

20<sup>th</sup> January 2010

## **REPORT FROM THE HEAD OF THE MDA DELEGATION IN HAITI**

**The tens of hours of training and exercises we took could not prepare any member of the team for the destruction and devastation, and the helplessness that we are seeing, when facing the demands and hopes of the local population and the systems surrounding it. This is the moment when one is proud to be part of the response to people who are so greatly in need, even if only playing a small part.**

These words were written by **the head of the MDA Israeli delegation, Chaim Rafalowski**, as part of a report that he sent to the MDA Director General. The MDA delegation which is part of the Norwegian Red Cross delegation set up a Field Hospital in the courtyard of the University Hospital in Port-au-Prince and has been treating inhabitants of the capital. The hospital was badly damaged, the central hospitalization building was not destroyed but most of the single storey buildings of the different departments of the hospital collapsed and most of its facilities were destroyed, large parts of the hospital were cut off from electricity and there is no water supply to the hospital. Near the hospital that was hit, the school of nursing collapsed and it is thought that 50 people are buried under the rubble. **“At the moment we are concentrating on medical treatment for the injured and helping with humanitarian aid”** said Rafalowski. **“The emergency room was until now manned by local medical teams and it is collapsing from the load. The occupancy is over 100% of what the hospital can cope with. There is a shortage of drugs, beds, medical equipment, and basic items such as needles, bandages and pints of blood. Even after we had reinforced the hospital and had opened an additional area of the emergency room being manned by American and Israeli paramedics and medics the local people are still angry with the delay in treatment and there is a fear that violence will break out against the teams”**. At the request of the University Hospital, the American army has taken responsibility for the security of the area, and is in control at the entrances and carrying out armed checks within the area.

Since they arrived, the teams of MDA paramedics have not rested and are dealing with the tens of wounded who come to the clinic in the Field Hospital. Most of the wounded are typified by having traumatic severed limbs which have not been treated until now. **“We have here a medical team with surgical capabilities, but because of the lack of medical equipment which was destroyed, they are having difficulty in giving the needed medical care and it would seem that the wounded will have to wait a long time until they receive definitive surgical attention for their amputation which needs medical attention, and it is also not possible to put plaster on breakages”.**

In addition to the Field Hospital of the Norwegian Red Cross there is also a hospital set up by the Red Cross at the site with the aid of the international community and the Swiss who are running a children's hospital – International Medical Corps – IMC.

The president and Director General of the International Federation of the Red Cross, together with a high level delegation of Directors of Red Cross National societies visited the site of the Red Cross hospital and they praised the presence of MDA for enlisting and coming to help and the importance they see in this act.

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MDA Spokesman