

# 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

## **CARIBBEAN:HURRICANE MICHELLE** 4 November, 2001

*Information Bulletin N° 1/01*

*This Information Bulletin is intended to reflect 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**

Hurricane Michelle, characterized as an extremely dangerous category 4 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 215 km per hour (135 mph) is reportedly located some 220 km south of Havana. The hurricane is moving towards the north at 19 km per hour, with extremely strong winds which are expected to hit the Cuban coast late Sunday evening (GMT).

On Friday 2 November, a Hurricane Alert was declared in Cuba, throughout the Western and Central Provinces (including Habana Province and the City of Habana). More than 150,000 people have been evacuated to safer areas.

According to the Cuban Red Cross (CRC), Hurricane Michelle is expected to cause extensive damage. By comparison, the most powerful hurricane to hit Cuba occurred in 1926 and killed over 600 people, and its winds were reportedly weaker than those of Hurricane Michelle.

According to the CRC there are currently three likely scenarios based on the most recent forecasts

- the most likely scenario predicts that Hurricane Michelle will cross Cuba, entering from Isla de Juventud, with a slight eastern curve, hitting the Havana area, and then crossing the provinces of Matanzas or Villa Clara; or
- the hurricane will hit the Peninsula of San Antonio, the eastern most tip of Cuba and then continue in a northern direction towards the Florida Keys; or
- the hurricane will cross Cuba from the west to the central provinces of Villa Clara, Cienfuegos, Sancti Spiritus and Ciego de Avila, then turn to the north exiting towards the Bahamas.

Heavy rains have been encountered in Cuba since the end of October, causing floods in 10 communities in the provinces of Ciego de Avila, Camaguey, Holguin and Guantanamo. Due to these rains 3,200 people were already evacuated from Holguin, while 463 were evacuated in Camaguey. Since it is estimated that Hurricane Michelle could drop up to 20 inches of additional rain, there is a considerable danger of additional floods. Many of the dams situated between Pinar del Rio and Ciego de Avila (two provinces under alert) have reached 100% of their capacity. The soil is saturated due to current rains, thus increasing the risk of landslides.

Hurricane Michelle also caused severe damage in Nicaragua, Honduras, eastern Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, and the Yucatan Peninsula over the past few days on its path from the coast of Nicaragua at a time when it was merely a tropical storm.

In Jamaica the continuous heavy rains resulted in landslides and flooding, with over 30 communities affected in the parishes of Portland, St. Mary and St. Ann, including two deaths and some 400 families left homeless and in some instances totally displaced due to massive landslides

In Honduras the storm affected about 20,300 people, with four deaths, seven missing, and about 4,000 now living in improvised shelters.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent Action***

CRC branches are on alert, and volunteers have been activated in the provinces and at headquarters. The emergency intervention groups are also on alert in communities, and search and rescue brigades have been activated. The CRC volunteers are also assisting at temporary shelters. The CRC radio communication network is effectively disseminating information. A CRC "Hurricane Warning" TV spot has been regularly transmitted over the last several days. The CRC and the Cuban Civil Defense are maintaining regular contact. The Federation's Field Assessment and Coordination Team (FACT) system is on alert.

The Federation's regional delegations in Santo Domingo and Guatemala are monitoring the situation and remain in close contact with the CRC, as well as with the Honduras and Jamaican Red Cross. The Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) in Panama is undertaking operational preparations and arrangements.

The Honduras and Jamaican Red Cross are currently assisting those affected in their respective countries, and further assessing their needs. The relief efforts have been somewhat affected by the mountainous terrain, blocked roads, and swollen rivers.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see [www.ifrc.org](http://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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