

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

AFGHANISTAN: EARTHQUAKE

27 March 2002

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This Bulletin is being issued based on the information available at this time. The Federation is currently not seeking international assistance. However, depending on further updates and assessment reports, an appeal may be launched to assist the Afghan Red Crescent Society in its relief operation.

The Situation

The death toll has continued to rise sharply as more reports confirm the scale of destruction after a series of earthquakes and aftershocks struck the Nahrin district of Baghlan province in northern Afghanistan overnight Monday/Tuesday. Latest estimates say that at least 2,000 people have been killed and thousands more have been injured. There are fears the death toll could rise sharply as more devastation in this remote region is uncovered. Thousands of people have also been made homeless. Today further strong aftershocks hit the region. In the wake of the first series of earthquakes, the market town of Nahrin and the nearby village of Burkah were reported to be destroyed. Access to the affected area has been hampered by blocked roads and the fact that many areas have been heavily mined during previous battles between the Northern Alliance and Taliban forces. The region is 160 km east of Mazar-i-Sharif over difficult terrain in the Hindu Kush.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

As part of a coordinated relief response, the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has dispatched relief items on a UN convoy from Mazar-i-Sharif. Five trucks loaded with 888 tents, 4,846 blankets, 3,187 pieces of plastic sheeting and 193 jerry cans were due to arrive in the old city district of Nahrin later today. The distribution will be supervised by the ARCS disaster preparedness officer.

The Federation is planning to send a field assessment coordination team (FACT) to the region in support of the ARCS in assessing the need of the affected population and immediate response to priority needs with the relief items that are already in the country.

Two ARCS emergency medical units - comprising doctors, nurses, a pharmacist and support staff - are on the scene and have been the first to provide emergency treatment in the stricken area. The acting president of the ARCS, who is also a health officer, is on one of the teams. The president is not only assisting in emergency health care but is also helping coordinate the ongoing relief strategy. Latest reports are that more than 100 people have been treated and another 100 were due to be seen by nightfall. Eight of the most seriously injured have been transferred outside of the area to facilities with more specialised equipment. One of the teams is stationed in the new city district of Nahrin while another has set up a tented health clinic in the old city.

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ARCS volunteers and staff have been mobilised. Nine ARCS staff are assisting in the distribution of relief items. The Federation is working closely with the ICRC on all aspects of the operation.

UNOCHA has taken the lead role to coordinate all relief efforts in kind and services. The Federation's relief delegate was due in Pulhi Khumri and Nahrin today. Federation logistics personnel are arranging for more supplies to be sent from Kabul to Mazar later today.

The ARCS also responded to an earthquake on March 3, measuring 6.7 on the Richter scale which killed at least 70 people in Samangan province north-eastern Afghanistan. Two earthquakes in February and May 1998 left about 9,000 people dead in north-eastern Afghanistan.

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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