


www.ifrc.org
Saving lives,
changing minds.

Information bulletin

Honduras: fire in Comayagua Penitentiary

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Information Bulletin n° 1 15 February 2012

This bulletin is being issued for information only and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is not currently seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation. The Honduran Red Cross could, however, consider direct assistance to provide support to the affected people and families.

[<Click here for detailed contact information>](#)

During the night on 14 February, a fire spread in the Comayagua Penitentiary (Granja Penal de Comayagua) affecting several sectors of the centre. Although figures need to be confirmed, official statements report that 356 inmates have lost their lives and many more are injured.



Some 30 volunteers of the Honduran Red Cross (HRC) were activated during the night on 14 February to assist hundreds of inmates at Comayagua Penitentiary. Source: HRC

In its auxiliary role to the government, the Honduran Red Cross (HRC) has been actively involved in evacuating and providing first aid care to the affected detainees. Thirty volunteers and 7 ambulances from the branches of Comayagua, Taulabe, Márcala, Siguatepeque, Jesús de Otoro and Tegucigalpa have already been activated, and more are being called. The National Society will increase its assistance by deploying its psychosocial support brigade to reach affected persons and family members of deceased inmates. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have expressed, through the HRC, its interest to support the government's efforts to remove and identify bodies.

The situation

At 22:50 hours on 14 February a fire was reported in the Comayagua Penitentiary (Granja Penal de Comayagua), located in the department of Comayagua. The fire affected the modules 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of this prison, located 90 kilometres north of the capital city Tegucigalpa. Government officials have stated that some 356 inmates have lost their lives and many more are severely injured, although figures have yet to be confirmed.

The Permanent Commission for Contingencies (Comisión Permanente de Contingencia, COPECO), the Fire Department and other local authorities, as well as the National Society, were immediately deployed to provide assistance with the containment of the fire, emergency evacuations and first aid care for the surviving inmates. The National Police also supported the preventive evacuation of the not yet affected areas of the correctional facility. All forensic personnel in the country have been called to assist with the identification of the deceased whilst the government of Chile has offered a team of forensic experts to support their task. In addition, COPECO has dispatched 1,000 food parcels and 1,000 mattresses and the Ministry of Health has made available their medical supplies.

The Defence and National Security Board (Consejo de Defensa y Seguridad Nacional) convened to determine the future response to this crisis and organize an official investigation of the event. The investigation of the fire in the Comayagua prison will be completed with the presence of international observers and respected national moral authorities.

Family members of the inmates have arrived to the area to inquire about the current situation of their relatives, with some moments of tensions developing while awaiting the government's decisions. Although authorities decided to transfer the bodies to Tegucigalpa for identification, the government has promised to assist families with their return to Comayagua for funerary services.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Since the start of the crisis, volunteers and technical personnel from the Comayagua branch of the HRC initiated emergency evacuations, assisted with first aid care, and ambulance services and referral to local hospitals as well as the Hospital Escuela in Tegucigalpa.

The headquarters of the HRC activated their National Emergency Monitoring Centre (Centro Nacional de Monitoreo, CNM) and started to coordinate with COPECO's central office and the Public Ministry. Through its point of contact in the Public Ministry, the National Society has informed about its early actions and offered to support with the removal and identification of bodies and provision of psychosocial support for family members through the ICRC.

Moreover, on Thursday 16 February, an ICRC team with expertise in forensics, health, psychology (to support families) and reestablishment of family links will arrive to the area. The ICRC will also donate inputs such as body bags to the Institute of Forensic Medicine.

The CNM is also coordinating with all the National Society's branches surrounding Comayagua, such as Taulabe, Márcala, Siguatepeque, Jesús de Otoro and Tegucigalpa, which have deployed their resources to support with pre-hospital care. At the moment, the HRC has 7 ambulances and 29 volunteers supporting in the area, but it is in need of approximately 35 additional volunteers. The National Society's psychosocial support brigade has also been activated to provide assistance to family members of the deceased inmates. This team has also been entrusted with the support of Comayagua's volunteers working alongside victims. The National Society, in coordination with the Department of Psychology of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras), will install a 'crisis centre' near the morgue in the city of Tegucigalpa to reach affected families with psychological first aid.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation, please contact:

- **In the Honduran Red Cross:** Oscar Fernandez, national director of operations and relief, Honduran Red Cross; phone: + 504.3399.4703; and email: oferandez@honduras.cruzroja.org

- **IFRC regional representation for Central America and Mexico in Costa Rica:** Fabricio Lopez, regional representative for Central America and Mexico; and email: fabricio.lopez@ifrc.org
- **IFRC Americas zone office in Panama:** phone: + 507.317.3050
 - Jorge Zequeira, PADRU coordinator; email: jorge.zequeira@ifrc.org
 - Douglas Baquero, regional logistics coordinator; email: douglas.baquero@ifrc.org
 - Jane Grimshaw, PMER manager; email: jane.grimshaw@ifrc.org



Click here

1. Click [here](#) to return to the title page

How we work

All IFRC 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 the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

www.ifrc.org
Saving lives, changing minds.



The IFRC's work is guided by *Strategy 2020*, which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
 2. Enable healthy and safe living.
 3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.
-