

Strong earthquake in southwest Pakistan kills at least 23

October 7 2021, by Kathy Gannon and Abdul Sattar



A family is seen inside their house following an earthquake in Harnai, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) east of Quetta, Pakistan, Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021. The powerful earthquake collapsed at least one coal mine and dozens of mud houses in southwest Pakistan early Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Arshad Butt

A powerful earthquake collapsed at least one coal mine and dozens of

mud houses in southwest Pakistan early Thursday, killing at least 23 people as the death toll continued to creep higher. At least another 200 people were injured, an official said.

The death tally was expected to rise even further as crews searched in the remote mountainous area, said Suhail Anwar Shaheen, the local deputy commissioner.

At least four people were killed when the coal mine in which they were working collapsed, said Shaheen, citing coal miners in the area. As many as 100 homes also collapsed, burying sleeping residents inside.

In one case, a mother died along with her two young sons when their home collapsed, said Wali Muhammad, a relative. Nearby, the body of an 8-year old girl was found beneath the rubble of her home.

The epicenter of the 5.9 magnitude quake was about 15 kilometers (9 miles) north-northeast of Harnai in Baluchistan province, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. The initial measurement of the quake's strength was 5.7 magnitude. It struck about 9 kilometers (5.5 miles) below the Earth's surface; shallower quakes tend to cause more damage.

The area, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) from Quetta, the provincial capital, is dotted with coal mines, which has Shaheen worried the death toll could rise. It struck in the early morning while scores of miners were already at work, he said.



Members of a family and volunteers take belongings following an earthquake in Harnai, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) east of Quetta, Pakistan, Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021. The powerful earthquake collapsed at least one coal mine and dozens of mud houses in southwest Pakistan early Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Arshad Butt

Pakistan's military was deployed to the earthquake area to airlift dozens of injured from mountain peaks. At least nine critically injured people were taken to the provincial hospital in Quetta. Search and rescue teams have arrived in the mountains, an army statement said.

Concern has grown about scores of coal miners who might be trapped. Homes lay in heaps of mud and straw. Residents of small mountain villages were seen wandering stunned among the rubble.

"Women, children, everyone, was running here and there," said resident Ghulam Khan. "We were scared and we didn't know what to do."

Ambulances soon arrived to transport the injured to the hospital in Harnai.

Doctors treated patients outside the hospital as 4.6 magnitude aftershocks continued into the morning hours. Children with bloodied bandages were in stretchers outside the hospital as ambulances brought more wounded.



A man clears the rubble from a damaged house following an earthquake in Harnai, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) east of Quetta, Pakistan, Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021. The powerful earthquake collapsed at least one coal mine and dozens of mud houses in southwest Pakistan early Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Arshad Butt



A girl looks at a damaged house following an earthquake in Harnai, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) east of Quetta, Pakistan, Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021. The powerful earthquake collapsed at least one coal mine and dozens of mud houses in southwest Pakistan early Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Arshad Butt



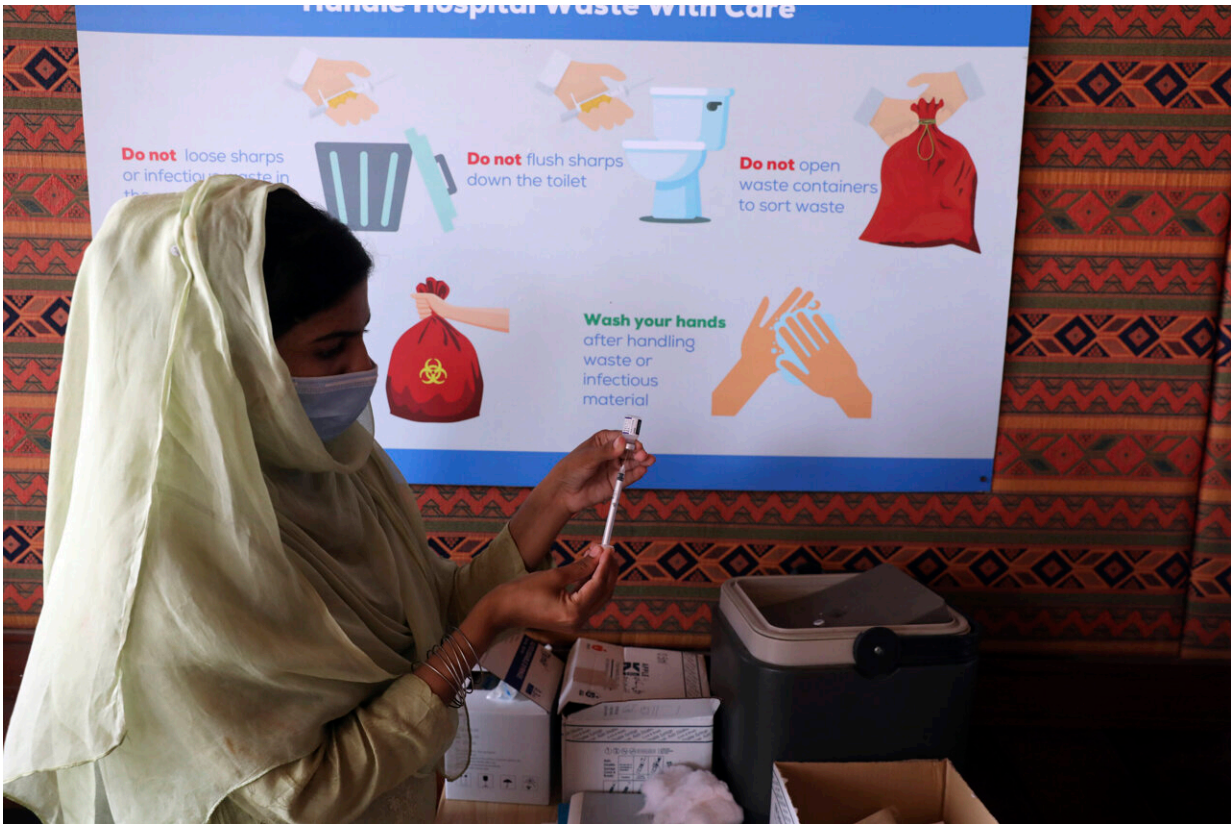
Members of a family take belongings following an earthquake in Harnai, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) east of Quetta, Pakistan, Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021. The powerful earthquake collapsed at least one coal mine and dozens of mud houses in southwest Pakistan early Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Arshad Butt



Injured women receive treatment at a local hospital following an earthquake in Harnai, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) east of Quetta, Pakistan, Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021. The powerful earthquake collapsed at least one coal mine and dozens of mud houses in southwest Pakistan early Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Arshad Butt



A woman receives the Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine from a health worker at a vaccination center in Islamabad, Pakistan, Monday, Oct. 4, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Rahmat Gul



A health worker prepares a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at a vaccination center in Islamabad, Pakistan, Monday, Oct. 4, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Rahmat Gul



A local resident looks his damaged house following a severe earthquake hit the area, in Harnai, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) from Quetta, Pakistan, Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021. A powerful earthquake collapsed at least one coal mine and dozens of mud houses in southwest Pakistan early Thursday. Credit: AP Photo



An injured men receives treatment in a tent set up at a local hospital following an earthquake in Harnai, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) east of Quetta, Pakistan, Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021. The powerful earthquake collapsed at least one coal mine and dozens of mud houses in southwest Pakistan early Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Arshad Butt



A health worker prepares the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at a vaccination center in Islamabad, Pakistan, Monday, Oct. 4, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Rahmat Gul



An injured boy receives treatment at a local hospital following a severe earthquake hit the area, in Harnai, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) from Quetta, Pakistan, Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021. A powerful earthquake collapsed at least one coal mine and dozens of mud houses in southwest Pakistan early Thursday.
Credit: AP Photo



A family gather outside their house following a severe earthquake hit the area, in Quetta, Pakistan, Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021. A powerful earthquake shook parts of southwestern Pakistan early Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Arshad Butt



Local residents gather outside their houses following a severe earthquake hit the area, in Quetta, Pakistan, Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021. A powerful earthquake shook parts of southwestern Pakistan early Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Arshad Butt



Local residents gather outside their houses following a severe earthquake is felt the area, in Quetta, Pakistan, Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021. A powerful earthquake collapsed at least one coal mine and dozens of mud houses in southwest Pakistan early Thursday. Credit: AP Photo/Arshad Butt



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"So far we have treated more than 200 casualties," said Manzoor Ahmed, medical superintendent of the Harnai district hospital. The small rural facility has been taxed to the limit, he said. As many as 15 bodies were brought there.

By early afternoon Thursday, funerals were being held in small villages dotting the mountainside.

Most of the population in the area live in sunbaked mud houses, many of which collapsed. Rescue efforts were underway, but Shaheen said it would take hours just to reach many of the hardest-hit areas.

Witnesses in the area said residents were wrapped in blankets against the cold, sitting on the side of the road waiting for the aftershocks to subside and for help to arrive.

The area is remote and already the autumn nighttime temperatures are chilly.

Pakistan's southwestern Baluchistan lies on a seismically active region, according to the provincial disaster management authority. The worst earthquake, in 1935, destroyed the provincial capital of Baluchistan and killed more than 35,000 people. Since then, scores of earthquakes have rattled the province, Pakistan's least populated, with just 12 million people.

Pakistan is a nation of 220 million people, 60 percent of whom live in the country's eastern Punjab province.

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Citation: Strong earthquake in southwest Pakistan kills at least 23 (2021, October 7) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-10-strong-earthquake-southwest-pakistan.html>

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