

The world has changed since you woke this morning

Homeless Moroccans squeeze into makeshift tents as tremors continue

Giles Tremlett in Imzouren
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Two aftershocks from Tuesday's Moroccan earthquake brought down more buildings in northern towns and villages yesterday, leaving thousands of homeless people trying to erect makeshift shelters in the rain and cold.

"People are very angry, hardly any help has arrived," Nabil Haduyi said in the village of Beni Benayach, where two blocks of flats fell to the ground yesterday afternoon, causing further panic among the already jittery survivors.

He was in a field making a tent of plastic sheets, old carpets, curtains and anything else he could get his hands on.

Many of the buildings still standing had huge holes in their sides or gaping cracks running round them.

"Look, nobody is going to want to go back into these buildings ever again," Mohammed Karami said, pointing at one whose top two floors were skewed off centre but still balanced on the ground floor.

As a persistent drizzle added to the misery, blame was being placed on builders and government regulators for not making sure that buildings erected on this notorious faultline were not quake-proof.

"The authorities are to blame. They should make the rules that would oblige people to build houses that can withstand earthquakes," Mohammed Ohaj said.

An estimated 20,000 people will need emergency housing.

Nearby, in the town of Imzouren, close to the epicentre of the quake, some buildings were reduced to rubble.

There could be no hope for the people who would have been sleeping in them when the earthquake struck in the small hours of Tuesday morning.

Most of the 564 confirmed victims are believed to have come from the town, and there was anger at the government's slow response to the disaster.

About 200 people are reported to have marched through Imzouren shouting, "People are dying, and nothing has been done for them."

Others, shaking their fists, cried: "This is a shame. We are treated like slaves."

At one spot in the town a row of three-storey houses had somehow kaleidoscoped together, remnants of clothes, colourful rugs and mattresses the only proof that people had once been able to live in them.

"There are four people at the bottom of the rubble of a house here," Ali Agharbi said.

"We do not know whether they are alive or dead but we do not have any machinery to look for them."

Sniffer dogs brought by firefighters from Spain and France picked their way delicately across the debris but those in charge of them said they had failed to find any survivors.

"We have gone through buildings that the Moroccans had already picked through and there was nothing there," said a Spanish rescue service coordinator, Bernardino Gasols.

"Now they are sending us up to some of the villages that have been damaged."

Many of the small villages clinging to the sides of the Rif mountains were said to be impossible to get to without four-wheel drive vehicles yesterday, and there were unconfirmed rumours that some had been wiped off the map.

The death toll is expected to rise as rescuers reach the more remote areas.

"They say that all that is left of Ait Kimrat is its name," Mr Agharbi said.

Large diggers and trucks were being hauled up the narrow, twisting mountains roads yesterday, past the large boulders that had been knocked off the slopes by the quake.

Foreign aid workers said the Moroccans were doing fairly well, even if many of those directly affected felt differently.

A small encampment of green and yellow tents had sprung up in front of the shattered buildings of Imzouren and the first food and water supplies were on hand, though up to 30 people were having to share a single tent.

Hercules aircraft from Morocco, Spain and France landed at the airport in al-Houceima, bringing Red Cross aid which was being handed over to the Red Crescent for distribution.

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