

TURKEY: EARTHQUAKES

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period covered: 25-29 November

Through the end of November, more than 7,150 usable winterised tents have been delivered to Turkey through the Red Cross Red Crescent. Freezing temperatures, snow, and heavy rains are dramatically worsening the homeless situation and hampering relief efforts and at least 8,000 additional winterised tents are urgently needed for immediate use. Relief distributions and monitoring of the health and water and sanitation conditions continue throughout both earthquake areas.

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 time, 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 at 18h57 on 12 November 1999 which rated 7.2 on the Richter scale and shook Düzce and Kaynasli counties in the north-western province of Bolu, some 100 kms to the east of Izmit. The jolt was felt both in Istanbul (some 260 kms to the west) and Ankara, the nation's capital, 300 kms to the east. Although this situation report provides updated information related to the August earthquake, the focus is primarily on Red Cross Red Crescent relief activities in response to the latest tragedy in Turkey.

Update

Casualty figures from the earthquake on 12 November now stand at 760 confirmed dead and 4,948 injured. Some 6,450 houses and 1,313 businesses are heavily or moderately damaged. More than 1,600 buildings are due for demolition, in addition to some 900 that had collapsed.

Snow in the Bolu region is hampering the relief efforts due to access roads being partially closed or blocked. Furthermore, last week's heavy winds followed by flood waters struck some of the tent cities in areas affected by the August quake, ruining a number of tent schools in the Sakarya province. Again, local authorities have temporarily suspended classes.

According to media reports, the government has announced it will not be able to meet the deadline for the construction of 26,000 prefabricated houses by the end of November and is extending the target to the second half of December; around 15,000 dwellings have been delivered to date.

Temporary shelter in locations outside the disaster zone and in Government owned hotels throughout Bolu is being put at the disposal of the homeless. To date, some 314 persons have agreed to settle in hotel facilities around Bolu and, of 1,896 applicants, 483 have already left for public guest houses in other provinces. Allowances for rent and travel expenses have been provided to some 1,708 families, while 2,311 had applied.

Following several months of debate, the Turkish Parliament has approved a law to increase taxes on income, treasury bonds, cell phones, vehicles and property in order to raise some US\$ 3 billion to repair quake damage.

The establishment of fully-fledged tent cities throughout the November quake zone continues, with 42,225 tents distributed - 21,980 by the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) - according to latest figures from the Prime Minister's crisis centre.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Efforts to source and deliver winterised tents to Turkey remain the top operational priority for the International Federation and Turkish Red Crescent. Through the end of November, the Red Cross Red Crescent has delivered 7,153 usable winter tents to Turkey, with up to 9,602 in the pipeline, through international and local procurement. With weather conditions deteriorating, the difficulties of a tight winterised tent market have been compounded by two suppliers to the International Federation delivering tents well below specification and far from the standard of samples provided for inspection prior to contract.

Turkish Red Crescent Society

The Society is increasing its operation in the tent cities being set up for victims of the November quake, providing three hot meals per day and shelter/relief items. Its Düzce coordination centre is fully operational, enabling essential distributions to those still living throughout the vicinity in tents or makeshift structures.

In addition to winterised tents, the TRCS has also dispatched the following items since 12 November: blankets (142,262), sleeping bags (7,195), beds (19,422), quilts (3,609), 100,000 metres of plastic sheeting, a mobile hospital with 100 beds, a mobile clinic, portable kitchens (42), ambulances (5), generators (107), stoves (11,935), portable baths (10), blood units (855), medicines, serum and 309.3 metric tons of food.

International Federation

Good progress is being made between the TRCS, various Participating National Societies (PNSs), and the International Federation delegation regarding the composition of the three assessment teams due to undertake project identification activities in the first half of December. Leadership of the teams comprises the American Red Cross (disaster preparedness), health (International Federation) and reconstruction/rehabilitation (International Federation/British Red Cross). As indicated in situation report No. 30 (26 November), the reports of all three assessment teams are due for completion by 20 December.

Relief: Deliveries of relief and shelter items from the International Federation's Samandira warehouse to the TRCS facility in Düzce continued over the weekend, including food, hygiene parcels, plastic sheeting, kitchen sets, and mobile warehouses.

Water and Sanitation: The installation of Oxfam water tanks in Adapazari's Emirdag camp is due for completion in the next two weeks.

Health: A physiotherapy assessment team assigned by the German Red Cross and supported by the International Federation health team has completed its mission. A series of recommendations on activities will be forwarded to the International Federation; project implementation by the German Red Cross is envisaged.

Participating National Societies

American Red Cross: The Society is continuing its major support to 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. A team of four disaster management experts will arrive next week to lead the DPP assessment mission.

Belgian Red Cross: A two-member expatriate team is currently following up site preparation works in Golchuk targeted at installing at least 70 prefabricated houses linked to utilities. The first units are expected to arrive at the beginning of December. Meanwhile, the Society has undertaken an assessment of the water-sanitation conditions within the temporary shelter settlements throughout Golchuk.

French Red Cross: The Society continues its activities in Akyazi projected at the reconstruction of a school for 1,000 pupils and the distribution of relief items, including 800 tents, heaters and other shelter materials 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. As noted above, the physiotherapy assessment conducted last week has been finalised, enabling the Society to move forward with projects in this specific area.

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

Japanese Red Cross: The construction of the Kocaeli University hospital funded by the National Society, through the International Federation, is ongoing. Besides supporting the TRCS and Federation overall relief operation, further projects are being identified, focusing primarily on rehabilitation/reconstruction.

Netherlands Red Cross: The National Society continues supporting the TRCS and Federation relief efforts and monitoring the reception and distribution of winter relief items. An application for a one month extension to the winter clothing and shoes project, funded by ECHO, has been submitted.

Spanish Red Cross: With funding from ECHO, the National Society continues preparations to establish a tent city in Bolu centre, comprising 1,000 tents and all the necessary support facilities.

Swiss Red Cross: Some 2,000 winter tents and 20 sanitary containers purchased by the Society are being established in Yayahkaptan and Cephanalik tent cities. Further rehabilitation and reconstruction projects are being studied.

Outstanding needs

At least 8,000 additional winter tents are urgently needed for immediate use, in addition to those in the current pipeline. Unearmarked contributions as well as pledges for the following items are also welcome: baby parcels (30,000), field beds (19,960) kitchen sets (5,500) and winter clothing - details on exact specifications are available from the International Federation's Logistics Department in Geneva.

External relations / Government/UN/ NGOs/ Media

In recent days, the International Federation participated in a coordination meeting organised by the UN in Bolu. A coordination and information sharing meeting with the ECHO representative in Turkey has also taken place in Istanbul.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

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