Beat: News

Volcano erupts in western Indonesia, killing at least 14

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USPA News - At least fourteen people were killed Saturday when a volcano erupted on the island of Sumatra in western Indonesia, just a day after villagers further away from the crater were allowed to return to their homes because volcanic activity was believed to have decreased. Mount Sinabung, located around 52 kilometers (32 miles) southwest of Sumatra`s main city of Medan, first erupted at 10:30 a.m. local time on Saturday when it spewed hot rocks and ash up to 2,000 meters (6,550 feet) into the air for nearly 8 minutes.

It was followed immediately by a second eruption lasting more than 3.5 minutes and a short eruption lasting just over a minute at 11:27 a.m. Saturday`s eruption sent lava, searing gas and rocks down the volcano`s southern slopes, reaching as far as 4.5 kilometers (2.8 miles) from its crater. A 5-kilometer (3.1-mile) radius had previously been ordered to evacuate, but many residents have repeatedly ignored the order and have returned to stay overnight. Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, a spokesman for Indonesia`s National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB), said at least 14 people were killed and 3 others were injured. "All the dead and injured were in the village of Sukameriah and were overcome by searing gases," he said, adding that search and rescue teams would look for more victims on Sunday. Among the victims were at least three students aged 17, four students in their 20s, an elementary school teacher, and possibly a journalist. The eruption came just a day after the country`s Volcanology and Geology Disaster Mitigation Center (PVMBG) reported that it had not detected any significant volcanic activity at Mount Sinabung in recent days, allowing villagers outside the 5-kilometer (3.1-mile) radius to return to their homes. "Many things have been done such as the installation of signs and the deployment of officers to prevent citizens from entering the prohibited 5-kilometer (3.1-mile) radius, but there are still people who enter the hazardous areas," Sutopo explained. "There are now 16 villages that must be evacuated because it is too dangerous. Refugees are not allowed to go home." Indonesia has more active volcanoes than any other country in the world and sits on the so-called Pacific Ring of Fire, a belt of intense volcanic and seismic activity. Two people were killed in August 2010 when Mount Sinabung also erupted, which marked the volcano`s first known eruption since 1600. One of Indonesia`s most active volcanoes is Mount Merapi, which is located on the island of Java near Jogjakarta, the country`s second-most visited area after Bali. Between October and November 2010, a series of eruptions took place at the volcano, killing at least 353 people and displacing more than 300,000 others.

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