

Hurricane Dorian death toll climbs to 43, expected to rise 'significantly'

September 7 2019, by Brendan Smialowski



Hurricane Dorian refugees arrive at the Kendal GL Isaacs National Gym on September 6 in Nassau

The death toll from Hurricane Dorian's devastating rampage across the Bahamas rose to 43 and was likely to climb "significantly," officials said,

with hundreds missing even as rescuers plucked desperate survivors from the debris.

More than 260 residents of the brutally damaged Abaco Islands arrived in the capital city of Nassau after spending more than seven hours on a government-chartered ferry, a second of which was expected to arrive overnight.

Those who made it to safety awaited news of loved ones such as Diane Forbes, who had not heard from her two sons since Tuesday and was searching for them among some 200 evacuees sheltering at a gymnasium Friday night in Nassau, which was spared the wrath of the hurricane.

"They said they were hungry and the scent of the bodies, the dead, was really getting to them... I don't know if my son is alive or not," she said of one of her children, who had been in Marsh Harbour on Abaco with his girlfriend and her mother.

Confirming the new toll of 43, Prime Minister Hubert Minnis said 35 were killed on worst-hit Abaco and eight on Grand Bahama island.

"The loss of life we are experiencing is catastrophic and devastating," he said in a statement late Friday quoted by The Tribune newspaper.

With many missing, "this number is expected to grow significantly," his spokeswoman Erica Wells Cox told NBC News.



Hurricane Dorian evacuees are pictured at the Kendal GL Isaacs National Gym on September 6 in Nassau

On the eventual death toll, Health Minister Duane Sands earlier said "the number will be staggering."

"Literally hundreds, up to thousands, of people are still missing," Joy Jibrilu, the director general of the Bahamian tourism and aviation ministry, told CNN.

Thousands of people were left homeless on Grand Bahama and Abaco and many were becoming frustrated with the speed of relief and evacuation efforts.

"There's no gas station, no food stores, my job is gone" said Melanie Lowe of Marsh Harbour, whose house was partially destroyed and had packed into a two-bedroom apartment with 16 people before arriving in Nassau.

According to UN relief officials, more than 70,000 people—virtually the entire population of Grand Bahama and Abaco—are in need of assistance after the storm reduced homes to matchsticks and destroyed people's livelihoods.



Aircrew medevac 10 people affected by Hurricane Dorian from Marsh Harbour to Nassau, Bahamas

The US Coast Guard and private organizations have been evacuating residents of Abaco and other islands to Nassau.

The multinational relief effort, which also includes Britain's Royal Navy and several non-governmental organizations, has been hampered by flood damage to airport runways, destroyed piers and docks and downed communications.

Tents and awnings installed at Nassau Airport, not far from rescue planes taking off and landing, provided temporary housing for storm-battered Bahamians.

Landfall in Outer Banks

As survivors began the first steps of rebuilding their lives, arrangements were being made to take care of the dead and the Bahamian authorities were seeking to account for the missing.

Sands said extra morticians and refrigerated coolers to store bodies were being sent to the affected islands.



Hurricane Dorian left a trail of major flooding and damage on Great Abaco Island

Mortuary workers in white hazmat suits, blue gloves and masks could be seen in Marsh Harbour carrying corpses in green body bags and loading them onto flatbed trucks.

"As you know, in the United States, we weren't hit nearly as hard as was thought but the Bahamas, you got hit very, very hard," US President Donald Trump said in a video statement on Twitter.

"On behalf of the United States and the people of the United States, we're working hard, we're with you and God bless you," he said.

"Any cruise ship companies willing to act as stationary housing, etc., I am sure would be appreciated!," he also tweeted.

Dorian made landfall meanwhile in the United States as a Category 1 hurricane packing winds of nearly 90 miles per hour (150 kilometers per hour).

The Miami-based National Hurricane Center (NHC) said the storm made landfall at Cape Hatteras on North Carolina's Outer Banks, the finger-like barrier islands off the coast.



Waves crash on Rodanthe Pier as Hurricane Dorian hits Cape Hatteras in North Carolina on September 6



A park floods in Rodanthe, North Carolina as Hurricane Dorian hits Cape Hatteras



A shop floods in Rodanthe Sound as Hurricane Dorian hits Cape Hatteras

Flooding was reported in the town of Ocracoke to the southwest of Cape Hatteras.

Thousands of coastal residents of US states from Florida to Virginia had been fearing the worst but the East Coast largely escaped unscathed.

Some flooding occurred in the historic city of Charleston, South Carolina, and tens of thousands of residents lost electricity but no major damage was reported.

At 5:00 am (0900 GMT) Saturday, the NHC said Dorian was about 145

miles southeast of Nantucket island and was producing tropical storm force winds in southeast Massachusetts as it heads towards Canada.

"Hurricane Dorian is accelerating towards Nova Scotia and will make landfall this evening near Halifax," the Canadian Hurricane Centre said Saturday.

It has issued hurricane warnings for parts of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

© 2019 AFP

Citation: Hurricane Dorian death toll climbs to 43, expected to rise 'significantly' (2019, September 7) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-09-hurricane-dorian-death-toll-climbs.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.