

Pakistan Issues Flood Alert as Death Toll Rises

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BUNER, Pakistan, Authorities in Pakistan issued a flood alert Wednesday for several southern districts, warning of heavy rainfall, as rescue teams continued searching for missing persons in the country's northwest. Severe flooding has already killed hundreds nationwide over the past week.

The National Emergencies Operation Centre announced that up to 100 millimeters (around four inches) of rain is expected in the next 24 hours. Officials cautioned that the downpour could submerge highways, disrupt transport, and damage power and telecommunications in Karachi, Hyderabad, Thatta, Badin, Mirpurkhas, and Sukkur in the southern province of Sindh.

The disaster management agency confirmed that at least 41 people were killed in rain-related incidents across the country in the past 24 hours. Most of the fatalities occurred in the northern Gilgit-Baltistan region and in Karachi, where torrential downpours flooded streets, halted traffic, and forced schools to remain closed.

Since June 26, above-normal monsoon rains have claimed at least 746 lives nationwide. Officials fear the toll could rise further as recovery efforts continue in the northwest.

In the northwestern district of Buner, nearly 150 people remain missing after floodwaters carrying massive boulders swept through villages. Entire homes were flattened as mud and debris buried entire neighborhoods.

Mohammad Suhail, a spokesman for emergency services, said the death toll in Buner has risen to 290 after more bodies were pulled from the rubble. Rescue workers, aided by army sniffer dogs, have distributed tents, blankets, cooking supplies, food, and clean drinking water to survivors. Power lines have been partially restored, and most damaged roads are now accessible.

Residents have accused authorities of failing to issue early warnings, leaving families with little time to escape. Survivors described the flooding as sudden and overwhelming.

Zarin Gul, 45, recalled seeing heavy rain clouds burst over the mountains while working in his fields on August 15. He said he tried to warn relatives, but they could not escape in time. "Huge boulders, some the size of rooms, tumbled like straws in the torrent, crushing houses that had never seen flooding before," Gul told local media.

In the nearby village of Malik Pura, shopkeeper Raza Khan, 50, described how the floodwaters swept through without warning. "Everything was so sudden that we didn't even realize when everything was being swept away," he said, mourning the loss of relatives.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir visited the Swat Valley and Buner on Wednesday. Sharif pledged financial compensation for survivors and

promised repairs to damaged infrastructure. He also urged citizens to avoid building homes near riverbanks.

The government continues to face pressure over disaster preparedness and its ability to protect vulnerable communities during the monsoon season. Many affected families argue that a stronger early warning system could have prevented some of the devastation.

As the flood alert remains in effect for Sindh province, rescue operations in the northwest are focused on locating the missing and providing shelter for those who lost their homes. With hundreds already dead and thousands displaced, Pakistan faces yet another test of its emergency response capacity during one of the most dangerous monsoon seasons in recent years.