

Tighter Measures Needed for Effective International Disaster Response in Ireland

A report launched on June 24th by the Irish Red Cross has identified ten areas in which Ireland's laws and regulations could hinder international emergency aid entering the country during a humanitarian disaster. The report, 'A Study for Strengthening the Legal and Policy Framework for International Disaster Response in Ireland', analyses the threats Ireland faces along with the country's capacity to respond effectively and efficiently.

Within the report, there are a number of key recommendations that would ensure an effective legal framework for Ireland in preparation for, and so as to reduce the impact of, disasters. These include preventing delays in processing visas for relief workers; customs delays and tax requirements for medications, relief goods and equipment; and difficulties in recognising foreign professional qualifications

During large-scale disaster relief operations, vital international support can be hampered by a range of legal and regulatory issues. Speaking at today's report launch in the Royal College of Physicians, Dublin, John Roche, Irish Red Cross Head of International, gave the example of, "Disasters such as the Balkans, where international response was delayed due to local regulations around the importation of and the proper generic labelling of medicines."

Mr Roche also pointed to the missing Malaysia Airlines Plane, South Korean ferry disaster and 2010 ash cloud as examples of unpredicted disasters. "While it may always be hoped that international disaster relief will never be required in Ireland or in any other country for that matter, it is essential to be prepared", said Mr Roche.

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- The Centre for Humanitarian Action at University College Dublin was commissioned by the Irish Red Cross in April 2013 to undertake a study with the objective of outlining Ireland's legal and policy framework for facilitating an international disaster response and determining how it can be strengthened in accordance with both the HNS and IDRL Guidelines.
- The report '*A Study for Strengthening the Legal and Policy Framework for International Disaster Response in Ireland*' is available online at www.redcross.ie/IDRLreport.