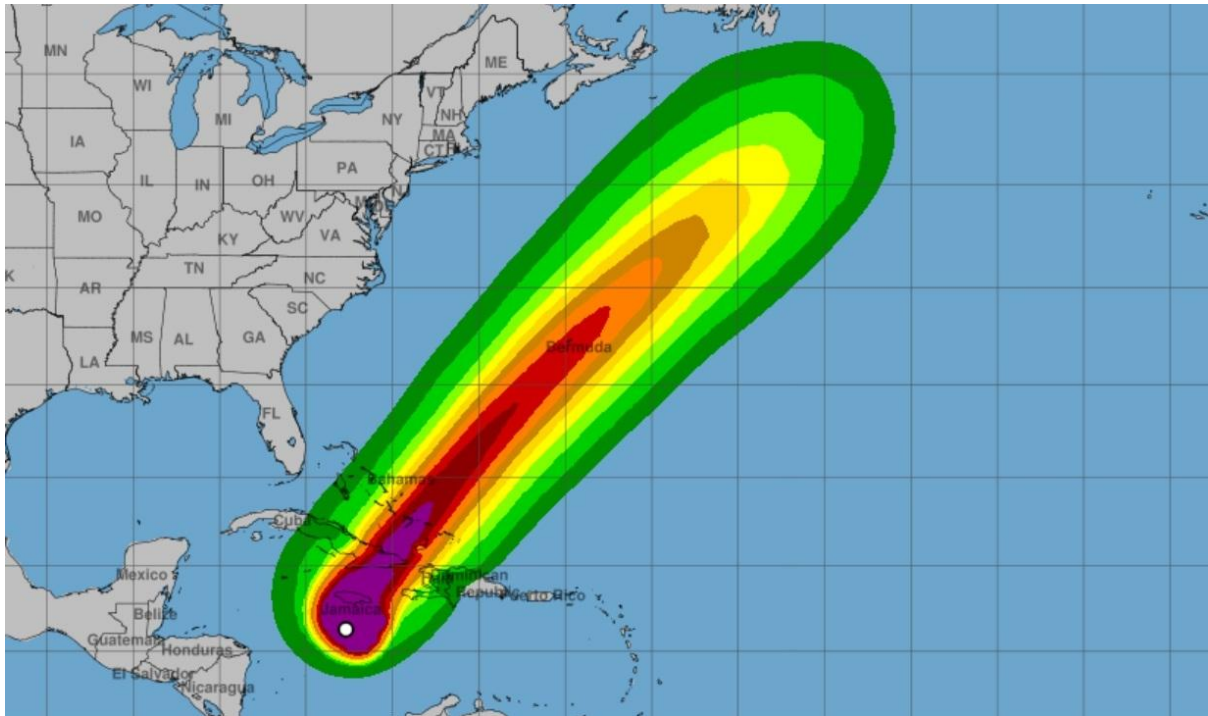


Cuba prepares for severe Hurricane Melissa



Track forecast and wind speeds for Melissa (source: [NHC](#))

Stormy days are coming to Cuba. Hurricane Melissa has intensified into a Category 5 hurricane and is threatening eastern Cuba with devastating effects. The US National Hurricane Center (NHC) reported wind speeds of 260 kilometers per hour and even stronger gusts at 5:00 a.m. on Monday morning, meaning the storm has reached the highest category on the [Saffir-Simpson scale](#).

At that time, the storm was located 205 kilometers southwest of Kingston, Jamaica, and 505 kilometers southwest of Guantánamo. Moving at only six kilometers per hour, Melissa is advancing very slowly, which increases the storm's potential for damage to the affected areas.

Twelve hours of devastation expected

Dr. Celso Pazos, director of the Cuban Meteorological Institute (Insmet), said on Sunday that Melissa's center is expected to linger over Cuban territory for about twelve hours – from its entry on the southeast coast to its exit on the north coast. The hurricane is expected to make landfall on Tuesday evening and pass over the island during the early hours of Wednesday.

Cuba's most renowned meteorologist, Dr. José Rubiera, described Melissa as “extremely dangerous” on Sunday and warned that wind gusts could reach speeds of up to 300 kilometers per hour.

Massive evacuations initiated

The Cuban government has [initiated](#) extensive protective measures. Deputy Prime Minister Inés María Chapman warned of severe flooding, especially in the provinces of Granma and Santiago de Cuba, where water from other eastern areas converges.

In Granma, 110,000 people (15 percent of the population) must be brought to safety, 66,000 of them in evacuation centers, according to provincial president Yudelkis Ortiz Barceló. The province identified 98 critical areas for evacuation.

Santiago de Cuba is preparing to protect 258,573 people, reported First Party Secretary Beatriz Johnson Urrutia. Special attention is being paid to the municipality of Guamá, which was recently hit by Tropical Storm Imelda. The Protesta de Baraguá and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes dams are being monitored.

In Guantánamo, 139,914 people (30 percent of the population) are to be accommodated in 108 centers, explained Party Secretary Yoel Pérez García. Holguín plans to evacuate 69,000 people, while Las Tunas intends to accommodate 72,000 people in 133 centers and with relatives. A total of nearly 650,000 people will be evacuated.

President urges haste

President Miguel Díaz-Canel emphasized the urgency of the preparations and pointed out that the storm would arrive at night or in the early hours of the morning. "What we don't do now, we will lose later," he warned at an extended meeting of the National Defense Council.

The head of state called for intensive work on Sunday and Monday, stating, "If we work for the worst-case scenario, we guarantee peace of mind in this whole matter." He emphasized the need to evacuate all people in flood areas and below dams.

Focus on infrastructure and supplies

The government is also focusing on protecting critical infrastructure. Díaz-Canel ordered the inspection of emergency power generators, the protection of wind and solar parks, and the provision of cell phone charging stations and alternative lighting for the population.

Special attention is being paid to garbage collection, cleaning drains and canals, and securing basic food supplies. The president emphasized that not only people but also their possessions must be protected, including mattresses, household appliances, and pets. To keep the population informed through all channels, the news portal *Cubadebate* will be accessible for the next few days without using mobile data.

Melissa is the third hurricane this season to reach Category 5. The NHC forecasts that, despite possible fluctuations in intensity as it passes through Cuba, the storm will remain a major hurricane before moving on to the Bahamas. ([Cubaheute](#))