

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

YEMEN: LANDSLIDE

30 December 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 for information only. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

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The Situation

A devastating landslide occurred during the night of 28 December, 2005 in al-Dhafir village, Bani Matar District, Sana'a Governorate. The village is situated on a rocky slope about 50 kilometers west of the capital city of Sana'a. Reports indicate that 31 houses were damaged or destroyed, buried under huge piles of rocks. As of Thursday evening (29 December) thirty bodies had been recovered, and many had been reported injured. The number of deaths is expected to rise as about 100 residents, out of the village's total population of some 270 people, remain missing and are believed to be under the rocks and rubble. According to civil defence sources, 11 persons have so far been rescued from beneath the rubble.



Some 50 military and civil ambulances have been transporting the injured to hospitals in the governorate of Sana'a. Rescue services are intensifying their efforts to save those who are still alive. The efforts have been impeded by the rugged terrain of the region and the massive piles of rocks. Rescue efforts are still continuing as

of Friday morning, and all available security and medical services had been dispatched to the affected area. It remains unclear what caused the landslide as Yemen's seismology centre had no word of an earthquake, and there were no reports of severe weather.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Yemen Red Crescent (YRCS) responded by sending a rescue team from the Sana'a branch, assisted by around 30 volunteers from branches in Amran, Mahweit and Sanaa. They helped in search and rescue operations along with other government and civil societies and the local community. The YRCS President and Secretary General visited the area early Thursday morning to oversee the operation and meet officials to coordinate efforts. An assessment report will be prepared by the national society by Saturday after collecting the needed information. The Federation's Representative also visited the village and met with the Governor of Sana'a where they discussed ways that support can be provided by the YRCS in order to alleviate the impact of the disaster.



The Vice President of Yemen, on his visit to the village to review the current situation and organize rescue and relief efforts, also headed a meeting including the prime minister, the minister of justice, and the governor of Sana'a. The meeting formed a committee to perform these tasks, including rock breaking and removal. Senior officials received directives to provide rescue assistance, and support was provided to those affected, particularly with shelter for homeless families (see photo above).

When the Federation team arrived a hospital unit was set up in one of the tents with four medical doctors on stand by in order to immediately assist found victims. In order to transport the surviving victims to better equipped hospitals in Sanaa, about 10 ambulances stood standby in the village. In order to move the huge pile of rocks various heavy machinery (ie caterpillars) were brought into operation at the scene.

The primary conclusion at this stage is that the situation seems to be under control due to that the government has taken full responsibility for the rescue operation. The YRCS has also clearly showed timely and effective action by deploying staff and volunteers to support efforts, and was among the first organizations on the scene.

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