

# Devastated Venice braced for third major flood

November 17 2019, by Filippo Monteforte With Charles Onians In Rome

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Venice was braced Sunday for an unprecedented third major flooding in less than a week, with sea water due to swamp the already devastated

historic city where authorities have declared a state of emergency.

The city forecast "acqua alta", or [high water](#), of 160 centimetres (over five feet) for 1200 GMT, lower than Tuesday's 187 centimetres—the highest level in half a century—but still dangerous.

"Maximum attention for today's tide," tweeted mayor Luigi Brugnaro, who has estimated damage so far from the invading salt [water](#) at over one billion euros (dollars).

"The safety apparatus has been activated. Thanks to all those who are looking after Venice and intervene when needed."

The renewed threat from exceptionally intense high tides came after a brief respite on Saturday, with visitors on Sunday morning having to walk along improvised gangways on St Mark's Square as the waters rose yet again.

The top tourist site had been shut for several hours on Friday as strong storms and winds battered the region, leaving it submerged by sea surges.

Churches, shops and homes have also been inundated in the city, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Members of the Italian football team travelled to Venice on Saturday to show solidarity with the stricken city.



Residents whose houses have been hit are eligible for up to 5,000 euros in immediate government aid

"Venice will overcome this too. Like an athlete who suffers a serious injury and then gets up again," said delegation chief and former Azzurri international Gianluca Vialli.

The crisis has prompted the government to release 20 million euros (\$22 million) in funds to tackle the devastation.

Culture Minister Dario Franceschini has warned the task of repairing the city, where more than 50 churches have suffered damage, will be huge.

## Hotel reservations cancelled

Residents whose houses have been hit are eligible for up to 5,000 euros in immediate government aid, while restaurant and shop owners can receive up to 20,000 euros and apply for more later.

Most of the city's cash machines were no longer working because of the water, making life even more difficult for tourists and Venetians.

Older residents who remember the infamous "acqua alta" of 1966, when the water rose to a level of 1.94 metres, say they have not seen such frequent flooding before.



AC Milan goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma waded through flood water in St. Mark's Square



Hotels reported cancelled reservations, some as far ahead as December, following the widespread diffusion of images of Venice underwater

## Floods close Saint Mark's Square



Satellite map of central Venice locating St Mark's Square

Hotels reported cancelled reservations, some as far ahead as December, following the widespread diffusion of images of Venice underwater.

Tuesday's high waters submerged around 80 percent of the city, officials said.

Many, including Venice's mayor, have blamed the disaster on global warming and warned that the country prone to natural disasters must wake up to the risks posed by ever more volatile seasons.

Mayor Brugnaro on Saturday said he had invited the United Nations to set up a climate change research centre in Venice.

"We want to launch a great global appeal to scientists: come here, you will find open doors and a city ready to welcome you," Brugnaro said.

The Serenissima, as the floating city is called, is home to 50,000 residents but receives 36 million visitors each year.

A massive infrastructure project called MOSE has been under way since 2003 to protect the [city](#), but it has been plagued by cost overruns, corruption scandals and delays.

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