

How Are UAE Forensics Experts Helping in Derna?

The UAE has dispatched dozens of forensics experts to Derna in Libya in recent weeks, with the specific purpose of identifying the tens of thousands of dead bodies caused by the tragic flooding which occurred in September. With more bodies still being discovered weeks after the incident, the Libyan authorities need all the help they can get.

The UAE has considerable resources, expertise and experience in this area, which is why it wasted no time in mobilising its disaster victim identification (DVI) unit in the wake of the crisis. Meanwhile, the Emirati government have also directed substantial humanitarian aid resources such as food, medical supplies and shelter materials to those displaced by the disaster.

A catastrophic occurrence

The flooding occurred on the evening of September 10th and was largely instigated by a colossal storm in the northeast of the country, which destroyed two dams in Derna. The torrent unleashed by the collapse of the dams inundated at least a quarter of the city, which is home to some 90,000 Libyans.

Around a third of that population were uprooted from their homes as a result of the occurrence, with a further 10,000 in the outlying areas also being displaced. They have been forced to seek refuge in other cities in the country, taking shelter in schools, community centres or the homes of people kind enough to lend their support.

Worst of all, the flooding has claimed the lives of thousands of people to date. The total number of dead is still unclear, with new bodies still being discovered on a daily basis. However, estimates place the death toll at above 11,000 according to some reports. Of course, the process of identifying each of these bodies is an arduous and extremely challenging one.

Emirati aid

For that reason, the Emirati government sent a 26-person team to Derna in the immediate wake of the crisis, closely followed by a secondary unit to supplement their efforts. Among their ranks were specialists in DNA, dental identification, forensic anthropology and crime scene experts, who will be able to provide their expertise to the Libyan authorities on the ground.

As well as applying their sophisticated methods of identification to the deceased, the UAE teams will also meet with the survivors of the catastrophe who are missing loved ones to

collect DNA and possibly obtain matches. “The goal is to help our Libyan brothers with seeking closure [after] this tragedy so that if we can match and identify the bodies that have been recovered, they can then be given the dignified burial they deserve,” [explained Isa Al Awadhi](#), chief of the first DVI unit to land in Derna.

Additionally, the UAE has also diverted 622 tonnes of humanitarian aid packages to Libya across more than 20 shipments. As well as food and personal hygiene supplies, the parcels also contain medical items which are designed to prevent the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera, which are common in times of crisis such as these. It’s expected that their aid can help as many as 6,000 Libyan families.