

TURKEY: EARTHQUAKES

16 November 1999

appeal no. 19/99

situation report no. 27

period covered: 14-15 November

Following the second major earthquake to hit north-western Turkey in the past three months - and despite mobilisations in recent days - there is now an urgent and immediate need for more winterised tents to provide temporary shelter to a traumatised population, many of whom are too frightened to return to their homes, even with temperatures in the disaster zone hovering close to freezing and wet weather becoming the norm. Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies are urged to source suitable supplies of winterised tents and airlift consignments to Turkey without delay.

The context

North-western Turkey, the country's most densely populated region and industrial heartland, has been struck by two massive earthquakes in less than three months. The first, on 17 August 1999 at 03h02 local measured between 7.4 and 7.8 on the Richter scale and lasted 45 seconds. 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. The official death toll stands at over 17,100, with some 44,000 people injured, nearly 300,000 homes either damaged or collapsed and more than 40,000 business premises similarly affected. On the day of the catastrophe, 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 remains active.

The disaster was followed by more than 1,300 aftershocks, culminating in the second quake - which shook Bolu and Düzce some 100 km to the east of Izmit for 30 seconds - at 18h57 on 12 November 1999 and rated at 7.2 on the Richter scale. This situation report concentrates primarily on Red Cross Red Crescent activities in response to this further tragedy in Turkey.

Update

The latest casualty figures from the earthquake on 12 November are at least 452 confirmed dead and 2,386 injured, with these numbers still expected to rise. The destruction in Bolu and Düzce is widespread; early assessments indicate that some 800 buildings have been heavily damaged in the whole

region. In addition, the neighbouring districts of Kaynasli, Akcakoca, Cumayeri, Gümüşova, Yigilca and Gökaya have also been affected. Despite heavy traffic and few large fissures in some of the roads, main communication facilities are accessible.

Hospital facilities in the affected area are damaged and not functioning any longer. Volunteer doctors reached the area rapidly set up field facilities near the hospital buildings to treat the injured. Severe cases are being referred to hospitals both in Ankara and Istanbul. Latest assessments indicate there is no need for additional medical personnel at present.

Coordinated by the Prime Minister's Crisis Management Centre, the crisis centres established during the first (August) earthquake were immediately reactivated both in Düzce and Bolu. Turkish search and rescue teams began working soon after the disaster struck and foreign specialised teams have been arriving into the country since Saturday morning. There are now more than 20 foreign search and rescue teams in the area with new arrivals every day. Their efforts are continuing even although hope of finding survivors decreases by the hour.

Meanwhile, distribution of basic relief items have begun and some six new possible tent city sites have been identified in Düzce and its surroundings for the homeless. Although tents are being delivered to the area, they are not arriving in sufficient quantities to meet immediate and anticipated needs. 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 which 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 •

The Society is focusing its activities on the distribution of relief items including tents (8,392) delivered to date), blankets (71,250), sleeping bags (4,995), beds (10,060), a mobile hospital with 100 beds, portable kitchens (29), ambulances (5), generators (103), stoves (2,250 - with another 10,000 being purchased), blood, medicines and serum. Some 78.5 mt of food has been dispatched to the area and the provision of hot meals thrice daily to some 8,000 earthquake victims is a primary target for the Society, with the number of beneficiaries expected to rise.

International Federation •

In the first 48 hours following the disaster, some 50 trucks were deployed to the area carrying relief supplies (including tents, blankets and field beds), medicaments and sanitary materials. In addition, three rubble halls (to support hospital facilities or provide additional storage space) and one 10,000 litre and four 1,500 water tanks were dispatched to the affected area. A warehouse was immediately identified in the area to facilitate the operation and International Federation field liaison delegates have been working round the clock in Düzce and its environs. Specialists in logistics/procurement and telecommunications are en route to Turkey today to support the delegation.

The International Federation's health coordinator has been in the affected area assessing the situation, in conjunction with the Turkish Red Crescent. Medicines for burn treatments will be purchased locally to supply field facilities already established.

Media activity has been intense, with the International Federation's head of delegation, deputy head of delegation and members of the information/reporting function responding to dozens of requests for on-the-spot interviews from news organisations all around the world.

Participating National Societies •

On the night of the disaster, representatives from various Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies present in Turkey left Istanbul for the affected area. Hundreds of blankets were distributed by French Red Cross and sanitary equipment was brought in by Spanish and Netherlands Red Cross Societies. Two 50 sq m tents with electricity and heating were dispatched by Spanish Red Cross to support the Düzce State hospital, with a further 30 family tents provided by the Society to hospitals in Bolu. Tents

supplied by the German Red Cross formed part of the International Federation's initial relief consignments.

A number of Societies also despatched search and rescue dog teams, including Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy and the Netherlands. With the search and rescue phase ending, these teams are now returning home.

Outstanding needs

A critical need for winterised tents (see specification attached) has emerged in the days following the latest quake. The weather in Düzce is deteriorating and earthquake victims are reluctant to return to their homes - even those which appear structurally sound - for fear of further occurrences. The International Federation contracted to purchase 10,000 winterised tents in mid September from a regular and long established supplier but early deliveries proved defective and on analysis, further samples provided by the manufacturer have not met specification either in the weight of canvas/sq. m or water-resistance tests. Accordingly Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies are urged to source suitable supplies of winterised tents and airlift consignments to Turkey without delay.

As indicated in situation report no 26 (13 November 1999), due to the generosity of the Red Cross Red Crescent community and its supporters in the aftermath of the August earthquake, currently there are sufficient supplies of other relief items in warehouses in Turkey, operated by both the TRCS and the International Federation, to meet immediate needs. In addition, local procurement of a range of goods, including 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 situation report no 25 published Friday (12 November 1999) for details.

For further information, please contact the following: International Federation, Geneva: Charles Eldred-Evans; tel: +41 22 730 4535; mobile: 41 79 217 3363; email: eldred@ifrc.org. Logistics: Birgitte Stalder-Olsen; tel: +41 22 730 4245.

Peter Rees-Gildea
Director
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Martin Faller
Acting Director
Europe Department