

40 people dead in Kenya and Somalia as heavy rains and flash floods displace thousands

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Online Desk: Heavy rains and flash flooding have killed at least 40 people and displaced tens of thousands in Kenya and Somalia, aid agencies reported Monday.

In Somalia, the government declared an emergency after the extreme weather killed at least 25 people and destroyed homes, roads and bridges. Emergency and rescue workers were trying to reach an estimated 2,400 residents trapped by floodwaters in the Luuq district of southern Somalia's Jubaland state.

The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs warned of a high risk of flooding along the Juba and Shabelle rivers and called for the evacuation of people living along the entire stretch of the Juba.

"The Somalia Disaster Management Agency is swiftly responding to the crisis, with plans to dispatch a flight to Dollow and transport two boats from Kismayo to Luuq and one to Baardhere to assist with evacuations," Hassan Isse, the agency's managing director, told The Associated Press.

"The magnitude of the current floods is likely to deteriorate in the next few days due to the emergence of more water from upstream in the Ethiopian Highlands," Isse said.

The heavy rains follow four consecutive years of drought that pushed Somalia to the brink of famine.

In neighboring Kenya, the Kenya Red Cross said the death toll had risen to 15 since the heavy rains began Friday, with the port city of Mombasa and the northeastern counties of Mandera and Wajir the worst affected.

As of Sunday, flash floods had destroyed 241 acres of farmland and killed 1,067 livestock, the Kenya Red Cross reported.

Weather forecasters in Kenya started warning in September that rains would be heavier than usual during the short rainy season between October and December.

President William Ruto contradicted the forecast, telling Kenyans that the experts had revised their advice and that "there would be no devastating El Nino flooding."

Heavy rains and flooding have also been reported in the Somali region of Ethiopia where thousands have been forced to flee their homes after houses and farmlands were destroyed by flood waters.