



Areas affected by Storm Daniel (IOM)

Highlights

- On Sunday, 10 September 2023 storm Daniel made landfall in Libya causing severe weather conditions, including strong winds and sudden heavy rainfall affecting several northeastern areas of Libya (see map). According to IOM DTM, as of 12 September, Current estimates are at over 2,000 deaths and at least 5,000 people missing.
- The lack of accurate and reliable data across affected regions presents a significant challenge; access challenges and conflicting reports from multiple sources further add to the difficulties in coordinating and effectively deploying humanitarian assistance.
- Significant displacement is being observed across affected regions, most notably in Derna, where available data indicates that at least 30,000 individuals have been displaced.* Search and rescue operations are ongoing, especially in Derna, where accessibility remains a critical challenge due to damaged infrastructure.
- Critical infrastructure, including healthcare, electricity, buildings, roads and telecommunication, has been significantly damaged. Progress is being made toward restoring electricity and communications to the affected areas.
- The authorities in the West and the East formed crisis response committees respectively. The Government of National Unity dispatched two batches of emergency supplies to the East, including 14 tons of medical supply.
- According to the government, urgent humanitarian needs include psychosocial support, food, shelter, NFIs (Non-Food Items), healthcare and logistical support, as well as data assessment and specialized technical support.
- Many international partners indicated their interest to provide emergency response assistance. The UN in Libya is preparing a flash appeal to garner and coordinate international support in response to Libyans' request for humanitarian assistance.

(*) According to the IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix, Libyan Red Crescent and the Ministry of Health.

Situation overview

Eastern Libya is grappling with an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the wake of Storm Daniel. The storm has inflicted significant casualties and destruction throughout several cities and towns in the northeastern and in the Al-Jabal Al-Akhdar (Green Mountain) region. Areas that were particularly hard-hit include Derna, Albayda, Soussa, Al-Marj, Shahat, Taknis, Battah, Tolmeita, Bersis, Tokra, and Al-Abyar, among others. The crisis is further complicated by the lack of accurate and reliable data across the affected regions due to access challenges. The presence of conflicting reports exacerbates the difficulty in coordinating and effectively deploying humanitarian aid.

According to the International Organization for Migration's Displacement Tracking Matrix, as of 12 September, there are over 2,000 estimated deaths and at least 5,000 people missing. The situation in Derna is severe particularly, where the estimated count of displaced individuals in Derna exceeds 30,000 from a total population of more than 200,000. On 11 September, over 1,000 bodies in Derna and over 100 bodies in Albayda - victims of flooding - were buried in mass graves.

Critical infrastructural, particularly roads and bridges, suffered extensive damage due to Storm Daniel, severely hampering access and relief operations in Eastern Libya. In Derna, of the city's seven entrances, only two from the south are currently navigable and all three inner-city bridges were destroyed, making the city virtually inaccessible, while multiple dams have also collapsed. The only remaining southern road to Derna, the Dhahr al-Hamar Road has sustained damage with a possibility of collapse and cut off of access to Derna. In Soussa and Shahat, major roads linking the cities have either been flooded or completely swept away.

These access constraints pose significant challenges on humanitarian aid delivery, search and rescue operations, and the overall crisis response. The General Electricity Company has partially restored electricity to Derna, and internet services were restored, although the overall situation remains precarious.

Search and rescue operations are actively underway, led by government agencies and the Libyan National Army (LNA), the Libyan Red Crescent along with LibAid and local volunteers. Authorities have issued urgent appeals for specialized teams to assist those trapped under rubble and in floodwater, particularly in hard-to-reach areas. Casualties among first responders were reported; the Libyan Red Crescent Society reported the loss of three volunteers in Derna who were engaged in rescue operations. Additionally, LNA spokesperson disclosed that contact has been lost with five soldiers along with their vehicles during a rescue operation in the city of AlBayda.

A wave of nationwide support has swept across Libya in response to the crisis. The authorities in the West and the East formed crisis response committees respectively. Aid has been dispatched from various points across the country to assist those affected. Authorities in the West dispatched several shipments of supplies, including 14 tons of medical aid, along with personnel to augment local response capabilities. The Emergency and Support Service also dispatched six medical convoys to the Eastern region, which also included relief personnel. A team of 70 doctors arrived in Benghazi on Tuesday. Field hospitals were established in Derna and Al-Marj. Temporary shelters were also established to provide temporary housing for the displaced communities. In the city of Benghazi, 18 schools have been converted into temporary shelters and are currently hosting at least 522 displaced families.

The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Libya has tasked an emergency response team to support local authorities and partners in the region and assist in the humanitarian response. In addition, the Humanitarian Coordinator activated the Rapid Response Mechanism. Surge capacity is currently deployed, including through the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination mechanism, to support response and relief operations. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator announced the allocation of USD 10 million from the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to support people affected by the floods.

Humanitarian Needs and Response

In the aftermath of Storm Daniel's catastrophic impact on Eastern Libya, a multidimensional humanitarian crisis has unfolded, necessitating immediate and coordinated action. The foremost priority is search and rescue operations, but given its time sensitivity, the authorities requested the international community to focus on humanitarian assistance and early recovery efforts going forward.

Immediate requirements span several critical sectors, starting with the provision of temporary shelter to people who had their homes destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. Displaced individuals are in urgent need of tents, blankets, and basic household items. Vulnerable groups including women, children, and elderly people are at greater risk and require safe and adequate shelter solutions.

Healthcare infrastructure has also taken a significant hit, prompting an immediate need for emergency medical assistance. Urgent needs include provision of body bags for burials. Access to clean water, proper sanitation facilities, and hygiene promotion are non-negotiable to stave off the spread of waterborne diseases. Medical supplies, including medications and essential equipment, along with medical personnel, are needed to treat the injured and ill. Long-range communication equipment is urgently required for effective rescue operations, given that most telecommunication networks are down.

Psychosocial support cannot be overlooked in this calamity. Survivors are grappling with immense emotional trauma, experiencing a range of emotions from grief and shock to anxiety. Specialized services are needed to help them cope with the psychological aftermath of the disaster.

Food security is another pressing concern. The storm has severely disrupted local food supply chains, making immediate food assistance a priority. The provision of ready-to-eat meals, dry rations, and nutritional supplements for infants and young children is essential to prevent malnutrition. Concurrently, non-food items like hygiene kits, cooking utensils, and flashlights are needed to restore a semblance of normalcy to the lives of those affected.

Finally, the logistical challenges posed by the destruction of critical infrastructure, particularly roads and bridges, can't be underestimated, hence the government requested to provide heavy equipment to clear up debris. The ability to deliver humanitarian aid is being seriously hampered by access constraints, making alternative methods for aid delivery and search and rescue operations a matter of urgency.

In addition to provision of emergency supplies, the authorities highlighted the importance of having data assessment tools, as well as specialized technical advice and support from the international community.

Given the scale and complexity of the needs, it's imperative that a well-coordinated, multi-agency approach be deployed to offer timely and effective relief to the affected communities. With search and rescue operations still ongoing and the humanitarian situation fluid, the urgency of addressing these immediate and complex needs cannot be overstated.