

Hurricane Irma: Caribbean islands left with **trail of destruction**

Before hitting Florida, **Hurricane Irma** caused catastrophic damage across the Caribbean, where it killed at least 37 people and left thousands homeless.

Irma, one of the most powerful storms ever recorded in the Atlantic basin, swept across islands including St Martin, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the British and US Virgin Islands.

It **left** billions of dollars worth of damage, with some **areas** now **"barely habitable"**.

#### **Antigua and Barbuda**

Hurricane Irma first struck **the dual-island nation** of Antigua and Barbuda on Wednesday. A young child was killed. Prime Minister Gaston Browne said 95% of buildings on Barbuda had been damaged, and the island **was** **"literally under water"** and **"barely habitable"**.

About 50% of the Barbuda population was now homeless, he told the BBC.

However, Antigua, **with** a population of 80,000, escaped **major** damage, with no **loss of life**.

#### **St Martin, St Barts and Anguilla**

**The category five storm** then **pummelled** St Martin and St Barts - popular **holiday** destinations - on the same day. The hurricane left more than two-thirds of **homes** on the Dutch side of the island of St Martin uninhabitable, **with** no electricity, gas or drinking water, and **four** **people confirmed dead**.

**The French government** has said its side of St Martin - known as Saint-Martin - has sustained about €1.2bn (\$1.44bn;

£1.1bn) in damage, with nine deaths across Saint-Martin and St Barts.

French Interior Minister Gerard **Colomb** said there had been **"massive destruction"** to **the islands**. The nearby British overseas territory of Anguilla also had **extensive damage**, with one person killed.

## **AN ERASURE OF THE BBC- HURRICANE IRMA: CARIBBEAN ISLANDS LEFT WITH TRAIL OF DESTRUCTION**

#### **British Virgin Islands and US Virgin Islands**

There was widespread damage reported on both island chains after **Irma** hit them later on Wednesday, with five dead in the British Virgin Islands and at least four **killed** in the US Virgin Islands.

Sharon Flax-Brutus, director of tourism for the British Virgin Islands (BVI), said the damage was difficult to assess because communications were down, but that "many homes are without roofs, or have been diminished to merely foundations".

Following the storm, some **residents** described looting and said people were walking around with machetes to cut trees down.

BBC reporters have reached the island of Tortola, and say entire neighbourhoods have been flattened, while Richard **Branson** says most of the buildings and vegetation on Necker, the island owned by **the billionaire**, have been **destroyed or damaged**.

#### **Puerto Rico**

**Hurricane Irma** skirted Puerto Rico late on Wednesday, causing **waves** of up to 30ft (9m) off the capital San Juan. Although the US territory avoided a direct **hit**, its **infrastructure** was **badly** affected - more than half of the island's three million residents were without **power** and officials said many could be **cut off** for several days.

At least three deaths were reported **on the island**.

#### **Haiti and the Dominican Republic**

**Both** countries were **battered** by the storm and **experienced** flooding, but neither had as much damage as initially feared.

Irma caused power outages and some damage to roofs and farms in the northern parts of the countries. In the Dominican **Republic** about 20,000 people were evacuated ahead of the **storm**.

#### **Turks and Caicos Islands**

Irma struck the Turks and Caicos on Thursday.

On **the archipelago of** Turks and Caicos, with its population of about 35,000, one witness described a drop in pressure that could be felt in people's chests.

Irma ripped off roofs on the main island, Grand Turk, flooded streets, **snapped utility poles** and caused a widespread black-out.

#### **Cuba**

Ten people were killed after **Irma** made landfall on Cuba late on Friday - **the first category five hurricane to hit** the country **in decades**.

About a million **people**, including tens of thousands of tourists, were evacuated ahead of the storm.

The hurricane battered the north of the island for several hours, with storm surges partially engulfing villages **and** whole communities **left homeless**.

Trees and telegraph poles collapsed, and there were power outages across Havana.

#### **Florida**

**Irma** arrived in Florida on Sunday as a category four storm.

Streets across the state were **flooded and** at least four deaths have so far been connected to the hurricane, which was **downgraded** to a tropical storm on Monday.

Millions remain without power, with **the state's largest** electricity provider, Florida **Power** & Light, saying some repairs make take time.

The clean-up operation in the US state has barely begun, **but** estimates by risk forecaster AIR Worldwide suggest

\$20bn to \$40bn (£15bn to £30bn) in **damage has been done to** insured property alone. Irma continues to move further **in land**.



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#### WRITER

Rol-J Williams  
*"An Erasure of the  
BBC- Hurricane Irma:  
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