

# **TURKEY: EARTHQUAKE**

25 August 1999

*appeal no. 19/99*

*situation report no. 6*

*period covered: 25 August 1999*

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*With heavy rain continuing in the disaster area, the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) has come under heavy pressure to step up its distributions of tents. An urgent call has gone out to all PNS requesting immediate supplies of water-proof tents. The response has been encouraging - an airlift of 10,000 tents will start from Iran tomorrow - and ongoing efforts will not cease. Meanwhile, the International Federation's assessment team is continuing its work and a full Appeal, reflecting detailed needs and quantities, will be issued shortly.*

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## ***The context***

On 17 August at 03h02 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 4.5 on the Richter scale. Izmit, an industrial city of one-million in western Turkey, was nearest the epicentre. But the force of the tremor was felt as far away as Ankara, the capital, some 500 km to the east, and across parts of the Balkans. Geophysicists described the quake as one of the most powerful this 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 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. This Preliminary Appeal will shortly be followed by a full appeal once a needs assessment has been completed.

## ***Update***

The Turkish government has now revised the confirmed death toll downward by some 5,500 to 12,514. It said deaths in the industrial city of Izmit were far fewer than previously announced. But about 30,000 bodies are still believed to remain buried in the rubble.

The homeless are still seeking somewhere secure to live and the muddy quagmires left by the recent downpours have increased fears of disease from mosquitoes and flies attracted by the foul-smelling wreckage. Drenched survivors are battling in vain to keep their improvised shelters from collapsing into soggy piles.

The Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit has pledged that all earthquake survivors would be living in tent cities within one month.

The World Health Organisation has said the real threats to the survivors are poor sanitation, contaminated water and the interruption of routine medical care, rather than the presence of large numbers of unburied corpses. Officials from the Turkish Ministry of Health declared the earthquake zone free of the risk of epidemics on Tuesday, and said that work to help minimise the spread of infectious diseases was well organised. So far there are no major outbreaks of dysentery or epidemics.

The country's prime minister has called for temporary bungalows to be built. The authorities' count of buildings destroyed or damaged is now more than 17,500. Some 27,021 tents have been set up in the region and 22 camp trailers, 908 caravans and collective centres with a capacity of 5,200 have been opened. There have been 2,526 international rescue and aid workers in Turkey.

There is no shortage of doctors or nurses and many Turkish medical professionals have volunteered. The Turkish medical association says that some 500 doctors from unaffected areas are willing to serve as volunteers. There is a large amount of medication being dispensed at clinics. Normally, drugs are obtained at local hospitals but there are expectations that the TRCS will be providing them in the future. Doctors normally leave their equipment in hospitals, and as many hospitals were destroyed or severely damaged medical equipment such as stethoscopes and blood pressure gauges are in considerable demand.

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

### **Assessment team w**

Federation assessment teams have now reported their preliminary findings. Shelter continues to be the major need, both in terms of short-term accommodation in tents and longer term solutions such as prefabricated housing. However, many people want to stay near their destroyed homes as they still have feelings of attachment to them, so have pitched tents nearby. It is expected that many will move in with relatives while others seek a temporary home in consolidated tent cities. The TRCS anticipates there will be need for several additional camps to accommodate as many as 100,000 people.

There are now four International Federation assessment teams in the field covering logistics, relief, health (including water and sanitation) and the TRCS operation. PNS representatives have been drawn from Red Cross Red Crescent Societies in America, Austria, Britain, Finland, France, Iran, Spain and Sweden; a water-sanitation specialist from Oxfam is a member of the health team. Arriving today (Wednesday) is a health assessment team of five persons which will contribute with findings from an in depth cluster survey, concentrating on relief health; this groups reports to the American Red Cross assessment team representative.

### **Health w**

Both the ERU field hospitals are functioning, though not yet at full capacity. The Norwegian ERU in Izmit has signed a Letter of Intent with the local health authority to support the city's University hospital.

Yesterday (Tuesday) the Federation completed the compilation of a list of medicines and medical supplies, which has now been forwarded to a number of PNS and remains available, by fax or e-mail on request. The task now is to match supplies to hospital needs and the Federation is coordinating with the TRCS on this point.

### **PNS support w**

Goods have started to arrive from National Societies which responded to the Federation Appeal. During the last 24 hours, among the following items received by TRCS/Federation logisticians at the Istanbul airport are:

- { 156 kgs of blood and three truckloads of various items (tents, food and medical supplies) from the Czech Red Cross;
- { 71 pallets (39,934 kg) of ready-to-eat meals from Federation stocks in Vasto, Italy;
- { 2,981 kg of medical items from the Italian Red Cross;
- { Emergency Health Kits from the Belgian Red Cross;
- { Water/sanitation supplies from the Austrian Red Cross.

Some of the consignments were sent directly to the affected area and the remainder stored in the TRCS warehouse in Maltape. Assessments of warehousing for future operations are being carried out. The TRCS has a large warehouse in Maltape 80 km from Istanbul.

Among the items currently in the pipeline are two emergency health kits from the American Red Cross, water and sanitation equipment, and tents and blankets from Oxfam, tents from the Iranian Red Crescent (first deliveries tomorrow), tents from the Netherlands Red Cross, tents, blankets and medical items from the Republic of Korea Red Cross and tents and blankets from the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent. Red Cross Red Crescent fund-raising campaigns are underway in Britain, Croatia, Italy and Japan

#### **Turkish Red Crescentw**

The latest list of distributions by the Turkish Red Crescent is attached as Appendix II of this report (hard copy only).

## ***Outstanding needs***

The most urgent and pressing need, as stated above is for tents, and following emergency calls from the field and the Geneva secretariat, PNS are actively seeking supplies. There is also a clear need for clothing, but people will not accept second-hand clothes and as Turkey is a major manufacturer of clothing local purchase is advised.

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

The TRCS liaison representative has told the delegation that attention should now turn to the question of winter accommodation. There was a need for more tents and prefabricated houses. Most people have relatives around the country and will begin to move in with them, but as many as 20% of the quake victims were too poor to go anywhere (a preliminary TRCS estimate) and public pressure for prefabricated housing for them would grow. The representative also noted that mobile kitchens would need facilities for storing store meat. He suggested refrigerated trucks might be an option.

Preliminary editing for a video to accompany the forthcoming appeal has now been completed. Numerous interview requests continue to be received from the delegation -- especially from the national media of donor societies.

## ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details. If there are cash or in-kind contributions to the Appeal not reflected in this list, please inform the Federation's Operations Funding and Reporting Department of the details, including specific nature of the contribution and value.

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

***{ International Federation, Geneva: Charles Eldred-Evans; tel: +41 22 730 4439; mobile: 41 79 205 1959; email: [eldred@ifrc.org](mailto:eldred@ifrc.org) or Penny Elghady; tel: +41 22 730 4319; email: [elghady@ifrc.org](mailto:elghady@ifrc.org)***

Peter Rees-Gildea  
Director  
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Renny Nancholas  
Director  
Europe Department