

TURKEY: EARTHQUAKE

23 August 1999

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situation report no. 4

period covered: 21 - 23 August

With the search and rescue phase of the operation largely over, International Federation coordination efforts are being focused on the immediate emerging health risks and post disaster assessments. Following the initial particularly challenging period, the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) has responded by moving its relief distribution and assistance activities into top gear. Cooperation from the Government of Turkey has been excellent. The report from the Federation assessment team (consisting of representatives from the American, British, Finnish and French Red Cross Societies) will more precisely indicate remaining needs, and mid-to longer term requirements. A full Appeal will follow within one week.

The context

On August 17 at 3:02 a.m. local time, a massive earthquake measuring between 7.4 and 7.8 on the Richter scale and lasting 45 seconds hit northwestern Turkey. More than 300 aftershocks were reported, some as high as 4.2 to 4.5 on the Richter scale. Izmit, an industrial city of one million in western Turkey located approximately 104 kms east-southeast of Istanbul was nearest the epicentre, but the force of the tremor was felt as far away as Ankara, the Turkish capital, some 500 kilometres to the east, and across parts of the Balkans. Geophysicists also described the quake as one of the most powerful recorded in the 20th century, nearly rivalling the 7.9 magnitude earthquake that devastated San Francisco in 1906.

The Turkish government declared a state of emergency and requested international assistance. The International Federation first issued an Alert on Tuesday morning (17 August), and at the request of the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS), followed up by launching a Preliminary Appeal to support the Society's emergency relief operation in aid of victims of the earthquake. This Preliminary Appeal will shortly be followed by a full Appeal once the needs assessments have been completed and more detailed information becomes available.

Latest events

Latest casualty reports indicate over 12,000 people dead and over 33,000 injured, and these figures are expected to climb much further as the search and rescue phase gives way to recovering bodies. The town of Yalova, just visited by a Federation team, is indicative of the needs throughout the stricken area: according to the governor of the district of Yalova, some 400 buildings in central Yalova town had

collapsed, each housing approximately 20 - 30 families. This would indicate the potential for an enormous death toll (as high as 60,000 assuming no survivors in these collapsed buildings). As in many other towns and cities, the destruction was selective; some buildings seemed untouched, while others were either distorted or had completely collapsed into piles of concrete slabs.

Some 2,000 bodies have been recovered from the rubble in Yalova town. Between 4,000 and 5,000 people were injured and most of them have been processed through the TRCS mobile hospital situated at the municipal stadium.

An estimated 70,000 are said by the governor to require tent accommodation (people are sleeping in make-shift tents in parks and other open spaces). This number includes 4,000 families staying in TRCS tents. The Governor says 10,000 more tents are needed for others, whose shelter consists mostly of linen tied to sticks to form a roof that gives shade from the burning sun.

There appeared to be relatively good organisation in Yalova, with roll on-roll off ferries taking cars and people to and from Istanbul constantly, police stationed along major roads directing traffic and heavy machinery moving along efficiently.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) w

After the challenges of the immediate aftermath of the quake when many of the local TRCS staff and volunteers were themselves considered victims, the National Society is now very visible and extremely active in all areas, with two "tent cities" set up in Yalova and in Izmit. In addition to the blood donor centre in Izmit, the TRCS also has a blood collection centre outside Golcuk (on the road to Izmit). In Golcuk, TRCS vans from other branches are delivering food and water.

According to information provided by the TRCS Headquarters over the weekend, the following items have been distributed in the field: 19,021 tents, 44,700 blankets, 14,224 kgs of foodstuffs and 11,000 litres water, 21 portable and 2 mobile kitchens, and 4 mobile clinics. *See Annex II (faxed TRCS list) for distribution details.*

The Turkish Red Crescent is operating a 1,300 tent city in a spacious compound in the centre of town (the first tents went up on Friday afternoon and the last were erected on Saturday afternoon). The remaining tents available were given to authorities for shelter along roads and in other open areas all over the town.

At the TRCS tent city, hot food is prepared by a private company. The TRCS will take over provision of hot food in 24 hours, using a mobile kitchen. At the tent city, as well as in less-organised camps elsewhere in the city, the lack of sanitary facilities is apparent. Twelve more mobile latrines are expected within 24 hours, to be placed outside the compound and connected to the sewerage system.

In the TRCS compound, city authorities have set up a distribution centre. Staff at one work station receive requests for goods, another check the requests against lists of available materials and makes decisions on despatches, while a third desk process the orders for execution. The organised distribution system is clearly augmented by spontaneous activity; groups and individuals have been seen on streets all around the city handing out various items to tent camp dwellers.

The TRCS also operates a field hospital at the town stadium, consisting of six large white tents and several smaller ones. The hospital is manned by about 150 doctors and 150 nurses and assistants. Food appears to be plentiful, for the moment, and distribution by various organisations is relieving some of the anxiety of the homeless. Lack of toilets and running water for bathing and washing is a major problem.

Health w

Major health concerns continue to be the threat of epidemics (salmonella, typhoid fever, and dysentery), and efforts are underway to create an isolation cell to treat these cases. Federation efforts are also focusing on tailoring or targeting support to the existing medical facilities. The Federation assessment team, for example, met with the President of the local TRCS branch in Yalova, who will prepare a plan of action and a list of needs by Tuesday.

In Golcuk, the team visited the German Red Cross (GRC) Emergency Response Unit (ERU) referral hospital (currently 150-200 beds, and extendable) which became operational on 22 August. Four doctors from the GRC are assessing the health situation in surrounding local towns where cases of dysentery and diarrhoea are reported. The GRC ERU is situated on the outskirts of Golcuk, and is coordinating assistance with local government, Ministry of Health and TRCS officials who will direct cases referred by damaged or overcrowded hospitals in the area, as well as normal out-patient cases. With regards to staffing, Turkish national medical and auxiliary staff will be incorporated into the operation.

In Izmit, the TRCS has established two camps on the road toward Adapazari and expect more people to arrive there. Latrines and showers will soon be installed. The assessment team also visited the Norwegian Red Cross (NRC) ERU hospital in Izmit which was operational on 22 August, and offers 200 beds (extendable to 300). There is excellent cooperation with local government, Ministry of Health and TRCS officials who will direct cases referred by damaged or overcrowded hospitals in the area. The most serious cases from the six surrounding hospitals will be referred to the NRC ERU hospital, located in the compound of the University and the Workers Hospital, and made up of 16 people as well as 70 Turkish medical staff integrated from the two hospitals. The needs of the six surrounding hospitals will also be assessed by a Federation specialist, in collaboration with WHO. The NRC Field hospital has given 7,500 portions of BP5 (high protein biscuits) to the nearby Red Crescent tent city. It is expected that the hospital will reach full capacity very quickly.

A list of hospital kit needs has been communicated by the respective ERUs, and the Federation is following up on expediting the needed medicines and material.

Water/Sanitation w

The International Federation has issued an Alert for the deployment of a water-sanitation ERU following reports that the water situation is far worse than first reported.

Participating National Societies w

Belgian and French Red Cross

A three-member team has arrived accompanying a shipment of 10 tonnes of hygiene supplies. The Belgian Red Cross will also send a self-contained surgical unit which will probably support one of the hospitals.

Swiss Red Cross

The Head of Information arrived with three Swiss journalists.

Spanish Red Cross

A basic health care centre accompanied by medical and logistics support staff is being sent by a special charter flight coming in Wednesday with 2 pneumatic tents, and two portable warehouses.

Japanese Red Cross (JRC)

The JRC are now working near Izmit, at Uzunçiftlik, supporting the TRCS tent city, providing them with medical support and equipment. They have 13 doctors and five nurses and one WHO emergency kit, and will take over the existing clinic in the tent city and will work with local doctors and nurses. The local clinic treated from 200 to 300 patients in the first 48 hours following the earthquake.

Slovenia Red Cross

The Society is despatching 200 MT of bottled water shortly.

Logistics issues w

Two Federation logistics delegates are strengthening contacts with the TRCS logistics team and establishing contact with the government crisis centre. Humanitarian aid is still coming in, but at a more manageable rate. Reception of goods by the TRCS team at the airport continues, as well as coordinating the destination of the medical goods with the Health Ministry. Red Cross/Red Crescent relief supplies are being sent to a central TRCS warehouse in Maltape (outside Istanbul).

Incoming goods w

The French Red Cross (FRC) is sending 100 tonnes of hygiene products next week, and 140,000 hygiene parcels will be taken from Red Cross stocks in Skopje and sent to Istanbul. In addition, 250,000 baby diapers will be sent by the FRC.

Outstanding needs

Main needs continue to include tents, portable showers, portable chemical toilets, hygiene articles, basic drugs (list on request), portable warehouses, shower and washing containers, refrigeration for medicines and food, and generators. A more specific list will be reflected in the following full Appeal.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

Meetings with UN representatives continue in Istanbul, as well as contacts with operational NGO's. A high-level TRCS representative is scheduled to arrive in Istanbul on Monday evening to discuss government support and operational issues with the Head of Delegation. Meetings in Ankara are also being arranged. A new International Federation Senior Liaison Officer was due to arrive in Ankara this evening (Monday).

Media:

The International Herald Tribune ('the world's daily newspaper') has donated free advertising space to the International Federation, encouraging readers to donate to the Appeal. The first advertisement is due to appear in the Atlantic Edition tomorrow /Tuesday).

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Director
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Renny Nancholas
Director
Europe Department