

16 killed, hundreds stranded on Indonesian mountain after earthquake

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Villagers clear debris caused by an earthquake at Sajang village, Sembalun, East Lombok, Indonesia, Monday, July 30, 2018.

Sembalun: At least 16 people were killed and hundreds other were stranded in the Indonesian tourist island Lombok after an earthquake with 6.4 intensity triggered landslides which cut off escape routes

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By late afternoon, more than 250 people had reached a relief post in Sembalun village and a team of rescuers has reached hundreds more near the mountain's crater lake, a local military official, Arifianto, told Indonesian TV, adding that even as the tourists were shaken from the experience they were mostly unharmed.

He said some suffered light injuries and were traumatised, but most were in good condition.

The magnitude 6.4 earthquake early Sunday killed 16 people, including an Indonesian student who was among the Mount Rinjani climbers. The shallow quake set off landslides on the mountain that carpeted in boulders and rocks, blocking usual paths out.

The National Disaster Mitigation Agency had said more than 680 people were stranded on Rinjani, an active volcano, based on figures from its entry gates where visitors are registered. Most are foreign from 26 countries, including more than 330 from Thailand.

Arifianto, who uses one name, said rescuers will escort trekkers down the mountain. Indonesian's elite special forces have also been deployed to speed up the evacuation.

The shallow quake damaged more than 1,400 houses and was felt on neighboring Bali island, where no damage or casualties were reported.

Indonesia's meteorology and geophysics agency has recorded more than 270 aftershocks.

Earthquake survivors receive medical treatment at a temporary shelter in Sembalun, East Lombok, Indonesia, Monday, July 30, 2018.

Anci, a villager from near the quake epicenter, said he and his family spent the night in a makeshift tent, worried that aftershocks could cause more buildings to collapse.

“We slept here at the roadside because our house collapsed in the quake,” he said. “There have been many aftershocks, although they are not strong so far. But we heard that quakes as strong as the one early in the morning may occur and that makes my family and I very nervous and scared.”

President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo said the government would give each family whose home was destroyed 50 million rupiah (\$3,500) to rebuild.

Like Bali, Lombok is known for pristine beaches and mountains. Hotels and other buildings in both locations are not allowed to exceed the height of coconut trees.

Indonesia is prone to earthquakes due to its location on the “Ring of Fire,” an arc of volcanoes and fault lines encircling the Pacific Ocean. In December 2004, a massive magnitude 9.1 earthquake off Sumatra triggered a tsunami that killed 230,000 people in a dozen countries.

- (With inputs from AP)