

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

SAUDI ARABIA: HAJJ STAMPEDE

13 January , 2006

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. 01/2006) is being issued for information only, and reflects the status of the situation and information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

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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 the 12th of January 2006 at around 2:30 PM a stampede took place during the stone-throwing ritual at the Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. At the time of writing this bulletin, at least 345 people have died and hundreds were injured. Reports indicate that most of the casualties are persons from South-East Asia and Africa. The stampede happened at the foot of the Jamarat Bridge where pilgrims were returning to Mina from Tawaf-al-Wada; the final ceremony of Hajj. According to Mr. Abdullah Al-Ruwaili, deputy director of the Public Relations and Media Department at the Saudi Red Crescent Society (SRCS), the main cause of the stampede was lack of awareness by some pilgrims who were carrying their luggage. About two and a half million people are believed to have performed al Hajj this year.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

In line with the SRCS mandate to provide medical relief services, the national society has taken the lead in the triage operation. The SRCS had already deployed twenty Advanced Medical Posts at the foot of the Jamarat Bridge (where the stampede took place) before the crush occurred. Some 120 SRCS EMS teams (each team with one ambulance) and one helicopter have provided medical relief services to the those affected, and taken part in

transferring around (150) of the stampede victims to hospitals in Mecca. A number of victims were treated on the scene (statistics on this are not yet available or have not been released).

The SRCS also has carried out awareness campaigns which targeted pilgrims to Mecca. Some 75% of the SRCS operation's in Mecca are concentrated during the al Hajj period.

In its response, the SRCS is working closely with the Ministry of Health, mobile hospitals of the Ministry of Defence and the security forces. In addition to the 120 ambulances made available by the SRCS, around 60 ambulances were provided by other organizations. Tracing has been carried out by the Ministry of Health and Interior Ministry. Psychological Support (PSP) services have been provided by the Ministry of Health to the injured in hospitals.

The SRCS has the capacity to respond internally. However, they have indicated the need for other national societies to take part in future awareness campaigns involving pilgrims in order to avoid similar reoccurrences in the future.

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