

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

28 March 2002

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

The Situation

Disaster relief efforts continued in response to the series of earthquakes and aftershocks which struck the Nahrin district of Baghlan province in northern Afghanistan (160 km east of Mazar-i-Sharif in the Hindu Kush mountain range) on Monday and Tuesday, 25 and 26 March. Aftershocks continue to cause concern and panic in a population already traumatized by conflict, drought, and chronic food shortages. The latest reports indicate between 800 to 1,000 people are dead, with thousands more injured. These figures however are expected to change as assessment teams reach the more remote areas and villages of this isolated region. Reports indicate that homeless families are estimated to number between 7,000 to 10,000. Access to the affected area continues to be hampered by blocked roads and the need to take into account areas which were heavily mined during previous battles between the Northern Alliance and Taliban forces.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The coordinated Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) and International Federation relief response continues. With considerable stocks of relief items available in Afghanistan (maintained by a number of humanitarian organizations), most of the non-food item needs are covered. The Federation has sent 4 trucks loaded with 700 tents and plastic sheeting, and 4 more trucks are expected to reach the affected area tomorrow (Friday, 29 March), delivering 200 tents and 5,000 blankets.

The ICRC is currently supporting 2 hospitals (the MoPH with 150 beds and the textile factory hospital with 200 beds), and both are full. For that reason, the Federation has loaned 20 tents to the ICRC to be used for those persons with minor injuries referred to these hospitals.

The two ARCS emergency medical units (comprising doctors, nurses, a pharmacist and support staff) continue to provide medical treatment and assistance. According to recent communications the ARCS team working in the old part of the city of Mazar i-Sharif will cover the needs within the old city and 17 surrounding villages. The team has also started outreach activities in the villages with an ARCS mobile team. These activities include assessment of the situation, especially the health status of the people, as well as referral of patients from the villages to the ARCS health center. By 27 March, a total of 143 patients had been treated in the ARCS tents, while 8 were referred to the hospital (transported with Federation cars). Today (28 March) 92 patients were treated by the ARCS team in the old city. In order to organize patient referrals from the old city to the Pul-i-Khumri hospital, the ARCS team is collaborating with the HALLO Trust (NGO focusing on demining) ambulance.

Related to media activities, the Federation's health officer has provided interviews to the NY Times about the ARCS and Federation activities. Photos of the work in the ARCS clinics were also taken by a Russian TV channel and the Japanese Red Cross.

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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