

At least 95 dead as flash floods in Spain devastate Valencia

Alejandro López
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At least 95 people are confirmed dead, with dozens missing due to heavy rains and flash floods Tuesday in eastern Spain, around Valencia and in Albacete and Cuenca. Intense rains have swept away entire villages, left tens of thousands stranded in their homes, cut power to 120,000 residents, and led to widespread road closures.

Floodwaters swept people away, as families with children and elderly dependents struggled to survive. Attempts to call emergency services at “112” were met with silence, as the lines had collapsed. Chaos spread throughout the city, as hundreds of people found themselves trapped in cars, in trucks, or on rooftops.

Many emergency rescue calls involved workers stranded at their jobs. Despite early warning of the storm’s impact, many businesses refused to halt operations, placing workers’ lives at risk. In industrial zones like El Oliveral industrial park, work continued as usual, despite the danger. Major corporations, including IKEA and Mercadona, also insisted employees report to work despite the flood risk.

In Paiporta, chaos began around 7 PM on Tuesday. “The police warned us that the ravine had overflowed. Within minutes, the water went from ankle-deep to waist-high,” Óscar Pozo, a local resident, told *eldiario.es*. Within minutes, the power was cut. “They warned us only when the water was already in the streets, and the police presence was right by the ravine,” he said, denouncing “poor management” of the emergency. “The alert came far too late,” he said.

The flooding left mountains of debris scattered throughout affected areas. Footage from Valencia showed cars stacked on roadways, while Spain’s transport minister confirmed that damage to a rail line between Madrid and Valencia was severe, with services expected to resume only in the next four days. The storm is now moving northwards across Spain, with Cadiz on red alert over flood risks.

This climate change-driven disaster is the worst flood in recent Spanish history, even more deadly than the 1957 Valencia flood, when torrential rains caused the Turia River to overflow, killing 80 people.

Sixty-seven years later, this tragic loss of life is not a natural but a social disaster, driven by human-induced climate change. It exposes the incapacity of the capitalist ruling class to in any way take basic disaster prevention measures, let alone adopt a planned, coordinated policy to stop global warming.

Dr Ernesto Rodríguez Camino, Senior State Meteorologist and member of the Spanish Meteorological Association, said: “In general terms, what we know is that, in the context of climate change, these types of intense and exceptional, rare rainfall events are going to become more frequent and more intense and, therefore, destructive. ... When flash floods develop from intense rain, the flood wave can move through the river catchment with tremendous speed. This has been the case for centuries, but with increased rainfall extremes, new areas are moving into zones at risk.”

Dr Friederike Otto of Imperial College London told the *Daily Mail*: “With every fraction of a degree of fossil fuel warming, the atmosphere can hold more moisture, leading to heavier bursts of rainfall. These deadly floods are yet another reminder of how dangerous climate change has already become at just 1.3°C of warming. But last week the UN warned that we are on track to experience up to 3.1°C of warming by the end of the century.”

Though Valencia is known as one of Europe’s most flood-prone areas, authorities have for decades taken no significant action. Located on Spain’s eastern coast, the city and surrounding region face major flood risks: heavy autumn rains come in sudden, intense storms known as *gota fría*. It is particularly vulnerable to flash and coastal flooding, as urbanisation and intensive agriculture have reduced natural absorption areas, increasing runoff and

straining drainage systems.

In 2019, Valencia suffered a deadly flood, as record-breaking rainfall caused extensive flooding and at least 6 deaths. In 2022, the Red Cross issued a detailed study of flood risks in the Valencia region, based on the 2019 flood, and called on Spanish authorities to carry out disaster response planning. Its report advocated “legally mandating the development of regional and local disaster recovery plans in order to ensure effective recovery operations.”

But over the last five years since 2019, nothing was done to prepare Valencia for new floods.

In fact, several months ago, the right-wing Popular Party (PP)-led Valencian regional government under Carlos Mazón repealed a decree establishing the Valencian Emergency Unit (UVE). Government spokesperson Ruth Merino pathetically claimed this reflected Mazón's commitment to “optimising all public sector agencies and entities for efficient management.”

This set the stage for a catastrophic failure of Spanish authorities to take any action in response to urgent warnings from scientists.

Initial warnings came on October 25, five days before the disaster. Juan Jesús González Alemán, a Senior State Meteorologist and a researcher at the State Meteorological Agency wrote on X: “over the next five days, this DANA [Spanish acronym for high-altitude low pressure area], due to its characteristics and behavior, has significant potential to enter the high-impact category.” He warned it would be “One of those that will be remembered on the Mediterranean side.”

At Sunday midday, the Agency issued an official warning of the impact on Valencia, home to more than 5 million people. Using scientific forecasting methods, it correctly pinpointed Tuesday as the storm's peak: “On Tuesday the 29th, expected to be the height of this episode, the highest likelihood of intense rainfall will be in the Mediterranean region of the peninsula. ... In parts of the Valencian Community and Murcia, more than 150 mm of rain may fall within 24 hours.”

On Tuesday, Mazón delayed issuing emergency alerts despite an 8 AM warning from the meteorological agency. By midday, the Júcar Hydrographic Confederation reported overflowing ravines and a rapid rise in the Albaida River. However, Mazón downplayed the warnings, stating: “According to the forecast, the storm is moving towards the Serranía de Cuenca, so it is expected that by around 6:00 pm its intensity will lessen” across Valencia. This statement has since been removed from

official channels.

It was not until 8:12 PM that the Valencian government issued an automatic emergency message to mobile phones—though by then many people were already trapped by the floods.

The national PSOE-Sumar government, likewise had done nothing to strengthen Spanish disaster response plans or push Valencian regional authorities to take action. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez was in India on Monday and Tuesday, trying to boost Spain's military-industrial complex by selling Airbus C-295 aircraft to the Indian Airforce. He has now militarized the emergency response, deploying over 1,000 troops from the Emergency Military Unit (UME) to assist with the rescue operations.

Yesterday, European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell cynically declared that events in Spain “highlight the urgency of combating the climate crisis, as the high temperature of the Mediterranean is one of the causes behind the increasing frequency and intensity of these extreme weather phenomena.”

Borrell is one of the leaders who has advocated for the EU to escalate war against Russia, supplying hundreds of billions of euros in weapons and cash subsidies to turn Ukraine into a battleground and the Ukrainian population into cannon fodder for NATO's war on Russia.

Such wars underscore the impossibility of addressing the man-made climate change crisis on the basis of the capitalist nation-state system. Instead of coordinating a planned, global response to protect the environment, the capitalist system is wasting massive resources on a fratricidal war that could escalate to nuclear conflict. The Valencia floods again expose the inability of capitalist governments of all political colorations to carry out ecological policies or even plan basic disaster management procedures addressing basic social needs of the population.



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