

MDR65003	Date of issue: 19 September 2020
Date of event: 8-9 September 2020	
Host National Society: Hellenic Red Cross (HRC)	
Number of people affected: 11,000 people	Number of people to be assisted: 11,000
National Societies currently involved in the operation: German Red Cross	
Other partner organizations involved in the operation: International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is seeking funding or other assistance from donors to continue supporting the Hellenic Red Cross (HRC) through its currently ongoing [MDR65003 Emergency Appeal on Turkey-Greece and other countries: Population Movement](#). This Emergency Appeal is currently being revised with an increased budget and will be adjusted to reflect additional needs as a result of the fire. Those wanting to respond to the crisis on Lesvos are encouraged to contribute to this appeal.

This bulletin is being issued for information and reflects the current situation and details available at this time.

The situation

During the night on 8 September 2020, a devastating fire ripped through the Reception and Identification Centre in Moria, on the island of Lesvos, as residents remained in COVID-19 lockdown. The fire broke out in a number of spots around the Moria refugee camp which has led authorities to suspect arson.

On 15 September, the Civil Protection Minister confirmed that five persons have been arrested in connection with the fire.

The camp was at more than four times its capacity and the fire has all but destroyed it, prompting close to 11,000¹ refugees who had been living there to flee. More than 4,000 children, including over 400 unaccompanied children had been living in the camp. 407 unaccompanied children were transferred from Lesvos to Thessaloniki on three flights between the evening of 9 September and early morning on the next day. This week, an additional 584 asylum seekers have been transferred to the mainland.

The Greek Prime Minister has announced a four-month state of emergency on the island. The authorities arranged to accommodate some one thousand of the most vulnerable migrants immediately on a passenger ferry, and also quickly established a **new temporary camp at Kara Tepe** to host all other migrants. The camp is already operational, tents have been erected, basic medical facilities have been set up, and water and electricity have been secured.



People are queueing up to receive medical assistance at the first aid station of the Hellenic Red Cross in Lesvos. Photo: Georgia Trismpioti, IFRC

¹ Corrected from previously reported 13,000 based on [UNHCR estimate](#).

The authorities have announced that all migrants must register at the new camp. As of 19 September, more than 7,000 migrants had already moved into their new tented accommodation, and more migrants are expected to move in over the coming days.

All migrants are tested for COVID-19 upon arrival, and according to the authorities 174 migrants have tested positive so far. They are isolated at a separate quarantine structure at the camp.

Greece requested further assistance through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism on 14 September. In an immediate response, Denmark, Austria, Finland, Sweden and Germany have offered hundreds of tents, blankets, winterisation kits and sleeping bags.

Main humanitarian needs and concerns

With the establishment of the new camp, **basic needs including shelter, food, water, health and security are increasingly being met for migrants** who have moved to the new location. Distribution of basic hygiene items, household items and clothing will continue. Meanwhile, sanitation facilities and waste management are being improved. As the camp will stay open until the spring of 2021, all basic services will need to be consolidated and further streamlined in the weeks ahead.

Health and hygiene promotion, and the observation of common measures such as social distancing, regular handwashing and use of masks will remain particularly relevant in view of the overall COVID-19 trends.

According to UNHCR, some 50 women and gender-based violence survivors have already been transferred to a safe shelter on the island. There is a need to ensure continued protection efforts across all response programming, including the prevention of violence against children and sexual and gender-based violence, as well as survivor-centred support and referral where needed. The need for psycho-social support will also require further assessment.

Community engagement and accountability (CEA) is also identified as a key need in this context and an area where the HRC can play an essential role.

The immediate crisis has further affected community relations between migrant and host communities. As the socio-economic situation may worsen further due to COVID-19 and individual households were already struggling because of the global downturn, poverty levels are likely to increase. Where possible, support measures for local communities should be considered as part of the overall response.

It is also likely that there will be an increased demand for adequate reception facilities and services for migrants on the mainland. Last, but not least there is a need for sustained advocacy for more durable solutions and a European migration approach based on solidarity, prompt access to protection and fair asylum procedures, and respect for dignity.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Hellenic Red Cross (HRC) has a branch on Lesbos with staff and 55 volunteers trained in PSS and RFL.

Supported by the German RC, the HRC volunteers have erected a total of 155 family tents at Kara Tepe, and the first migrants have already moved in to occupy them after being registered. An additional three tents are being used to support the work of the HRC mobile health unit, and a further 342 tents are available should there be a need for additional capacity in the coming days.

A mobile health unit is fully operational since the afternoon of 17 September and is staffed by five nurses. A first aid station has been set up on 17 September.

Several teams of Samaritans have been deployed to assist with first aid, relief distributions, erection of tents and general relief operations, and more staff will be deployed in the coming days as needed. In addition to

relief goods which arrived in Lesvos from HRC central warehouse, the local branch has also received in-kind donations of new clothing from the neighbouring Chios branch.

The HRC is on standby to mobilize further support, in close consultation with local authorities and the Ministry of Migration and Asylum and has offered its support for the immediate and long terms needs on Lesvos.

Meanwhile, the Hellenic Red Cross is also actively responding to urgent migration needs in other camps and urban centres in mainland Greece. Services include mobile health units in several migrant camps, five centres for unaccompanied children, two multifunctional centres for migrants in Athens and Thessaloniki, educational health services, referral programmes and a national helpline.

These activities were scaled up earlier this year with the support of IFRC's [MDR65003 Turkey/Greece Population Movement Emergency Appeal](#). This is currently being revised and will be adjusted to reflect additional needs following the fires. Those wanting to respond to the crisis on Lesvos are encouraged to donate to this appeal.

IFRC support

The IFRC is supporting Hellenic RC in operational costs, communication, technical assistance and coordination through its country office in Greece and backed up by its regional office in Budapest and Geneva headquarters.

An IFRC communications officer and a reporting officer are currently on Lesvos to support the Hellenic Red Cross with media queries, collection of AV material, monitoring and reporting.

As for surge support, a WASH coordinator is expected to arrive on Lesvos in the coming days to assess the immediate and longer-term sanitation needs, including toilets, shower facilities and liquid waste disposal.

Additionally, a programme and operations coordinator has been identified and is expected to arrive in Greece next week. The IFRC Head of Country Office also accompanied the HRC President during the field visit on 15 September.

Communications

The IFRC Regional Office for Europe issued a [press release](#) on the humanitarian situation in Lesvos quoting IFRC President Francesco Rocca that was published by several high-profile media outlets including the [Associated Press](#), [The Guardian](#) and [Le Monde](#). Regular updates are published on the [IFRC Europe Twitter channel](#). Photos can be accessed [here](#) and media key messages are available upon request.

ICRC and RC Movement partners

The ICRC has deployed additional staff from Athens to assist in restoring family links (RFL) in close cooperation with HRC staff.

A German Red Cross delegate arrived on Lesvos on Sunday to oversee the construction of tents and to advise HRC on other planned components of the operation.

Several other partner National Societies have pledged further support both for the immediate response in Lesvos, as well as for ongoing response and long-term services for migrants elsewhere in Greece.

On 11 September, an urgent briefing was organized by IFRC Geneva to provide participating National Societies with an update on the latest situation and to conduct a quick dialogue on the way forward. National Societies who had participated on the call included the American RC, Belgian RC, British RC, Danish RC, Finnish RC, German RC, Italian RC, Netherlands RC, Swedish RC and Swiss RC.

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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 (NGO's) 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**.