

# **TURKEY: EARTHQUAKE**

24 August 1999

*appeal no. 19/99*

*situation report no. 5*

*period covered: 24 August*

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*Recent heavy rains in the disaster area have increased health and sanitation concerns, made life still more miserable for those without shelter, and threatened makeshift arrangements for on-site storage and distribution points. Meanwhile, the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) are establishing tent cities, though some homeless remain reluctant to leave the site of their collapsed dwellings. International support for the earthquake appeal remains positive with continued cash contributions and mobilisation of resources and personnel for the operation.*

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## ***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.

## ***Update***

Latest casualty reports indicate over 15,000 people dead and over 44,000 injured. Sanitation is the most pressing concern at the present time. While there are no confirmed reports of any epidemic, the recent rains and sanitary conditions in some camps increase the risk of the spread of infection. Widespread distributions of bottled water and government disinfectant programmes have certainly helped avoid such potential outbreaks.

The TRCS/Federation health assessment teams are expected to report back soon on the situation.

The greatest risk presently comes from inadequate toilet facilities for the homeless, rather than any danger of infection from dead bodies in the rubble. While efforts are underway to mobilise sanitation

facilities - especially in the TRCS tented cities, it is expected to take some time before safe piped water becomes widely available.

The ERU hospitals and TRCS clinics continue to receive referrals from overloaded local hospitals, the caseload now increasingly requiring general hospital support rather than surgical assistance. Injuries from searching in dangerous structures may continue for some time as the search for victims and property continues.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

In response to the present situation the Federation has placed an emphasis on support to existing medical facilities through the Norwegian Red Cross (NRC) Emergency Response Unit (ERU) field hospital in Izmit the German Red Cross (GRC) ERU field hospital in Golcuk has so far treated 58 out-patients, including performing minor operations. While coordination with the Director of the Golcuk Hospital has been very effective, there is concern about the current under-use of two ERU's and the Turkish Ministry of Health has instructed that all further patients in Golcuk be referred to the GRC hospital. A GRC field kitchen plus personnel has also arrived to serve the hospital.

### **Assessment w**

A Federation assessment team which arrived early this week has been divided into two teams of three members each, and accompanied by a member of the TRCS appointed by Ankara. The assessment itinerary consists of visits to the German and Norwegian Red Cross hospitals in Golcuk and Izmit, the TRCS camps in Yalova and Golcuk, and the airport (logistics). A separate Information Team travelled towards Adapazari on 23 August, stopping at the TRCS tent city at Derince, 10 kilometres outside Izmit on the road towards Istanbul. Some 350 tents are now up, housing 2,000 people. TRCS officials indicated this number could be boosted to 1,000 tents, however health and sanitation facilities and equipment will have to be expanded if this is the case. The Japanese Red Cross medical team are also working in Derince, supporting the TRCS field hospital. In government crisis centres, loudspeakers invite people to move in to the tent cities which are all erected and managed by the TRCS.

The team also reported from Adapazari that it had rained hard, and the onset of rain in the disaster area (which was completely unexpected in August) could significantly increase the potential for epidemics and heightens the need for emergency shelter. The whole issue of warehousing - especially food storage - is a particular concern at the moment. TRCS officials said they had 4 field kitchens operational which could serve a population of up to 7,000 people. The team also visited the tent city, where some 650 tents have been put up, and up to 2,000 can be erected. People are being registered as they arrive in the camp (some 300 people so far) and they are receiving food assistance. The most serious medical cases are transferred to hospitals in Istanbul, Korfez and Ankara.

### **Food w**

Some 38,000 ready-to-eat meals are due to be delivered from the Federation warehouse in Vasto, Italy on 24 August.

### **Water/Sanitation w**

The Austrian Red Cross water and sanitation ERU is being deployed.

### **Delegation w**

The Federation delegation, currently operating out of a hotel, intends to move into TRCS offices in the first week of September.

### **Assistance from Participating National Societies (PNSs) w**

Information received from PNSs overnight includes:

#### ***French Red Cross***

The Director of the National Society's International Department is arriving in Istanbul on 24 August to join the Federation assessment team.

#### Hellenic Red Cross

A 16-member medical team delivered 200 tents, 1,000 blankets, and one thousand bedsheets to the TRCS team at the Istanbul airport, to be sent to Yalova. Part of the team is located at the crisis centre in Golcuk's State Hospital, and another part of the team established a mobile unit to cover the needs of the TRCS tent city in Golcuk and the surrounding villages.

#### Italian Red Cross

The Italian Red Cross has indicated 25,000 blankets will be delivered at the end of this week or early next week.

#### Kuwait Red Crescent Society

The Society has indicated that various relief supplies will be delivered on 24 August, with another Kuwaiti Red Crescent plane due to arrive with two ambulances the following day.

#### German Red Cross

A flight from Germany with supplies from the German Red Cross for the GRC field hospital arrived on 23 August (2 Land Rovers, tents, blankets and 1 field kitchen)

#### Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Iranian Red Crescent Society has offered to provide the Turkey operation with 10 mobile toilets and showers.

#### **Logistics issues w**

Two Federation logistics delegates report that the situation at the Istanbul airport is improving. The TRCS logistics team continues to receive all humanitarian aid coming into the country, including non Red Cross/Red Crescent consignments.

## ***Outstanding needs***

Recent information indicates that the short supply of regular medical items is a growing problem, while large quantities of donated and unsolicited medical supplies are hampering the restocking of regular or emergency medical structures. Upon request the Federation can provide the approved list of basic drugs requested by the Turkish government and reminds donors to confirm all medical supplies with the Secretariat prior to transportation. Other needs continue to include tents, portable showers, portable chemical toilets, hygiene articles, basic drugs (list on request), portable warehouses, beds/cots, refrigeration for medicines and food, generators, shower and washing containers. A more specific list will be reflected in the following full Appeal.

## ***External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media***

Federation officials met with UN representatives in Istanbul on Monday, and the discussion centered around the major issue of the Government's instructions that all aid consignments to Turkey be directed to the TRCS. The capacity of the TRCS to manage the situation is being considered in discussions between the Federation Head of Delegation (HoD) and TRCS Headquarters.

A high-level TRCS representative arrived in Istanbul on Monday evening to meet with the HoD to discuss cooperation with delegation and the National Society. It is anticipated that this has the potential to facilitate many operational issues.

#### Media:

Following the earthquake an information delegate was immediately transferred from Macedonia to Turkey. This delegate has been joined by three colleagues to cope with the emergency phase of the disaster.

A photo/video delegate has been assigned to cover Red Cross/Red Crescent activities in Turkey, producing both stills and video footage which will be made available for National Societies along with stories for use in various Red Cross/Red Crescent publications. The media interest has been enormous, and delegates in the field and staff in Geneva have been giving hundreds of interviews to both international and various national media. The media focus is now on health and the importance of assistance for the coming autumn and winter.

Photos covering the earthquake's hardest-hit zones in Yalova, Golcuk and Izmit will soon be available for National Societies and on the Federation Website.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for further details.

***For further information please contact the following:***

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