

《斐济飓风致20人死亡》



A shopkeeper chops up a tree that had fallen on his roof during Cyclone Winston, as a cleanup continues in the aftermath of the storm in Fiji's capital Suva, February 22, 2016.[Photo/Agencies]

SUVA -- At least 20 people have lost their lives due to severe tropical cyclone Winston, authorities announced Monday.

Akapusi Tuifagalele, director of the National Disaster Management Office, confirmed the latest nationwide death toll.

Almost 8,000 people remained hunkered down in hundreds of evacuation centres across Fiji where they had headed before tropical cyclone Winston hit late on Saturday with winds of up to 325 kph (200 mph).

The majority of the fatalities were along the western coast and were caused mainly by flying debris and drowning in storm surges, authorities said.

Meanwhile, officials confirmed to the government-owned Fiji Broadcasting Corporation that seven fishermen from the Yasawas group of islands in Fiji's western division are missing at sea. The fishermen went out to sea on Friday and have not been heard from since.

Fiji has declared a state of natural disaster for a period of 30 days. A curfew imposed during the cyclone was lifted Monday morning.

China's Ministry of Commerce has declared that it is working on a plan to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to Fiji.

Aerial footage of outlying islands taken by the Royal New Zealand Air Force, and posted on the Fiji government's official website, showed whole villages flattened and flooded.

Aid agencies were told at a meeting of Fiji's National Emergency Operations Centre on Monday of potential "catastrophic" damage to Koro Island, Fiji's seventh-largest island.

