

## **Italy avalanche: Rescue operation ends, final toll stands at 29**

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**Rome:** The final death toll from Italy's devastating avalanche stands at 29 after the remaining bodies were pulled out of the rubble of a hotel crushed by tons of snow, firefighters said Thursday.

### **Italy avalanche rescue operation ends**

Firefighters issued the update after a week of search efforts at the isolated Hotel Rigopiano in central Italy. Nine people were pulled out alive in the first days of the rescue.

Premier Paolo Gentiloni acknowledged delays and "malfunctioning" in the initial rescue effort after local authorities brushed off the first alarms about the avalanche. But Gentiloni told parliament on Wednesday that now wasn't the time to find scapegoats.

In his briefing to parliament, Gentiloni stressed the unprecedented perfect storm that unfolded last week as more than two meters (six feet) of snow fell within 72 hours on the isolated hotel, followed by four powerful earthquakes that shook all of central Italy.

Prosecutors say that autopsies on the first six bodies examined showed most died from the initial physical trauma of the hotel collapsing, with some also showing signs of hypothermia and asphyxiation.

- AP inputs