

Vast destruction, 39 dead in Mexico after Acapulco hurricane

October 29 2023, by Yussel GONZALEZ



Hurricane Otis battered Acapulco, Mexico, when it made landfall on October 25, 2023.

Acapulco was struggling Saturday to recover from the extraordinarily powerful Hurricane Otis, which claimed 39 lives and provoked

widespread power, water and telephone outages.

The picturesque Mexican tourist haunt, which once lured Hollywood stars like Elizabeth Taylor and Elvis Presley, had never experienced a Category 5 hurricane like Otis, which roared ashore Wednesday and made local landmarks built over decades look like they had been bombed.

A lack of phone signal has left survivors desperate to communicate with loved ones. Some 200,000 homes were damaged, with a number of restaurants and businesses in ruins.

"We must restart the reconstruction of Acapulco as soon as possible," President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said.

As aid finally began to arrive after the storm's devastating landfall—initial estimates report \$15 billion in damage—the government on Saturday upped the death toll from the previous report of 27.

Secretary of Security Rosa Icela Rodriguez said in a video on [social media](#) that at least 10 people remain missing, up from four previously reported.

A security force of some 17,000 has been deployed across the area after reports that supermarkets had been looted, authorities said.

Additionally, the Mexican army and navy have established an air bridge "to accelerate the distribution of humanitarian aid," a government statement said.



People desperately try to find a signal to use their mobile phones after Hurricane Otis slammed Acapulco, Mexico.

Thousands of liters of water and [food supplies](#) have been distributed in the resort city, home to 790,000 people.

The government said victims in need of specialized care were being flown to hospitals elsewhere in Mexico.

Survivors angry

Despite the [government efforts](#), many survivors around the area were still struggling to contact family and friends elsewhere in Mexico.

Andrea Fernandez, who is eight months pregnant, said she was distraught—unable to let her husband in another state know that she is fine.

"There is no (cellular) service. I haven't been able to communicate for three days," she said, jostling on a bridge with about 20 others keen to reach loved ones.

"I'm desperate," she said through tears.

Cell phones intermittently pick up signals in some parts of the port, but the situation is hit or miss.



Aid from the Mexican government has been slow to reach Acapulco in the aftermath of the storm.

One local woman could be overheard saying: "There is no way to get out of here! I'll talk to you again when I can. Everything here is gone. It's horrible."

Some survivors have told local media they were angry to hear tourists were taken to safe places to ride out the storm—in sharp contrast to the local population.

Francisco Perez, 50, was desperate to get word to his mother. He accused the authorities of a grossly inadequate response.

"(They put) some portable (phone) antennas at a couple of places, but... what are we supposed to do?" he asked angrily, as people's focus has begun turning to the lack of reliable water and food.

Some tourists approached journalists on the port's main avenue, Costera Miguel Aleman, asking them to pass on details of a sick person who needed to be evacuated from a damaged building.

Otis strengthened with dramatic speed, growing in just hours from a [tropical storm](#) to the most powerful category of the five-step Saffir-Simpson scale before hitting land early Wednesday.

The World Meteorological Organization described the hurricane as "one of the most rapidly intensifying [tropical cyclones](#) on record," exceeded in modern times only by another Pacific hurricane, Patricia, in 2015.

The speed with which Otis intensified took the government and weather forecasters by surprise, leaving little time to issue warnings and prepare residents for its arrival.

In 1997, Hurricane Paulina hit the Acapulco region as a Category 4 storm, killing more than 200 people.

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