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Authorities Failed to Prevent Repeat of 'Historic' 2013 Floods in Far East Russia, Residents Say

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Residents of three Far East Russian regions are accusing the authorities of failing to improve flood control systems in the six years since the area was hit with biggest floods in more than a century, the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper has reported.

Tens of thousands of people were evacuated and more than 100,000 were affected overall in the mid-2013 flash flooding across five Russian regions that meteorologists said was the worst in 120 years. This month, the Amur River has reached dangerous levels and flooded hundreds of homes months after heavy floods paralyzed the Pacific city of Vladivostok and the Irkutsk region in Siberia.

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Authorities in the Amur region, the Khabarovsk region and the Jewish autonomous region have failed to rebuild levees or reopen storm drains since the 2013 floods, Novaya Gazeta cited residents and local officials as saying Friday.

"[The 2013 relief effort volunteers are] outraged because six years was enough to fix everything. Nothing's been fully completed. That causes a serious negative [reaction] among people," said Alexei Larin, a journalist based in the city of Komsomolsk-on-Amur in the Khabarovsk region.

The Amur River in Komsomolsk-on-Amur has reached a peak of 8 meters and 29 centimeters, Novaya Gazeta reported, and forecasters predict the water will recede at a rate of 5 centimeters per day until mid-October. Emergency officials warn that the Amur River's water levels there could still rise after receding late last week.

Oleg Belozerov, a deputy in the urban settlement of Nikolayevka, said he had asked the governor of the Jewish autonomous district last year to check the condition of local storm drains.

"The governor sent my letter back to our district and the district sent it to the head of our village. Nothing's been done and now we're flooded," Belozerov told Novaya Gazeta.

President Vladimir Putin plans to visit the Emergency Situations Ministry crisis center to discuss flood relief efforts in Far East Russia, the Kremlin said Monday.

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