

Information bulletin

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Algeria: Floods in Ghardaia

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This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. Based on the initial assessment, the Algerian Red Crescent (Algerian RC) is currently developing a plan of action which will be detailed in the next report.

Summary:

Floods caused by heavy rains have killed at least 33 people and injured 50 in and around the Algerian oasis town of Ghardaia on 2 October 2008. Eight of the 13 districts of the surrounding Ghardaia province have been affected by the floods; and 600 homes have been inundated in the town.

The Algerian RC, through its regional committee in Ghardaia, has been immediately present on the site, deploying its regional intervention teams. The National Society has initiated a relief operation and is conducting additional assessments. The Algerian RC has been using its central and regional stocks of relief items to cover the immediate needs; and local and public appeals were launched, which made the National Society very successful in mobilizing and managing local donations.

However, considering the scale of the disaster – eight willayas being affected in a diameter of 30 kms along the Oued M'Zab and approximately 2,000 families in need – the Algerian RC is planning to request for a disaster relief emergency fund (DREF) allocation to continue its emergency operation.

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Ghardaia region is located approximately 600 kilometres (375 miles) south of Algiers. Source: AFP

The Situation



Mudslides overrun the riverbanks and invaded the villages

Torrential rains in the Algerian Sahara caused flash floods, killing 33 people and leaving 50 injured in the region of Ghardaia. The floods also left about a 1,000 of people homeless and many other people are missing. Hundreds of people had to be rescued by helicopters and up to 600 houses are estimated to be destroyed in the rains of Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. The rains stopped on Friday and water appeared to be subsiding but some streets were still submerged. The water level was eight meters (26 feet) high in some parts of the town, and residents feared at the possibility of more flash floods in the town of 100,000 on the northern edge of the Sahara.

Phone lines in the area were disrupted on Thursday which complicated the communication and collection of information from remote villages. Eight Wilayas have been affected by the floods but the most severe situation is in the Wilaya of Ghardaia. Following the heavy rains, mudslides overrun the riverbanks of Oued M'Zab and invaded the villages. According to local witnesses, in some places the amount of mud reached 8 meters and some houses were buried up to the second floor. The authorities have confirmed the severity of the emergency situation, and the search and rescue operations are still going on.

Algerian RC, civilian protection, local non-governmental organisations and volunteers are organizing their intervention on the site in favour of thousands of affected people. As cited by the APS agency based on the brief of the Minister of National Solidarity, Djamel Ould Abbas, the Algerian government unblocked aid for the affected population on Friday. The Minister added that the Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia gave strict orders for the population affected by the natural catastrophe to be taken care of by releasing unrestricted credit.

In and around Ghardaia, those who had escaped the worst of the flooding helped their less fortunate neighbours, offering shelter and hot meals to those left homeless by the flash floods. The Ministry of Interior sent tents, generators, and 400 tonnes of food aid to the region. The authorities also requisitioned two sports halls, where they installed 890 tents and 1,500 camp beds for those left homeless by the rains.

Around 5,000 people demonstrated in the town of Ghardaia on Friday to demand urgent aid after flash floods killed 33 residents. The protesters demanded basic food supplies and equipment to help search for survivors or bodies.

The Minister of Interior, Noureddine Yazid Zerhouni, said the floods are the worst for a century, while locals reported sweeping damage. Several parts of Algeria were lashed by heavy rains including Djelfa - midway between Ghardaia and Algiers - where two people lost their lives.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Algerian RC headquarters was immediately informed about the situation by the National Society's committee of Ghardaia which had deployed its volunteers on the site. So far, 273 volunteers in 18 intervention teams and 30 psychologists are working 24 hours on the different sites in close collaboration with the local authorities. The National Society volunteers were mobilized from Ghardaia as well as from the 14 neighbouring wilayas. Other wilayas are sending additional volunteers to support the Ghardaia teams in the assistance provided to the affected people and families.

The coordination with the authorities is going on very successfully. Since the very first hours of the disaster, the National Society was part of both the national and regional emergency cells as one of the key stakeholder of the national disaster plan (Plan Orsec) led by the Ministry of Interior together with the Civil Defence, the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Transport, and Ministry of Solidarity. Tasks and responsibilities were clearly defined for the assistance to be provided in the field. Daily coordination meetings are held to assess the situation and review the plan of action.



According to official sources, the floods are the worst that occurred in the country for a century

The International Federation's regional representation for North Africa was immediately in contact with the Algerian RC after the floods and is regularly briefed by the National Society's headquarters in Algiers.

The emergency operation is actually monitored at the headquarters level by the national relief coordinator, in close collaboration with the National Society's president who left immediately to Ghardaia to support the president of the regional committee.

A national emergency cell was set up at the National Society headquarters. Organization and coordination of the volunteers and teams, mobilization of goods and logistical arrangements are planned at the headquarters level and communicated to Ghardaia emergency cell.

Several National Society regional stocks were moved by trucks to Ghardaia to cover immediate needs. Goods have arrived and have started to be dispatched to the beneficiaries. The main basic services delivered by the Algerian RC are search and rescue along with the Civil Defence; distribution of food and non food items; basic health care (first aid, community health, emergency health); psycho-social support; and restoring family links.

Public appeals were launched and were very successful, particularly in providing meals to the homeless. The National Society volunteers were managing the local donations and organizing the distributions.

Based on the initial assessment, 15 distribution points were set up in order to assist 1,200 families in collaboration with local municipalities and local associations. The National Society plans to reinforce and extend its activities in the following areas:

- Distribution of food parcels;
- Distribution of hygiene kits;
- Distribution of clothes, blankets, mattresses, and cooking sets;
- Water and sanitation (generators and motor pumps);
- Psycho-social support
- Restoring family links

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

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet 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.

Contact information

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