

Red Cross steps up assistance for explosion victims

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is continuing its efforts together with the Congolese Red Cross to help people affected by the [Brazzaville blasts](#) which took place on Sunday, 4 March 2012.



Together, they are focusing on gaining access to the blast site and making it safe, as well as on restoring family links, particularly aiding children separated from their families as a result of the accident.

"It's a terrible disaster for a lot of people," said Bernard Metraux, the ICRC's head of mission in Brazzaville. "Some have been seriously injured. For others, their homes were destroyed or made uninhabitable. Others don't know the whereabouts of loved ones. Our first priority is to find unexploded ordnance posing a risk to health-care facilities in the vicinity of the blast site."

Under an agreement with the Ministry of Defence, an ICRC team knowledgeable in the neutralization of unexploded munitions arrived in Brazzaville recently and are working with other organisations to clean up the area. Their aim is to make it safe for people to return home as soon as possible and for relief workers to enter the zone.

The ICRC and Congolese Red Cross volunteers are working to identify children who are looking for their families or whose families are looking for them, as well as people who are alone and vulnerable, such as the elderly. Photos and names of children who have been reported missing or are looking for their families are starting to be posted up around the city.

The ICRC is helping the local authorities deal with the bodies of people killed in the explosion, thus enabling their families to be informed. It has also been distributing medical supplies to health-care centres located near the temporary shelters.

The response to this disaster by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is being coordinated among all the Movement's components present in the Republic of the Congo (Congolese Red Cross, ICRC, International Federation and French Red Cross).

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