

TURKEY: EARTHQUAKES

17 December 1999

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The number of usable winterised tents delivered to Turkey by the Red Cross Red Crescent now exceeds 15,000 with a further 7,000 in the pipeline. Over the past week, the International Federation has dispatched over 671 metric tonnes of relief items and food to the disaster zones. Today (Friday, December 17), the newly-elected President of the TRCS, accompanied by the Society's Director General, is visiting the delegation to meet with delegates and PNS representatives.

The context

In the second half of 1999, north-western Turkey, the country's most densely populated region and industrial heartland, was 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. 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 which 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. Casualty figures from this quake continue rising with a confirmed death toll of 815 and 4,946 injured. Some 8,944 houses and 1,542 businesses are heavily or moderately damaged. More than 2,533 buildings are due for demolition, in addition to some 900 that collapsed.

Update

Another strong aftershock, mainly felt in the Adapazari area, occurred on Monday 13 December; once again there were severe stress reactions among the population and eight persons were hospitalised. Both in the Istanbul metropolis and the earthquake zones, anxiety and fear are increasing as a result of the recent public announcements made by the Turkish Prime Minister regarding the possibility of another earthquake.

In the quake which struck 25 villages in the Erzurum region of eastern Turkey earlier this month, one person was reported dead and eight injured. A total of 350 homes were destroyed throughout the area, affecting 3,000 persons. However, the loss of family livestock stables (around 640) and at least 240 head of cattle is significant, since animal farming is a main source of income in the vicinity.

The establishment of fully-fledged tent cities throughout the November quake zone continues, with 48,313 tents distributed - 25,942 by the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) - according to figures from the Prime Minister's crisis centre.

In the latest fire incident in a tent city in Düzce, five tents were completely destroyed although no casualties were reported. Meanwhile, pressure is mounting on the tented population who are still reluctant to move into prefabricated settlements, through fears of benefits' loss, including daily food supplies. The latest media reports indicate that 22,330 prefabricated houses have been completed out of 33,289 planned by the public works and housing ministry.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Over the past week, the figure for usable family-sized winter tents delivered by the Red Cross Red Crescent to Turkey - through international and local procurement - has breached the appeal target of 10,000 and now stands at 15,464 and with an outstanding pipeline of some 7,048. The International Federation has received a number of cash pledges earmarked for these crucial items and continues sourcing suppliers.

Turkish Red Crescent Society

In conjunction with its Izmit branch, the TRCS is funding scholarships for 30 university students affected by the August earthquake.

Following the quake that hit the Erzurum region earlier this month, the TRCS dispatched 100 winter tents and stoves to assist the homeless; the most immediate needs of the affected population have now been met.

In addition to winterised tents, working with the International Federation, the TRCS has also dispatched the following items since the disaster on 12 November: blankets (149,942), sleeping bags (18,000), beds (19,462), quilts (4,359), 150,000 sq. metres of plastic sheeting, a mobile hospital with 100 beds, a mobile clinic, portable kitchens (42), ambulances (5), generators (118), stoves (23,000), 3,270 gas bottles, portable baths (10), office containers (13), baby hygiene parcels (10,000), adult hygiene parcels (40,000), floor pallets (3,000), bed linen sets (500), blood units (855), medicines, serum and 350.7 mt of food.

The provision of three hot meals a day to some 70,000 persons throughout the whole quake hit area remains the Society's main task, with the aim of further improving the facilities and increasing the number of beneficiaries.

International Federation

Based on the assessment of damage and needs in the Erzurum region, the International Federation has made recommendations for the identification of specific projects to assist the population in recovering their main source of income, as well as reconstructing their homes and livestock stables.

Assessment missions: The disaster preparedness assessment team concluded its first phase mission last weekend after collecting a substantial amount of data that will enable the design of an in-depth, long term programme to be implemented throughout the next year. Prior to the team's departure, a briefing session on its findings took place with the participation of all International Federation delegates and PNS representatives. The work of the health assessment team, also now concluded, has focused on projects already identified, including health care in the camps, psycho-social support, physiotherapy and rehabilitation of health facilities. Meanwhile the rehabilitation and reconstruction team started its mission this week, prioritising visits to those facilities highlighted by their health counterparts and also looking at needs in the educational and social welfare spheres.

Health: The delegation's health department continues to work closely with 20 hospitals and all tent cities in the affected area. Modular prefabricated units procured by the International Federation, to

provide clinics and hospital wards, will begin arriving in Turkey shortly, with funding from the British government. An order for up to six mobile clinics - to be used for primary health care and transportation in the tent cities and remote areas - is being placed by the Danish Red Cross.

Relief: Over the past week, the International Federation has dispatched over 670 mt of relief items including tents, food, blankets, beds, mattresses, family and baby hygiene parcels, kitchen sets, plastic sheeting and food. More than 40,000 sleeping bags, funded by the American and Canadian Red Cross Societies and OPEC have been airlifted to Turkey this month. Monitoring of distributions and follow up of the victims situation continues to be carried out by the two field liaison delegates based in the main quake hit areas.

Water and sanitation: A contract has just been signed for the local procurement of 100 toilet and shower containers, with delivery to tent cities scheduled for completion by the end of next month. Eight additional containers supplied by the German Red Cross, 750 garbage cans and 54 washing machines have also been delivered to the August quake hit area. The installation of Oxfam water tanks in Adapazari's Emirdag camp is due for completion very shortly.

Delegation: A Geneva based psychotherapist, on a short term mission to Turkey to counsel delegates, local staff and PNS representatives, will present her report in the coming days. Today (Friday), the newly-elected President of the TRCS, accompanied by the Society's Director General, is visiting the delegation to meet with delegates and PNS representatives and discuss key coordination and linkage issues.

Participating National Societies

American Red Cross: A representative from the Society's Washington DC headquarters, who has been in Turkey since early in the month supporting the permanent representative, has concluded his mission. As part of the Society's major support to Red Cross Red Crescent activities in relief, health and water-sanitation, 842 additional winter tents have recently been delivered to the Düzce and Bolu area.

Belgian Red Cross: Preparation of a site in Golchuk where the Society will install prefabricated housing has been finalised and the first units are due next week; the entire settlement, with all the required facilities, is expected to be fully habitable within two months. A Belgian Red Cross specialist continues assessing the water-sanitation conditions within the temporary shelter settlements throughout Golchuk.

French Red Cross: The Society continues its activities in Akyazi and Kaynasli, 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. Last week toys were distributed to kindergarten students in the area.

German Red Cross: Over this weekend, the Society's new prefabricated hospital in Golchuk will be inaugurated and fully operational. German Red Cross support to the relief operation throughout the area continues, with the ongoing provision of tents for families and to strengthen health facilities, medical equipment, toilet and shower containers as well as food distributions in villages surrounding Bolu. Rehabilitation and reconstruction projects for schools and hospitals are being identified and addressed. The Society's most recent commitment is to procure a prefabricated hospital for Bolu and build TRCS branches both in Düzce and Bolu, while training modules for the proposed psycho-social programme are currently being translated into Turkish. In addition, an agreement has been reached with the TRCS, paving the way for the training and establishment of search and rescue teams.

Italian Red Cross: Distribution of ECHO funded hygiene parcels is ongoing in Golchuk, Adapazari and Izmit tent cities. Some 1,000 parcels have been delivered in the last two days. At the request of the TRCS, distributions will be expanded throughout the Yalova region.

Japanese Red Cross: A permanent representative assigned by the Society to Turkey is currently working in close cooperation with the rehabilitation and reconstruction assessment mission. The

construction of the Kocaeli University hospital, funded by the Japanese Red Cross through the International Federation, is ongoing.

Netherlands Red Cross: The Society continues its support to the TRCS and International Federation relief efforts and monitoring the reception and distribution of winter relief items. The production of the winter clothes and shoes funded by ECHO is due to be finalised before the end of this month, with distributions starting immediately and expected to continue through early January.

Spanish Red Cross: The installation of winter tents and the establishment of a tent city in Bolu is underway, supported by four Spanish Red Cross delegates. To date, some 850 tents are already erected and the first 100 families have arrived. Meanwhile, Spanish Red Cross delegates are busy distributing blankets, beds and mattresses to the incoming population, expected to number around 100 per day. In addition, project proposals for the construction of a hospital in Karamussel and a school in Adapazari are underway.

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

Outstanding needs

At least 8,000 additional winter tents would be welcome for immediate use, in addition to those in the current pipeline. Unearmarked contributions as well as pledges for the following items are also sought: pallets for flooring (5,000), 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.

Contributions

See Annex 1 for details.

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