Beat: News

300 feared dead after tropical cyclone ravages Somalia;s Puntland

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USPA News - At least 300 people are believed to have died after a tropical cyclone hit the semi-autonomous Somali state of Puntland earlier this week, local authorities said on Wednesday, adding that entire villages were destroyed and hundreds of people remain unaccounted for. Tropical Cyclone 03A made landfall north of the infamous pirate hotspot of Eyl on early Monday morning when it had maximum sustained winds near 64.8 kilometers (40.2 miles) per hour, making it a minimal tropical storm.

It also brought rainfall at up to 1.18 inches (30 millimeters) per hour as it moved inland before dissipating over eastern Ethiopia on Tuesday. The Puntland government declared a Natural Disaster Emergency by late Monday as the scale of the disaster became apparent. Interior minister Abdullahi Ahmed said 140 people had been confirmed killed by Wednesday, but the storm`s death toll is expected to reach at least 300 as many people remain missing. "Heavy torrential rains, high wind speeds and flooding has created a state of emergency, with 300 persons feared dead, hundreds others unaccounted for, and countless livestock lost," the government said in a statement after an emergency meeting on Wednesday. It said Eyl, Beyla, Dangorayo, Hafun, Alula, Rako Raho, and Jariban are among the worst affected districts. "Many fishermen are missing and feared dead. The storm has destroyed entire villages, homes, buildings, and boats," the statement added. It said the main road between the Puntland capital of Garowe and the city of Bossaso remained cut off near Sunijif, causing logistical problems for relief efforts and delaying an inter-agency assessment by the United Nations (UN) and its partners. Local authorities on Wednesday made available approximately 60 tonnes (132,277 pounds) of emergency supplies, including food, blankets, tents, and medicines, to be distributed as part of the relief efforts. Makeshift shelter centers were in the process of being established in main villages to take care of displaced persons. "Puntland security forces including the PMPF are using military transport trucks to deliver relief supplies to affected coastal districts in this vast territory," the government said in its statement. "The loaded and ready trucks cannot deliver supplies by road, as the heavy rains and flooding has rendered dirt roads to the coastal areas impassible." The UN`s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said it initially estimates approximately 30,000 people are in need of food, water, shelter, and medical supplies across an affected area of more than 250 square kilometers (96.5 square miles). It said UN agencies were considering to airdrop supplies in coastal areas if access to those areas does not improve in the coming days. Hours after the storm devastated the region, the Puntland government already issued an international appeal to humanitarian aid organizations to organize emergency supply deliveries via airdrops. In Wednesday`s statement, the government reiterated its appeal to the international community to donate relief supplies.

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