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# Hurricane Melissa Leaves Jamaica in Ruins as Government Mobilizes Massive Recovery Effort

**Hurricane Melissa pummeled Jamaica with 185-mph winds, torrential rain, and massive flooding, leaving widespread destruction. PM Andrew Holness vowed rapid recovery efforts, as 15,000 people sheltered and officials warned of ongoing landslides and outages**

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**Black River, St. Elizabeth, Jamaica with extensive destruction in the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa. Nearly all visible structures have been obliterated.**

Hurricane Melissa has left a trail of devastation across Jamaica after making landfall on Tuesday as one of the most powerful storms ever to strike the Caribbean nation. With winds reaching 185 mph and rainfall exceeding 30 inches in some areas, the Category 5 hurricane tore through homes,

hospitals, schools, and roads, crippling infrastructure from St. Elizabeth and Manchester in the south to Hanover and St. James in the northwest.

Prime Minister Andrew Holness, speaking with CNN on Tuesday night, described the destruction as “devastating,” particularly along the hurricane’s corridor of impact. “The reports that we have had so far would include damage to hospitals, significant damage to residential property, housing and commercial property as well, and damage to our road infrastructure,” he said. Holness added that the government’s preparedness measures would now shift to immediate relief and recovery. “We have mounted a very credible and strong preparation and recovery strategy...to ensure that our citizens, who may now be facing hardship, can have confidence that the government will be able to reach them immediately after the storm is passed.”

The prime minister confirmed that no official fatalities had yet been reported but acknowledged the likelihood of loss of life given the hurricane’s strength. He outlined plans to begin restoration efforts on Wednesday, prioritizing electricity, telecommunications, and road clearance. “My Cabinet, all the ministers, are mobilized,” Holness said. “Tomorrow, the efforts to clear roads, to ensure islandwide connectivity, to return electricity and to deal with the humanitarian issues that may occur — the need for food, medicine, and temporary shelter — all of those will be mobilized tomorrow.”

Local Government Minister Desmond McKenzie also confirmed that more than 15,000 Jamaicans have sought refuge in emergency shelters, with additional residents setting up makeshift shelters in their communities. “The shelters will remain open for as long as it is necessary,” McKenzie said. He condemned incidents where access to school facilities designated as shelters was denied. “Once the shelter is designated by law, the responsibility is vested in the municipal cooperation and the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management,” he stated, adding that principals and school boards have no authority to refuse entry. He said the government will investigate such cases to prevent recurrence.

As Jamaica begins assessing its losses, Hurricane Melissa continues its deadly path, now battering eastern Cuba and threatening the Bahamas and Bermuda.

### **NHC 5:00 A.M. Update — Wednesday, Oct. 29, 2025**

According to the National Hurricane Center (NHC), Melissa has weakened to a Category 3 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 115 mph (185 km/h) as it moves northeast at 12 mph (19 km/h). At 5:00 a.m. Wednesday, the storm’s center was located near 20.3°N, 76.1°W, about 60 miles west of Guantánamo, Cuba, and 230 miles south of the central Bahamas. The minimum central pressure was recorded at 960 mb (28.35 inches).

Hurricane warnings remain in effect for Cuba’s Granma, Santiago de Cuba, Guantánamo, Holguín, and Las Tunas provinces, as well as the southeastern and central Bahamas. A tropical storm warning continues for Jamaica, Haiti, Camagüey province in Cuba, and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

The NHC cautioned that damaging winds are subsiding across Jamaica, but residents should remain sheltered until sunrise due to ongoing flash floods and landslides. “Ongoing catastrophic flash flooding and numerous landslides will continue today and into tonight,” the agency said.

Melissa is expected to bring an additional 3 to 6 inches of rain across Jamaica, bringing total rainfall to 12 to 24 inches, with isolated peaks near 30 inches in mountainous regions. Eastern

Cuba is forecast to receive 10 to 20 inches, with up to 25 inches in higher elevations — totals expected to trigger “life-threatening and potentially catastrophic flash flooding.”

The storm will also bring 5 to 10 inches of rain to the southeastern Bahamas, 1 to 3 inches to the Turks and Caicos, and heavy rain to Bermuda later in the week. Storm surge levels of 8 to 12 feet are expected along Cuba’s southeast coast, 5 to 8 feet in the southeastern Bahamas, and 2 to 4 feet in the Turks and Caicos.

Melissa’s powerful swells continue to create life-threatening surf and rip currents across Jamaica, Hispaniola, eastern Cuba, and the Cayman Islands, spreading to the Bahamas and Bermuda later this week.

Prime Minister Holness has labeled Melissa's impact on Jamaica as “one of the worst natural disasters in our history,” and has mobilized government agencies and emergency crews to restore order, deliver aid, and begin the long process of rebuilding an island ravaged by nature’s fury.

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