

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

IRAQ: STAMPEDE

7 September 2005

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

This Bulletin no. 3 is being issued as an update on the Iraqi Red Crescent response in the wake of the tragedy on the Ala'imma bridge in Baghdad. The Federation's Iraq delegation (based in Amman) is actively supporting the national society as it joins efforts to support the thousands of people affected by this disaster. The Federation will communicate further if the situation dramatically changes and the status of the national society's response and whether international support is sought.

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations \(NGOs\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

Background

More than 1,000 people are believed to have been killed as well as hundreds injured as a result of last week's stampede in Baghdad. The Shia religious celebration, involving two million pilgrims, quickly turned to horror on Wednesday 31 August with people crushed or being drowned in the river Tigris, after falling or being pushed by weight of numbers. Most of the victims were women and children. As people streamed towards the Shrine of Musa Al-Kadhumi, in north Baghdad in Al-Kadhimiya district panic appeared to break out. News reports spoke of chaos being sparked by rumours of a suicide bomber in the crowds. The pilgrims arrived from many places to mark the annual commemoration of Imam Musa Al-Kadhumi. Hours before the crush, three mortar bombs shelled the Mosque of Al-Kadhimiya killing seven and injuring more than 37. The families of the victims have started to hold funerals for their loved ones.

National society response

Since the Ala'imma stampede, the headquarters of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS) and Baghdad branch have responded promptly and effectively to the tragedy. IRCS volunteers were busy round the clock in the four days following the disaster and now a clearer picture of the nature of their response has emerged:

Date	Action taken	By
1 st day 31-8-05	o Carrying victims to hosp. and providing first aid. Insufficient ambulances were available	IRCS Baghdad branch, 10 volunteers involved.
	o Tracing between hospitals and citizens.	IRCS Baghdad branch, 20 volunteers involved.
	o Assigning rapid disaster assessment team for evaluation.	IRCS Baghdad branch, 10 volunteers involved.
	o Providing psychosocial support to the victims.	IRCS Baghdad branch, all volunteers involved.
	o Sharing first aid expertise with hospital staff.	IRCS Baghdad branch, 10 volunteers involved.
2 nd day 1-9-05	o Purchasing relief and medical items from market, and distributing to hosp. ¹	IRCS Baghdad branch, 20 volunteers involved.
	o Continuation of tracing action by providing victims lists in cooperation with local citizens.	IRCS Baghdad branch, 10 volunteers involved.
	o Ongoing tracing activities.	IRCS Baghdad branch, 20 volunteers involved.
	o Ongoing provision of psychosocial support to those affected.	IRCS Baghdad branch, all volunteers involved.
	o Night shifts for any emergency developments.	IRCS Baghdad branch, 5 volunteers involved.
3 rd day 2-9-05	o Food items as a support to victims' families. ²	IRCS Baghdad branch
	o Assessment team sent to estimate beneficiary needs for next day support.	IRCS Baghdad branch, 10 volunteers involved.
	o Ongoing tracing operations.	IRCS Baghdad branch, 10 volunteers involved.
4 th day 3-9-05	o Distribution of food items for 300 families. ³	IRCS Baghdad branch, 20 volunteers involved.
	o Assessment visits to various regions of Baghdad carried out, in coordination with the city council.	
	o Evaluation meeting held to formulate activities for coming days.	

1 The items were: bottled water, masks, bed sheets, blankets, and body bags.

2 As explained in the previous update report (Friday, 2 Sep. 2005).

3 The items are mentioned in below table.



IRCS volunteers provide first aid.



Volunteers carry the injured to hospital.

Food items distributed on the 4th day (3 Sep. 2005) were purchased from local markets. The items are indicated below:

Item	Unit	Qty.
1. Rice.	kg	5
2. Sugar	kg	5
3. Macaroni.	Bags (5 kg each)	1
4. Tomato paste.	Bottle (5 kg each)	1
5. Food oil.	Bottle (5 ltr. each)	1
6. Detergent.	kg	5
7. Soap.	Pcs.	4
8. Red beans.	kg	5



A sample of food items distributed.



Transporting food to affected families.

Federation support

The Federation-Baghdad office operation room has conducted joint field visits with IRCS Baghdad branch staff to monitor volunteer action.



Providing body bags and bed sheets.



Distributing food items.

Discussions in Baghdad continue to be held so that the response keeps pace with evolving needs.

Impact:

- Movement principles have been promoted as indicated by positive reactions to the national society from the families of those who were helped. This appreciation particularly focused around the efforts of Baghdad branch volunteers.
- IRCS health volunteers demonstrated their expertise in providing effective first aid in a crisis situation. Hospital staff praised the volunteers' performance.

Challenges:

- Insufficient IRCS vehicles to support planned activities.
- Inadequate IRCS Baghdad branch warehouse for storing larger quantities of relief items.
- Lack of dissemination capacity led to poor media coverage of Baghdad branch response activities.