

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

TUNISIA FLOODS

29 January 2003

Information Bulletin N° 2

- *This bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation will consider international support through an Appeal.*

The Situation

Since early January, Tunisia has been affected by a cold wave and heavy rainfall, especially in the northern and central parts of the country. The rains have continued since the first Information Bulletin on 23 January. These rains have arrived after three years of drought, which has left the soil hard, making it difficult for the water to be absorbed, thus causing extensive flooding. This is the worst flood disaster in ten years. Tunisia has faced severe floods before: in 1969, 1983 and 1989-90.

The number of those affected has risen significantly from the original estimate of 600 families or 3,000 persons. In Mannouba alone, 600 families are seriously affected, and in Jendouba about 3,000 families have suffered, a total of 18,000 persons in these two governorates alone. At least six children have drowned. In total nine governorates have been affected. Since last weekend Bizerte, north of Tunis, has been added to the list, which includes Jendouba, Béja, Manouba, Kasserine, Kairouan, Sidi Bouzid, le Kef and Monastir. The rains have increased the level of the water in the largest river, Oued Mejerda, which crosses the northern part of the country from the Algerian border to North of Tunis, making it flow over to the fields and villages.

A Federation delegate arrived on 25 January for a short mission to assist the Tunisian Red Crescent in an initial needs assessment. The delegate together with a Tunisian RC representative visited the two worst affected areas: the governorates of Mannouba at the outskirts of Tunis, and Jendouba in the north west part of the country close to the Algerian border. They met with regional Red Crescent representatives and local authorities.

In Mannouba the number of affected families at the time of the visit was 330, but this figure has already risen over the weekend to about 600 families or 3,000 persons. These people have been accommodated in a youth hostel, a centre for disabled, a centre for elderly people and private families. They will need to stay there until their homes have been cleaned and repaired.

In the Jendouba governorate the worst affected village is Bou Salem, where 6,900 families have been affected in various degrees, and about 2,000 seriously. These now live with relatives and neighbours. In

North Jendouba 50 families and in the Eastern part of town 95 families have been affected. In addition, a school for 340 students has been flooded and the activities have been moved to a youth hostel. Overall in Jendouba it can be said that about 3,000 families or 15,000 persons have been seriously affected.

The total estimate of the two worst affected governorates is 3,600 families or 18,000 persons. This figure will go up when data on the other governorates becomes available. The people have been evacuated as their houses have either been destroyed or seriously flooded. They have lost most of their belongings: blankets, clothing, food stocks. A number of cattle and sheep have also been lost, and small businesses devastated. The figures will be confirmed and additional information provided by a Tunisian Red Crescent assessment team that will collect information from all the affected regions.

The rescue operation has been mainly carried out by the army and the civil defence, assisted by the Tunisian Red Crescent volunteers. The President of the Republic has appointed a technical commission to assess the material and economic damage and the work that needs to be undertaken.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Tunisian Red Crescent (TRC) has collaborated with the regional authorities in assisting affected families by furnishing warm clothing, foodstuffs and small scale financial assistance. The Society's relief stocks of blankets, clothing and tents are practically used up, and the 40,000 Tunisian Dinars (about 50,000 CHF) taken from the TRC emergency relief fund to buy food and relief items to the victims has almost depleted the fund. The Society is in need to replenish its relief stocks urgently. The most important needs are the following:

- 10 tons of warm clothing
- 5,000 blankets
- 500 hygiene kits (to be assembled locally)
- Diapers for babies (to be bought locally)
- Reconstitution of the emergency fund (50,000 CHF).

The Tunisian Red Crescent is mobilising an assessment team to update the figures of those affected as well as their specific needs. This data should be available by the end of the week. However, even without detailed information it is quite clear that the Society needs additional financial and material resources to help the people that have been forced out of their homes and have lost their belongings and food stocks. An application to the Federation Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) is being prepared.

In view of the fact that winter in Tunisia will last until end of March, the Society foresees a follow-up of the emergency action by supporting affected families to overcome this period, during which their houses are being repaired. The Society plans to focus its efforts on the most vulnerable, namely children, pregnant women and elderly people. The assistance will consist of social and financial aid as well as provision of clothing and foodstuffs. The programme will be closely coordinated with regional authorities.

The Federation Tunis office will assist the Tunisian Red Crescent in producing a Plan of Action for the follow-up assistance activities for the months of February and March. A third Information Bulletin will be issued shortly, giving more details about the situation as well as a Plan and Budget for the foreseen activities.

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

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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.

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