

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 & FLOODS

14 November 2001

Information Bulletin N° 2

Disaster relief emergency fund (DREF) Allocated: CHF 100,000

This Information Bulletin is being issued to provide an initial update on progress in the Federation's preliminary emergency appeal (35/01) for CHF 2,034,000 to assist 6,000 families for up to three months - launched on 12 November 2001 - as well as a general update on the situation in Algeria. A more detailed operations update is expected shortly.

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 350 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), 6.000 families - including 4.000 in Algiers - have been made homeless. The most affected communities in the capital are Oued-Kouraich, Bab El-Oued 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.

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 have continued. 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. There is also concern over the vulnerability of the homeless because of the extreme cold weather.

The Government of Algeria has allocated 5 million Algerian dinars (CHF 23,000) to meet the most urgent humanitarian requirements and in addition Interior Minister Yazid Zerhouni has officially appealed for international aid. The prime minister has nominated the Governor of Algiers to coordinate rescue and relief operations.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Four field assessment coordination team (FACT) members, and one support staff from the Federation's Tunis office have arrived in Algeria. Another person will arrive tomorrow (Thursday). The team has established positive working relations with the ARCS.

Communication with the ARCS and the Federation FACT team remains difficult. Existing damage to main telephone cables between Algeria and Europe, compounded by damage due to floods and the recent storms makes communication sporadic. However, the FACT team did manage to supply the following information:

(i) The main current needs are:

- 1,000 family tents for families who did not find shelter in public buildings
- 10,000 pieces of plastic sheeting for shelter
- 5,000 camping foldable beds with mattresses
- 15,000 buckets with lid, Oxfam type (easy to stack)
- chloramine tablets (to be used to chlorinate water - 1 tablet per bucket, no powder or larger size tablets)
- bladder tanks and tap-stands. FACT is checking whether Civil Protection has the capacity/access to fill such tanks with drinking water, checking how many tanks are needed and what size
- medical equipment, kits. Information is expected once the FACT health expert has visited health posts.
- the supply of blankets is being covered by donations from German and Iranian National Societies as well as the Swiss RedCross/Government

(ii) At least 1,000 volunteers have been mobilised and are assisting several thousands of homeless, including one group of 1,018 families on one site, a group of several hundred on a second site and small groups of families all over the capital, Algiers, and its surroundings. The number of homeless families needing assistance is growing rapidly and the ARCS expects to assist in all up to 6,000 families.

(iii) Twenty-two health posts, providing first aid and basic health services, have been opened by the Society. The FACT health expert, who arrives today, will visit them tomorrow and provide the Federation with a list of the support that is needed.

(iv) The National Society has access to at least two large warehouses and has volunteers at the airport taking care of loading and unloading.

(v) Relief teams and goods are being rushed into Algeria, often without advance notice and sometimes awareness of the actual needs in the field. There is a risk of duplication if donors/humanitarian actors do not take the efforts of one another into account. The ARCS and the FACT are in close consultation with the authorities to coordinate the respective response efforts.

(iv) The Government has indicated that there will be no landing fees for humanitarian flights.

National Societies, interested in covering part of the above mentioned needs are requested to contact the Federation's Logistics Department Secretariat, Birgitte Stalder-Olsen at +41 22 7304245 - StalderB@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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