

Catastrophic floods in Central Europe claim over 20 lives

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Heavy continuous rainfall has led to catastrophic flooding in large parts of Central Europe. Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania are most severely affected by the floods. Over 20 people have died so far across the four countries and around 250,000 households were temporarily without electricity. Thousands have already been evacuated, although peak river levels are not expected until midweek.

Areas in the Czech Republic were particularly severely affected. In the area of the big city of Ostrava, near the Polish border, several dikes broke. Several rivers, including the Oder, meet in the city, which has a population of around 285,000.

Entire residential areas had to be evacuated with rubber dinghies. In total, more than 10,000 people had to be evacuated in the country, official bodies told Czech TV. Rail traffic to and from Prague and in the direction of Poland was stopped entirely. A power plant had to be shut down. In addition to the electricity and mobile phone services, the drinking water supply also temporarily collapsed.

The city of Litovel, about 200 kilometers east of Prague, was almost completely flooded. All facilities were closed and public life came to a complete standstill. By Monday, one person drowned in the floods, and at least seven others are still missing.

The government in Warsaw declared a state of disaster. More rain has fallen in several places in Poland than in the so-called millennium flood in 1997.

So far, five people have died in Poland and several more are considered missing. The town of Klotzko was flooded over the weekend after a dam broke. In parts of the flooded areas, the power supply has been cut, and train traffic came to a complete standstill throughout most of the country. In the Opole region, a hospital had

to be completely evacuated.

Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk announced emergency aid of 1 billion zlotys (€230 million). This is not even the proverbial drop in the bucket given the immense damage that is far from quantifiable. Poland spends over 4 percent of its GDP on military spending. Last year alone, €32 billion were spent on military purposes.

Austria has also been struggling with the most severe floods in decades. Lower Austria has been hit hardest, but also Styria, Upper Austria and northern Burgenland are affected.

Around 30,000 emergency personnel were deployed in Lower Austria alone. The state was declared a disaster zone. Two people in the districts of St. Pölten-Land and Korneuburg drowned after their houses were surrounded by floodwater. A firefighter was killed in a basement while trying to pump out water. As of Tuesday evening, 26 villages were cut off from the outside world.

On Monday evening, hundreds of residents of villages near the capital Vienna had to be evacuated after dams had broken. In Vienna itself, flooding caused the subway and the power grid to fail. Only thanks to decreasing rainfall have worse consequences for the city on the Danube been avoided so far.

Seven deaths have been officially reported from Romania. Numerous people are still missing. Regions in the Carpathians in the east of the country were particularly affected. Until Sunday, the highest flood warning level was in force. Several remote villages were completely cut off. People had to be rescued from their rooftops.

Hungary has declared the highest flood warning level for the capital Budapest. The riverside roads along the Danube were closed to traffic. Experts expect the

highest water levels in the second half of the week. Prime Minister Victor Orbán cancelled scheduled appointments abroad due to the tense situation. Interior Minister Sándor Pintér said that 12,000 soldiers were ready for deployment.

In the Slovak capital Bratislava, about 70 kilometers from Vienna, emergency services are also on high alert, as the city also expects a record level of the Danube.

In several towns and cities in Eastern Germany, concern is growing about increasing water levels on the Oder and Elbe rivers, which are expected to reach their peaks on Thursday or Friday. Dresden in Saxony and Frankfurt Oder on the Polish border could potentially be hit by flooding.

While storm Boris, which brought the enormous rainfall, was caused by the rather unusual collision of polar air and warm, humid air from the unusually hot Mediterranean, the deeper causes lie in the dramatic acceleration of climate change.

Climate researchers were not surprised by the impact of recent events. “The catastrophic rains in Central Europe are exactly what scientists expect due to climate change,” said Joyce Kimutai of the Imperial College London Grantham Institute.

Climameter, a research project funded by the European Union and the French research organization CNRS, also largely attributes the “heavy rainfall that led to the flooding in Central Europe” to climate change.

The floods are part of the extreme weather events that are becoming increasingly frequent and severe worldwide. The population of Central and West Africa is also currently suffering from extreme flooding. According to official figures, around 1,000 people lost their lives in the floods in Mali, Liberia and Nigeria, but the actual number is likely to be much higher. At the same time, the south of the continent is suffering from a historic drought.

In Southeast Asia, Typhoon Yagi engulfed large parts of Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar. Hundreds of people died, and the consequences are yet to be fully uncovered in the poverty-stricken regions.

Climate change is ultimately man-made and due to an economic system that places the pursuit of profit above human lives. Although climate change and global warming are drastically changing weather patterns, governments are refusing to take serious action to

mitigate the devastating effects of these long-predicted disasters.

Instead, all governments in Europe are cutting funds for disaster management and environmental protection, infrastructure and healthcare in order to finance the military build-up for the war against Russia. If Chancellor Olaf Scholz calls the floods in the neighbouring countries “gloomy” and promises help, this is only cynical rhetoric.

While the defense budget has been enormously inflated, the 2024 budget for civil protection and disaster relief is estimated at a ridiculous €550 million, €10 million less than in the previous budget.



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