, Nepal, Sunday, April 26, 2015. A powerful aftershock shook the Kathmandu area of Nepal on Sunday, a day after the massive earthquake devastated the region and destroyed homes and infrastructure. (AP Photo/Manish Swarup)



Nepalese evacuate with belongings to safer areas in Bhaktapur, Nepal, Sunday, April 26, 2015. A powerful, magnitude 6.7 aftershock shook the Kathmandu area of Nepal on Sunday, a day after the massive earthquake devastated the region and destroyed homes and infrastructure. (AP Photo/Niranjan Shrestha)

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