

UN system mobilizing to support Indonesia, following earthquake and tsunami disaster

Rescue workers are still trying to reach areas of Sulawesi in Indonesia affected by an earthquake and tsunami, UN humanitarian said on Monday, noting that more than 840 people have died and more than 600 have been severely injured in the disaster.

The update from the UN [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#) follows the 7.4 magnitude tremor which struck Central Sulawesi at 5.02pm local time last Friday.

The quake subsequently caused a tsunami that hit coastal areas in Palu City and Donggala which has left more than 48,000 people sheltering in some 200 displacement sites.

On Twitter, UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#), said on Monday that he had been “following the unfolding tragedy.”

The Pacific’s Ring of Fire is the most active seismic zone on the planet and requires special attention when it comes to disaster risk management – *Mami Mizutori, Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction*

“Our hearts go out to all affected by the earthquake and tsunami. My deepest condolences to all who have lost family and friends,” he said, adding that the UN system was “mobilizing to support government-led rescue and relief efforts as needed.”

Before the Sulawesi disaster, on 7 August the Indonesian island of Lombok was rocked by a magnitude 7 earthquake, which left hundreds dead.

That quake left about 80 per cent of buildings either damaged or totally destroyed in the north of the island, which is home to around 200,000 people.

In addition to national search and rescue teams now in Sulawesi, the relief effort includes the armed forces, police and government officials, the OCHA update said.

The UN agency added that the Government of Indonesia “welcomed specific offers” of international assistance that are in line with current needs, which according to the national disaster management agency (BNPB), include food, shelter materials, fuel and generators, clean water and medical assistance.



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People cross a damaged road in Balaroa, West Palu, Central Sulawesi, after the earthquake and tsunami that struck Sulawesi on 28 September 2018.

“The humanitarian community working in Indonesia is deeply saddened by the loss of life and the injuries following the earthquake and tsunami in Sulawesi,” the OCHA statement said. “Humanitarian agencies are in close communication with the Government to more fully understand the situation in the affected areas and stand ready to support, however is required.”

Delivery of aid is ongoing but landslides and damage to essential infrastructure is hampering access.

This includes the damage to the runway at Palu airport, which is slowing the movement of equipment and personnel.

Messages of support from the UN Secretary-General were echoed by his Special Representative for [Disaster Risk Reduction](#), [Mami Mizutori](#): “The earthquake and tsunami are a reminder that the Pacific’s Ring of Fire is the most active seismic zone on the planet and requires special attention when it comes to disaster risk management,” she said. “About 90 per cent of the world’s earthquakes occur there and the risk of an associated tsunami is extremely high which is why early warnings are so important along with public awareness raising and evacuation drills.”

According to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, [UNISDR](#), Indonesia has suffered more deaths from tsunamis than any other country.

This is the sixth fatal tsunami to strike the country since the huge 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami claimed approximately 226,000 lives across 12 countries, the vast majority in Indonesia.

Earthquakes and tsunamis are responsible for more deaths than extreme weather events, having claimed an estimated 747,234 lives over the last 20 years,

according to a new UNISDR report.

It will be released next week to coincide with International Day for Disaster Reduction on 13 October.