

www.ifrc.org
Saving lives,
changing minds.

Information Bulletin Portugal: Forest fires

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Date of issue: 21 June 2017	Information Bulletin no. 2.
Date of disaster: 17 June 2017	Point of contact (name and title): Diana Araújo – Cooperation Responsible at International Department, Portuguese Red Cross Phone: +351919569031 E-mail: cooperacao@cruzvermelha.org.pt
Host National Society: Portuguese Red Cross (PRC) with 313 staff and volunteers actively involved in responding to the disaster	
Other partner organizations involved in the operation: local authorities including civil protection, armed forces, firefighters, INEM	

This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation. The Portuguese Red Cross will, however, accept direct assistance to provide support to the affected population through its [national appeal](#) (see details below).

The situation

The **number of casualties keeps rising** as devastating forest fires continue to burn in central Portugal. The blaze has so far claimed **64 lives**, and **injured 204** people, **seven** of whom remain in **critical state**, including a child and four firemen. The number of **displaced people** has risen to **500**.

In **Pedrógão Grande** (Leiria district), the blaze is already under control, although there have still been various flare-ups during last night. In **Góis** (Coimbra district), two fronts are still in flames and a total of 30 villages have been evacuated to date. According to latest information (of morning of 21 June) from the Portuguese Civil Protection, **more than 1,000 personnel** (firemen, INEM, civil protection, Red Cross and Armed Forces) are combatting the blaze on the ground in the affected districts and assisting residents in danger, supported by some **400 vehicles** and **13 aircrafts**. The **Social Welfare Department** of the Portuguese government continues to provide social support for the hundreds of people displaced from their homes, assisted by the Portuguese Red Cross (see further details below). Several **shelters** have been set up to accommodate those who could not be taken in by residents living in nearby municipalities. Many civilians have resisted to leave their homes during evacuations.



Portuguese Red Cross staff and volunteers ensure psychosocial support among many other services to people who have been displaced from their homes and/or suffered trauma experiencing the raging fires. *Source: Miguel Vidal / Reuters*

Portugal has also received international assistance through the **EU's Civil Protection Mechanism**, with **Spain** dispatching two and **France** three **water-bombing planes** to help contain the fire.

Authorities are expecting the fire to be **under full control during today** if low-intensity wind conditions remain favourable. They are also warning of soaring temperatures though which may keep hindering efforts to put out the blaze. Temperatures are expected to reach about 38 °C this week in the area, which, coupled with winds, may reignite fires already under control.

Portugal's deadliest forest fires have started on **Saturday, 17 June 2017** out of the forest near the village of Escalos Fundeiros (in the municipality of Pedrógão Grande, Leiria district) where a lightning struck a tree in a dry thunderstorm. The blaze has rapidly spread from Pedrógão Grande to Castanheira de Pêra e Figueiró dos Vinhos municipalities and further with devastating impacts, including killing many on the roads trapped in their cars or by smoke inhalation.

An **aircraft** was also reported by the local media to have **crashed** on Tuesday near Pedrógão Grande while deploying to combat the blaze, although this information has not been confirmed by the authorities.

Parts of the **roads** in the affected zones have already been reopened (including road 347 between Relvas and Póvoa), while others including road 236 and National Highway 2 remain closed.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Portuguese Red Cross has been **assisting the fire response since the onset of the disaster** following activation of its forces at 18:30 on 17 June. A total of **313 staff and volunteers** from 37 local branches and structures are currently on the ground providing **essential support to affected and often traumatized people**. This includes first responders, doctors, nurses, psychologists and social workers. Three logistics units, 73 ambulances and a healthcare clinic are supporting the response.

To date, the Portuguese Red Cross has assisted the **evacuation of 235 people** from fire-affected areas. Its ambulance service has supported the medical health emergency response assisting **116 people**. Trained psychologists have provided **psychosocial support to 334 victims** including the firefighter brigade that has lost one of its men in the fire. Two **dead body management** vehicles, including a refrigerator and 200 body bags were also on stand-by but have by now been demobilized.

The Civil Protection Authority is carrying out the **tracing of family members** and restoring of family links (RFL). It has set up a **dedicated hotline** for this purpose. The Portuguese Red Cross has offered assistance to the Authority in this activity through its **network and expertise**. The **Portuguese Red Cross RFL staff** has been activated to respond to possible cases where family members need to be traced. A number of families are currently awaiting identification of the deceased.



Restoring Family Links staff of the Portuguese Red Cross has been activated to support the Civil Protection Authority in tracing family members and restoring family contacts if needed.
Source: Portuguese Red Cross

The National Society is also prepared to start distributing **relief items including water, food, beds and blankets** as needed.

The IFRC's Regional Office for Europe has been in regular contact with the Portuguese Red Cross since the onset of the emergency for disaster management, reporting and communications support.

Resource Mobilization

The Portuguese Red Cross has launched a **national appeal** to support the ongoing emergency activities and raise much needed funds.

Cash transfers can be done through:

- bank account transfer: IBAN PT50 001000003631911000174 - CÓDIGO SWIFT BBPIPTPL
- online donations: <http://www.cruzvermelha.pt/donativos/donativo-pontual.html>
<https://www.facebook.com/cruzvermelhaportuguesa.sede>

Communications

The Portuguese Red Cross continues to be active on its website and social media, promoting its **national appeal** and informing the public how they can help. The IFRC communications team in Geneva and Budapest is supporting social media outreach through global channels and is in touch with the National Society counterpart.

A web story on ifrc.org outlining the National Society response can be found [here](#).

Additional details on the Portuguese Red Cross' help can be found in this [photo essay](#) and in these television reports: [psychological assistance](#), [evacuation of elderly people](#), and [evacuation of the village of Aldeia de Sandinha](#)



Click here

1. Click [here](#) to see the map
2. Click [here](#) to return to the title page

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

Portuguese Red Cross:

- **Diana Araújo - Cooperation Responsible at International Department**
phone: +35 1 91 9569 031; email: cooperacao@cruzvermelha.org.pt

IFRC Regional Office for Europe:

- **Ruben Romero, DM Coordinator**
phone: +36 1 888 45 00; email: ruben.romero@ifrc.org
- **Mette Petersen, Head of Country Cluster**
phone: +36 1 888 45 00; email: mette.petersen@ifrc.org
- **Nichola Jones, Communications Coordinator**
phone: + 36 70 430 6506; email: nicholalyndsay.jones@ifrc.org

IFRC Headquarters in Geneva:

- **Susil Perera, Senior Officer, Response and Recovery**
phone: +41 22 730 4947, email: susil.perera@ifrc.org

How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief and the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, **encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



Save lives,
protect livelihoods,
and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



Promote **social inclusion**
and a culture of
non-violence and **peace**.

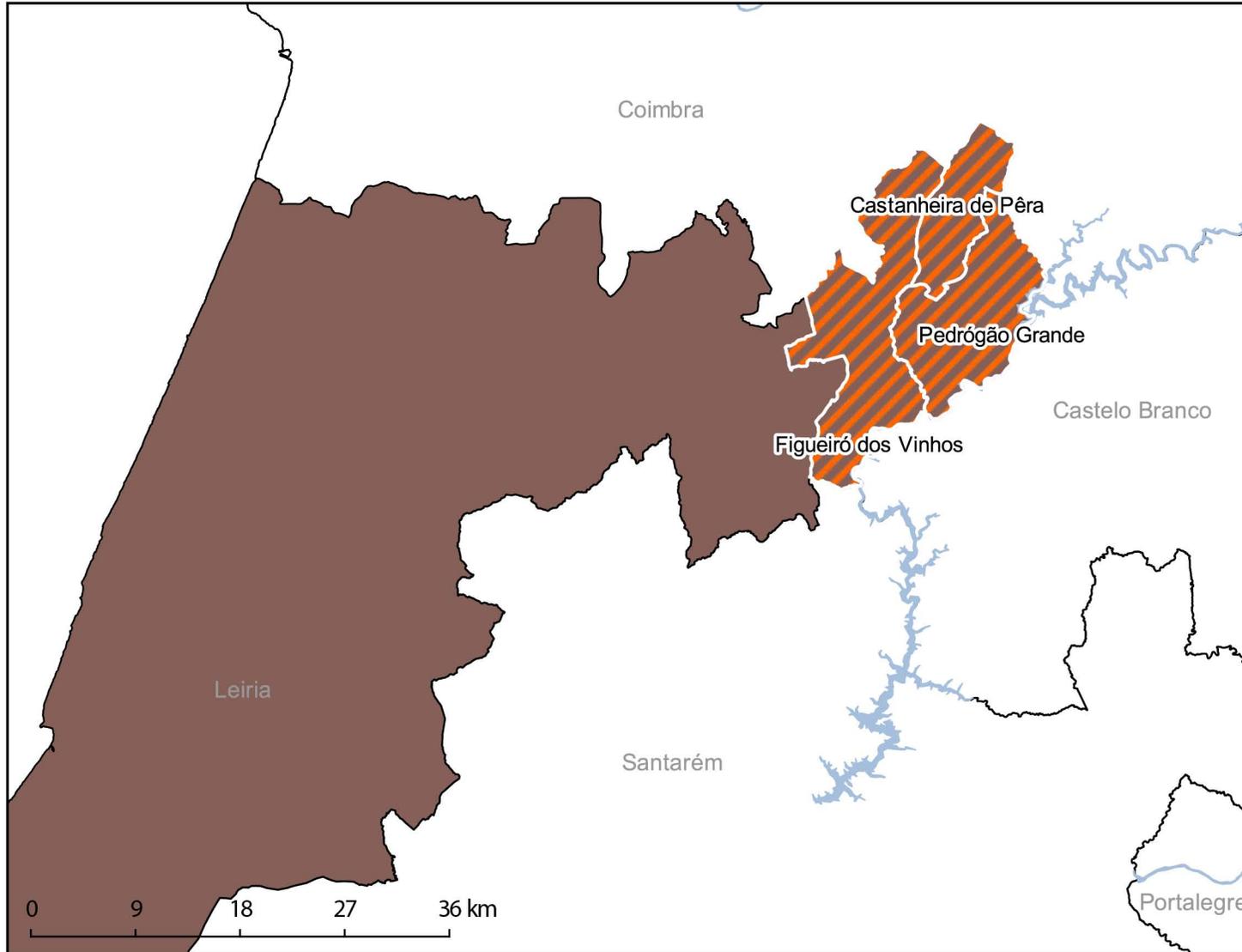
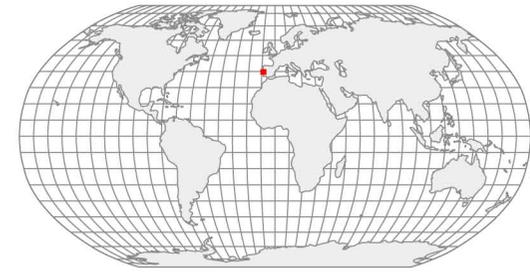


International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

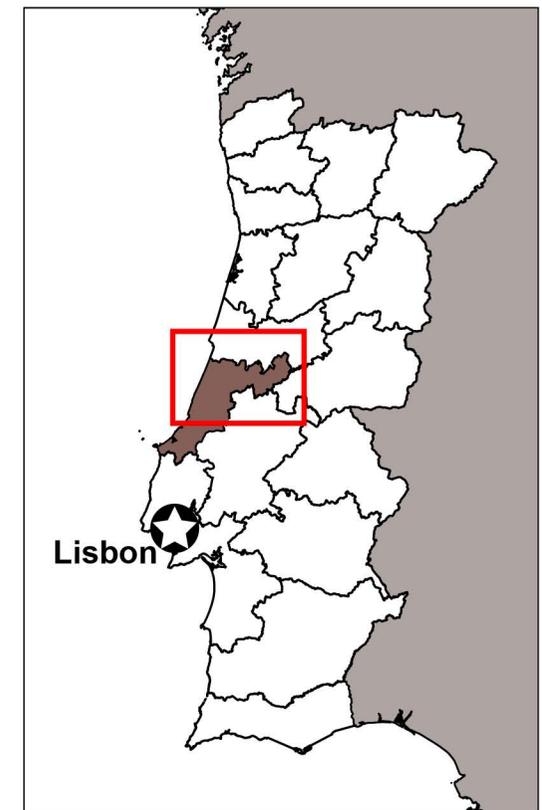
PORTUGAL: FOREST FIRES

IB1

19 June 2017



-  Fire-Affected Municipalities
-  Affected District
-  Other District



The maps used do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or National Societies concerning the legal status of a territory or of its authorities.
Map data sources: GADM, IFRC