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At Least 14 Dead in Central Asia Quake

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KAN, Kyrgyzstan — A powerful earthquake killed at least 14 people in Central Asia's densely populated Ferghana Valley on Wednesday, destroying homes in remote mountain towns and sending people onto the streets in panic.

Uzbekistan's Emergency Situations Ministry, citing preliminary data, said 13 people died when the earthquake destroyed aging houses in several towns and villages in the Ferghana region. One man in Tajikistan died after jumping from his window, officials said.

The U.S. Geological Survey measured the quake at magnitude 6.1.

The valley straddles Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and is the most densely populated part of Central Asia, a strategic and earthquake-prone region between Russia, China and Afghanistan.

In a rare public admission of bad news, Uzbekistan's Emergency Situations Ministry said 86 people were treated for injuries and 35 taken to the hospital. It said an emergency response team was already working in the worst affected areas.

Kyrgyzstan's Emergency Situations Ministry dispatched a team to the region to investigate damage, said spokesman Sultanbek Mamatov. Damage to an electricity substation had cut off power to several small towns and villages, he said.

In one such village, Kozhokorun, a reporter saw every single-story clay house destroyed. But there was not a single casualty among the 55 families who live there.

The risk of further casualties seemed higher on the Uzbek side of the border. Independent news agency Uznews.net quoted an unidentified resident of the town of Khamza as saying the local hospital could not accommodate all of the wounded.

In 2008, a powerful earthquake killed more than 70 people in Kyrgyzstan. In 1966, the Uzbek capital Tashkent was flattened by a 7.5-magnitude earthquake that left hundreds of thousands homeless.

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