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**More Than One Million Cubans Evacuated Because of Hurricane Irma**

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More than one million Cubans are evacuated today to protect from the fury of Hurricane Irma, which now slaughtered the central provinces of Sancti Spiritus and Villa Clara, authorities said.

The National Civil Defense National Office reported that 77 percent of the people is protected in homes of relatives and neighbors who jointly shelter the victims.

The evacuees are from the easternmost provinces of the island, Guantanamo, Santiago de Cuba, Granma, Holguin and Las Tunas, to central Camagüey, Ciego de Avila, Sancti Spiritus and Villa Clara as the powerful hurricane progressed in west-northwest direction.

Now the authorities of the western territories of Matanzas, Mayabeque and Havana carry out huge operations of evacuation of residents of the most vulnerable areas.

Irma strikes at midday Saturday the center of Cuba with strong fury category four on the Saffir-Simpson scale with sustained winds of 215 kilometers per hour and higher gusts at some points near the center of the hurricane, heavy rains and waves of up to 10 meters of height, indicates the Institute of Meteorology.

From Sancti Spiritus, where the powerful cyclonic disturbance moves along its northern coast, it is reported that the entire province is suffering from Irma's strikes whose hurricane winds extend 110 kilometers from its center, although the biggest scourge is in the northern municipality of Yaguajay.

Reports from local television indicate that among the first reported damages are the total or partial loss of roofs of houses and other constructions, falling trees and electric poles obstructing pathways.

The digital site of the provincial newspaper Escambray also reports that there are locally intense rains that are causing floods in rivers and streams, and authorities said that the electricity was cut in much of the province.

Due to its movement of movement, the hurricane already strongly affects the province of Villa Clara, and then hit Matanzas, especially the north coast where the main tourist pole in Varadero is located.

Havana is already in a cyclonic alert phase and waves up to nine meters high are forecast to hit its northern coast. Local authorities and personnel from various government agencies carry out extensive protection and evacuation work.

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