

# 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

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## GREECE: FOREST FIRES

*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 185 countries.*

### In Brief

This Bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the situation and the information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

The International Federation undertakes activities that are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to achieve the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity."

#### Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

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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 Organizations \(NGO's\) 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

Since 24 August, Greece has been experiencing a number of wildfires in forests and villages across most of the Peloponnese peninsula. The prefectures of Heliia, Messinia, Achaia, Lakonia, Argolida, Korinthia and Evia Island have been particularly badly hit. On 25 August the Prime Minister declared that Greece was in a state of emergency and international assistance was requested to fight the fires. On 29 August, it seemed that the fires would continue

burning for a long period of time with new fires also starting. However, the fires began dying down on 29 August and the fires brigade reports that no inhabited areas are currently threatened.

The fires burned hundreds of thousands of square kilometres of forest areas, olive groves as well as a vast number of residences in villages. The number of casualties officially stands at 64, but the number could rise since many people remain at high risk.

Many people evacuated their homes to move to safer places. There were also cases, regrettably, of people not managing to leave their homes on time, due to the speed of the fires and finding themselves trapped. A great number of people have been left homeless; however, it is still too early to measure the extent of the damage and effect on the populations.

Many people are in need of first aid, psychological support and medical care due to burns, traumas and respiratory problems. Moreover, as a result of the fires a lot of regions - not only the affected ones – face breakdowns in telecommunications and the electricity and water supplies.

## **The Hellenic Red Cross action**

### **Rescue and relief activities**

The Hellenic Red Cross has officially undertaken an assessment of the needs in the affected areas. Tents have been provided to act as temporary shelter for people who have been forced from their homes. The National Society has been assigned by the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity to undertake food distributions to the affected population in the camps established. Two mobile first aid units have been put at the disposal of the National Emergency Aid Centre (EKAB).

Several branches of the Hellenic Red Cross have been actively involved in the operations though their rescuers, social workers and volunteers. Branches are in a state of preparedness. The Hellenic Red Cross rescue teams, the Samaritans Corps, have been active in the affected areas, transporting people, conducting search and rescue activities, evacuating villages at risk and being involved in fire-fighting operations.

In Helia 30 rescuers were involved in fire fighting operations using a 20 tonne water-carrier in the villages of Grillos, Ploutochori, Lala, Persena, Rodia, Matesi, Skala, Andritsena. Food and water distributions were also made in the Zacharo area, which were unfortunately interrupted due to the renewed outbreak of fire. Currently, volunteers are distributing water in the ancient Olympia area (1000 bottles of water) and food in Arini, Kalidona and Xirochori villages. They also assisted in the removal of dead animals in Chrisochory, Taxiarches and Minthi villages.

In the prefecture of Arkadia night patrols have been conducted around the area and currently a five-member team is on standby; in Lasithi five rescuers were on a state of alert, but have now stood down; and in Evia 30 rescuers have been on fire fighting operations and evacuating villages at risk; a five-member team remains on standby there too.

A total of 1,976 ready meals, covering the needs for two days, were delivered to the hospital of Pyrgos. Additionally, 4,000 cans of food, 500 kilos of sugar, 400 kilos of pasta and 2,000 cans of pasteurized milk were delivered to the municipality of Ancient Olympia.

### **Health and care activities**

Paid and volunteer nurses from the Hellenic Red Cross are supporting the operation of the local hospitals and the health centres in the affected areas. Nineteen nurses are operating in the prefectures of Helia, and in the rest of the Peloponnesus peninsula, mainly in the towns of Sparta, Tripoli and Kalamata, where they are supporting the health centres on a 24 hour basis, as well as in the prefectures of Chalkida and Lamia.

A total of 80 volunteer nurses are still participating in the operations, with a further 125 volunteer nurses in a state of preparedness. Some 1,500 volunteers to hand out food are ready to be deployed and 20 social workers organize the registration of the beneficiaries, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity. They also offer psychological support services and inform the affected population about the compensation they can receive in the Prefectures of Helia, Archadia, Messinia, Lakonia and Evia.

The Hellenic Red Cross hospital and the Henry Dunant hospital sent a team of 15 doctors, including surgeons, pathologists and pneumonologists, to support the hospitals and health centres in the affected areas of Helia prefecture, following requests from the local hospital managers. Teams of social workers have also been transferred to Helia, Evia and Archadia prefectures, visiting the affected areas to report on the needs and provide psychological support to people suffering from post-trauma after the fires.

The Red Cross is also undertaking the management and the administration of camps wherever requested and providing assistance in the domains of public health, food distribution and first aid materials.

In the municipality of Zacharo in Helia prefecture, the Red Cross has provided 200 beds, 200 mattresses, 50 tents (capacity for eight persons), 100 towels, 200 bed sheets, 200 bottles of shampoo and 200 hand soaps. More relief operations will be organized according to the needs of the affected areas.

Red Cross teams made up of social workers are in place to register the beneficiaries in need of food and shelter. They also provide psychosocial services, in close cooperation with the competent authorities of the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity.

Although the Hellenic Red Cross capacity in terms of staff, volunteers and logistics is high, it is running short of relief materials and cash due to the extent of the disaster and the vast number of people affected. Volunteers have been offering their services since the onset of the emergency in close coordination with the fire departments, police departments and other the relevant stakeholders from hospitals, ministries and local authorities.

Several Greek NGOs such as the *Smile of the Child* and the *Hellenic Association for Guides* have provided the National Society with volunteers, relief material and equipment.

Due to the extent of damage it is still extremely difficult to provide concrete numbers on the beneficiaries. However, according to the assessment of the Red Cross teams, in cooperation with the competent authorities, some of the most needed basic items are as follows:

- hygiene parcels;
- bottled water;
- blankets;
- bed sheets;
- pillows;
- mattresses;
- chemical toilets;
- generators;
- beds.

The Hellenic Red Cross is seeking funds within its borders in order to carry out more activities it has planned. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has authorized USD 100,000 to be provided to the Hellenic Red Cross.

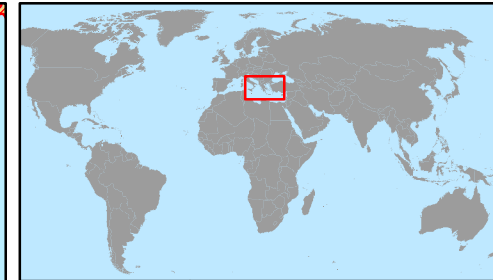
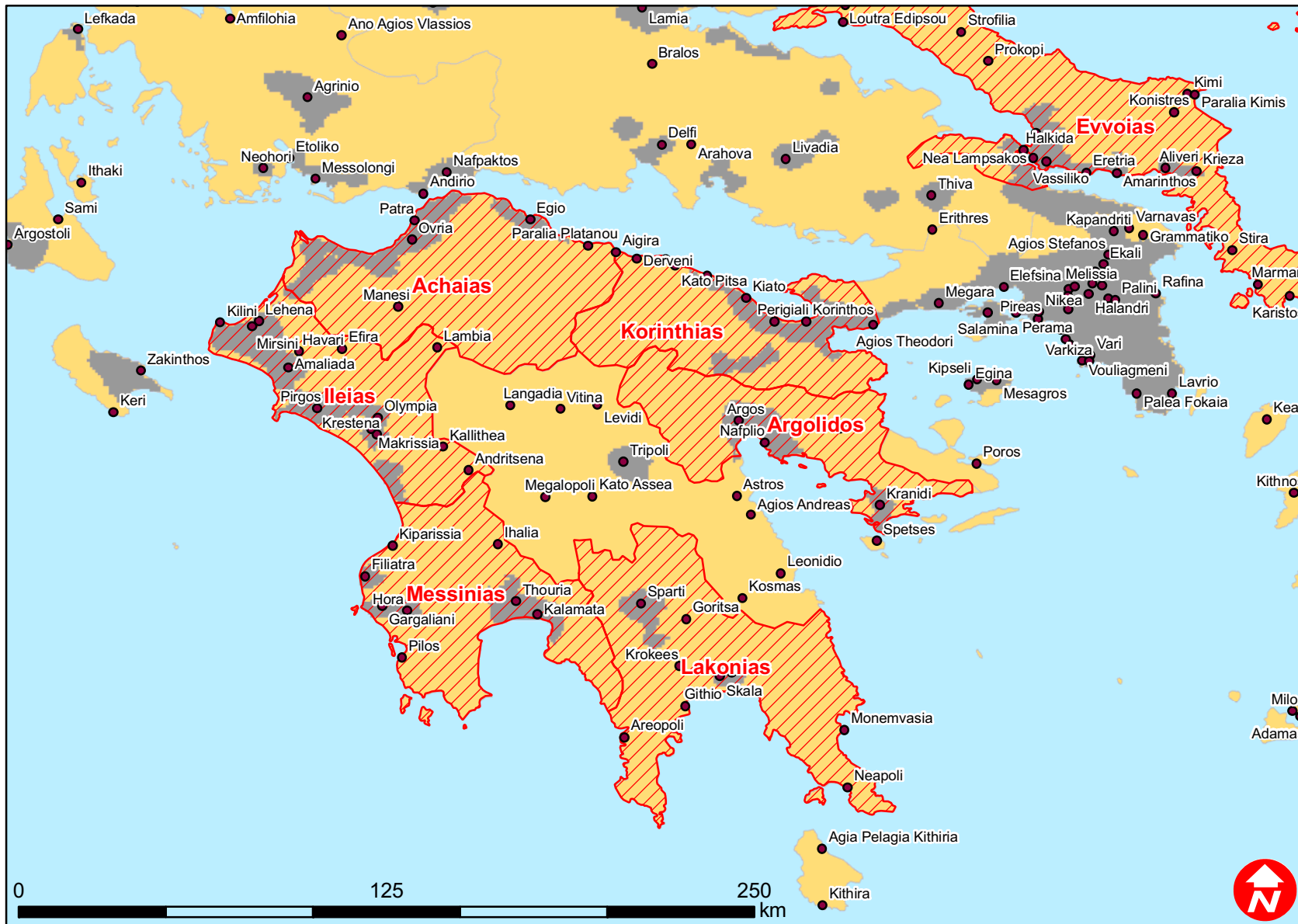
The Federation's Europe zone office is in regular contact with the Hellenic Red Cross regarding international assistance.

Warm thanks and gratitude are extended by the Hellenic Red Cross to the general public who have responded with support for the relief activities in the affected areas with either volunteer work or any other contribution. There are also several National Societies, which contributed with cash donations and are ready to provide relief material or personnel upon request.

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# Greece: Forest fires



Since 24 August 2007 Greece has been experiencing a number of wildfires in forests and villages in most of Peloponnesus peninsula. These fires have already burned hundreds of thousands of square kilometres of forest areas, olive groves as well as a vast number of residences in villages.

- Main places
- Urban area
- ▨ Prefectures affected

The maps used do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or National Societies concerning the legal status of a territory or of its authorities.