

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT FOR THE PEOPLE OF VALENCIA AND ALL THOSE AFFECTED BY THE EXTREME 'CLIMATE' EVENT

As a health organisation, we rarely issue statements about politically sensitive situations. However, the ongoing spate of extremely unusual 'climate' events share common features with important health impacts.

There is always a confluence of:

- the breakdown of warning systems
- the breakdown of communications from authorities to the people and areas affected
- events happening in extraordinary and perplexing manners that bear little relation to historical precedents
- unusual state-sponsored structural changes in the areas prior to the event that exacerbate the situation
- extraordinarily high and gruesome death tolls which are obfuscated by the mainstream media
- offers of help, emergency food supplies and clean water turned down when from other countries and blocked on the ground when local or national
- state warnings not happening, or not until too late
- massively delayed state aid that is then very limited compared to the means the state has and the needs of those affected.
- the damage is often to residential areas that are designated for redevelopment by global organisations or to fertile farmland.

The recent calamity in Spain shares all of these characteristics.

The DANA, a Spanish acronym for high-altitude isolated climatic depression, that has affected the provinces of Valencia, Cuenca and Albacete, is the worst meteorological disaster to hit Spain in modern history. The flooding caused by the DANA on October 29th, 2024, has led to more than 220 deaths and there are nearly 2,000 people missing to date, according to official counts, and 2,500 according to non-official counts.

The lack of a prompt response by the local and national authorities has led to a worsening of the disaster, with people unable to leave their homes or towns due to mud-blocked doorways, streets and roads. People from various towns in the affected region have had no electricity, no safe drinking water and no food. Despite marked responses from the public following calls for help, delivery of supplies has been limited due to government-issued prohibitions to enter the affected zone. Furthermore, there have been orders issued for armed forces to remain in their barracks with limited numbers of military and police personnel allowed to provide help. This has forced the same people that survived the flooding to be the ones that shovel mud and try to make their cities and towns liveable once again.

The situation is catastrophic, and one that no human being can afford to ignore. The public health implications of this unprecedented flooding can lead to increases in morbidity due to gastrointestinal and

respiratory infectious diseases. In addition, bodies of people that were pulled out to the sea are starting to appear on the beaches and mounting numbers of corpses are being found under the mud in houses and streets. This is a potential source both of contagion and of psychological hardship for those already affected by the tragedy. In addition, the sustained rain in the area increases the risk of further flooding with mounting hazards, especially for the elderly, the very young, pregnant women and ill people. The best way to avoid or reduce further casualties is with rapid actions to declare a state of emergency, evacuate people while bodies are removed and the zone is made safe, ensure the safety of drinking water and water for domestic use, and food and shelter.

The World Council for Health stands with the people of Valencia, Cuenca and Albacete. We are shaken by the loss of life that could have been averted with opportune warning from the authorities, with quick disaster-management responses and with a rapid distribution of clean water, food, and other essential supplies. We recognize the solidarity of the Spanish people and support the efforts of organizations such as Médicos por la Verdad (Doctors for Truth) to deliver aid and information. Please visit their **Telegram channel** for practical emergency information as follows:

- Water purification guide
- Managing wounds and injuries

We exhort the Spanish Government to **declare a state of emergency** with no further delay and to ensure that the people of the affected region are taken to safety while cleaning and sanitation by trained personnel takes place. We urge governments around the world to ensure that dam and infrastructure of pluvial systems are maintained and that dams are not removed as is now occurring in an effort to have “free-flowing” rivers according to the European Union’s (EU) biodiversity strategy, Natural meteorological events cannot be avoided, but the impact of their force can certainly be mitigated by ensuring the maintenance of key infrastructure that blocks excess water runaway during floods. Never again should we see a child shovelling mud out of a gutter after living through a catastrophe such as the DANA. We must care for human life!

FURTHER RESOURCES

A practical guide to managing injuries following a weather disaster

**GUÍA DE ACTUACIÓN PARA EL MANEJO DE HERIDAS POR CATÁSTROFE
METEOROLÓGICA (Parte 1-MÉDICOS POR LA VERDAD)**

El verdadero amor por la salud y la vida: Médicos por la Verdad

Dra Natalie Prego website

MÉDICOS POR LA VERDAD España (Oficial) – Telegram channel

