

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

ALGERIA: EARTHQUAKE

22 May 2003

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Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) allocated: CHF 200,000

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 180 countries.

For more information: www.ifrc.org

In Brief

This document is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation will consider international support through an Appeal (pending an official request from the Government of Algeria).

The Situation

An earthquake measuring 6.7 on the Richter Scale struck northern Algeria at approximately 20:00 hours on 21 May, 2003. This is the biggest earthquake to hit North African countries since 1980 and shocks were felt on the Spanish Mediterranean coast. The epicentre is located at Thenia, about 60 kilometres (40 miles) east of Algiers, near the industrial city of Rouiba. The first earthquake was followed by three further quakes all registering over 5.0 on the Richter Scale, and in heavily populated areas. The worst affected areas were the district of Bourmerdes, where 256 people are reported to have died and a hospital has collapsed, and Algiers, Rwaba city and Abu Mardas. Initial indications are that more than 600 people have been killed, and more than 4,000 injured, but these figures are likely to rise as more information comes in. Telecommunications are severely disrupted, including the mobile telephone network and there is extensive damage to infrastructure, many buildings having collapsed. Parts of several buildings have collapsed in many of Algiers districts. President Bouteflika is chairing a disaster crisis committee and has sent his staff to the stricken area.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Algerian Red Crescent Society (ARCS) is fully mobilised and was very quickly visible on the sites of the operations. The President of the Algerian Red Crescent, Professor Boukhroufa is now in Rouiba, one of the most affected cities, where more than 100 people have been killed. Dr Baroudi, Director of Relief is visiting the hospital of the small town of Ain-Taya. A task force was set up in Algiers, and working in close coordination with the authorities (Protection Civile), the ARCS staff and volunteers are rescuing victims, administering first aid, and transporting the injured to hospitals. ARCS ambulances and vehicles were mobilized and sent to the field. More than 100 volunteers offered their support to help the affected people. The ARCS teams are also helping in the hospitals for the blood collection, as the population was requested by the Government to provide blood for the injured people. Some volunteers are also distributing blankets from ARCS emergency disaster preparedness stocks to the families who have lost their homes or for the people who are staying outside, fearful of further shocks. Some schools were opened to host these families.

The Regional Office for North Africa has been in regular contact with the Algerian Red Crescent officials during the night. A Relief coordinator from the Regional Office in Tunis is on his way to Algeria and a FACT trained member of the French Red Cross, an Algerian national, is also on his way to Algeria with a satellite phone. The

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German Red Cross is preparing to send a three-man search and rescue team with dogs, and the Spanish and French Red Cross Societies have made FACT French-speaking delegates available for deployment. The regional delegation in Amman is also mobilising their regionally trained personnel for possible deployment. Related to facilitating communications needs, the Federation has had contact with Ericsson's office in Tunis with whom there is an operational agreement for disaster response.

Contact has been made with the ICRC head of delegation and a desk officer, and with OCHA / UNDAC.

The ARCS senior management is discussing details for a possible appeal. In this context, the Federation's experience in responding to a number of disasters in Algeria (earthquakes in 1954, 1965, 1973, 1980, 1989, and 1994; floods in 1964, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1971, 1973, 1992, and 2001; drought in 1974; and refugee/population movements in 1975 and 1992) will be instrumental. Full details of needs, resources and personnel will follow.

Further information will be posted on the Federation's Disaster Management Information System (DMIS) (<https://www-secure.ifrc.org/dmis/index.htm>)

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All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal.