

MDR65003	Date of issue: 12 September 2020
Date of event: 8-9 September 2020	
Host National Society: Hellenic Red Cross (HRC)	
Number of people affected: 13,000	Number of people to be assisted: 13,000
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) in 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 Lesbos 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

On Tuesday night, 8 September 2020, a devastating fire ripped through the Reception and Identification Centre in Moria, on the island of Lesbos, as residents remained in COVID-19 lockdown. Fire broke out in a number of spots around the Moria refugee camp which has led authorities to suspect arson. There have been no known casualties and the cause of the fire remains under investigation.

The camp was at more than four times its capacity and the fire has all but destroyed it, prompting close to 13,000 refugees who had been living there to flee. More than 4,000 children, including 408 unaccompanied children, had been living in the camp. The 408 unaccompanied children were transferred from Lesbos to Thessaloniki on three flights between Wednesday evening and early Thursday morning.

The Greek Prime Minister has announced a four-month state of emergency on the island.

Sanitary conditions in Moria camp were alarming before the COVID-19 lockdown and fire. Tensions within the camp and with local residents were high and were heightened even further when three dozen people living in the camp were diagnosed with COVID-19 in the days before the fire. Authorities are trying to locate all those who tested positive and dispersed in the chaotic situation after the fire.

Police have blocked roads to prevent migrants from reaching the town of Mytilene, and more roadblocks were set up in an effort to keep some 4,000 migrants in Moria and a second large migrant camp in Kara Tepe.

Greek authorities have accommodated a thousand of the most vulnerable refugees with disabilities and health problems on a ferry boat. Authorities aim to ensure continuous provision of food and potable water to



Hellenic Red Cross truck with 6.5 tonnes of relief items arriving at the port of Lesbos.

Photo: Hellenic Red Cross

all people staying currently in external spaces and temporary shelters on the island; to transfer necessary materials to shelter people in a safe area; and to distribute basic hygiene items to the affected people.

The authorities are creating more temporary shelter spaces using tents in several locations on Lesbos. A first group of migrants will be hosted in a new temporary site with 240 tents provided by UNHCR while other options and suitable sites are being identified. Migrants are tested for COVID-19 before they can enter a new accommodation site.

Several European member states have confirmed that they are ready to relocate some of the migrants from Moria, including unaccompanied minors who have already been transferred to Thessaloniki. EU member states are also responding to the request by the Greek government for humanitarian relief items and other materials including COVID-19 tests.

Main humanitarian needs and concerns

The most immediate humanitarian needs include emergency shelter solutions, blankets, water, food, health care, first aid and protection. Securing water sanitation and hygiene (WASH) has been highlighted as a major need for all migrants, particularly in the current COVID-19 context. There is also need for Psychosocial support (PSS) and Restoring Family links (RFL) services.

This is a very complex and fluid context, and there are several operational challenges ranging from community tensions and security concerns, uncertainty about the future location of those affected in the short and longer term, the risks related to the further spread of COVID-19, the considerable coordination challenges with a large number of humanitarian and other actors, and logistical constraints.

Looking ahead, there will also 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 first aid, Psychosocial Support (PSS) and Restoring Family Links (RFL).

The HRC has deployed a team of senior staff who are carrying out an **initial assessment of most urgent needs** in close coordination with government authorities and other actors. A first truck with **6,500 kg of relief goods**, including blankets, water, and hygiene kits was despatched from the HRC main warehouse in Athens and reached Lesbos on Friday morning. 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.

A **mobile health unit** has been redeployed from the mainland and arrived in Lesbos on Saturday morning; and ten more nurses will arrive on Sunday morning.

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 Lesbos. The HRC is in urgent need of items such as hygiene kits and kitchen sets, as well as two mobile health units/vans, and would welcome any support in this area from partners.

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 Emergency Appeal is currently being revised and will be adjusted to reflect additional needs as a result of the fires. Those wanting to respond to the crisis on Lesbos 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. **Surge staff in operational coordination and communications are expected to be deployed in the next coming days** to provide support remotely and in Greece. **A communications officer** is being deployed to assist with media relations and international communications.

The deployment of an Emergency Response Unit for water, sanitation and hygiene (**WASH ERU**) **is being considered**.

Communications

The IFRC Regional Office for Europe issued a [press release](#) on the humanitarian situation in Lesbos, quoting IFRC President Francesco Rocca, and managed several related media enquiries. Regular updates are published on the [IFRC Europe Twitter channel](#). Photos can be accessed [here](#) and media key messages are available upon request. An IFRC Communications Officer in Greece is already available to support with international media request and related communications.

ICRC and Red Cross Movement partners

There is ongoing coordination with the ICRC who maintain a presence at the HRC Lesbos branch, focusing on community-based protection, detention and support to PSS and RFL. Coordination with the ICRC is ensured at country, regional and global levels.

The German RC is organizing 4 relief flights with 500 family tents and 343 winterization kits, as well as non-food items including high thermal fleece blankets, sleeping bags, plastic sheeting, hygiene kits, collapsible jerry cans and kitchen sets for up to 5,000 people.

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

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

Hellenic Red Cross Society

- Angelica Fanaki, Head Director, HRC International Cooperation, Organisational Development & Programs Sector, M + 306936695925, angelica.fanaki@redcross.gr
- Marina Stamati, Head of Press, Communications & PR Department, M +30 6974 909429, pr@redcross.gr

IFRC Country Office, Greece

- Leon Prop, Head of Country Office, leon.prop@ifrc.org

IFRC Regional Office for Europe, Hungary

- Seval Guzelkilinc, Head of Disaster and Crisis (Prevention, Response and Recovery), M +36 70 430 6502, seval.guzelkilinc@ifrc.org
- Alma Alsayed, Operations Coordinator, M +36 70 430 6511, alma.alsayed@ifrc.org
- Nebojsa Medojevic, Disaster and Crisis preparedness Delegate, M +36 70 953 7701, nebojsa.medojevic@ifrc.org

For Resource Mobilization:

- Andrej Naricyn, Head of Partnerships and Resource Development a.i., Andrej.NARICYN@ifrc.org

For Communications:

- Corinne Ambler, Regional Communications Manager, corinne.ambler@ifrc.org

IFRC Geneva:

- Antoine Belair, Operations Coordination, Senior Officer for Disaster and Crises (Prevention, Response and Recovery); email: antoine.belair@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 (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**.