

## Powerful earthquake strikes in Haiti.

By Maria Abi-Habib

Aug. 14, 2021 Updated 11:36 a.m. ET

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — A magnitude 7.2 earthquake struck Haiti on Saturday morning, hitting the impoverished Caribbean country that is still recovering from a disastrous but less powerful quake more than 11 years ago. Heavy damage and people trapped in rubble were reported in at least two cities.

The United States Geological Survey said the quake struck five miles from the town of Petit Trou de Nippes in the western part of the country, about 80 miles west of Port-au-Prince. Seismologists said it had a depth of seven miles. It was felt as far away as 200 miles in Jamaica.

The quake could hardly have come at a worse time for the nation of 11 million, which has been in the throes of a political crisis since President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated on July 7.

The U.S.G.S. said it was a magnitude 7.2 quake, which can cause enormous damage and was more powerful than the 7.0 quake that hit Haiti in 2010.

There were no immediate reports of fatalities, but pictures and video posted on social media showed collapsed structures and panicked residents in their pajamas screaming the names of loved ones.

At least two cities reported major devastation: Les Cayes and Jeremie. Phone lines were down in Petit Trou de Nippes, the epicenter of the quake, and no news emerged immediately from that city, leaving Haitian officials to fear for the worst.

“Many houses fell. Many people are trapped under the rubble,” said Widchell Augustin, 35, said from Les Cayes, where he lives. “We can hear people screaming under the rubble. People are running back-and-forth to the hospital.”

Videos emerged with people still in their pajamas or bath towels, out in the street seeking refuge from their violently trembling homes, assessing the devastation, many screaming. Entire three-story buildings were flattened to eye-level; another video showed a group of men sifting through rubble and trying to remove debris to extract someone stuck underneath.

One video from Les Cayes showed residents, fearing tsunami warnings triggered by the quake, fleeing a surge of seawater flooding a street. The U.S. Tsunami Warning Center had reported a tsunami threat for some coasts.

Another video from Les Cayes showed the sun blurred out by plumes of dust from the destruction. Houses were flattened, the bricks that once served as their foundation now in a pile of rubble spilling out onto the street.

One man likened it to the cataclysmic earthquake that struck the country in January of 2010.

That earthquake, with a magnitude of 7.0, killed more than 220,000 people and leveled much of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

Haiti’s southern peninsula, the site of the Saturday quake, was hit hard by Hurricane Matthew in 2016 and, five years later, has still not fully recovered. Remnants of the devastation still linger, with Haiti’s broke government unable to fully restore all the houses, roads and government buildings destroyed.