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Information bulletin Italy: Population Movement

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Italian Red Cross will determine the need for external assistance after an assessment mission carried out with the support of the IFRC Secretariat's Europe Zone Office.

Summary

On the evening of 18 April a boat carrying an estimated 800 migrants capsized about 180 km south of the Italian island of Lampedusa. Twenty-eight survivors were pulled out of the water and these have already arrived in Catania. The rest of the migrants are feared dead though only 24 bodies have been recovered. This incident represents the largest loss of lives of its kind on the Mediterranean Sea and comes less than a week after another 400 people had also drowned off the shores of southern Italy on 13 April.

In recent years, hundreds and thousands of migrants and refugees lost their lives in similar circumstances in their attempt to seek a safe haven and a better future. The latest tragedy at sea represents the highest number of deaths registered at one time.



More than 100 Italian Red Cross volunteers are ready to assist the new arrivals. @Italian Red Cross

The Italian Red Cross for many years now has been at the frontline of the humanitarian response to the needs of the migrants and refugees. In this latest crisis, the National Society activated its Psychosocial Support Service (PSS) and relief teams, as well as its Restoring Family Links unit, and works in close cooperation with the Italian authorities. In anticipation of the growing number of migrants arriving in the country, the Italian Red Cross approached the International Federation on 20 April 2015 with the request to consider the launch of DREF or an emergency appeal in support of the National Society's humanitarian response to the needs of the newly arrived migrants.

Following this request, the IFRC Secretariat's Europe Zone Office has assigned its Disaster Management Coordinator to work with the Italian Red Cross on assessing the emergency requirements and on formulating proposals for further actions.

The situation

Since 1 January 2015 more than 21,000 migrants have landed in Italy. Week after week, thousands of migrants were saved and brought to the southern ports of Italy in Lampedusa, Augusta, Trapani, Messina, Porto Empedocle, Agrigento (Sicily), Reggio Calabria (Calabria) and Taranto (Apulia).

On the evening of 18 April, a boat carrying an estimated 800 migrants (UNHCR) capsized about 180 km south of the Italian island of Lampedusa. Only 28 survivors were pulled out of the water. The rest of the people on board are feared dead though only 24 bodies have been recovered. This incident represents the largest loss of lives of its kind on the Mediterranean Sea, occurring less than a week after a similar tragedy at sea on 13 April when 400 people had drowned off the shores of southern Italy.

In 2014, over 3,500 people attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea either drowned or were reported missing. According to the IOM and the UNHCR so far 1,600 people have died in 2015 alone.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Italian Red Cross teams are providing humanitarian support to the migrants on site in coordination with the local authorities. The organization acts as auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, supporting these in carrying out their humanitarian actions.

The Italian Red Cross is active in the main ports of southern Italy - in the regions of Sicily, Calabria and Apulia - to meet the humanitarian needs of thousands of migrants rescued by the Coast Guards in the Strait of Sicily and off the coast of Libya.

The Red Cross is currently present on the ground with over 100 volunteers and staff, ambulances, vehicles and inflatable tents, providing first aid, food, water and psychosocial support as well as organising transportation to the closest hospitals.

In the aftermath of the most recent crisis in the Mediterranean basin, the Italian Red Cross has activated an emergency phone number for providing information and restoring family links (RFL) service for the affected relatives.

The Italian Red Cross is providing the following activities in all the regions affected by the crisis:

- Distributing hygiene kits to the migrants as soon as they reach the harbour;
- Providing migrants with medical assistance upon landing;
- Providing RFL service;
- Providing migrants with food and non-food items in the transit centre.

The Italian Red Cross and the Secretariat of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) are monitoring the situation closely. The International Federation's Europe Zone Office, upon the request of the Italian Red Cross, will deploy its Disaster Management Coordinator to carry out an assessment and to identify the best operational support option to the Italian Red Cross together with them. The Europe Zone Office DM Coordinator is arriving in Italy on 22 April 2015.

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 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.