

# MINOR EMERGENCY



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

## COLOMBIA: VOLCANIC ACTIVITY

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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

**CHF 50,000 (USD 38,025 OR EUR 32,318) HAS BEEN ALLOCATED FROM THE FEDERATION'S DISASTER RELIEF EMERGENCY FUND (DREF) TO RESPOND TO EMERGENCY OPERATIONS IN COLOMBIA.**

**UN earmarked funds to repay DREF are encouraged.**

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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>

### The situation

On 16 November, the Colombian Institute of Geology and Mining (Ingeominas) declared a "level two" alert due to increased activity of the Galeras volcano. The Galeras volcano stands 4,270-m high and is located in the department of Nariño in south western Colombia near the border with Ecuador. The Colombian government then declared the area in "disaster situation" or "maximum alert". The National Disaster Preparedness and Response System (SNPAD) ordered the evacuation of about 9,000 people living on the slopes of the Galeras volcano which scientists say could be seriously affected.

Volcanic activity in Galeras has been frequent in recent years; the volcano first began showing signs of activity in 1988 after lying dormant more than 40 years, then erupted in January 1993, killing nine people on a scientific

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expedition to its summit. The present active crater lies 6 km west of Pasto, a city with approximately 300,000 inhabitants. There are also three smaller craters in the caldera. Galeras is one of 15 volcanoes worldwide that are being monitored by the scientific community as an "International Decade Volcano" because of the hazard that it represents to the local population<sup>1</sup>.

Several communities around the volcano are considered to be at high risk and are in the process of being evacuated. In the municipality of Pasto, some 6,300 people are being evacuated from the following communities: Agua Pamba, Genoy, Bella Vista, Castillo Loma, Nueva Campiña, El Edén, Villa María, La Cocha, Charguayaco, Mapachico, El Rosal, San Francisco and two sectors of Briceño. In the municipality of Nariño some 560 people are being evacuated from the following communities: Chorrillo, Yunguillo and Pueblo Viejo. In the municipality of La Florida some 2,124 people are being evacuated from the following communities: Barranco Alto, Barranco Bajo and the western region.

### Red Cross action taken so far

The Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS) has mobilized equipment, volunteers and personnel to support the people and families who are being voluntarily evacuated. Thus far, 11 families have been evacuated in Genoy and Mapachico in the municipality of Pasco. The CRCS has a contingency plan in case of disaster in the department of Nariño and the Nariño branch has activated its response team, which includes volunteers, health professionals and relief personnel. A total of 167 people have been activated in response to the emergency, including physicians, nurses, psychologists, specialists in water and sanitation, telecommunications, and personnel specialized in disasters from the branches of Cauca, Valle, Cundinamarca, Boyacá and the National Society's headquarters. An additional 104 people from different specialities from Risaralda, Caldas and Quindío branches are also ready to be deployed to the affected areas, should the need arise. Telecommunications equipment and a water unit have been mobilized to support the operations. Stabilization and classification modules have also been mobilized from the branches of Boyacá, Cundinamarca and Caldas to assist injured people.



A Red Cross volunteer supports the evacuation in Nariño

Prior to this emergency, more than 300 people had already been trained in disaster preparedness, especially focused on response to volcanic events in the areas of Genoy, Mapachico and the municipalities of Nariño, La Florida, Consacá, Yacoanquer and Tangua. Training in the area around Santa Bárbara, in the municipality of Sandoná, has been focused on water and sanitation management and the setting up of water tanks to store water in case of large-scale emission of ashes, with support from the American Red Cross.

The DREF funds allocated for this emergency will be used for further disaster preparedness activities in order to ensure that the CRCS and the communities are ready, should the volcano erupt and a large-scale evacuation be needed. The CRCS will start a volunteering course in the next 10 days with 60 people, especially focused on

<sup>1</sup> According to [SIR-C/X-SAR Space radar images of Earth at JPL](#)

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university students and professionals. Additionally, a workshop on Piloting Response and Contingency Plans, promoted by the Pan American Disaster Response Unit (PADRU), will be held in the city of Pasto from 30 November to 3 December in order to strengthen response and contingency planning, validate the material on this topic and exchange experiences among the affected countries in order to improve future operations. This important event will be carried out with 11 participants from the CRCS, 5 participants from the Ecuadorian Red Cross, 2 participants from the Mexican Red Cross, 2 participants from the Salvadorean Red Cross Society, 1 consultant, 1 participant from OXFAM and a disaster management delegate from PADRU.

On Friday, the CRCS launched a national appeal in the hope of raising 5 million Colombian pesos (approximately USD 2,290,000) to assist 15,000 families. Blood donation is also an important element within this national appeal.

**Coordination**

The CRCS is working in close coordination with the Institute of Health in the department of Nariño and the Pan American Health Association (PAHO) in order to provide 300 temporary shelters in the city of Pasto. A total of 11 tents are being mobilized at the moment and 40 more are expected from PADRU. An agreement has been signed with the municipality in order to organize the distribution of relief goods to be provided to the families in case they are evacuated.

**Budget outline**

CHF 50,000 has been allocated to Colombia in response to recent emergencies. Of this total, CHF 25,000 has been allocated for disaster preparedness activities in anticipation of increased volcanic activity in the area around the Galeras volcano. Another CHF 25,000 has been allocated in response to floods which are currently affecting 26 departments in the country (please see floods Minor Emergency Bulletin)

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