

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

IRAQ: STAMPEDE

1 September 2005

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

This Bulletin no. 1 is being issued as an update on the Iraqi Red Crescent response in the wake of the tragedy on the Ala'imma bridge in Baghdad. The Federation's Iraq delegation (based in Amman) is actively supporting the national society as it joins efforts to support the thousands of people affected by this disaster. The Federation will communicate further if the situation dramatically changes and the status of the national society's response and whether international support is sought.

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations \(NGOs\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

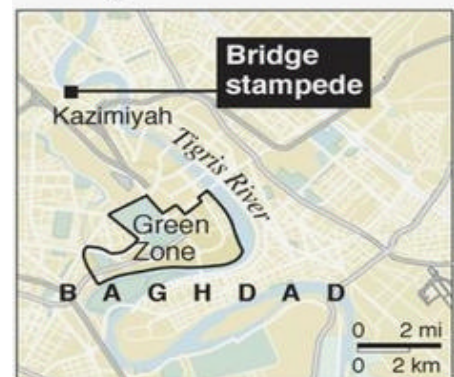
The Situation

A Shia religious celebration involving two million pilgrims quickly turned to horror yesterday (Wednesday 31 August) leaving at least 965 dead and 800-plus injured. Those killed were either crushed in the stampede or drowned in the river Tigris, after falling or being pushed by weight of numbers. Most of the victims were women and children.

As people streamed towards the Shrine of Musa Al-Kadhum, in north Baghdad in Al-Kadhimiyah district (see map) panic appeared to break out. News reports spoke of chaos being sparked by rumours of a suicide bomber in the crowds.

Pilgrims killed

About 650 people were killed Wednesday in a stampede on a bridge.



The pilgrims arrived from many places to mark the annual commemoration of Imam Musa Al-Kadhum.

Hours before the crush, three mortar bombs shelled the Mosque of Al-Kadhimiya killing three and injuring more than 10.

Today many funerals were staged and some bodies were being taken to the Shia holy city of Najaf for burial. The Iraqi government has declared an official period of mourning.

National society action

The Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS) was quickly into action. Fifty volunteers were dispatched to the area within minutes of news of the tragedy. They were backed by seven vehicles (two ambulances, two trucks, two 4WD and a minibus). The volunteers administered first aid on the scene to some of those most in need. The initial team was soon joined by backup. A first aid centre was set up on-site. As injured people were ferried to various hospitals, the IRCS sent 1,000 blankets to Al-Nu'man, Medicine City and Baghdad Nursing House hospitals. The below photographs capture some of the scale and horror of the scene.



The massive crowd near the Shrine's Gate (AP Photo)



In the River



Over the Bridge



Dazed by tragedy *(All photos AP)*

In addition, several items were sent to Kadhimiyah Hospital, including packs of basic medical supplies (300), blankets (100), body bags (40), stretchers (7), and bed sheets (150). Some of this equipment was available thanks to previous donations from Caritas.

IRCS teams last night continued a major operation of transporting victims to various hospitals, evacuation of bodies and helping in the search for missing loved ones. The tragedy galvanized the whole of the national society to respond and the IRCS president (pictured below) visited some of the injured in hospital.



The scale and intensity of the disaster made effective and rapid response a challenge. The national society, however, was quick to link up with colleagues from the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, including the Federation, ICRC, UEA RC and Kuwaiti RC to ensure action was coordinated. The Federation has authorized the release of USD100,000 from an emergency contingency fund contained within its ongoing emergency appeal (08/2003) [<click here for latest operations update>](#)

Iranian RCS is providing medicine and the Iraqi RCS will pick it up at the border tomorrow (September 2). The Federation is supporting this action through the renting, loading/unloading of the trucks.

Needs

The IRCS support operation is continuing today (September 1). There is a need for further relief items. The Federation’s Iraq delegation (based in Amman) is in discussion with the national society around this. If there is a need for external assistance, this will be communicated. The following items are urgently needed:

N	Item	Quantity
1	Emergency First Aid Kit	For 1000 Persons
2	Blood Bags	
3	Body Bags	
4	Blankets	
5	Bed sheets	
7	Stretchers	100 For IRCS staff use
9	Face masks	

Although the Ala'imma bridge tragedy has been in many ways overwhelming, the IRCS has again proved to be an effective supporter of vulnerable Iraqi communities during yet another tragic period in the country. The extreme insecurity in Iraq has prompted the departure of many international humanitarian organizations. Because of this, the role of the IRCS as a nationwide, indigenous and community-based supporter of vulnerable people has become even more important.