

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

NIGERIA: EXPLOSION

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This Bulletin is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, the Federation will seek international support through an Appeal.

The Situation

Ignited by a fire in a nearby residential area, an underground ammunitions dump situated in the Ikeja Military Cantonment exploded on 28 Sunday at around 5 PM. The munitions continued to detonate throughout the night and into the next day. The large army barracks suffered the most severe damage with the 3 and 4 story accommodation blocks taking the brunt of the damage and many casualties. The heavily populated and poorly constructed homes in the vicinity offered little safety to the inhabitants with resultant casualties. The damage from the blasts extended over a wide area with flying glass and collapsing ceilings and walls causing numerous injuries.

While exact figures of dead, wounded and missing remain difficult to specify, the NRCS is concentrating its efforts on providing emergency assistance to survivors. Many casualties were caused by the exploding munitions, but still more were caused by the subsequent panic and stampede which followed from rumors that a military coup was underway. As the explosions continued through the night, increasingly more people joined in a rush to escape. Many drowned in the nearby Oke-afa canal, many more were injured jumping from higher buildings or by being trampled underfoot, and some were killed or injured by traffic on the heavily traveled Ikeja dual highway. There have been further reports of casualties resulting from unexploded ordinance scattered widely over the area. Families became separated in the confusion with many young children looking for their parents.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS) volunteers from the Lagos State branch, supported by national headquarters staff, immediately responded with assistance delivered to the scene. Volunteers provided first aid to 160 people and evacuated 150 injured people, including children, to the Ikeja General Hospital for treatment. Of these 150 people 91 still remain hospitalized with serious injuries. It became immediately obvious that a serious problem was lost children and a temporary shelter was set up, with the dissemination of messages that the NRCS was dealing with lost children. A registration and information system was established accordingly. In the first 24 hours some 560 children were registered and provided food and accommodation. 121 children remained unclaimed remained overnight in the Motherless Babies Home of the Lagos State branch. A further 111 children were reunited with their parents the morning after the explosion while a further 60 new cases were registered. A total of 70 children remain in the care of the NRCS while 310 parent couples have registered lost children. This work of trying to

reunite families has proved labor intensive and over 40 volunteers have been engaged full time in counseling and offering psychological support as well as maintaining and checking records for tracing. At this time a total of 1,400 families (some 7,000 people) are registered as displaced or homeless. Food and water have been provided to these affected persons. The public and private (business) sector has responded positively with offers of assistance to the NRCS. The NRCS has also erected 20 tents in the Cantonment Car Park and provided 500 sleeping mats, 20 bales of used clothing, and plastic shoes (donated by the Swedish Red Cross) for the displaced.

A coordination meeting held under the leadership of the Lagos State Commissioner for Health was attended by the NRCS, with WHO and UNICEF present. This followed an inter-ministry meeting at which it had been decided that the Ikeja Cantonment would have to be evacuated for a period of two to three weeks with families being temporarily located in the Police College Ikeja grounds and the Abalti Barracks Yaba grounds. The Berger Nigeria construction company has already started clearing ground in preparation for erecting tents for the evacuees who will move there within the next few days. An Information Centre has been established by the military in Ikeja Cantonment which will provide the new base for the provision of general information as well as the NRCS child tracing operation.

The Lagos Health Ministry is providing transport assistance between the 3 mortuaries of Isolo, Lagos Island and Ikeja. A total of 600 corpses are presently unidentified in these mortuaries. UNICEF is providing drugs and medicines to hospitals as required and will distribute water to the two displacement / evacuation camps, while WHO has offered the services of doctors and nurses for those to be evacuated and the displaced.

Needs

The work of caring for and reuniting lost children will continue for some days. The NRCS will provide food and shelter for some 500 people; children or parents of lost children. An estimated 10,000 people will require food for their two to three week stay in temporary shelter. While the public donation of food will continue, it is important that at least one main meal per day for these people is provided. The NRCS is one of the few indigenous organizations able to undertake this responsibility. It is estimated that some 3,000 - 5,000 people will remain homeless and in need of assistance. They will be provided with family packs of cooking pots, plastic plates/cups, cutlery, sleeping mats (2), and soap.

This assistance operation will be managed under the authority of the Secretary General of the NRCS, with implementation by the Lagos State branch led by the Zonal Disaster Preparedness Officer. The Federation delegation will provide technical, logistical and management support. A full Plan of Action will be reflected in the appeal to be issued shortly.

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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