

Reconstruction after Hurricane Oscar: UN and Mexico pledge support



Storm damage in Guantánamo province after Hurricane Oscar (KI-scaled) (Source: [Cubadebate](#))

In Cuba, the reconstruction efforts have begun after Hurricane Oscar caused devastation in the eastern Cuban province of Guantánamo on Sunday. Although the storm was relatively weak, a Category 1 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson scale, the death toll has risen to seven people, including a five-year-old child, according to the latest information from the Cuban authorities. The power grid was restored on Tuesday.

Oscar formed just a few hours before making landfall and swept across the island during a nationwide blackout. The Cuban civil defence force, usually known for its effectiveness, this time had to prepare under extremely difficult conditions and had to be coordinated within a very short time despite the power outage.

On Monday, teams of electricians were sent from several provinces to Guantánamo. On Wednesday, President Miguel Díaz-Canel, together with Prime Minister Manuel Marrero and other members of the government, visited the most affected regions in the south of the province. The communities of Imías and San Antonio del Sur, located very close to the coast, were the most devastated. The reported deaths also occurred there. There was widespread flooding, while winds of over 100 kilometres per hour blew off roofs and damaged buildings. Oscar also caused damage in Baracoa and Maisí, in the far east of the province.

Due to the ongoing flooding and destroyed roads, access to Imías by land is blocked, which is why the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) have set up an airlift to supply the town. The routes to Baracoa and Maísi are also restricted, and intercity buses to the communities have

been suspended. In the affected regions, the power supply is still interrupted and the exact extent of the damage has not yet been determined.

Agriculture has also suffered severe damage. In some areas, where up to 500 millilitres of precipitation fell, around 70 percent of the cultivated areas for bananas, beans, rice, and tubers have been destroyed. In the Baracoa area, there was damage to the coffee and cocoa plantations, which are the most important crops in the area.



Clearance work on a blocked road (source: [Cubadebate](#))

Díaz-Canel promised extensive relief efforts for the affected communities and a quick recovery. Cuba's Ministry of Trade announced that it would distribute additional rations of basic food and hygiene products in the affected regions via the Libreta booklet.

On Wednesday, Mexico was one of the first countries to offer Cuba technical assistance. Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum announced that the dispatch of fuel to support power generation was also being considered.

On the same day, the United Nations also announced that it would support Cuba in the reconstruction. Their local coordinator, Francisco Pichón, condemned the US economic blockade of the island, which has been in place for more than 60 years. Pichón stated that the US blockade of Cuba and the country's inclusion on the US list of terrorist supporters restricted the work of the United Nations in this area and significantly affected the island's efforts to meet the 2030 Development Agenda.

After the nationwide blackout last Friday, the power grid was restored on Tuesday afternoon at 2:44 p.m. local time. More than 52,000 workers were continuously on duty to start up and reconnect the subnetworks.

The power deficit of 946 megawatts expected for Friday was significantly lower than before the breakdown, when values of over 1500 megawatts were reached over several days. Nevertheless, the situation of the energy grid remains critical. With the high three-digit deficit, the planned power cuts continue, which can be more than 12 hours a day outside Havana. The water supply is also affected and has not yet been restored everywhere.

Classes at all educational institutions were suspended this week to support the reconstruction efforts following the hurricane and power outage. Many office workplaces will also remain closed until 27 October. ([Cubaheute](#))