

# Hunt for survivors as Indonesian tsunami death toll climbs to 373

December 24 2018, by Harry Pearl

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Rescue teams are ramping up a desperate search for survivors after a volcano-triggered tsunami slammed into beaches around Indonesia's Sunda Strait

Dozens of filled body bags were hauled away from buildings flattened by Indonesia's volcano-triggered tsunami Monday, as the death toll

climbed to 373 and search teams pushed on with the grim hunt for corpses.

Rescue teams used their bare hands, diggers and other heavy equipment to haul debris from the stricken area around the Sunda Strait, as thousands were evacuated to higher ground.

Experts warned that more deadly waves could slam the devastated region after Saturday night's disaster, as questions swirled over why the killer wave caught a disaster-prone country's monitors completely off guard.

The powerful [tsunami](#) swept over popular beaches on southern Sumatra and western Java and inundated tourist hotels and coastal settlements.

Some 1,459 people were injured with another 128 missing, disaster agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho said, giving an updated toll late Monday.

"The lack of a tsunami early warning system caused a lot of victims because people did not have the time to evacuate," he said.

Hundreds of buildings were destroyed by the wave that left a tangled mess of corrugated steel roofing, timber and rubble at Carita beach, a popular spot for day-trippers on the west coast of Java.

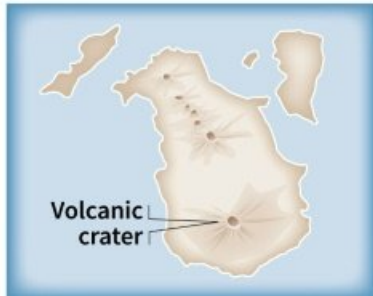
Beachside cottages at one resort were flattened while the dining room's mud-caked floor was strewn with smashed chairs and tables, utensils and spilled cups of ice cream.

## Anak Krakatoa

"The child" of Krakatoa, in Indonesian, formed after the explosion of Krakatoa in 1883

► **Before 1883**

Krakatoa is on the island of Rakata



► **Around 1928**

Anak Krakatoa emerged from the caldera (cauldron-like hollow) of Krakatoa



► **1883**

Explosion of Krakatoa, killed 36,000  
Formed huge under sea crater



Sources: Geoportail, International Tsunami Society, maps4news.com/©HERE

Schematic representations

© AFP

Maps showing the formation of Anak Krakatoa after the explosion of the Krakatoa volcano in 1883

In the lobby, a Christmas tree remained standing, surrounded by fallen holiday ornaments and toppled-over flower pots.

"The military and police are searching the ruins to see if we can find more victims," said Dody Ruswandi, a senior official at the disaster agency, adding that the rescue effort was likely to last a week.

**'No time to evacuate'**

Indonesia's disaster agency initially said there was "no tsunami threat" even as the wave crashed ashore.

It was later forced to issue a correction and an apology as it pointed to the area's lack of early warning systems.

Unlike those caused by earthquakes, which usually trigger alert systems, volcano-triggered tsunamis give authorities very little time to warn residents of the impending threat.

Experts say Saturday's disaster was most likely caused by a moderate eruption of the Anak Krakatoa volcano in the Sunda Strait that triggered either a large and very fast moving flow of molten rock into the sea or a sudden and massive submarine landslide—both would displace large amounts of water, resulting in a tsunami.



Experts say Saturday's disaster was most likely caused by a moderate eruption of the Anak Krakatoa volcano in the Sunda Strait

The evidence so far suggested that a section of the volcano collapsed and slid into the ocean, triggering a tsunami, said Dwikorita Karnawati, head of Indonesia's meteorological agency.

It was the third major natural disaster to strike Indonesia in the space of six months, following a series of powerful earthquakes on the island of Lombok in July and August and a quake-tsunami in September that killed around 2,200 people in Palu on Sulawesi island, with thousands more missing and presumed dead.

It also came less than a week before the 14th anniversary of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami, one of the deadliest disasters in history that killed some 220,000 people in countries around the Indian Ocean, including some 168,000 Indonesians.

The vast archipelago nation is one of the most disaster-hit nations on Earth due to its position straddling the so-called Pacific Ring of Fire, where tectonic plates collide.

## **'Saw the water coming'**

In devastated Sukarame village, Sunarti waded through knee-deep water as she searched for belongings outside her destroyed house—and waited for aid to arrive.

"There's been no help at all so far," the 61-year-old AFP from the

flattened hamlet.



Indonesian officials say the rescue effort in the devastated region is likely to last a week

"Some people are starving."

Survivor Ade Junaedi recounted seeing nature's fury firsthand.

"It happened very quickly," he said.

"I was chatting with a guest at our place when my wife opened the door and she suddenly screamed in panic. I thought there was a fire, but when

I walked to the door I saw the water coming."

Richard Teeuw, a geohazard expert from the University of Portsmouth in England, said the eruption and landslide may well have destabilised the volcano, heightening the risk of another tsunami.

"The likelihood of further tsunamis in the Sunda Strait will remain high while Anak Krakatoa volcano is going through its current active phase because that might trigger further submarine landslides," Teeuw said.

Dramatic video posted on social media showed a wall of water suddenly crashing into a concert by pop group "Seventeen"—hurling band members off the stage and then flooding into the audience.



Survivors waded through knee-deep water searching for belongings outside destroyed homes

At least two band members were killed along with its manager and a crew member, while Indonesian media said the band's missing drummer was found dead Monday.

The surviving lead singer's wife is missing. Front man Riefian Fajarsyah posted a picture online of he and his wife kissing in Paris with the Eiffel Tower in the background.

"Today is your birthday—I want wish you a happy birthday in person. Come home soon, honey," he wrote in the caption of the photo, which was posted Sunday.

Anak Krakatoa, which forms a small island in the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra, emerged around 1928 in the crater left by Krakatoa, whose massive eruption in 1883 killed at least 36,000 people and affected global weather patterns for years.

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