

3,000 could be buried after Indonesia quake, say officials

Medical teams and emergency supplies arrive on Sumatra as government pleads for international aid

Second Sumatra earthquake leaves hundreds dead

Warning: This video contains some graphic images[Link to this video](#)

As many as 3,000 people could be buried under the rubble of thousands of buildings in Sumatra, Indonesian officials said today, as the search and rescue operation intensified in the wake of this week's earthquake.

Foreign aid teams flew in tents, water, medicine, food and hundreds of emergency workers after the authorities admitted they were struggling to cope with the aftermath of the 7.6-magnitude quake, which has left hundreds dead.

One woman was rescued from the ruins of a school in Padang, the city close to the epicentre, more than 40 hours after it was destroyed in the earthquake.

There were reports of three schoolgirls buried under rubble ? but still alive ? in another school in the city. The Times reported that faint voices of the three could be heard from under the wreckage of the school, but that rescuers feared that any effort to remove the debris could prompt a catastrophic cave-in.

Official figures put the number of people killed at 715, but one UN estimate said the figure was 1,100. Officials said they expected the death toll to increase as the scale of the devastation became clearer.

Rustam Pakaya, the crisis centre chief at the health ministry, said more than 2,000 people had been injured and thousands were missing.

Priyadi Kardono, a spokesman for the disaster management agency, said more than 20,000 buildings and houses had been seriously damaged or destroyed. A Guardian reporter who reached the town of Pariaman further up the coast found that almost every building had been damaged and that people were sitting under makeshift tents, waiting for further help.

In Padang, the 21-year-old student rescued from the STBA Prayoga language school was pulled out after rescuers dug a tunnel through debris. Onlookers applauded as the woman, called Sari, was carried to an ambulance on a stretcher. Her eyes were closed, but one rescuer said she was able to talk. Her uncle said he was overjoyed that she had been saved. "She said, 'I'm hungry, thirsty,' and they gave her some milk," he added.

Other families were anxiously waiting for news. Tommy Erwinsyah, 29, said his wife, Suci, had been lying next to Sari.

"Her leg is trapped under the concrete floor that fell on her. They can't lift or break it so now they will try to use an air compressor to lift it," he said. "Last night, I spoke to her. Her voice is very clear. I hope she can get out today. I went into the tunnel and I could hear her voice. I could see her hand."

The government admitted it was struggling to cope, and the health minister, Siti Fadilah Supari, appealed for foreign aid. "We need help from foreign countries for evacuation efforts," she said in remarks carried by AFP and the BBC. "We need them to provide skilled rescuers with equipment. Our main problem is that there are a lot of victims still trapped in the rubble. We are struggling to pull them out."

South Korea, Switzerland and Singapore are among the countries to have sent civil emergency teams. British search and rescue experts are also on their way to the disaster scene.

The US president, [Barack Obama](#), who spent part of his childhood in [Indonesia](#), pledged to support the recovery effort, and the European commission said it would provide €3m (£2.7m) to meet initial humanitarian needs.

Witnesses said that almost one-third of buildings in the centre of Padang had been destroyed. "So many buildings are collapsed," said Enda Balina, of World Vision, one of the first international aid organisations to reach the city.

"The city's infrastructure has collapsed. We went around the city this morning. In the downtown area, three out of every five buildings has been affected, some heavily damaged. The government is trying to get people out of the rubble."

It has emerged that Fauzi Bahar, the mayor of Padang, last year asked for extra money to prepare for evacuating the town in the event of an

earthquake. The request was turned down by the government.

Unconfirmed reports from aid workers suggested that Pariaman, a town of 80,000 people near Padang, may have been largely destroyed by the quake.

Early reports from Pariaman described a 1km fracture in the town's main road and the dome of the town's largest mosque lying on the ground.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/oct/02/indonesia-earthquake-woman-rescued>