

Weakened Cyclone Freddy batters Madagascar, killing 4

February 22 2023, by Laetitia Bezain



A man walks by damaged building, in Mananjary district, Madagascar, Wednesday Feb. 22, 2023 after cyclone Freddy reached Madagascar. A slightly weakened Cyclone Freddy has made landfall in Madagascar, where schools, businesses and public transportation were shut down ahead of its arrival. Freddy was packing winds gusting to 180 kilometers per hour, or about 111 miles per hour, as it came ashore in a nation already hit in January by a tropical storm that killed at least 30 people. Credit: AP Photo/Solofo Rasolofomanana

A weakened Cyclone Freddy which pummeled Madagascar Tuesday night with heavy rains and strong destructive winds, killing four people, is continuing to wreak havoc in the southwest of the Indian Ocean nation.

Freddy battered the western city of Mananjary and left 16,660 people displaced and damaged nearly 5,000 homes in the country, according to the latest provisional assessment by Madagascar's risk and disaster management office. But somewhat weaker winds and better preparation staved off further damage.

The [cyclone](#) had waned slightly over land, with the state's meteorological office measuring average winds of 50 kilometers (31 miles) per hour and reduced gusts of 70 kilometers (43 miles) per hour.

The red alerts issued for Madagascar's east coast were lifted Wednesday morning and the southwestern regions of the island have now been placed on "blue alert," indicating a phase of post-cyclone damage assessment, rescue and recovery.

"Recently built utilities, schools, stadium and [health centers](#) have been affected including houses by the seafront whose roofs were blown off," said Martin Raveloarimanana, a church minister in Mananjary. "We try to repair what can be repaired and to clean up."

Raveloarimanana said that better preparation and early evacuations limited damage and risk to life. But he added that the region was still recovering from Cyclone Batsirai that pummeled the region in February last year and the new damage has only added to residents' despair.

Authorities say 64 tons of relief food rations have been made available to the region.



People work on a damaged building, in Mananjary district, Madagascar, Wednesday Feb. 22, 2023 after cyclone Freddy reached Madagascar. A slightly weakened Cyclone Freddy has made landfall in Madagascar, where schools, businesses and public transportation were shut down ahead of its arrival. Freddy was packing winds gusting to 180 kilometers per hour, or about 111 miles per hour, as it came ashore in a nation already hit in January by a tropical storm that killed at least 30 people. Credit: AP Photo/Solofo Rasolofomanana

"Bananas and breadfruit trees fell because of the winds," said Gabriel Ravelomanantsoa, a resident of Antsenavolo, about 50 kilometers (30 miles) southwest of Mananjary. "This is what people eat daily and everything is now destroyed."

But he added: "Homes were not affected that much as everyone had reinforced their house because we had information in advance."

Vatovavy region authorities, where Mananjary is located, reported that 12,000 people were displaced. The region's governor told The Associated Press that officials are "still in the process of taking stock of the damage."

Freddy, now classified as a "moderate tropical storm," is projected to leave the island Wednesday evening. It is set to travel across the Mozambican Channel where it will likely regain strength as it barrels towards mainland Africa, with Mozambique in its path, the United Nation's meteorological center in Reunion estimated. It is due to make landfall in the country on Friday morning.

The U.N. weather agency warned that the cyclone will lash Mozambique as a "strong tropical storm with potentially damaging winds."

A regional climate center based in Botswana also warned of "heavy to extreme rainfall" over some parts of Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Eswatini and South Africa.

Meanwhile, fears of a new cyclone forming near the Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean were raised after Reunion's cyclone center said it's monitoring a new tropical depression that "has significant potential to strengthen into a tropical storm by Thursday."

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