
HAITI : Quake devastates universities, kills academics

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Universities have been destroyed and students and academics killed in the earthquake that struck Haiti on Tuesday. Unesco urged "academia to show solidarity" and universities elsewhere to take in Haitian students. By yesterday it was known that at least three North American academics and five students had died or were still missing in the Caribbean nation.

As authorities estimated that up to 200,000 people had perished, it emerged that former geology professor Patrick Charles warned Haiti in 2008 that conditions were "ripe for major seismic activity".

There is no way of knowing yet how many Haitian university students and staff died in the earthquake, which was 7.0 in magnitude and could be one of the 10 deadliest in history. But numbers are likely to be high as the country's biggest institution, the University of Haiti, was demolished and all other higher education institutions - including Quisqueya University and the Université des Caraïbes - are located in the devastated capital Port-aux-Prince.

Former Montreal geography professor and Haitian-based writer Georges Anglade and his wife Mireille were reported killed, as was University of Virginia masters student Stephanie Jean-Charles, a native of Haiti who was visiting her family.

At least two academics and four students from Lynn University in Florida, US, were still missing yesterday. They were part of a 14-strong 'Journey of Hope' team from the university, which had flown into Haiti the day before the disaster on a community service mission.

The academics are Professor Patrick Hartwick, Dean of the Ross College of Education, and Richard Bruno, an assistant professor in the College of Liberal Education.

Formerly a medical doctor with the US Department of State, Bruno was no stranger to danger. He had travelled through conflict-torn African countries, been held at gunpoint in Nigeria, survived a bombing at the US embassy in Saudi Arabia and worked in the Caribbean including Haiti during times of unrest, according to the *Palm Beach Post*.

The four students are Stephanie Crispinelli, 19, Britney Gengel, 19, Christine Gianacaci, 22, and Courtney Hayes, 23.

The surviving students said the group spent Tuesday distributing food and visiting a school and orphanage. On returning to Hotel Montana in Port-au-Prince, seven of them had relaxed by the pool, the academics had gone to the gym and the other students to their rooms. When the quake hit and the hotel collapsed, only one student emerged from the rubble.

Lynn University hired rescue teams to try to locate and return the academics and students, ABC News reported. After initial reports that 11 of the students had been found, it transpired only eight had.

It is unclear whether two other unnamed faculty members of Lynn University, who were believed to be holidaying in Haiti, have been accounted for.

There was better news for the families of two missing journalism students from the University of Florida who were in Haiti filming a documentary when the earthquake hit. Roman Safiullin and John Bougher were found alive.

Two missing PhD students from New York University were also found on Thursday night. Greg Childs and Nathalie Pierre had arrived in Haiti on Monday to conduct research and access archives in Port-au-Prince.

Their adviser, Professor Michael Gomez, told *ABC News* the two doctoral students had decided to go for a walk before the earthquake occurred. "They took refuge in a pool and watched their hotel crumble," he said.

On Thursday, Unesco Director-General Irina Bokova called on the international community to show solidarity with Haiti and said the Paris-based organisation was "preparing an action plan for rapid intervention to reactivate education provision".

"The destruction of the university in Port-au-Prince and of numerous secondary and primary schools in Tuesday's earthquake, and the human loss of teachers and students, is a catastrophic set-back for a country already hit by other disasters," Bokova said in a statement.

Unesco is mobilising support for temporary educational facilities and for reconstruction. "I also urge academia to show solidarity. Universities in the region and beyond should make every effort to take in Haitian students," Bokova added.

The scenes of death and destruction beamed out of Haiti last week shocked the world.

Yesterday, Reuters reported rising tensions among Haitians as aid and food trickled slowly in. Looting and fighting occurred while trucks carried piles of corpses to mass graves outside the city. The government said 50,000 bodies had been collected and thousands more remained buried under rubble.

"We anticipate there will be between 100,000 and 200,000 dead in total, although we will never know the exact number," Interior Minister Paul Antoine Bien-Aime told Reuters. Health Minister Alex Larsen said

three-quarters of Port-au-Prince would have to be rebuilt.

Countries around the world scrambled to help but struggled to get aid through the clogged airport, damaged port and rubble-strewn roads. By the weekend, the US had taken over the airport as more water, food, medical supplies and treatment were reaching Haiti's stunned citizens. Thousands of US troops also arrived over the weekend to help relief efforts.

Meanwhile, in an article in Haiti's *Le Matin* newspaper in September 2008, geologist and former professor at the Geological Institute of Havana, Patrick Charles, warned that conditions were "ripe for major seismic activity in Port-au-Prince. The inhabitants of the Haitian capital need to prepare themselves for an event which will inevitably occur..."

Charles explained that Port-au-Prince was traversed by a large fault, part of the Enriquillo Fault Zone, which destroyed a town in Haiti in the 1700s. He said there had been recent tremors, a sign that usually signalled a larger earthquake was on the way.

Lack of major seismic activity for the past 200 years could have built up stress and energy in the earth that could result in an earthquake measuring 7.2 or more on the Richter Scale, Charles wrote. This would be an event of catastrophic proportions in a city with loose building codes and shanty-towns built in ravines and other undesirable locations, he said.

According to *Haiti Xchange*, city officials discussed the potential disaster but failed to put any measures in place.