

Opinion: Panama needs a public national risk map

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Summary

A cartographer argues in La Prensa that after the 9 October earthquake Panama must build a public, regularly updated national disaster-risk mapping platform so municipalities and communities can prepare.

Details (summary of the article)

In an opinion piece in La Prensa, a cartographer argues that the magnitude 7.5 earthquake of 9 October, centred in Veraguas near the Los Santos border, showed Panama is not immune to disasters; about 300 people were evacuated from Isla Cañas and a state of emergency followed. He recalls earlier events, including the 1991 quake that struck Bocas del Toro and Chiriquí, and notes floods top the country's disaster records. Panama already has tools — Tommy Guardia mapping, the Environment Ministry's climate vulnerability index, SINAPROC law and the 2022-2030 risk management plan — but the information is fragmented and often unusable at local level. He proposes three steps: a national risk information platform combining broad 1:500,000 cartography with detailed local studies; making the data public, regularly revised and accessible to SINAPROC, municipalities and communities even when power or communications fail; and sustained investment in science, satellites, drones, seismographs and trained staff. The reconstruction now beginning is, he says, the chance to avoid rebuilding the same weaknesses in the same risky places.

Original (es)

Un mapa antes del próximo sismo

El terremoto del 9 de octubre demostró que Panamá necesita un mapa nacional de riesgos, público y actualizado, para anticiparse al próximo desastre.