

Beat: News

The La Palma volcano enters a phase of stability but prevents air traffic

Has razed 422 hectares of land

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USPA NEWS - After eighteen days of continuous eruptions and in a phase of great volcanic activity, with the expulsion of large amounts of incandescent material and ash abroad, the change in the direction of the wind threatened air traffic on the island of La Palma, in the archipelago of the Canary Islands. Large clouds of ash forced the closure of La Palma airport for both takeoffs and landings. The sea route is once again the only possibility of escape from an island that, almost three weeks after the first eruption, is still threatened by lava.

The Cumbre Vieja volcano, on the island of La Palma, the westernmost of the Canary Islands, has so far destroyed 93.4 hectares of crops, of which 35.6 correspond to banana plantations, 32.9 with vineyards, 6.7 with avocados and the rest, with other crops. In total, the lava has buried an area of almost 422 hectares of land with a front of 1,250 meters. According to experts, the volcano has entered a phase of stability, which allows us to be optimistic about the damage it can cause, although the variation in air currents can cause a worsening of the purity of the air and problems for the inhabitants of the island.

The volcano has emitted about 250,000 tons of sulfur dioxide since it erupted, according to the Instituto Vulcanológico de Canarias. However, Involcan considers that this may be "an underestimated value" given that it is based on the realization of SO₂ emission measurements in a land mobile position, which currently present "important limitations due to various factors."

Experts also affirm that the magma sleeve that gave rise to the Canary Islands archipelago, off the west coast of Africa, is now under the island of La Palma, which would explain the current eruption. La Palma and El Hierro are the youngest islands in the archipelago, 1.8 and 1.2 million years old, respectively. La Palma is 6,500 meters high, almost as high as the highest peak in the Andes mountain range in South America. As the two youngest islands develop, the oldest, Fuerteventura and Lanzarote, are disappearing due to erosion and will end up submerged in the sea, according to volcanologists.

"The La Palma eruption is undoubtedly the most destructive in the history of Spain," said Juan Carlos Carracedo, a 79-year-old geologist who has spent most of his life studying volcanism in the Canary Islands. Since the Castilians conquered the island in 1493, adds this expert, there have been seven other volcanic eruptions that destroyed crops and infrastructure. But none of them was as destructive as the current one because then there was not a tourism industry as powerful as now and the cultivation of bananas was not as important as it is today.

According to experts, the eruption of La Palma spitting out a magma deposit that continually seeks a way to rise to the surface, causing earthquakes and cracking the ground. It is the same type of volcanism that created the Hawaiian archipelago in the United States.

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