

## 21 dead as torrential rain hits Brazil

March 3 2020

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Children walk in the mud following heavy rains during the weekend, in Realengo neighborhood, in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on March 2, 2020

At least 21 people have been killed in torrential rain that hit the Brazilian states of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, triggering flash floods and destroying homes, authorities said Tuesday.

Another 32 people are missing in Sao Paulo, raising fears the toll could rise further.

Violent storms in recent days have dumped a month's worth of rain on some areas in a matter of hours, devastating the southern coast of Sao Paulo state and poor neighborhoods on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, the country's second most populous city.

At least 16 people were killed early Tuesday in Sao Paulo state after floods and landslides hit the coastal cities of Santos, Sao Vicente and Guarujá, authorities said.

One of the victims was a rescue worker who was killed by a landslide.

"I express my solidarity with those who are suffering from these heavy rains," Sao Paulo Governor Joao Doria wrote on Twitter.

Several highways were blocked by fallen trees and landslides, including some linking Santos, the biggest port in South America, to Sao Paulo, Brazil's largest city and economic capital.

In Rio de Janeiro, authorities said the death toll had risen to at least five after three days of violent rain that destroyed houses, swept away cars, and left some communities covered in water or mud.



View of cars stuck in the water and mud, after heavy rains during the weekend in Realengo neighbourhood, in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on March 2, 2020

The victims were electrocuted, buried in landslides or drowned, emergency officials said.

The disaster turned political in Rio when the city's Mayor Marcelo Crivella, a far-right evangelical Christian bishop, blamed residents for the flooding.

During a visit to an affected community, he complained to journalists that "people can't be throwing trash on hillsides, in storm drains and in the street."



In the middle of the press conference someone pelted Crivella in the face with a mud ball—which was captured in a video that went viral online.

"The water knocked my granddaughter and I and off the sofa. Dirty water came flooding into my kitchen, bathroom, bedrooms, everything. I lost everything," Ivone Cardoso, 65, a resident of Rio's Realengo neighborhood, told AFP as she swept mud and water out of her house.



View of damaged cars following heavy rains during the weekend, in Taquara neighbourhood, in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on March 2, 2020

Brazil is having an especially intense rainy season this summer.

In January, more than 50 people were killed in Minas Gerais state, which neighbors Sao Paulo, in several days of violent rain.

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