

# INFORMATION BULLETIN



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

## JAMAICA, CUBA, CAYMAN ISLANDS: HURRICANE

13 August 2004

*The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.*

### In Brief

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### The Situation

Hurricane Charley, a Category 2 storm, hit Cuba just after midnight on Friday after passing Jamaica and the Cayman Islands on Thursday. The storm killed three persons and left three injured in Cuba, and in Jamaica a man was killed trying to rescue six other people from floods that occurred in St. Elizabeth parish, on the country's southern coast; there were no reported casualties in the Cayman Islands

Hurricane Charley was a Category 1 storm as it passed just south of Jamaica and over the Cayman Islands, bringing heavy rains and high winds. There were reports of flooding and downed trees in both countries, which closed down roads, submerged crops and caused brief power outages. In Jamaica, the hardest hit area is the parish of St. Elizabeth, in the southwest of the country, where Jamaica Red Cross (JRC) personnel have reported that 30 families have been stranded as a result of damage to infrastructure. Six persons were taken to the Black River hospital for observation but were released on Thursday morning. Power outages were reported from Mountainside to Treasure Beach areas in St. Elizabeth. According to preliminary assessments, the main need of these families is water, which was to be airlifted with the assistance of the Jamaica Defence Force.

In Cuba, the hurricane hit Cuba's Isle of Youth, located south of the main island, late Thursday, before continuing northwards towards the Cuban capital city of Havana. Hurricane warnings were in effect throughout the central and western regions of the country, and the hardest-hit areas were Pinar del Rio, Cienfuegos and La Habana. Some 235,000 people were evacuated from these areas as the storm approached. In the city of Havana, 49,000 people were evacuated from precarious colonial-era building.

The storm passed just west of the heavily populated capital city, where there were reports of roofs being ripped off houses, broken windows and downed trees and power lines. Authorities have reported relatively minor damage, despite the fact that winds reached up to 125 mph.

Having passed over Cuba, Hurricane Charley developed into a category 4 storm and made landfall on the Florida coast near Fort Myers at approximately 15.50 hours on Friday afternoon.



Cuban fishermen pull their small fishing boat across the street into safety in Havana, 12 August 2004. A strengthening Hurricane Charley forced Cuba's civil defence authorities to issue a hurricane warning in the provinces of Pinar del Rio, Havana, Matanzas and the Isle of Youth and prepare to evacuate over 200,000 people. *Photo by Claudia Daut / courtesy of Reuters*

## Red Cross action

The Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU), the Panama Regional Delegation and the Port of Spain Sub Regional Office have been monitoring the development of this hurricane and are maintaining constant contact with the National Societies of Jamaica, Cuba and the Cayman Islands to ensure that the needs of the affected persons are being met.

### *Jamaica*

In anticipation of the hurricane, the Jamaica Red Cross opened the Emergency Operation Centre and put Red Cross branches on alert. After the storm had passed, the National Office of Disaster Preparedness held a preliminary debriefing meeting with national agencies, including Utilities and Works Agencies, Telecommunications companies, the Army, Law Enforcement, the Fire Department and the Meteorological Office. Parish Disaster Committees and personnel of the local JRC branch reported that St. Elizabeth parish was particularly badly affected and that 30 families had been stranded in the community of Big Woods. Six shelters have been opened in St. Elizabeth, housing about 100 people. The management of shelters in Jamaica is the responsibility of the JRC and these shelters are being managed by JRC personnel. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security has provided food supplies to the shelters, and the St. Elizabeth branch of the JRC is preparing meals and distributing hygiene kits. Detailed reports are expected soon, including a damage and needs assessment and a breakdown of the gender and ages of persons housed in the shelters.

### *Cuba*

The Cuban Red Cross (CRC) was on alert since Wednesday as the storm began to move north. The category 2 storm hit Cuba's south coast around midnight on Thursday and until four o'clock on Friday morning, intense rain and high winds battered the centre and west of the country. Of the 235,000 people who had been evacuated in La Habana, Pinar del Río and Cienfuegos, 35,000 people remain in shelters and were not able to return home on Friday given the damage incurred to their houses. A total of 2,500 CRC volunteers continue to work in shelters and on community committees. Telephone communication has yet to be restored in the Province of Pinar del Río. Red Cross teams are currently evaluating the damage incurred to homes; there has also been damage to agriculture, which has yet to be fully assessed.

*Cayman Islands*

When Tropical Storm Charley was upgraded to a Category 1 hurricane on Wednesday, the Cayman Islands Red Cross was asked to make preparation and officially open the shelter. Red Cross volunteers throughout the country were put on alert. A total of six people spent Wednesday night in the shelter but were able to return home the next day when the National Hurricane Committee announced an “all clear”. As the Cayman Islands were spared from the brunt of the hurricane, no other emergency actions were necessary on the part of the Red Cross, and volunteers are now participating in the clean up. Although no large-scale relief effort was needed, the Cayman Islands Red Cross considered the hurricane to be an important training exercise, and the National Society has been able to take away from the experience several lessons learned, which will be applied in any future disaster.

*All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.*

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