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Information bulletin Albania: Earthquake

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Date of issue: 27 November 2019	
Date of disaster 26 November 2019	Point of contact Fatos Xhengo, Disaster Response Coordinator, Albanian Red Cross Seval Guzelkilinc, Head of DCPRR, IFRC Regional Office for Europe
Host National Society: Albanian Red Cross	
Number of people affected: approx. 100,000 out of which 2,500 are displaced 31 dead, approx. 20 missing persons	Number of people to be assisted: approx. 2,000 families (~ 8,000 people)
N° of National Societies currently involved in the operation: Swiss Red Cross, Turkish Red Crescent, Red Cross of The Republic of North Macedonia, Italian Red Cross	
N° of other partner organizations involved in the operation (if available and relevant): 8 country teams present with search and rescue, logistics and assessment teams	

This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Albanian Red Cross, with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has determined that external assistance is required, and therefore an Emergency Appeal document will be prepared in seeking funding or other assistance from donors at this time.

The situation

A 6.4 magnitude earthquake hit Albania at 3:54 AM local time on 26 November 2019, centred 30 km (19 miles) west of Tirana, at a depth of 10 km (6 miles). It was followed by a second one of 5.4 magnitude at 07:10 AM only a few hours later. The epicenter was around Durres (around 34 km northwest of Tirana). The earthquake caused several buildings to collapse in Durres, Thumane and the neighbouring towns.

The most affected areas are the coastal city of Durres, and the town of Thumane, located 40 km from Tirana, close to the epicenter of the earthquake. Four buildings collapsed in Thumane, while two apartment buildings and two hotels collapsed in Durres. Tuesday's earthquake has been described by authorities as the strongest to hit Albania in 30 years.

31 people have been reported as dead and around 650 people injured as residents were trapped beneath the rubble of collapsed buildings. More than 350 wounded persons have been treated in hospitals, around 100 people remain in hospitals to date.

The airport in Tirana was temporarily closed on 26 November due to considerable damages at the terminals. Communication lines (land and mobile) are functioning. Electricity cuts are recorded only in some areas. Power was down in several neighbourhoods in the capital.



A volunteer is looking at the ruins of a building collapsed during the earthquake in Durres. Photo: Albanian Red Cross

Displaced people have been accommodated partly in the government setup tent camp in the football stadium in Durres, partly in hotels Tirana – Vlore line. It is still unclear how and when people can go back to their homes. Tents were set up in Thumane and in Durres.

2,000 families would need immediate help in relief and psychosocial support.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The National Society's actions are related to water & sanitation, food support; psychosocial support services as well as First Aid. The Albanian Red Cross has arrived immediately to the disaster site to assess damages and provide support to the affected population as required. The local branches situated in most affected areas in Durres, Tirana, Kruje, Lezhe and Lac have mobilized their teams with more than 160 volunteers to respond to the current situation. First aid and psychosocial support has been provided by the volunteers immediately after the earthquake.

In Durres, the social center of the Durres Red Cross branch is open 24/7 serving hot tea/coffee, water and hot meals for the affected people, as one of the collapsed buildings is located close by. In Thumane area, a team from the Headquarters and Kruja local branch is providing water and cakes/croissants for children and PSS is provided to the affected families.

The volunteers' team of Durres branch is placed in the football stadium of Durres where the government has set up a tent camp for the displaced people.

Volunteer teams from the Red Cross branches of Tirana and Durres were mobilized and sent to the hospitals to assist the injured people and their families.

The representatives of the Red Cross local branches in the affected areas are participating in the meetings of the Emergency Commissions in the respective municipalities.

First responders from the NS have informed RFL office in the HQ that most of the affected population has the means to get in touch with their relatives via mobile phones on their own. RFL office is planning a visit to hospitals and evacuation points in the affected area. NS is in contact with the officials from the government, hotline was not established yet.

The IFRC Regional Office for Europe has deployed members of its operational team to support Albanian RC in their needs assessment process (targeting, scenario planning and risk assessment) and support the National Society in their preparation launch of Emergency Appeal. Also, technical support will be given related to the health interventions including PSS.

Action of the Movement Partners

The Albanian Red Cross has received support from many National Societies in the region and beyond, respectively the Italian Red Cross, the Turkish Red Crescent, Red Cross of The Republic of North Macedonia, Red Cross of Montenegro, Red Cross of Kosovo, German Red Cross, Austrian Red Cross, Croatian Red Cross, Red Cross of Serbia, as well as from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The following teams have already arrived at the disaster site:

- Swiss Rescuers with dogs arrived on 26 November 2019 to Tirana, they will work jointly with the Turkish RC. The Swiss Government has sent out a team of around 13 people to Tirana.
- Turkish Red Crescent teams with 2 convoys are already in Albania and started needs assessment and relief distribution in Durres. Their shipment includes 120 tents, 2,500 blankets, 1,000 hygiene parcels and food for 2,500 people.
- Red Cross of The Republic of North Macedonia sent First Aid medical team with 7 staff, and an assessment and logistics team with 3 staff, 100 blankets, 500 sleeping bags, 50 portable sleeping beds, 100 food parcels, 100 hygiene parcels.
- Italian Red Cross has sent two mobile teams: one in camps management and logistics able to set up tents for the displaced and one MUSAR (Medium Urban Search and Rescue) team. Italian Red Cross personnel is being deployed in the framework of the European Civil Protection Mechanism. IRC has also launched fundraising campaign.

State response

Police, emergencies, hospitals, civil service teams are responding to assist affected people with search and rescue from the collapsed buildings. A tent camp has been set up in the football stadium of Durres where the affected people will be evacuated and accommodated. The state rescue crews are still working to free people believed to be trapped in the rubble both in Durres and Thumane. Schools were closed for the day in Tirana, Durres, Fier and Lezha.

The Albanian government activated the EUCPM (European Civil protection Mechanism) on 26 November. Albania accepted the offers from Italy, Romania and Greece. The Italian and Romanian MUSAR teams are part of the European Civil Protection Pool. An advanced team from Italy arrived in country on 26 November and will be joined by its MUSAR, the Greek and Romanian MUSAR teams are already in country. An EU Civil Protection Team composed of six experts is being deployed to Albania on 27 November for an initial mission duration of two weeks.

Communication

The earthquake has been leading news bulletins around the world. The IFRC Europe regional communications team has been supporting the Albanian Red Cross with international media requests since the earthquake struck. On 27 November we published a [press release](#). A [media advisory](#), [key messages](#) and [photos and videos](#) have also been shared via the IFRC Newswire and are available at the above links or on request. Regular updates have been posted on the @IFRC_Europe Twitter channel. For media inquiries, please contact Communications Manager Corinne Ambler (corinne.ambler@ifrc.org).

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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How we work

All IFRC 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 Humanitarian 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:



Save lives,
protect livelihoods,
and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



Promote **social inclusion**
and a culture of
non-violence and **peace**.