

# 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:TROPICAL STORM ERNESTO

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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 183 countries.

### In Brief

This Bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the situation and the information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The International Federation undertakes activities that are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to achieve the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

#### Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

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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 Organizations \(NGOs\) 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

On 25 August, a tropical wave which had brought rain and storms to Barbados and the Lesser Antilles over the previous days, was up-graded to tropical storm status – the fifth named storm, and as of 27 August, the first hurricane of the 2006 season. In the early hours of 27 August, tropical storm Ernesto was up-graded to a Category 1 hurricane - although it was subsequently down-graded to tropical storm status after passing over Haiti. It is expected to regain hurricane intensity as it heads towards Cuba, by the morning of Monday 28 August. The storm has continued to slow down, whilst generally increasing in intensity, with torrential downpours reported over the past 24-36 hours over Haiti and the Dominican Republic, as well as along the northern coast of Jamaica.

The current and projected track of the storm has it travelling slightly farther NNW than originally predicted, and it is expected to pass over the SW tip of Haiti late on Sunday, 27 August. Predictions are for additional strengthening over the next 24 hours, with the next landfall anticipated near Guantanamo, Cuba as a Category 1 or 2 hurricane, early on Monday 28 August.

As of 5PM EDT, tropical storm Ernesto was located near latitude 18.0 N and longitude 74.5W, or some 240 kilometres WSW of Port of Prince, Haiti and about 255 km SSE of Guantanamo, Cuba. The storm continues to move slowly along a north-westerly track at 13 km / hour. Earlier in the day, maximum sustained hurricane winds had reached up to 120km/hour, extending outward up to 30 km from the centre, with tropical storm winds extending outward up to 150 km – before settling down to somewhat lesser velocity of 95km/hour late on 27 August.

The storm is expected to continue along its current track over the next 24 hours. A hurricane warning has been in effect for the southern coast of Haiti, as well as for the Cuban Provinces of Guantanamo, Santiago de Cuba, Granma, Holguin, Las Tunas and Camaguey. A tropical storm warning has also been recommended for the south coast of the Dominican Republic, whilst a tropical storm warning and hurricane watch remain in effect for Jamaica. A hurricane watch also remains in effect for the Cayman Islands and has most recently been declared for all of the Florida Keys, from Ocean Reef to the Dry Tortugas.

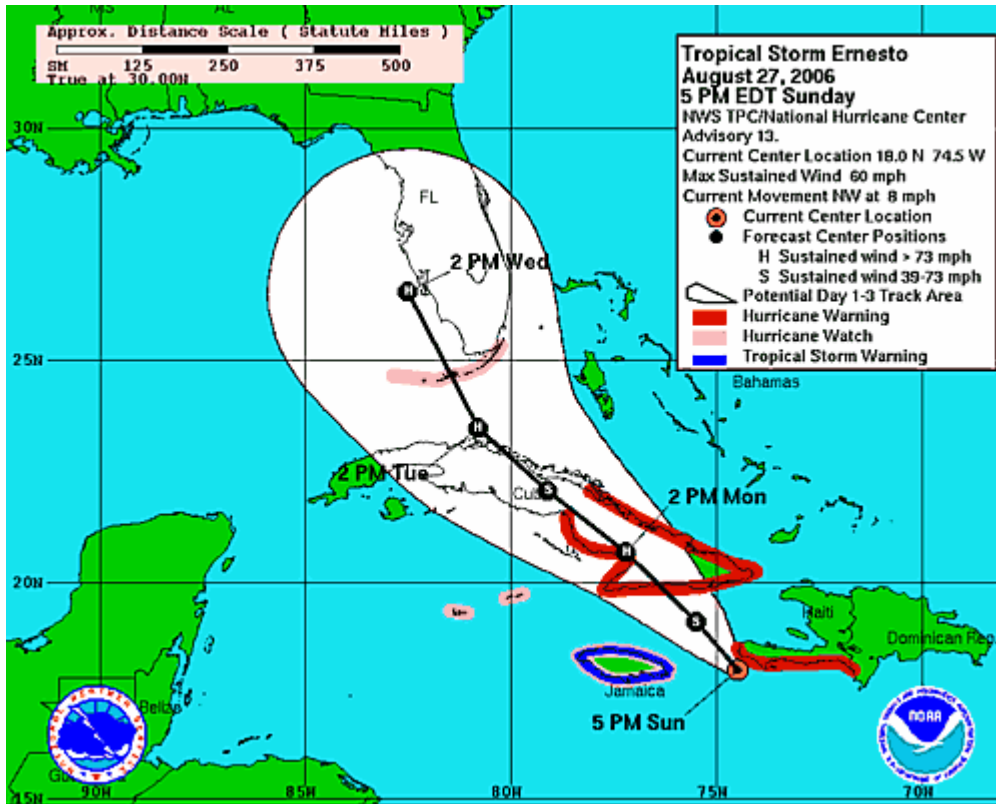
Red Cross National Societies and International Federation delegates in the field report that:

- In Cuba, heavy and sustained rainfall had begun as of late morning on 27 August, in the south eastern provinces. There have also been reports of heavy sea surges, and authorities have declared beaches off-limits;
- In Haiti, it has been raining steadily for over 24-36 hours, and certain parts of the capital city of Port-au-Prince have been experiencing flooding. Accumulated rainfall to date has reportedly reached 30cm in the plains and up to 50cms in the mountainous areas of the south. This, combined with the highly agitated sea swells and surges, has increased the risk of flooding and landslides, with particular concerns for 5 of the Départements: Sud Est, Sud, Nippes, Grand Anse and Ouest). In addition, the Quinte River in Haut-Artibonite is reported to have over-flown its banks – with some evacuation occurring in the area of Passerenne, less than 15 km from Gonaives.
- In Jamaica, up to 30 cm of rain has already accumulated in communities along the northern coast, with more on the way, as the storm continues to pass just to the north of the island.

Tides of up to 90cm above normal are expected in Jamaica and the SW peninsula of Haiti, with even bigger tides - possibly reaching 180cm along with large battering waves - being predicted for the southern coast of East Cuba.

There are concerns that the sustained heavy rains could cause life-threatening flash floods and mudslides – with certain parts of Haiti particularly vulnerable to such occurrences.

It is highly probable that tropical storm Ernesto will regain strength, becoming a hurricane once again, as soon as it has left the mountainous areas of Haiti and is back over water.



### Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The International Federation – through its Panama Regional Delegation and its Pan-American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU) based in Panama, and supported by its country Delegation in Haiti, as well as its Sub Regional Office in Trinidad - remains in close contact with the National Societies in Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica and the Overseas Branch of British Red Cross in the Cayman Islands, as well as with the American Red Cross and the French Red Cross, to coordinate actions and exchange information, in anticipation of the possible need for emergency relief.

A Federation Logistics Officer is also positioned in Jamaica, as part of PADRU’s regular operations and is providing support and acting in a liaison capacity with the National Society and PADRU.

The Haitian National Red Cross Society (HNRCS) has activated its Emergency Operations Centre which has held two coordinating meetings over the last 24 hours, as well as its Regional Operations Centres, and is in close contact with governmental authorities. National Intervention Teams (NITs) and HNRCS volunteers have been mobilized in Jacmel, Les Cayilles and Jeremie – and support is also being provided by in-country NIT members trained by the French Red Cross’s Regional Intervention Platform for the Caribbean (PIRAC) for conducting initial assessments, in association with the Civil Protection Agency. Regular radio contact (HF and VHF) is being maintained with all regional branches, and every three hours with those situated in the south of the country. The HNRCS/Federation is liaising closely with OCHA; following reports of flooding in Port Salut in the Sud Department, OCHA is planning to carry out an assessment as of 28 August.

All of the south-eastern provinces of Cuba, from Camaguey to Guantanamo, are on official hurricane alert, with people being evacuated from high risk areas. Cuban Red Cross volunteers are assisting in evacuations, search and rescue activities, and water safety measures. In total, 1,200 Red Cross volunteers have been mobilized to date, to assist with preparations in anticipation of the predicted hurricane. Local radio and TV are providing regular information up-dates on the progress of Ernesto.

The Jamaica Red Cross Executive Committee has been holding emergency meetings and has activated all of its branches, island-wide, with first-responder Red Cross volunteers on stand-by. All the branches have met with their local disaster agencies to reinforce their roles and responsibilities during the emergency. Staff and volunteers are at the headquarters, to provide support and to make contact as necessary. Contacts were made with the psychosocial support team and all the Community Disaster Response Teams (CDRTs), trained under the DIPECHO IV programme, with greater emphasis on those communities that are prone to flooding.

Jamaica Red Cross volunteers were planning to conduct field assessments of the affected communities late on 27 August, to determine needs and provide some initial relief assistance accordingly. Planning and actions are being closely coordinated with the Jamaican national emergency office (ODP). The Jamaica Red Cross continues to monitor its communication links via its HF and VHF radio network with the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), its branches island-wide and other National Societies.

The Cayman Islands Overseas Branch of British Red Cross is on stand-by, with volunteers activated, and is coordinating closely with the national emergency authorities. Branch Directors attended a meeting of the National Hurricane Committee (NHC) on 27 August. Subsequent to the meeting of the NHC, volunteers were to be briefed, assigned to duties and if necessary issued with response kits (hard hat, flashlight, gloves, length of rope).

The American Red Cross Disaster Operations Centre was activated on 25 August, focusing on building the appropriate capacity, as the storm heads towards Florida. Leadership teams and support staff have been identified and will be deployed to Florida and Alabama, as of 28 August. Headquarters staff has begun coordinating with authorities, to put into place initial response support mechanisms.

PADRU has up-dated its stock list, with a view to dispatching emergency relief items as quickly as required, and is on stand-by to deploy disaster management delegates and regional intervention team (RIT) members, depending on needs.

### ***Coordination and Information***

PADRU is coordinating with the OCHA Regional Office, based in Panama. The Jamaica Red Cross was contacted by the ODPEM to provide shelter managers for the possible opening of shelters.

PADRU and the French Red Cross's 'Intervention Platform for the Caribbean' (PIRAC), based in Guadeloupe are also coordinating closely, for possible deployment of PIRAC's emergency intervention team to support operations in Haiti, as required.

The Federation has an Information Delegate, pre-positioned at PADRU, with specific responsibility to lead international media relations during the hurricane season and support National Societies in their media relations.

The Federation's Disaster Management Information System (DMIS) is being up-dated on a regular basis.

A special page on both of the Regional Federation websites at [www.cruzroja.org](http://www.cruzroja.org) and [www.caribbeanredcross.org](http://www.caribbeanredcross.org) have been created and will be up-dated on a regular basis, as the situation requires.

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