

Indonesia tsunami: Authorities confirm 222 deaths, over 800 injured

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A man reacts after identifying his relative among the bodies of tsunami victims in Carita, Indonesia.

Carita Beach: The death toll from the tsunami believed to be triggered by a volcanic eruption in Indonesia on Saturday has reached at 222 people, while over 800 have been reported injured. The tsunami hit at least nine beach hotels, hundreds of houses and a group of people attending a beach concert during the long holiday weekend.

Around 28 people have been reported missing after the tsunami hit around the Sunda Strait on Saturday night, the Disaster Management Agency said. The toll could continue to rise because some areas had not yet been reached.

Scientists, including those from Indonesia's Meteorology and Geophysics agency, said Sunday that the tsunami could have been caused by undersea landslides or those occurring above sea level on the Anak Krakatau volcano's steep outside slope following the eruption. The volcano's name translates to "Child of Krakatoa," a volcanic island formed over years after one of the largest eruptions in recorded history occurred at the Krakatoa volcano more than a century ago. The scientists also cited tidal waves caused by the full moon.

Devastation caused by latest tsunami in Indonesia

The death toll includes the scores of people attending a concert by Indonesian pop band named "Seventeen" at a popular beach as well as hordes of tourists visiting the island nation during the long weekend before Christmas,

The Anak Krakatau volcano lies in the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra islands, linking the Indian Ocean and Java Sea. It erupted about 24 minutes before the tsunami, the geophysics agency said.

At least nine hotels have been destroyed in the disaster

The worst-affected area was the Pandeglang region of Java's Banten province, which encompasses Ujung Kulon National Park and popular beaches, the disaster agency said.

Agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho said 222 deaths had been confirmed and at least 843 people were injured. Rescue workers were still trying to access other affected areas.

The toll by the 'volcano' tsunami is likely to rise, say authorities

Indonesian President Joko Widodo expressed his sympathy and ordered government agencies to respond quickly to the disaster.

“My deep condolences to the victims in Banten and Lampung provinces,” he said. “Hopefully, those who are left have patience.”

The 305-meter (1,000-foot) -high Anak Krakatau volcano, located about 200 kilometers (124 miles) southwest of Jakarta, Indonesia’s capital, has been erupting since June. In July, authorities widened its no-go areas to 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) from the crater.

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However, Anak Krakatau remains much smaller than Krakatoa when it blew in 1883, killing more than 30,000 people. Krakatoa launched far-reaching tsunamis and created so much ash, day was turned to night in the area and a global temperature drop was recorded. The violent explosions sank most of the island into the volcanic crater under the sea, and the area remained calm until the 1920s, when Anak Krakatau began to rise from the site. It continues to grow each year and erupts periodically.

Gegar Prasetya, co-founder of the Tsunami Research Center Indonesia, said Saturday’s tsunami was likely caused by a flank collapse “when a big section of a volcano’s slope gives way. He said it’s possible for an eruption to trigger a landslide above ground or beneath the ocean, both capable of producing waves.

Indonesia prone to earthquakes, tsunamis

Indonesia, a vast archipelago of more than 17,000 islands and home to 260 million people, lies along the “Ring of Fire,” an arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin.

In September, more than 2,500 people were killed by a quake and tsunami that hit the city of Palu on the island of Sulawesi, which is just east of Borneo.

Saturday’s tsunami rekindled memories for some of the massive magnitude 9.1 earthquake that hit on December 26, 2004. It spawned a giant tsunami off Sumatra island in western Indonesia, killing more than 230,000 people in a dozen countries “the majority in Indonesia.

Roads and infrastructure are poor in many areas of disaster-prone Indonesia, making access difficult in the best of conditions.

- (With inputs from AP)