

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

TUNISIA FLOODS

23 January 2003

Information Bulletin N° 1

- *This bulletin 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.*

The Situation

Since early January Tunisia has been affected by a cold wave and heavy rainfall especially in the north and central parts of the country. Eight governorates have been particularly affected: Jendouba, Béja, Manouba, Kasserine, Kairouan, Sidi Bouzid, le Kef and Monastir. Kasserine received 50 cm of snow and had below freezing temperatures, which is highly unusual in Tunisia. Housing is not designed to cope with such conditions.

About 600 families - or 3,000 people - have been evacuated due to the fact that their houses have either been destroyed or seriously flooded. About one hundred houses built from soil have been wiped out and others have been damaged. The evacuated families are mostly sheltered in schools or youth hostels, but about twenty families are in tents. These people have lost most of their belongings: blankets, clothing, food stocks. A number of cattle and sheep has also been lost, and small businesses devastated.

The rescue operation has been mainly carried out by the army and the civil defence, assisted by the Tunisian Red Crescent volunteers. The President of the Republic has appointed a technical commission to assess the material and economic damage and the work that needs to be undertaken to avoid such situations in the future.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

The Tunisian Red Crescent (TRC) has from the onset of the disaster mobilised its regional and local structures, which have collaborated efficiently with the regional authorities in assisting affected families by providing warm clothing, foodstuffs and small scale financial assistance.

The Society's relief stocks of blankets, clothing and tents are practically used up, and the 40,000 Tunisian Dinars (about 50,000 CHF) taken from the TRC emergency relief fund to buy food and relief items have left the fund almost spent. The Society is in need of replenishing its relief stocks with 3,000 blankets, six tons of warm clothing and 50 tents, as well as reconstituting its emergency fund

In view of the fact that winter in Tunisia will last until end of March, the Society foresees a follow-up of the emergency action by supporting affected families to overcome this period, during which their houses are being repaired. This assistance will consist of social and financial aid as well as provision of clothing and foodstuffs. About two hundred families will have to be relocated to live with relatives, neighbours or others. Sanitary and medical assistance is planned through "health caravans" of eight volunteer medical doctors to care for cases of diabetes (frequent in Tunisia) and respiratory diseases with children and elderly. The programme will be closely coordinated with regional authorities.

The Federation Tunis office and the Tunisian Red Crescent in producing a Plan of Action for the follow-up assistance activities for February and March. A second information bulletin will be issued shortly, giving more details about the situation as well as a Plan and Budget for the foreseen activities. An application for support from the Federation's disaster emergency response fund (DREF) is being prepared.

For a full description of the National Society profile, see www.ifrc.org

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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.

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