

# Information bulletin



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## Fiji: Cyclone Tomas

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17 March 2010

This bulletin is being issued for information only and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The IFRC is not seeking funding or other forms of assistance from donors for this operation.

Cyclone Tomas, became a “category four” cyclone before reaching the Fiji Islands on Monday, 15 March 2010. The slow moving system gained intensity as it moved south across the northern islands of Fiji, over Vanua Levu, the Lau and Lomaiviti group bringing destructive winds and heavy rains. At its peak Tomas was estimated to have winds at strengths of up to 175-205 kilometers per hour with momentary gusts of up to 270 kilometers per hour. The Fijian government declared a state of disaster in the northern and eastern divisions of Fiji yesterday. Extensive damage is expected in the northern and eastern divisions as damage assessments get under way. Telecommunications, power and water were cut off in affected islands. Since 16 March 2010 there are 240 evacuation centres in the affected divisions with more than 17,000 evacuees occupying them; and one death has been confirmed. The Fiji ministry of foreign affairs has formally requested international assistance with the provision of air support for medical evacuation, transportation of rations and aerial survey as well as immediate relief assistance. (Immediate relief assistance includes: shelter, food, blankets, drinking water, water purification tablets and water containers).

### The Situation

The centre of cyclone Tomas was located 50 kilometers southeast of Totoya Island, 50 kilometers southwest of Kambara Island and about 150 kilometers northwest of Ona-I-Lau last night. Tomas peaked in intensity on Monday, and most models are now forecasting cyclone Tomas to continue to slowly decrease in strength and to maintain a southerly course over the next 24 to 48 hours across the remainder of Fiji's Southern Lau group of islands. Tomas' path moved south over Cikobia and Rabi before moving over Vanua Levu, Tavenui and Gamea. Tomas then proceeded over the Lau group of islands moving south at 20 kilometers (km) per hour and continues to affect the southern islands. By four o'clock this morning, cyclone Tomas was expected to be 500km southeast of Suva; and 110km south of Ono-I-Lau. On its current track, Tomas is expected to keep away from Tonga.

The Fijian government declared a state of disaster in the northern and eastern divisions of Fiji yesterday. Extensive damage is expected in the northern and eastern divisions as damage assessments get under way. The central division, including the capital Suva, suffered from strong winds while the western division has not experienced much impact from cyclone Tomas. Communications with Vanua Levu, Taveuni, Cikobia and many of the other smaller islands was cut off as all telecommunications providers experienced damages to their stations and installations. Since 16 March there are 240 evacuation centres with over 17,000 evacuees occupying them. Informal reports indicate damage to infrastructure, power supplies and extensive damage to gardens and crops. Fiji's Nadi airport reopened the afternoon of 16 March. International flights in and out of Nadi have resumed since yesterday; and domestic flights between Nadi and Suva resumed this morning. Fiji's ministry of foreign affairs has formally requested international assistance with the provision of air support for medical evacuation, transportation of rations and aerial survey. Fiji's ministry of foreign affairs has also requested immediate relief assistance in the form of shelter, food, blankets, drinking water, water purification tablets and water containers.

Today, 17 March 2010, the Australian and New Zealand governments answered parts of the Fijian ministry of foreign affairs' requests. The Australian and New Zealand governments have deployed planes carrying

tarpaulins, tents, water containers, water purification tablets; and have sent assistance to help with aerial surveys of the affected areas. Both governments have also indicated that they will provide financial support for the response effort in Fiji.

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Fiji Red Cross Society activated monitoring teams at the national office in Suva and at its two divisional service centres on Saturday, 13 March 2010. The national office has maintained frequent communications with the national emergency operations centre since then; and has been monitoring the progress of the cyclone and sharing information with all relevant parties. Branches were put on alert and updated frequently through their respective divisional service centres and the national office. Emergency response teams across the country were put on stand by and the emergency communications contingency plan for Vanua Levu and surrounding islands was tested with pre-positioned satellite phones before the cyclone made landfall.

Meetings were held in five branches in the northern division late yesterday with the national disaster management council (DISMAC) counterparts. Following there were plans for immediate deployment to the north eastern parts of Vanua Levu and the surrounding islands. The first of the Fiji Red Cross Society emergency response teams and trained disaster assessment personnel were deployed at first light this morning for communities near Udu point in Vanua Levu. There will be other teams working at the same time in other areas, including Bua, Seaqaqa and South East Vanua Levu.

A reinforcement emergency response team was due to depart on a navy vessel with other disaster management council teams late this afternoon to assist with assessments in the northern division. The vessel will also carry prepositioned stocks from the Fiji Red Cross Society including water containers and black packs that contain kitchen sets, clothing, tarpaulins, first aid kits, and soap. Two more emergency response teams will be deployed to the Lau and Lomaiviti group of islands. In addition to tarpaulins, black packs and water containers, Fiji Red Cross Society teams will also be taking bottled water with them to the islands.

The Fiji Red Cross Society has been proactively maintaining links with the IFRC and the participating national societies (PNSs), and other agencies in the region throughout the situation caused by cyclone Tomas. Australian Red Cross, French Red Cross and New Zealand Red Cross are on stand by to provide support for the provision of stocks; and to support surge capacity. The IFRC has been liaising with PNSs and other humanitarian partners in the region.

## How we work

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

IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by national societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

IFRC's work is guided by [Strategy 2020](#) which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.

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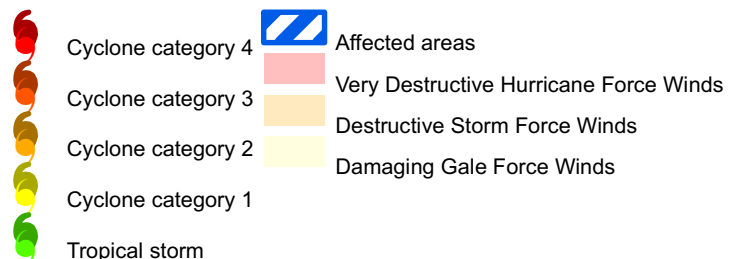
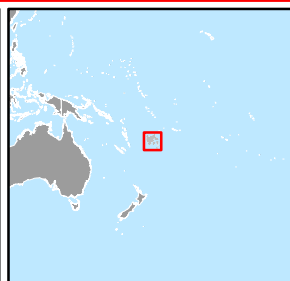
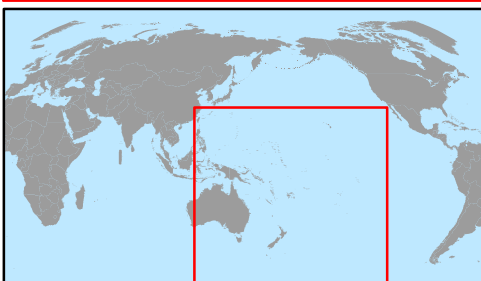
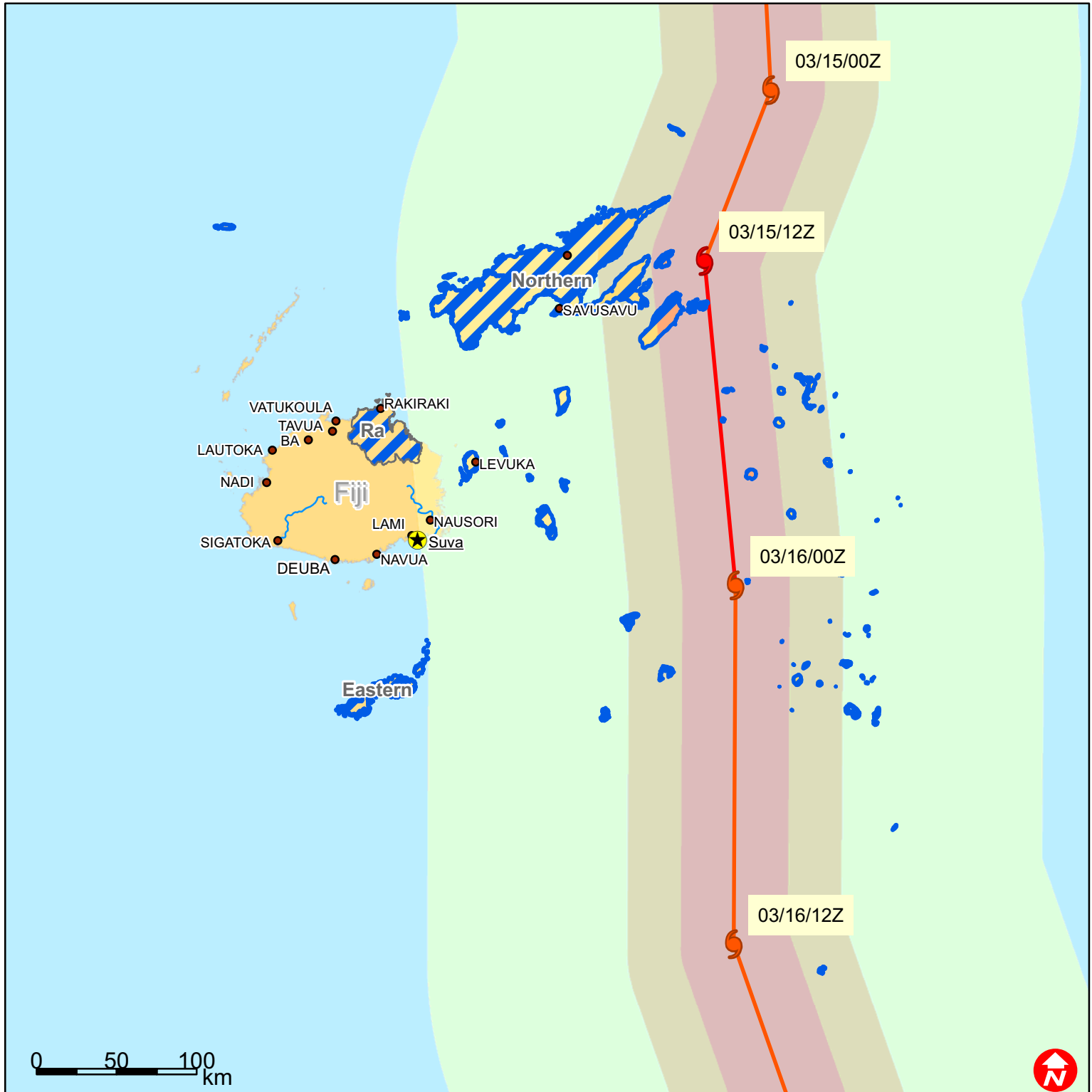
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