

Flash floods in Nairobi kill 23, disrupt flights

BY REUTERS & NATION AFRICA

NAIROBI. Aid workers pulled bodies from floodwaters across Nairobi at the weekend after flash floods that began overnight killed at least 23 people, swept away dozens of cars and disrupted flights at East Africa's biggest airport, authorities said.

Police say 29 people were rescued following an overnight search and rescue operation. The worst-affected areas included Mukuru, Kibra, Mathare, Pipeline, Githurai, South B and C, Roysambu and parts of Westlands.

Kenyan President William Ruto said he had deployed a team of emergency responders, including soldiers, to coordinate rescue efforts, while offering condolences to the affected communities.

"I have also ordered that relief food from our national strategic reserves be immediately released and distributed to families affected by the floods," he said in a statement on social media.

In the industrial neighbourhood of Grogan, security guard John Lomayan, 34, looked at the body of an elderly man he recognised - a roadside egg seller - trapped beneath a car that had been washed away when the Nairobi River burst its banks.

"I saw him being carried by the water from up there," he said, gesturing up the road. "We didn't know where he had gone. It is only now that we see him under the car".

Bus driver John Mwai recounted how he turned his bus into a rescue vehicle to move people to higher ground.

Kenya Airways said the rains had disrupted flights to Nairobi and forced some to divert to the coastal city of Mombasa.

Global warming

Scientists say global warming is worsening floods and droughts across East Africa by concentrating rainfall into shorter, more intense bursts. A 2024 World Weather Attribution study found climate change had made devastating rains in the region twice as likely as before.

A Reuters reporter saw three bodies pulled from underneath cars. Some of the dead had been electrocuted by damaged power lines. National provider Kenya Power separately said the waters had damaged equipment at a substation, listing 14 neighbourhoods that had been affected. "So many cars, so much stuff, I don't know. Everything was just washed away," resident Cedric Mwanza said, referring to the Nairobi River.