

TURKEY: EARTHQUAKES

13 November 1999

appeal no. 19/99

situation report no. 26

period covered: 12-13 November

Following a series of aftershocks over the past week, an earthquake measuring 7.2 on the Richter scale struck a populated area of western Turkey late yesterday (Friday). Its epicentre was some 100 km east of Izmit, a city severely damaged in the quake on 17 August - the worst in human terms this decade. Both the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) and the International Federation mobilised at once, dispatching key personnel and search and rescue teams to this new disaster site and readying large quantities of relief goods for delivery during today (Saturday). While the International Federation will accept unearmarked cash donations for this latest calamity, no further funds are being requested at this point and Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies are asked particularly not to seek nor facilitate consignments of relief items since sufficient stocks are available in Turkey, at least for the time-being.

The context

Since the devastating earthquake of 17 August 1999, which killed over 17,100 people and left some 44,000 injured, aftershocks - 1,382 at the last count, including eight in the 5.5 to 5.8 Richter scale range - have been a regular occurrence in and around the affected area. In recent days, the frequency and severity of these events have increased significantly, with two notable jolts last Sunday (7 November) and on Thursday. Earlier this month another incident was classified as a 'pre-shock'. Nevertheless the earthquake that hit Bolu and Duzce last night - and was felt in Istanbul some 300 km to the west - was devastating in its power and intensity, bringing more tragedy to a region, which has suffered greatly since the August quake. On the day of that disaster, the Turkish government declared a state of emergency and requested international assistance. The International Federation immediately launched a preliminary appeal, followed by a full appeal for CHF 65 million on 8 September 1999, which is still active.

Update

The latest casualty figures from this latest earthquake to hit Turkey are at least 350 confirmed dead and several hundred injured, with these numbers expected to rise. While this occurrence was almost similar in magnitude to the earlier event, the timing of this quake (19h00) meant fewer people were inside their

homes when the disaster struck and Bolu and Duzce are less densely populated than the area around Izmit, which was smitten in the very early hours of 17 August.

Even so the destruction in Bolu and Duzce last night was widespread, with many buildings collapsed and fires breaking out throughout the vicinity. At least three Turkish TV channels beamed live pictures of the disaster and its aftermath through the night. Roads into the area were reported as severely damaged - including the main Ankara-Istanbul highway, which was reduced from four lanes to one - and for a few hours, only search and rescue teams were allowed on some routes.

With the worst of the winter now approaching, it is clear that many people in the stricken area will feel compelled to sleep outside, even though structurally their homes may appear to be safe. There will also be a large population who cannot return to their houses, adding to the massive temporary shelter challenge already facing the Turkish authorities.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Turkish Red Crescent Society •

As soon as the scale of the catastrophe became clear, TRCS staff and volunteers, from the affected area and in Ankara and Istanbul, immediately sprung into action. At the disaster site, TRCS personnel assisted with the ongoing search and rescue efforts, rendering first aid and comforting the bereaved and traumatised survivors. Elsewhere stocks of relief items - many donated or purchased for the August operation - have been mobilised, including tents, blankets medicines and beds. TRCS ambulances have also been deployed.

International Federation •

Delegates assigned to the International Federation in Turkey responded immediately to this latest disaster some travelling overnight to the affected areas while others concentrating their efforts in Istanbul, either in a coordinating role or at the Red Cross Red Crescent warehouse in Samandira, on the outskirts of the city. Five trucks with medicaments were dispatched during the night and a further 17, carrying more requested relief items - tents, blankets, bedding etc - have arrived during today.

By the early hours of this morning (01h00), two International Federation relief delegates, two information/reporting delegates and a deputy head of delegation were en route to from Istanbul. The head of delegation in Turkey also travelled to Bolu and Duzce this morning to coordinate the International Federation's on-site response. The logistics team has remained based at the Samandira warehouse. Representatives from various Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies present in Turkey also left Istanbul for the affected area late last night.

Elsewhere, search and rescue dog teams were air-lifted to Turkey overnight - deployed by the Austrian and German Red Cross Societies - reaching Istanbul's international airport at daybreak. More teams are expected to arrive during the day, including one from the Bulgarian Red Cross.

Media activity was intense, with the International Federation's head of delegation and members of the information/reporting function responding to dozens of requests for on-the-spot interviews.

Outstanding needs

Due to the generosity of Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies and their supporters in the aftermath of the August earthquake, currently there are sufficient supplies of relevant relief items in warehouses in Turkey, operated by both the TRCS and International Federation, to meet immediate needs. In addition, local procurement of a range of goods, including tents, beds, mattresses, lanterns and food commodities is nearing completion and the quantities can be increased at relatively short notice. Pending a clearer picture of the full extent of this latest disaster, the International

Federation is not seeking further funds for its appeal of 8 September 1999, though unearmarked cash contributions will continue to be accepted.

Contributions

See Annex 1 of the situation report published yesterday (Friday) for details.

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