

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

ALGERIA: STORMS & MUDSLIDES

11 November 2001

Information Bulletin N° 01

This Information Bulletin is for information only. The Federation is not seeking any funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The Situation

The Algerian capital Algiers and several of the country's coastal areas were severely hit by torrential rains and storms over the weekend. Approximately 300 people were killed and another 1.000 were injured. Substantial damage to infrastructure was also caused. According to information from the Algerian Red Crescent Society (ARCS) and other sources, 6.000 families - including 4.000 in Algiers - have been made homeless. The most affected communities in the capital are Oeud-Kouraich, Bad El-Oeud and Priolet. There were reports of at least five people being killed in the Tipaza area and in the western city of Oran. More rain is expected in the coming days.

Infrastructure has been heavily affected by the deluge, mud and debris that continue to pour down to Algiers from the surrounding hills. Many roads are blocked, further hampering rescue operations. Utility provider Sonelgaz is said to have cut power to a number of neighbourhoods to reduce the risk of shortcuts after electricity cables were torn down by the wind. Communication from the ARCS is also hampered by poor infrastructure and the current emergency.

Evacuations from the most affected areas continued last night. The homeless are being temporarily accommodated with neighbours, in schools and other public buildings. The majority of the wounded have been hospitalised. However local hospitals have struggled to cope with the huge increase in the number of patients requiring immediate attention. There is also serious concern over the vulnerability of the homeless because of the extreme cold weather.

Interior Minister Yazid Zerhouni has officially appealed for international aid but the Government of Algeria has already allocated 5 million Algerian dinars to meet the most urgent humanitarian requirements. The Governor of Algiers has been nominated by the prime minister to coordinate rescue and relief operations. The state authorities evoked the national disaster relief plan (ORSEC) and it is expected that the ARCS will be given a clear role within the national disaster response. A plan of action to rehabilitate schools and other public buildings is being developed. Food to the homeless, and other affected populations, has been provided by the municipalities.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The National Society's assistance has been complementary to the rescue and relief operations undertaken by the civil defence and local authorities. The ARCS has mobilised its volunteers, who are responding to the immediate needs, specifically in providing first aid. The National Society has deployed three assessment teams, which have been collecting information on the human and physical losses as well as assessing the most urgent needs.

Preliminary assessment of the disaster by the authorities and the National Society indicates that there will be an urgent need for temporary shelter, large tents, food, kitchen utensils, clothes, heaters, water purification means and power supply units. More detailed and accurate information is being assembled by the ARCS and will be available shortly.

The International Federation has assigned a liaison mission to Algeria, which will arrive in Algiers tomorrow (Monday) afternoon. The mission will facilitate communication, information gathering and sharing in regard to the needs of the people affected by the storms. The International Federation is willing to support the ARCS with preparing an emergency appeal and plan of action in response to the disaster. In addition, if it is deemed necessary, the Federation will support the Society in coordinating the response to the disaster, taking into account the humanitarian imperative, the rules and principles of disaster response and the policies agreed by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

For further details please contact :

- *Evgeni Parfenov, Phone 41 22 7304325; Fax 41 22 733 0395; email parfenov@ifrc.org*

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.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Head, a.i.
Relationship Management Department

Christer Aqvist
Head, a.i.
Middle East North Africa