

TURKEY: EARTHQUAKE

27 August 1999

appeal no. 19/99

situation report no. 8

period covered: 27 August 1999

Excellent collaboration between the various Red Cross Red Crescent components (involving the Turkish Red Crescent, International Federation and PNS) continues, resulting in the effective delivery of relief and health assistance to the victims of the earthquake. The Federation's assessment team report provides the basis for discussions due to take place with the Government and the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) to agree on needs to be reflected in the forthcoming full Appeal.

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 official confirmed death toll now stands at 13,009, with 26,000 injured, but there are still tens of thousands of people missing and newspapers have been carrying long lists of names of people being sought. Hopes of finding anyone else alive have been abandoned and a search for four children thought trapped in a building in Cinarcik has been called off. Flooding is adding to fears of disease as raw effluent from broken sewers mixes with floodwaters, contaminating drinking water. For a third night, heavy rain fell on survivors living in tents and makeshift shelters in the quake region. Doctors are reporting cases of respiratory problems among children and elderly people forced to sleep in damp blankets on cold and wet ground.

Turkey has appealed for 50,000 prefabricated homes before seasonal rains begin in November, while three passenger ships are to dock in Izmit harbour to aid the accommodation effort. Civil engineers are assessing which buildings are still safe to use.

Local media report that people are trying to leave the affected area by whatever transportation they can find. The doors and walls of abandoned buildings are covered with messages in which people inform their relatives and friends of their destinations.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) w

The TRCS is setting up and managing over 20 tent cities for some of the 253,000 homeless as a first solution to their needs. The TRCS has mobilised hundreds of volunteers for rescue and relief operations. Its field kitchens are providing hot meals to the victims in all the affected cities and towns. Bottled water is being distributed by the government and the TRCS until longer term systems are operational.

Tracing w

A joint effort is underway by the German and American Red Cross to facilitate communication between family members and to develop communications systems within the TRCS. Tracing services are now fully operational at two camps. The services include free use of the telephone to contact relatives abroad, taking hand-written messages for transmission to relatives living abroad, and transmitting messages collected by national societies in other countries. The centres are located at a tent city near Izmit and in the city of Yalova. A third centre is being planned. The TRCS will be able take over the operation after the systems are fully established.

Relief items and Logistics w

An airplane containing relief supplies donated by the French Red Cross is due, delivering: 150 tents, 55 rolls of plastic sheeting, 2.2 MT of drugs, 40 blood pressure cuffs, 40 stethoscopes. Also, four trucks have left France carrying 150,000 diapers and other hygiene products.

Health w

The Norwegian and German Red Cross field hospitals are fully operational and providing both in and out-patient care; the expatriate teams in both hospitals are working with Turkish doctors and nurses.

Water and Sanitation w

An Austrian Red Cross Water Emergency Response Unit (ERU) is being installed to provide potable water and sanitation services to established tent cities in the Golchuk area, and it will also cover the city of Golcuk. It will be operational tomorrow (Saturday). The unit can supply up to 20,000 persons per day with water and cover basic sanitation needs. Latrines, washing and shower facilities and garbage collection will be provided. The programme is being implemented with full cooperation from both the TRCS and the local municipal crisis committee. Following reports of a deteriorating water and sanitation situation in Yalova, the Austrian team will be conducting a detailed assessment there.

Outstanding needs

Shelter remains the priority, more tents and plastic sheeting are needed for the short term and prefabricated housing before winter weather starts in November; portable 'squat' toilets and hygiene parcels are also in short supply. Quantities of blankets, water containers, vehicles, new clothing and medical supplies are likely to be included in a more detailed list of outstanding needs to be reflected in the full Appeal, due to be published next week.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

A team from the U.S. Center for Disease Control will be carrying out a health assessment survey, working through the American Red Cross. The TRCS has given its full cooperation and plans to use the information from the survey to determine needs for food, water and medical care.

A senior official from ECHO has been briefed by the International Federation in both Ankara and Istanbul and facilitated on a field trip to the disaster site.

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:

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