

Scramble for survivors as quake flattens Mexico City buildings

September 20 2017, by Carola Solé



A man being pulled alive from the rubble following the powerful quake that struck Mexico City on Tuesday

When the earthquake hit, it sent panicked people running into the street but many weren't so lucky. The dust settled minutes later to reveal a landscape of flattened buildings and rubble in the heart of Mexico City.

"Awful. I think it was one of the strongest we've felt. I don't know what

magnitude, but it was awful," said Pedro Cruz Martinez, a public servant cradling his little girl, after joining the rush of fearful parents to a local school.

After the screams and the shock, people quickly set to work digging for survivors.

In a scene reproduced in streets across the city center, dozens of people scabbled with bare hands to remove rubble from atop a concertinaed [building](#) as they waited for specialized machinery to arrive.

Central areas like Roma, Condesa and Doctores appeared to have taken the brunt of the 7.1-magnitude quake.

Several buildings were completely flattened in Roma, popular for its bars and restaurants and one of the neighborhoods hit hardest by the 1985 earthquake that shattered large swathes of this city and killed at least 10,000—32 years ago to the day.

Amid the tears and terror, there were small victories.

Cheers and applause echoed around the crowded Calle Alvaro Obregon in Roma as rescuers managed to pull someone from under the rubble.



A placard reads "Silence" as rescuers hurry to free possible victims out of the rubble of a collapsed building in Mexico City

There remained a sense that such moments would be rare, however.

In other buildings in the same area, volunteers joined the authorities to remove debris. One of them held a sign with the word "silence" in order to be able to hear people who may still be alive.

'Take care'

Local media reported around 30 collapsed buildings in Mexico City with at least four confirmed deaths in the capital, as the overall toll including surrounding areas reached 138, amid fears it could rise further.

Authorities asked for help from volunteers and for water. Some police

officers came through the crowd carrying containers of water.



An injured man is carried away by rescuers in Mexico City

Medics set up makeshift field hospitals in the streets, treating people for broken limbs and crush injuries.

Many people lay on stretchers, medics holding strips of cardboard boxes over victims' heads to protect them from the sun.

"Darling, if you want to help, give me your glasses and take care," a woman told her medic husband as they gazed at buildings reduced to rubble, the intimacy of people's homes laid bare as curtains swayed in buildings without walls.

Police called for calm and cordoned off streets with grotesquely twisted buildings, their reinforcing steel poking out from concrete.

People hugged and comforted each other amid anxiety about loved ones. Many stood around in a daze, not sure where to go or what to do.

But everyone was staying in the streets, afraid to go home.



Rescuers hunted for survivors amid the rubble of a collapsed building after a powerful quake struck Mexico City on Tuesday

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