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A person walks in a flooded street Oct. 30, 2024, in Llombai, in Spain's Valencia region, after the Spanish meteorological agency put the region on the highest red alert for extreme rainfalls. (OSV News/Eva Manez, Reuters)

by Associated Press

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Valencia, Spain — October 30, 2024
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The archbishop of Valencia expressed "grave concern" and said Mass for those affected after at least 63 people are feared dead, and many more went missing amid torrential rains that caused massive flooding in southeastern Spain.

The flooding turned roads into rivers of floating cars and cut off highways and access points, with water reaching the first floor of buildings.

Archbishop Enrique Benavent said Oct. 30 he "hopes that the victims and missing persons will be found safe and sound as soon as possible," according to Spanish Catholic news outlet Alfa y Omega.

The archbishop celebrated Mass for all those affected on the morning of Oct. 30 in a local basilica.

Since Oct. 28, authorities have responded to rescue calls in areas including Cuenca, Albacete and the Valencia region, where helicopters were dispatched to pull people from inundated homes and cars, according to The Washington Post.

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Speaking the morning of Oct. 30, Valencia's regional president said it was still too early to provide a comprehensive death toll. "These are very difficult hours for relatives and for the disappeared," said Carlos Mazón. "We will confirm the number of victims over the coming hours but right now it's impossible to offer a precise figure. We're in shock," The Guardian reported.

"Yesterday was the worst day of my life," Mayor Ricardo Gabaldón of Utiel, a town in the Valencia region, told the national broadcaster RTVE. He said several people were still missing in his town. "We were trapped like rats. Cars and rubbish containers were flowing down the streets. The water was rising to 3 meters," he said.

The archbishop wrote that the hope is that a catastrophic flood "will pass as soon as possible and that the residents of the most affected areas can return to normality."

Benavent said that parishes of his archdiocese "will collaborate in everything necessary so that people can regain hope, from closeness and solidarity."