

Rivers rise again as rain batters flood-hit south Brazil

May 13 2024, by Florian PLAUCHEUR



A local attempts to ride a bike in a flooded street at Santos Dumont neighborhood in Sao Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, on May 12, 2024.

River levels rose again Sunday as strong rains lashed waterlogged southern Brazil, where flooding has killed 145 people and forced

hundreds of thousands from their homes.

Residents of the state of Rio Grande do Sul were bracing for more misery from the new rains, after two weeks of downpours saw rivers burst their banks, swallowing up towns and parts of the regional capital.

More than two million people have been affected by the deluge, which experts link to climate change exacerbated by the El Niño weather phenomenon.

The levels of "practically all the major rivers in the state are tending to rise," state authorities said Sunday.

The probability of further flooding is "very high" in most regions of the state, according to the National Center for Monitoring and Warning for Natural Disasters (Cemaden).

A total of 132 people have been reported missing and 619,000 have been forced from their homes, civil defense officials said in an update Sunday evening.

The new threat comes as [rescue operations](#) are still underway, with some 130 people missing, while more than 619,000 were forced to leave their homes.

In the flooded historic center of state capital Porto Alegre, sofas and other belongings could be seen floating in muddy waters.

Further north in the town of Sao Leopoldo, a line of cars lay half submerged where they had parked along the road. Elsewhere, people rowed boats down flooded streets.



Further north in the town of Sao Leopoldo, cars lie half submerged where they had parked along the road, as people rowed boats down flooded streets.

Electrician Claudio da Silva, 36, went to check on the situation in his neighborhood, describing his house as "broken".

"My brother-in-law's house next door had water halfway up the second floor. Now it's gone down a bit and you can get to the second floor, but it's a mess. There are lots of dead animals. It's very, very, sad."

Metallurgist Antonio Vanzan, 50, described the situation as "critical."

"If the rain doesn't stop falling, what is going to happen? The level of the river may increase and the water will return inside the neighborhoods."

'Worsening situation'

The Guaiba, an estuary bordering state capital Porto Alegre, had on Saturday reached its lowest level since May 3.

However, fresh rains have once again swollen the body of water, and levels are expected to again rise above five meters.

Its banks overflow at three meters.

The Guaiba had reached historic levels of 5.3 meters on May 5 and 6.



Firefighters rescue locals in a boat, at Santos Dumont neighborhood in Sao Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, on May 12, 2024.

Other already overflowing rivers in the region also saw water levels continue to rise.

The flooding of the Taquari River has notably put the small town of Mucum on alert, where more than 40 people were killed by a devastating cyclone last September.

The town of Pelotas, south of Porto Alegre, "is facing a worsening situation" which increases the probability of flooding, warned its mayor Paula Mascarenhas on Instagram, calling for the evacuation of at-risk areas.

Parts of Porto Alegre, which is home to 1.4 million people, also remain underwater.

According to the National Institute of Meteorology, heavy rain will continue in the coming hours, with more than 100 mm per day in some areas.

In the northeast of the state, there is a "high risk of major flooding and river overflows, as well as significant landslides".

In a video published on X for Mother's Day, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva expressed solidarity with those affected, more than 80,000 of whom are currently housed in shelters.

"You are not alone," he said.

The [federal government](#) this week promised some \$10 billion for reconstruction in Rio Grande do Sul.

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Citation: Rivers rise again as rain batters flood-hit south Brazil (2024, May 13) retrieved 25 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-05-rivers-batters-south-brazil.html>

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