

# Pakistan quake toll reaches 515, insurgents hamper aid efforts

Gul Yousufzai, Reuters, 9-27-13

ARAWAN, Pakistan -- The death toll from an earthquake in southwestern Pakistan has reached 515, a provincial official said Friday, as insurgent attacks threaten relief efforts and survivors complain of lack of shelter from the scorching sun.

Babar Yaqoob, the Chief Secretary of Baluchistan, gave the updated death toll as he toured the destroyed region of Awaran, where the 7.7 magnitude quake struck on Tuesday.

Bodies were still being discovered in houses whose mud walls and wooden roof beams had collapsed.

"My daughter was killed when my house collapsed - I was also inside my house but manage to run out," said 70-year-old Gul January "We are sitting under the scorching sun and need shelter."

In Labash village near Awaran, more than half of the 3,000 houses have collapsed and those still standing have wide cracks.

"Everywhere we go people are asking for tents," legislator Abdul Qadeer Baloch said.

The arid area is also a stronghold of separatist Baluch insurgents, who have twice shot at helicopters carrying military officials in charge of responding to the disaster.

On Thursday, two rockets narrowly missed the helicopter carrying the general in charge of the National Disaster Management Agency and on Friday shots were fired at two helicopters carrying aid, the military said.

"There is a law and order situation here and other hurdles but despite everything, we will get to every last person," said Lt. Gen. Nasir Janjua, the highest ranking military official in the province.

Aid must travel by pitted roads that cut through mountains held by the insurgents.

The rebels, who have killed many civilians and members of the security forces, are fighting for independence from Pakistan. They accuse the central government of stealing the province's rich mineral deposits and the security forces of widespread human rights abuses.