

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

LEBANON: EMERGENCY SITUATION FOR THE LEBANESE RED CROSS AMBULANCE SERVICES

7 April 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 Information Bulletin (no. 01/2005) is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. CHF 100,000 has been allocated from the Federation's Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). The Federation will consider international support through an Emergency Appeal to be issued shortly.

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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for a full description of the national society profile, please access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

Background

Since 1975 the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) has built a reputation as a reliable, effective, and professional paramedical service provider. In 1995, the Government of Lebanon decreed that the LRC would be the national provider of First Aid and ambulance services for the entire population. Funding has been provided by the Government the LRC, and services have been provided free of charge for the population. In 2004, the LRC First Aid/Ambulance services responded to over 161,000 requests for assistance (over 440 a day). The LRC covers more than 80% of all ambulance missions in Lebanon; the remaining 20% is covered by private operators and the Civil Defence.

The Situation

Following a period of political turmoil, on 14 February 2005, a powerful car bomb ripped through the motorcade of former Prime Minister Rafik al Hariri. A total of 17 people were killed, including Hariri, and 40 people were seriously injured. The assassination was quickly followed by a series of demonstrations in the centre of the city. This was followed on 18 March by a series of car bombs targeting predominantly Christian neighbourhoods of Beirut. Although causing mainly material damage, the bombs have increased people's fear over a return to the situation experienced during Lebanon's civil war (1975-1990). The assassination of former PM Rafik al Hariri provoked further turmoil, preventing the Lebanese Parliament from passing a budget law in preparation for the 2005 state budget. Consequently the LRC's nation-wide ambulance services have been left without support in 2005 to continue implementation of its mandate, directly impacting the population that rely on these critical services.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action taken so far

The Lebanese Red Cross currently operates 180 ambulances from 42 stations spread throughout the country. At least 35 of the stations are open 24 hours every day. The operation centres are in direct contact with hospitals, police, security forces, civil defence, fire departments and the armed forces. The LRC ambulance services are managed by a team of 5 full-time staff consisting of a director, a vehicle fleet manager, a telecommunications manager, a secretary and an accountant. All other positions are covered by volunteers receiving per diem as compensation.

The LRC first aid/ambulance services have continued its regular missions, and are responding to the significant added needs during demonstrations and car bombings. This massive increase in missions is not sustainable and, in the absence of the external (governmental) funding, the LRC's reserves are not sufficient to keep this essential and life saving service at the minimum required operational level.

The needs

The Lebanese Red Cross has requested the International Federation to provide short-term assistance to allow the national society to continue to deliver mandated services to the entire population in the country, particularly during this period where political instability may result in civil disturbance and the increased need of emergency medical services.

CHF 100,000 has been allocated from the Federation's DREF to offer immediate help to the Lebanese Red Cross in coping with very serious, but hopefully temporary, difficulties. At the same time the Federation is in the process of finalizing an Emergency Appeal to support the Lebanese Red Cross First Aid structures to allow them to continue life-saving operations until a state budget is agreed upon (after parliamentary elections scheduled for May).

Coordination

The Federation and the ICRC are both supporting the LRC First Aid/Ambulance department. The ICRC support dates back to 1975 and the start of the civil conflict. Today, ICRC is financing second and third level training for the First Aid volunteers. The Federation has since 1998 assisted the LRC with ambulance fleet renewal, medical equipment and technical advice. A thorough assessment of the ambulance services is planned for 2005 which includes management systems, coordination mechanisms, fleet management and communication procedures.

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