

## Mourners Remember Boxing Day Tsunami Victims

Memorials and religious services are held across Asia to mark a decade since the Indian Ocean tsunami struck on Boxing Day 2004.

Survivors and families of victims have gathered across Asia for memorials to mark 10 years since the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami.

Around 230,000 people died after a 9.1-magnitude earthquake off Indonesia's western coast triggered a series of huge waves in the Indian Ocean. The rising waters caused devastation across the region, striking countries as far apart as Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Somalia. A man looks at the names of victims at the Aceh Tsunami Museum. The wave swept the whole of the Indian Ocean's shoreline, also hitting the coasts of India, Myanmar, Malaysia, the Maldives and Bangladesh. Around six hours after the start of the disaster the coasts of east Africa - Somalia, Tanzania, Kenya - were struck by the wave. The tsunami caused widespread destruction to many coastal communities. Thousands of foreign holiday-makers were also killed. The vast majority of Indonesia's 170,000 victims perished in Aceh province, among them tens of thousands of children. Some 7,000 mourners gathered on Christmas Day in Banda Aceh for the first of several memorials. Aceh governor Zaini Abdullah led the event at the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque. He thanked Indonesians and the international community for their support in the aftermath of the tsunami, which he said had helped the area recover. Teuku Ahmad Salman, who joined thousands at the service, said: "I cannot forget the smell of the air, the water at that time ... even after 10 years." Indonesia's Vice President, Jusuf Kalla, led a prayer ceremony where he and other officials placed flowers at a mass grave where thousands of unknown victims were buried. In a statement released to mark the anniversary, Prime Minister David Cameron praised the "real resilience" of those who have rebuilt their lives. He said the UK Government had provided almost £300m to support the reconstruction of affected areas. Some 151 British nationals killed in the tsunami. "Today we think of all those for whom Boxing Day is no longer a happy festive celebration but the day they lost a loved one in the Indian Ocean tsunami," he said. "At this poignant time, my prayers are with all those remembering people who were caught up in the disaster, including the 151 British nationals who lost their lives. "In the face of tragedy and adversity, hundreds of thousands of people have demonstrated real resilience to rebuild their lives and millions more have shown extraordinary generosity to help those affected." More than 100 survivors, along with bereaved relatives, held a memorial service on a beach in Khao Lak, Thailand. They walked into the waves and laid flowers in the sea, while diplomats placed wreaths on the sand. Crowds also gathered and laid wreaths at the country's tsunami memorial park in Ban Nam Khem, a southern fishing village which was decimated. More than 5,000 people were killed in Thailand, about half of them tourists. In Indonesia, staff members at the German, Austrian and Swiss embassies held a minute's silence to remember the victims. In Sri Lanka, the water swept a train from its tracks, killing almost 2,000 people. The train, including five of the original carriages, decorated with Buddhist flags, symbolically recreated the journey, carrying survivors who mourned the dead and missing.