Volunteers pass buckets filled with water bottles in Mexico City, Mexico, to help earthquake victims on September 20, 2017. Photo for The Washington Post by Alejandro Cegarra

MEXICO CITY, Mexico - On one of Mexico City's trendiest streets, lined with art galleries, cafes and gourmet restaurants, taco vendor Luis Miguel Osorio, his wife and daughter worked rapidly Wednesday to serve food to the victims. Volunteers and emergency workers crowded around a nearby apartment building that collapsed during Mexico's deadliest earthquake in 32 years.

The site remained one of several crisis points around the capital as authorities and volunteers worked to locate the missing and rescue those still trapped beneath rubble the day after the earthquake. Authorities have reported a death toll of 230 in central and southern Mexico. Mexico City has the largest number of these fatalities, where the death toll is 100 people.

Yet in the space of 24 hours, a sense of terror shifted to a spirit of solidarity. Friends, neighbors, relatives and even complete strangers came to each other's aid, transcending Mexico's usually strict class divisions.

Pitching In
With many businesses closed, Osorio and his family came out to support the rescue efforts with food, water and other supplies. Osorio has run a taco stand on Álvaro Obregón street in the Roma neighborhood for 17 years.

"The whole city was affected, and we're part of the city, so we're here to help," he said. "What else were we going to do?"

The 7.1-magnitude earthquake, whose epicenter was southeast of Mexico City in Puebla state, occurred 32 years to the day after the country's worst earthquake. That quake killed thousands in 1985. The quake Tuesday also happened only 12 days after an 8.1-magnitude quake rattled the capital and killed 98 people in southern Mexico.

**Donors Become Victims**

Last week, the well-heeled residents of Roma, located close to the city's downtown, were depositing supplies for the previous earthquake's victims. They brought canned food, blankets, and water to drop-off points for people in some of Mexico's poorest, most rural areas. Yet as Álvaro Obregón street filled with dust and debris, with one building toppled and many others damaged, these residents became victims too.

"It felt like the world was ending," says Amanda Ramírez, 22, who lives close to a collapsed apartment building. At least 13 people were still trapped in the building beneath rubble. Following emergency protocols, she abandoned her third-floor apartment when the quake hit, leaving behind everything except her keys, and descended a staircase that veered and contorted beneath her feet.

"There were moments as I went down the stairs in which I thought, 'Will I make it out?' " she said.

**Forced To Leave**

Elsewhere in the neighborhood, windows were shattered, and buildings were damaged to the point where people could not stay there. Many were forced to seek shelter elsewhere.

Ramírez, a pharmacist, was able to escape her building unscathed and returned only to pack an overnight bag before traveling to her mother's house across the city. With scores of people still trapped and rescue operations underway in various parts of the capital, many others were not so lucky.

Rescue efforts have been led by joint teams of federal, state and local officials, along with the military. But ordinary citizens have also come forward to help, sometimes producing unlikely friendships.

**First-Aid Volunteer**

University student Amelia Lara, 21, comes from Gustavo A. Madero, one of Mexico City's poorest districts. However, Wednesday she found herself bandaging the wounds of lawyers and workers from Mexico's financial district as she volunteered to provide first-aid.

"The conversations were interesting," she said. "People were in shock, many were shaking and crying, so you just tried to take their minds off things, ask them about silly things."

Mexico's capital is one of the world's largest cities and reflects the country's huge disparity between rich and poor. While residents of Roma enjoy leafy green parks, European-style cafes and
well-kept streets, many of the city's less fortunate citizens live in dusty slums on the edge of the city. The poor often commute to informal jobs in the wealthier neighborhoods.

As authorities barred many residents from returning to their homes because of structural damage, nearby Parque Mexico became a makeshift campsite where people grouped together, aware of the possibility of aftershocks that might cause further destruction. By Wednesday morning last week, the park was also a drop-off point for people wishing to donate blankets, water and other supplies.

**Time To Come Together**

The strong sense of solidarity in a city known for its aggressive drivers and rough edges -- not to mention its social snobiness -- reflects Mexicans' resilient sense of humor.

"These kinds of events bring the best out of Mexicans," said Álvaro Jiménez, a middle-aged engineer who was volunteering in the rescue efforts. "We can fight each other like dogs when things are going well, but when somebody needs help, we band together."

Just hours before the latest disaster occurred, the city had undergone a drill in recognition of the capital's far more destructive 1985 earthquake. By afternoon the following day, there were fears another building, six stories high, could topple in the Roma neighborhood.

"It's mysterious and it's tragic," Jiménez said. "But you can't do anything to stop it. You just do everything you can to help the people affected."
Quiz

1. Which of the following sentences from the introduction [paragraphs 1-3] BEST develops a central idea of the article?
   (A) Volunteers and emergency workers crowded around a nearby apartment building that collapsed during Mexico's deadliest earthquake in 32 years.
   (B) Authorities have reported a death toll of 230 in central and southern Mexico.
   (C) Mexico City has the largest number of these fatalities, where the death toll is 100 people.
   (D) Friends, neighbors, relatives and even complete strangers came to each other's aid, transcending Mexico's usually strict class divisions.

2. Which answer choice provides an accurate and objective summary of the article?
   (A) A devastating earthquake struck Mexico on the 32nd anniversary of the country's worst earthquake. Citizens, volunteers and emergency workers joined together on the day after the earthquake to provide help and supplies to those in need. Their solidarity crossed the usual divide between rich and poor in Mexico City.
   (B) A devastating earthquake struck Mexico on the 32nd anniversary of the country's worst earthquake. In the aftermath of the earthquake, many brave citizens stepped out of their homes to help those who were less fortunate. It was especially inspiring to see the city's wealthiest residents help the poorest.
   (C) An earthquake struck Mexico City one week after an even larger earthquake hit the city and caused historic destruction. Wealthy residents were surprised to find that their homes were destroyed by the quake. The emergency brought together rich and poor who were seeking hard-to-find food and shelter.
   (D) An earthquake struck Mexico City one week after an even larger earthquake hit the city and caused historic destruction. Many residents were lucky enough to escape with their lives but lost their homes. It is important for people to come together in situations like this regardless of class.

3. Which answer choice BEST represents Amanda Ramírez's reaction to the earthquake?
   (A) Ramírez was terrified and could not find her way out of her apartment without the help of friends and neighbors.
   (B) Ramírez was terrified, but remained calm enough to follow emergency procedures and get out of her apartment safely.
   (C) Ramírez was calm and collected, and was able to help many people in her neighborhood who were in danger.
   (D) Ramírez was calm and collected and quickly joined rescue teams working to bring others to safety.

4. Why did the author conclude the article with the observations of Álvaro Jiménez?
   (A) to indicate that Jiménez's skills as an engineer were especially helpful after the earthquake
   (B) to illustrate the similarities between the most recent earthquake and the one in 1985
   (C) to elaborate on the idea that there are usually much stricter class divisions in Mexico City
   (D) to emphasize the solidarity the people of Mexico feel with one another after a disaster