



This GOES-16 GeoColor satellite image taken at 4:16 p.m. EDT on Friday, July 5, 2024, and provided by NOAA, shows Hurricane Beryl over Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. Texas officials urged coastal residents to prepare as the storm moves toward the Gulf of Mexico. (NOAA via AP)

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Mayreau, St. Vincent and the Grenadines — July 8, 2024

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Mayreu is one of the smallest inhabited islands of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. It's so small that it's barely visible — a dot on the map of the Caribbean. Hurricane Beryl nearly erased it from the map.

Beryl pummeled everything along its path, ripping up roofs of schools, crumbling homes and stripping trees of almost every leaf on the 0.46 square miles (1.2 square kilometers) of this island of about 360 people.

"Everything was flying all over the place," Mayreau resident James Alexander said recalling the storm, "I saw a tank full of water lifted up and swirl in the air."

Beryl made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane Monday on the Caribbean island of Carriacou in Barbados and close to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, leaving a swath of destruction as it kept moving west and strengthening later into a Category 5.

The storm is the earliest storm to develop into a Category 5 hurricane in the Atlantic. On Friday, [it moved over Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula](#) after battering the resort of Tulum and reemerged in the Gulf of Mexico, prompting Texas officials to urge coastal residents to prepare as the storm headed their way. Beryl has caused at least 11 deaths as it passed through the Caribbean islands.

Other islands in the Grenadines archipelago, like Canouan, also suffered extensive damage. But tiny Mayreau has been mostly ignored in its pleas for help.

Most lost it all: 98% of the island's structures were severely damaged, according to the latest report from the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Agency.

When the storm hit, some of the people of Mayreau sought refuge in [The Immaculate Conception Church](#). But the sturdy building built more than 100 years ago with local stone did not have a chance against the wrath of the Category 4 hurricane.

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People sheltered in the church barely made it out. Almost miraculously, they escaped unharmed but for a few minor injuries. With only one small clinic, which has also been damaged, and one nurse, that the injuries were minor was the only good news for the people of Mayreau.

The storm ripped every roof off every home on the island. Many were left as piles of dust and rubble.

“This church suffered an awful fate as a result of the passage of Hurricane Beryl and it's an indication of what has happened throughout this island,” Luke Browne, St. Vincent and the Grenadines' former minister of health, said as he stood in front of the rubble of The Immaculate Conception Church.

Browne said he had been visiting Mayreau since he was a child and had seen the congregation “grow and thrive.” He made a plea for help to rebuild his native island.

Mayreau residents are now stranded without electricity or shelter — not even a roof — to protect them from the sun and rain.

Islanders are badly in need of everything, from food and water to tents and baby formula for its 14 youngest inhabitants.

Mayreau is far from the mainland, accessible only by a four-hour boat trip from St. Vincent.

Although some aid is expected to trickle in from nearby islands, the need is enormous, and the aid is only guaranteed for a short-term. There are no vehicles on Mayreau, so residents form human chains, passing vital bottles of water hand-to-hand to the improvised shelter.

The small population depends on tourism and fishing, both of which were disrupted by the storm.

“I’m just happy,” Alexander said, “to be alive.”