

DREF operation update



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Egypt: Palestinian Pilgrims Stranded in Arish

DREF operation n° MDREG006
Update n° 2
24 April 2008

The International Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) is a source of un-earmarked money created by the Federation in 1985 to ensure that immediate financial support is available for Red Cross and Red Crescent response to emergencies. The DREF is a vital part of the International Federation's disaster response system and increases the ability of national societies to respond to disasters.

Period covered by this update: 31 December 2007 to 23 April, 2008.

Summary: CHF 150,000 was allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) on 31 December, 2007 to support the Egyptian Red Crescent (Egyptian RC) in delivering assistance to some 2,600 Palestinians pilgrims and to replenish disaster preparedness stocks.

This update will provide information on the emergency operation that the Egyptian RC has implemented in December 2007 and January 2008, assisting more than 3,000 beneficiaries in the affected region, and reflect on the recent extension of the timeframe.



On 2 January 2008, authorities allowed 2,000 Palestinian pilgrims who had been stranded for days in the Egyptian Sinai to cross back into the Gaza Strip. In line with this, after discussions with the National Society, it was decided to revise the budget accordingly. Therefore, a first installment of USD 50,000 was requested for the National Society to provide the necessary support to the pilgrims. This allocation has been used to replenish the basic disaster preparedness stocks (relief items) of the Egyptian RC depleted to cover the immediate needs.

With this update, an extension of the timeframe of the operation is requested until the end of August 2008 due to the repeated crises on the Egyptian borders. Since January, recurring emergencies due to the closing of the borders were registered at Arish and Rafah borders almost on a daily basis, as well as several incidents incurred by Gaza people crossing the border to buy food and non food items. The Rafah and Arish branches of Egyptian RC, in close coordination with their headquarters, have kept the team of volunteers on standby since the last few months, providing support to people in need by using several donations from other Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies. The situation, which is not improving, is monitored by the Egyptian RC president and secretary general in close collaboration with the public authorities. Future occurrence of larger crises every now and then is predicted.

One of the effects of this well-run operation was a large amount of in-kind donations from Arab National Societies which the Egyptian RC is stocking for the next crises. The National Society is requesting to be able to use the balance to renovate its warehouse in El Arish, which is not sufficient to stock the in-kind donations now being held as preparedness stocks.

With the recent extension, this operation is expected to be completed by 31 August, 2008. In line with International Federation reporting standards, the Final Report (narrative and financial) is due 90 days after the end of the operation (by 30 November, 2008).

[<click here to view the interim financial report and here to view the contact details>](#)

The situation

Palestinian pilgrims returning from pilgrimage arrived in Egypt on 30 December, mostly by ferries and through the Nuweiba port of the Red Sea. The pilgrims had planned to go back home through the Rafah border crossing point, which was the border used on their way to Mecca. Egyptian authorities rerouted the pilgrims through Aouja (border controlled by Israel). Faced to the reluctance of the pilgrims to change their itinerary, Egyptian officials decided to settle the pilgrims into temporary camps outside the Mediterranean city of El-Arish. At their arrival in El-Arish, the pilgrims refused to leave the buses and requested to go back directly to Gaza.

The first group, 1,600 pilgrims, arrived on 30 December 2007; and the second group, 1,200 pilgrims, on 1 January 2008. Temporary accommodation in youth clubs, camps, stadiums and schools was provided to them by the Governorate of North Sinai. Additional pilgrims reached El-Arish in early January.

On 30 December, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation), together with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Office in Cairo, were contacted by the Egyptian RC to discuss possible support and assistance. The International Federation's regional office in Tunis, in contact with the Middle East/North Africa Zone office, submitted a DREF request to support this operation.

An allocation of CHF 150,000 was granted. A first installment of USD 50,000 was transferred to the National Society as the situation could be settled quicker than initially planned with the opening of the borders on 2 January and the return of the pilgrims within the week.

Coordination and partnerships

The strong coordination between the Egyptian RC branches and headquarters, in addition to the quick deployment of volunteers and relief materials, has once more demonstrated the efficiency of the National Society and its reliability as a partner. The good knowledge of the emergency mechanism (DREF), the effective coordination within the Movement actors (rapid communication with ICRC and the International Federation), has allowed a quick response to the crisis. Thanks to the allocation of the DREF, the Egyptian RC was in a position to cover immediate needs and to discuss its role in this operation with the national authorities. This has resulted in a short but responsive operation, respecting initial plans for the period of 30 December 2007 – 3 January 2008 in covering the emergency needs identified for the pilgrims. The Egyptian RC volunteers' assistance in the distribution of relief items as well as the provision of psychological support has been greatly appreciated by the beneficiaries.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Progress towards objectives

The use of the first installment (USD 50,000 – December 2007 /January 2008)

After setting out the role of each member in close cooperation with the local authorities, the Egyptian RC has activated its emergency plan in order to intervene on the site and contact the volunteers of the National Society countrywide. After few hours, the Egyptian RC formed four local teams of volunteers. Each team was

assigned to a locality under the supervision of the national coordinator. The latter reported regularly and accurately the activities of each team to the central committee of the National Society at its headquarters, then the governance reported to the local authorities.

The immediate action was to assess the needs of the Palestinian pilgrims and to establish a list of the most vulnerable. The deployed teams, with the assistance of the other involved parties such as the local authorities, have been able to rapidly reach all the pilgrims, record their needs and organize the humanitarian assistance. Building on previous experiences, the Egyptian RC has developed standard emergency tools and systems, and trained their volunteers on them in order to be immediately operational (rapid needs assessment, registration of beneficiaries, stock management, etc.).

Relief distributions (food and basic non-food items)

Objective: Meals, 1,500 mattresses and 1,500 pillows are distributed to the beneficiaries, according to the assessment and selection criteria that identified actual needs.

Activities planned at headquarters (relief and logistics department) and branch level (South and North Sinai branches):

- Monitor the existing situation and conduct rapid emergency needs and capacity assessments;
- Develop beneficiary registration system to deliver intended assistance;
- Distribute relief supplies and control supply movements from point of dispatch to end user;
- Monitor and evaluate the relief activities and provide reporting on relief distributions.

The following items were distributed to the target beneficiaries:

- 3,000 blankets for 750 families;
- 830 mattresses;
- 500 pillows;
- Food parcels (canned meat, fresh fruit, sugar, milk, water, cheese, juice, canned fruit, and bread);
- 2,500 meals.

During the assessment phase, the National Society volunteers recorded all the data regarding the affected persons and their specific needs. Thanks to the collected data, the Egyptian RC clearly outlined its plan of relief items' distribution and the beneficiaries. Since the collected data was precise and accurate, it was easy for the Egyptian RC to schedule the distribution.

During the first days of distribution, the National Society used its own stock and the relief items were transported from the warehouse of the central committee in Cairo to the Sinai region. The stock sent was already packed and ready to be distributed. Meanwhile, the National Society contacted its suppliers and purchased the quantities to complete the relief items distribution. The main quantity of food (including meals) was regionally purchased from the two main sites in North and South Sinai (Nuweiba and El-Arish).

A special committee composed of representatives from the Egyptian RC headquarters, from North Sinai branch and the governorate, including the secretariat of the governor and departments of health and solidarity, was established to assure the distribution of the food parcels.

The mattresses, blankets and pillows were used to replenish the emergency relief stock of the National Society, as it has used its own stock to cover the immediate needs of the pilgrims.

The local authorities offered a location known by all the population and easily accessible for most of the victims. The most vulnerable have benefited from the visit of the National Society volunteers who transported the relief items to them.

Request for extension of the operation timeframe until the end of August 2008 and Plan of Action for the remaining period:

The remaining funds will be used to strengthen El-Arish and Rafah branches' capacity. This will include:

1. Renovation of the existing El-Arish warehouse to allow proper stockpiling of relief items and store donations;
2. Procurement of basic relief supplies (pre-positioning of mattresses, blankets, etc.);
3. Training of Egyptian RC staff and volunteers from El-Arish/Rafah and neighboring branches in disaster management.

Impact: As a result of this DREF operation, important quantities of relief items were distributed to more than 3,000 persons. Relief items were in accordance with the needs of the victims. The distribution was conducted in better conditions and the items reached all the identified beneficiaries without delay.

Egyptian RC was in position to negotiate access to Gaza to bring relief and medical assistance to Palestinians with the support of ICRC. The National Society was supported in the following months for its humanitarian operations by several other Red Cross/Red Crescent National Societies (Kuwait, Turkey, Qatar) as well as the Islamic Bank for Development.

The Egyptian RC is in the process of preparing a larger disaster preparedness programme to be prepared for imminent crises.

Challenges: The Egyptian RC has to maintain its good relations with the involved parties since similar situations can occur again.

Movement coordination is to be improved, providing the lead to the Egyptian RC. Specific meetings are planned in Egypt and in Geneva to raise this specific issue.

Conclusion

The most important result of this operation is that an important quantity of relief items has been distributed to more than 2,600 people. The emergency operation was conducted immediately after and has been very helpful during a time when the local authorities were in shortage of support.

It is not the first time that the Egyptian RC is facing such an emergency situation and as it has been the case in the previous emergencies (please refer to DREF operation no. MDREG005), the coordination between the National Society and the local authorities was successful.

Although this was an emergency situation, it had a positive side where the community and the National Society came together as one and showed a selfless dedication and devotion to help relieve the situation as well as the victims.

Psycho-social support was provided to all the pilgrims, most of them being elderly.

The Egyptian RC appointed a disaster management coordinator to be part of the MENA disaster management network. The National Society's disaster management coordinator facilitated the North African Regional Sphere Workshop (Tunis, January 2008) as well as the Regional MENA Contingency Planning Workshop (Morocco, April 2008). These events provided opportunity to share experiences and expertise in the region and to foster the use of networks and regional resources.

How we work

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 \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response](#) (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet 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.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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[<Interim financial report attached below; click here to return to the title page>](#)

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

MDREG006 - Egypt: Palestinian Pilgrims Arish

Interim Financial Report

Selected Parameters	
Reporting Timeframe	2007/12-2008/02
Budget Timeframe	2007/12-2008/02
Appeal	MDREG006
Budget	APPEAL

All figures are in Swiss Francs (CHF)

I. Consolidated Response to Appeal

	Health & Care	Disaster Management	Humanitarian Values	Organisational Development	Coordination & Implementation	TOTAL
A. Budget		150,000				150,000
B. Opening Balance		0				0
Income						
<u>Other Income</u>						
<i>DREF Allocations</i>		150,000				150,000
C5. Other Income		150,000				150,000
C. Total Income = SUM(C1..C5)		150,000				150,000
D. Total Funding = B + C		150,000				150,000
Appeal Coverage		100%				100%

II. Balance of Funds

	Health & Care	Disaster Management	Humanitarian Values	Organisational Development	Coordination & Implementation	TOTAL
B. Opening Balance		0				0
C. Income		150,000				150,000
E. Expenditure		-56,465				-56,465
F. Closing Balance = (B + C + E)		93,535				93,535

III. Budget Analysis / Breakdown of Expenditure

Account Groups	Budget	Expenditure					TOTAL	Variance
		Health & Care	Disaster Management	Humanitarian Values	Organisational Development	Coordination & Implementation		
A		B					A - B	
BUDGET (C)		150,000					150,000	
Supplies								
Clothing & textiles	61,000		26,798			26,798	34,202	
Food	75,250		25,702			25,702	49,548	
Other Supplies & Services	4,000						4,000	
Total Supplies	140,250		52,500			52,500	87,750	
General Expenditure								
Financial Charges			295			295	-295	
Total General Expenditure			295			295	-295	
Programme Support								
Program Support	9,750		3,670			3,670	6,080	
Total Programme Support	9,750		3,670			3,670	6,080	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (D)	150,000		56,465			56,465	93,535	
VARIANCE (C - D)			93,535			93,535		