

TURKEY: EARTHQUAKES

24 November 1999

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Extensive relief activities to assist victims of the earthquake earlier this month are ongoing. In particular, deliveries of much needed winterised tents are being carried out by Red Cross Red Crescent societies, following an International Federation initiative last week, though many more are still needed. Meanwhile support to health and water and sanitation facilities located in the area struck by the August earthquake continues. An extraordinary general assembly of the Turkish Red Crescent has elected a former vice president as the Society's new president.

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. 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 Düzce and Kaynasli counties in the north-western province of Bolu, some 100 kms to the east of Izmit for 30 seconds - at 18h57 on 12 November 1999 and rated 7.2 on the Richter scale. The jolt was felt both in Istanbul (some 260 km to the west) and Ankara, the nation's capital, 300 km to the east. This situation report again concentrates primarily on Red Cross Red Crescent relief activities in response to this further tragedy in Turkey, but also includes some follow up on the August event.

Update

Casualty figures from the earthquake on 12 November now stand at 710 confirmed dead and over 5,108 injured. The destruction in Bolu and Düzce is widespread, with the total affected population currently

put at between 150,000 and 180,000; latest assessments indicate that some 976 buildings have collapsed and around 1,300 are damaged. The Government has estimated the financial cost of the quake at US\$ 10 billion. Energy and telecommunication problems in the region are under control.

Late Friday, 19 November, another aftershock, rated at 5.0 on the Richter scale, was felt in Düzce terrifying the people in the vicinity, most of whom are still living in tents or makeshift structures. Local crisis centres will finalise detailed reports on the number of people left homeless and their exact shelter needs in the coming days. Although the population movement away from the disaster zone has decreased markedly this week, thousands are still expected to leave the region for locations where local governments have offered shelter in public buildings. The exodus is hampering efforts to provide more detailed information on the needy population in the November quake area.

Foreign search and rescue teams left the country over the weekend, as work on removing debris intensifies. The major task remains the establishment of tent cities where the homeless can take shelter. For the time being however, most tents have been erected on an ad-hoc basis, with no real organisation apart from a few settlements assigned to specific organisations, including the TRCS.

According to the Prime Minister's Crisis Centre (PMCC), 1,284 prefabricated houses constructed in Düzce for victims of the August earthquake have been immediately reassigned to the locality. In addition, planning is proceeding on the installation of some 2,900 prefabricated homes with identification of sites already underway.

Most hospitals in the Düzce area are continuing their work in tents set up in gardens or car parks. In some cases, the damage is not severe, but both medical staff and patients fear entering and remaining inside the buildings.

Government crisis centres established in Düzce and Bolu are fully operational, coordinating the relief efforts with the support of locally based logistics centres.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Turkish Red Crescent Society

At the Society's extraordinary general assembly, which took place in Ankara over the weekend (and extended into Monday), a former TRCS vice president, Dr. Ertan Gonen, was elected as new president of the Turkish Red Crescent. The International Federation's Head of Delegation addressed the assembly, in particular looking to the future of the operation; a televised message from the International Federation's Secretary General was also shown to delegates.

With a coordination centre established in Düzce, the TRCS continues to focus its activities on the distribution of relief items and hot meals three times per day to 20,000 persons. With more mobile kitchens becoming available, the Society's aim is to provide meals for up to 30,000 persons during the coming days. More than 90 TRCS staff are working in the area. In order to speed up the distribution of goods to the needy population, the Society has hired some 30 extra workers for its Düzce warehouse.

According to the latest information from the PMCC, 29,124 tents have been distributed in the affected area, including 12,443 by TRCS. In addition, the Society has also dispatched the following items: blankets (123,285), sleeping bags (6,895), beds (11,500), duvets (3,587), 100,000 meters of plastic sheeting, a mobile hospital with 100 beds, a mobile clinic, portable kitchens (42), ambulances (5), generators (103), stoves (5,642), blood units (855), medicines, serum and 169.5 tonnes of food. Goods received through the International Federation are reflected in these figures.

Both the TRCS hospital set up in the Düzce state hospital grounds and the mobile clinic in Kaynasli are fully operational.

The Society is progressing towards a disaster preparedness programme which envisages the establishment of a disaster base in Izmit.

International Federation

The International Federation's Under-Secretary General, Disaster Response and Operations Coordination (DROC), visited Turkey over the weekend for briefings on Red Cross Red Crescent activities in both earthquake zones. An intense programme included field trips to Bolu and Düzce and meetings with TRCS officials in the field, local authorities, PNS representatives and International Federation delegates.

Shelter: During the weekend, 400 roles of plastic sheeting, 900 winterised tents (from the Norwegian Red Cross), 350 winter tents with stoves (Finnish Red Cross), 130 tents with heaters, 780 pieces of sleeping bags, blankets, field beds and an ambulance (German Red Cross) were received and immediately dispatched to the Bolu area.

More winterised tents and other critical shelter items are expected in the coming days, including consignments from the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. Efforts to source further supplies are ongoing.

Relief: Field liaison delegates, temporarily based in the Bolu area, continue assessing the needs and following up the development of the emergency phase. Requisitions for relief items are being sent to the Red Cross Red Crescent central warehouses and immediately released.

Local procurement contracts worth CHF 6 million have been placed in recent days and schedules agreed for the delivery of the goods, including beds, mattresses, shower and toilet containers and bulk food.

Water-sanitation: After arranging the distribution of emergency equipment to the November quake zone, the International Federation delegate, working with TRCS and PNS colleagues, is now assessing water-sanitation needs in the tent cities. Early action will include the provision of toilet and shower containers to the tent city being erected in Bolu with support from the Spanish Red Cross. A 15,000 litre tank and 25 garbage containers have been supplied to the Bolu State hospital.

In the August earthquake area, an Austrian Red Cross water-sanitation expert has arrived to work with the International Federation delegate in the placement of Oxfam water tanks in Adapazari's Emirdag camp. In Izmit camp, 100 taps have been installed, while a consignment of washing machines will soon reach settlements in Golchuk and Adapazari.

Health: After monitoring the situation of local health facilities in the Bolu area, an International Federation health team has made recommendations on the supply of tents and other equipment. For all the six hospitals in the area, the Red Cross Red Crescent has provided tents either for treatment or staff accommodation purposes. Further assessments in the newly affected area continue, in order to define future needs and longer term programmes.

At the same time, the International Federation health function continues to expedite the sourcing and delivery of prefabricated buildings, tents and equipment for the health sector in the area affected by the August quake and maintaining its coordinating role. Together with the German Red Cross team in the country, the International Federation is finalising details on a physiotherapy project to be jointly implemented, while mobile clinics for Adapazari and Yalova, donated by French and Danish Red Cross Societies, are expected to arrive in the coming days.

Telecommunications: A specialist from the International Federation's Geneva Secretariat has been working with the telecom delegate on strengthening the communications network; much needed technical equipment is due to arrive from the Japanese Red Cross shortly.

Participating National Societies

American Red Cross: A team of 11 has been in Turkey over the past week, reviewing the operation to date and holding discussions with TRCS representatives, PNS counterparts and the International Federation delegation. Detailed talks on the upcoming disaster preparedness programme are underway with the TRCS and International Federation. The Society is continuing its support for Red Cross Red Crescent activities in relief, health and water-sanitation. The architectural work for the rehabilitation of the Izmit State hospital has been finalised.

Austrian Red Cross: The Society has placed a water-sanitation specialist at the disposal of the International Federation to speed up the installation of critical equipment in tent cities throughout the affected region.

French Red Cross: The Society is setting up a delegation with five expatriate delegates to implement two projects: reconstruction of a school for 1,000 pupils in Akyazi and the distribution of relief items, including 800 tents, heaters and other shelter material in Kaynasli and Akyazi.

German Red Cross: In addition to initiatives described in previous situation reports, including recent deliveries of shelter and relief items, good progress is being made on the prefabricated hospital for Yenikoy and the Society is also supplying some prefabricated containers to Karamursel State hospital.

Italian Red Cross: Coordination and implementation of an ECHO-funded project for the distribution of 50,000 hygienic parcels to the affected population continues.

Japanese Red Cross: The director of the Society's relief department has been in Turkey for the past week visiting the disaster zones and participating in talks on the future of the Red Cross Red Crescent operation. Meanwhile, the construction of the Kocaeli University hospital funded by the Society, through the International Federation, is ongoing.

Netherlands Red Cross: Following the November quake, the Society has ordered 2,000 extra winter tents and 10,000 beds, mattresses and bed linen sets, which are expected to arrive within the next two weeks. A senior official from the Society has been in Turkey to assess new interventions and visit the November disaster site.

Spanish Red Cross: With funding from ECHO, the Society is setting up a tent city in Bolu centre with 1,000 tents and all the necessary support facilities; some 95 tents to assist the hospitals of the recently affected area of Bolu have also been provided. Two 50 sq. meter tents with electricity and heating systems have also been dispatched to the Social Security hospital in Düzce.

Swiss Red Cross: A representative is in Turkey finalising arrangements for the installation of 1,500 locally purchased winterised tents in Yayahkaptan (eastern Izmit), starting early next week; 20 sanitary containers will also be set up by the Society. A further 500 winter tents are being erected in a settlement at Cephanelik, in the Izmit area. In addition, the Swiss Red Cross is assessing the potential for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of public buildings in the disaster zone and examining options for some disaster preparedness/capacity building initiatives.

Outstanding needs

Winterised tents remain the priority item required in response to the present emergency. In addition, sleeping bags, plastic sheeting and jerry cans would be welcome, but only if available for immediate delivery to Turkey.

External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media

The Turkish Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations and other international organisations in Geneva yesterday (Tuesday) presented the International Federation's Secretary General with a plaque in recognition of the Red Cross Red Crescent response to the August quake. The citation read: "In profound appreciation of and with deep gratitude for the contributions to the relief efforts in the aftermath of the earthquake disaster in north western Turkey on 17 August 1999".

While international media interest has tailed off, some local media are still in the newly affected area covering the unfolding situation; most questions are being directed at the plight of the homeless in the coming winter.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

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