

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Central and Southern Europe: Floods

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Due to exceptional weather conditions and heavy rains in the Balkans, the territories of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia were hit by devastating floods. Several rivers have burst their banks resulting in thousands of people being evacuated and many homes damaged or destroyed.

In Albania, floodwaters have reached a depth of two metres, stranding villagers in predominantly Roma areas and cutting power supplies. Albania Red Cross has delivered flour, hygiene kits and blankets to hundreds of people.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina hundreds of houses are flooded, many areas are accessible only by boat, and power supplies have been severely disrupted. The river Drina looks like a lake in places, reaching its ever-highest levels for 100 years.

High tides on the Croatian coast have combined with melting snow to bring water levels to their highest in 50 years, and local Red Cross branches in Dubrovnik-Neretva County are providing relief items, drinking water, and are assisting with the evacuation.

Montenegro Red Cross describes the situation as very serious, and has already depleted its disaster relief stocks. They would urgently need canned food, rubber boots, hygiene parcels, warm clothes and jerry cans.

A state of emergency has been declared in parts of Serbia, where the Red Cross is providing ready-to-eat meals for evacuees. In all, thousands of people have been evacuated across the flood-affected countries.

Red Cross teams are visiting the worst-affected places, and the Federation's Europe Zone office is rendering technical assistance to the affected National Societies as they respond to the needs of the most vulnerable.



The Situation

A combination of heavy rains that have been falling for the last five days and the melting of fresh snow are causing floods in several parts of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia thus effecting thousands of people.

In **Albania** the Drini river flooded, and it caused the increase of water level in three artificial lakes, Fierza, Koman and Vau i Dejes, that are located on this river. The situation in Livadhe area is extremely problematic. Water level goes up to 2 meters. About 21 families were evacuated from this neighbourhood and it is expected that military vehicles will start evacuation of 61 other families. The area of Nënshkodrës is totally blocked by water on the Velipoja, Dajci, Oboti and Montenegro side. Velipoja can be reached via alternative road, in Bushat – the situation is more problematic in the village of Walnut, where 11 houses are at risk to collapse due to multiple flood waves of the river. About 60% of the municipality of Bushat suffers from electric power service disruption, while many apartments are surrounded by water. Villagers appeal for help in evacuating livestock, but military vehicles are ordered to evacuate residents only. The entry road to Shkodra town is flooded as well as Berdicës Arch, part of Shkodra-Tirana axis. The alternative road over hills is in use to reach the Shkodra town.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** several regions were flooded by different rivers. Particularly alarming is the situation in Gorazde, where an official state of natural disaster has been declared after the events, Čapljinski settlements Nerezi, Karaotok, Svitava and Šurmanci, where 170 families were evacuated and the Sarajevo suburbs Osjek, Otes, Major and Dobroševići.

In **Croatia**, as a consequence of the rains and increased water levels in rivers, at least 270 houses have been flooded. The authorities have declared a state of emergency for the affected area – the cities of Metkovic, Opuzen, Ploce and Kula Norinska. Yesterday, the water level reached 405 cm, which is the highest level ever recorded in the last 50 years. Water level is expected to rise in the following hours, which might result in more people to be affected. Evacuation is underway in Metkovic.

The situation is critical in several municipalities in **Montenegro**. In the municipality of Cetnje, 32 households have been evacuated. In the municipality of Golubovci (Zeta), 6 villages have been evacuated – 1,200 households, with some 5,000 family members. Some 100 households have been accommodated in collective shelters, and the others are staying with their relatives in the villages that are not yet completely flooded. The situation is changing rapidly, so these figures are likely to increase. In the municipality of Danilovgrad, 150 persons have been evacuated, out of whom 6 families are accommodated in the military facility of the Army of Montenegro. In the municipality of Niksic, 20 families have been evacuated, and 35 more families are likely to follow. At the moment, 15 families are accommodated at a military facility of the Army of Montenegro.

In **Serbia**, water levels of the rivers Drina and Lim started to rise due to heavy rains in the region. According to Head of the Emergency Situations at the Serbian Ministry of Interior, all affected residents after warning, are evacuated and are with friends and relatives now. For some of the evacuees, temporary shelters (hotels, schools) are opened in the municipalities. The dikes are broken at several parts, and roads are also flooded in the country. Between 1,500 and 2,000 people were evacuated, and some of them are accommodated at relatives.

According to first estimates, the floods affected a total number of 15,000 people in the region by inundating their house. Public authorities are closely monitoring the situation and regularly checking dams and water levels. In Croatia, Public Health authorities have warned that water from the public water supply is not appropriate for drinking. In Albania, the Prime Minister participated in an extraordinary government meeting in Shkodra region and declared a state of natural disaster and asked for action to cope with the following situation:

- 8,000 hectares of agricultural land are under water and the forecast says that river dams could break and endanger the lives of inhabitants.
- About 180 families from the affected area, among them 200 Roma people, are evacuated to collective centres, military barracks.
- About 320 houses are already flooded in the suburbs of Shkodra town, communes Dajç, Berdicë, Ana e malit, Obot etc.
- About 1,900 homes are surrounded by water.

In Montenegro the situation is serious, the number of evacuated population will increase as the water level is increasing, and according to the weather forecast, the rain will not stop in the following days.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina Civil Protection units and fire brigades are on standby for possible pumping of water in affected areas.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Red Cross Societies are responding actively to the changing situation in the region through mobilizing their resources, and they are currently assessing the damages caused by the floods and mapping the immediate needs of the affected communities.

Albanian Red Cross staff and Red Cross Branches in Shkodra have been intensively monitoring the development of the situation. The Secretaries of Shkodra are participating in the meeting of the Emergency Management Commission in this prefecture. The National Society logistic unit has prepared for distribution a stock with non-food items and is ready to deliver them to the affected area. So far, 2,750 kg of wheat flour, 110 hygienic kits and 220 blankets have been distributed to Shkodra.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the National Society is monitoring the situation by assessing immediate needs of the people. In cooperation with local authorities the National Society will assist people evacuated.

Out of its final remaining stocks the Montenegro Red Cross distributed rubber boots and jerry cans in the municipality of Zeta. Jerry cans are used for the distribution of potable water provided by the Waterworks.

In Montenegro the National Society Disaster Management team has assessed the needs of the affected people and will provide them with further quantities of jerry cans, rubber boots, hygiene parcels, canned food and clothes.

In Croatia the Red Cross branch, as part of the disaster response mechanism, is taking part in the response activities - participating in the evacuation, providing shelter and distributing water and relief items. Croatian Red Cross - National Headquarters is participating in the coordination of activities on the national level.

The Red Cross of Serbia will assist the evacuated persons and families with ready-to-eat meals for the next 72 hours. The first shipment of relief items of rubber boots and raincoats has already been started together with the mud pumps. The further assistance with household's rehabilitation will begin as soon as water recedes.

The International Federation is monitoring the situation together with the concerned National Societies, having their staff in the field. Support from the Federation Disaster Relief Emergency Fund is being considered, and a DREF might be followed by an Emergency Appeal, should the situation deteriorate.

How we work

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 the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by [Strategy 2020](#) which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact

- **In Albania:** Albanian Red Cross: Zamir Muca, Secretary General, email: zmuca@kksh.org.al;
- **In Bosnia and Herzegovina:** Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Dusan Kulusic, Secretary General, email: secretary.general@rcsbh.org;
- **In Croatia:** Croatian Red Cross: Nenad Javornik, Executive President, email: nenad.javornik@hck.hr;

- **In Montenegro:** Montenegro Red Cross: Slobodan Kalezić, Secretary General; email: ckcg@t-com.me;
- **In Serbia:** Red Cross of Serbia: Vesna Milenović, Secretary General, email: secretary@redcross.org.rs;
- **In Europe Zone Office:** Leon Prop, Head of Operations, Budapest, email: leon.prop@ifrc.org
- **In Geneva:** Pablo Medina, Operations Coordinator, phone: +41 22 730 4381, fax: +41 22 733 0395, email: pablo.medina@ifrc.org

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