

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Central America: Tropical Storm Alma

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This bulletin is being published for information only. Tropical storm Alma caused heavy rains and strong winds in the Pacific coasts of Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador since 28 May, 2008. Therefore, the National Societies of Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador have activated their response systems.

This Bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the situation and the information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time. As the situation progresses and the National Societies complete their assessments, a DREF application can be prepared if the National Societies request assistance.

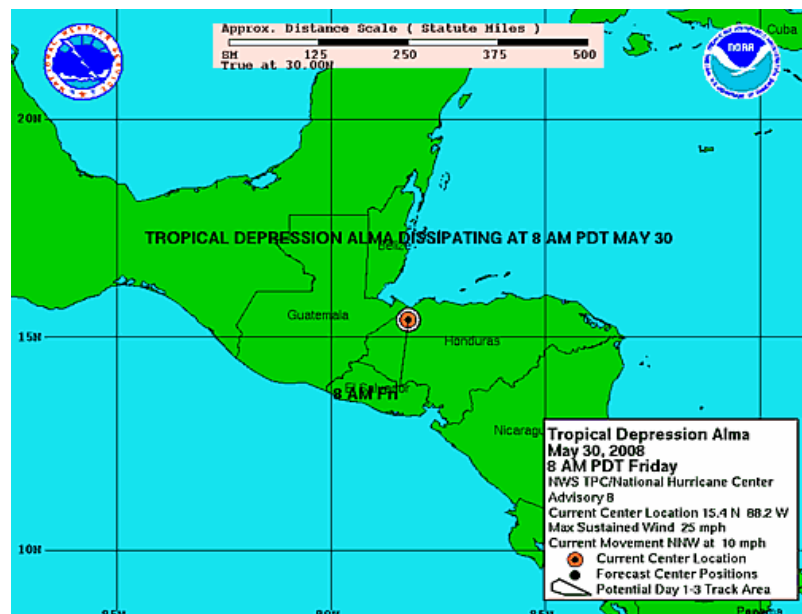


The community of PoneLOYa, Nicaragua.
Source: Reuters

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The Situation

On 28 May 2008, the first Tropical Storm of the 2008 Eastern North Pacific hurricane season, Alma, was formed near the west coast of **Nicaragua**, causing torrential rains throughout Central America. Heavy rain hit the Pacific coast of Costa Rica specifically in the northern region of Guanacaste. On the morning of 29 May, Alma was still a tropical storm as it headed into **Honduras**, also causing heavy rains. At 8:00 p.m. the centre of Tropical Storm Alma was located inland over Southern Honduras and east of San Salvador. It was moving northwards at almost nine miles per hour. Initially, the government of **Costa Rica** declared a red alert in several communities in the central Pacific region of the country, but as of 29 May 8:00p.m., the alert was discontinued since Alma was downgraded to a Tropical Depression.



The government of Nicaragua discontinued the tropical storm warning on 30 May as Alma moved inland over Honduras about 85 miles northwest of the capital city of Tegucigalpa.

On 30 May, according to the National Hurricane Centre, Alma dissipates near the border of Honduras and Guatemala. The centre of Alma will be moving over Western Honduras which will likely cause 10 to 15 inches of rain over parts of Central America from Costa Rica north-westward through parts of Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Belize.



Floods in Parrita, Costa Rica.
Source: La Nacion

According to preliminary reports from the National Commission for Risk Prevention and Emergency (Comision Nacional de Prevención de Riesgos y Atención de Emergencias – CNE) in **Costa Rica**, the most affected provinces are Puntarenas, Guanacaste and Alajuela. Landslides obstructed several roads and three bridges were damaged due to floods. Utilities such as electricity and telephone service were damaged as well. Alma damaged 1,080 houses of which 150 were destroyed displacing some 5,400 people in the region of Parrita due to severe floods. In total, there are 93 affected communities. The president of CNE declared that 146 common shelters are opened as well as 90 warehouses with food items so the needs of the affected people can be attended to.

According to the Civil Defence in **Nicaragua**, more than 280 houses were affected of which eight were completely destroyed. To date, three people died and ten are missing. Some 263 families (1,390 people) were evacuated from the

departments of León, Chinandega, Masaya, Managua and Rivas. The displaced people were placed in 13 common shelters. The most affected community was PoneLOYA in the department of León. The Civil Defence has asked the Nicaraguan population to donate food items, water, blankets, mattresses and medicines for the affected people. The Ministry of Education suspended school activities in the most affected departments.

In **Honduras**, the southern department of Choluteca issued a red alert; the Permanent Commission of Contingencies (Comisión Permanente de Contingencias – COPECO) has started to evacuate some 300,000 people as a preventive measure. Strong winds and rain slammed the southern region of the country, which is the most vulnerable area due to its deserts and lack of vegetation. The five southern departments are in alert in case the situation worsens.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Costa Rican Red Cross' (CRC) local branches in the affected regions have been monitoring the effects of the tropical storm closely and have mobilized their National Intervention Team (NIT) so that it can be deployed to the affected regions. The Nicaraguan Red Cross (NRC) activated their national contingency plan and the Honduran Red Cross (HRC) has activated their local branches in the southern departments and in Tegucigalpa.

The Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) and the Regional Representation for Central America and Mexico are in constant contact with the National Societies of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua to determine further needs.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

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[<click here to return to the title page](#)