

FEBRUARY 7th, 2023



Syria and Türkiye Earthquake

EMERGENCY SITUATION UPDATE

OVERVIEW

On February 6th, 2023, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck central Türkiye and Northwest Syria, damaging thousands of buildings, infrastructure, and causing fatalities. In both countries more than 5000 people have been confirmed dead, tens of thousands more are injured, and thousands remain buried under the rubble as rescuers are working against the clock to find those still missing^{1,2}. World Health Organization has indicated that the death toll is likely to continue to climb, potentially exceeding 20,000³. The Turkish national emergency management agency AFAD confirmed that the official death toll has risen to 3500, while more than 13,000 reported injured and more than 8000 rescued. Meanwhile in Syria, at least 1200 people have been killed and over 3400^{4,5}. There have been numerous aftershocks across the area, as indicated in the map above,



Note: Based on assessment as of 1:00 a.m. E.S.T. on Feb. 6. • Source: U.S. Geological Survey • By Pablo Robles

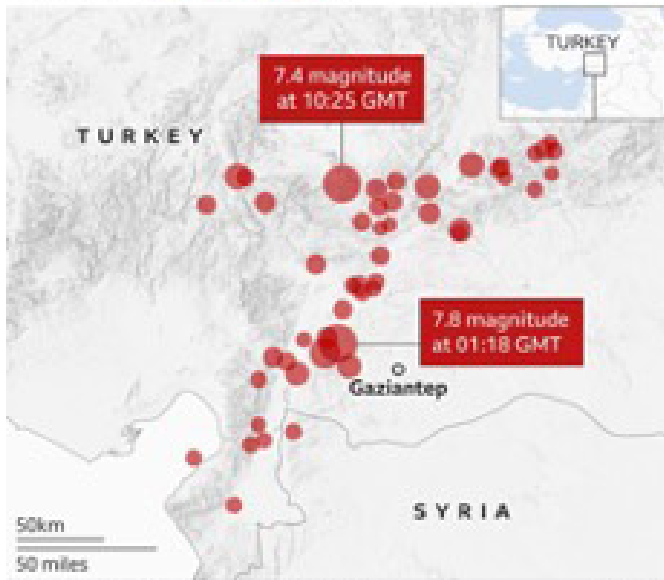


representing those mapped as of 18:30 6th February⁶, with more occurring in the hours that followed as well².

In Türkiye, the epicenter of the quake was in the Pazarcik district of Kahramanmaraş province. The Turkish Interior Minister Suleymon Soylu reported that at least ten major cities in Türkiye were affected: Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Hatay, Osmaniye, Adiyaman, Malatya, Sanliurfa, Adana, Diyarbakir and Kilis. Destruction in Southern Türkiye spreads across 650 miles³. Approximately 13.5 million people reside in and around those cities²,

Turkey hit by dozens of shocks

Magnitude ● 4 ● 6 ● 8



including 2 million Syrian refugees. Although limited information is available, thus far more than 4000 buildings have collapsed⁷. The Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay confirmed in a February 7th press conference that roughly 16,000 personnel are carrying out search and rescue operations across the country, including about 3200 international emergency health and rescue workers deployed from 45 countries⁸. The United States Geological Survey has produced a Ground Failure Estimates Report which indicates that as a result of the shaking, a significant area and population is exposed to both landslide and liquefaction hazards, which risks additional damage to infrastructure, safety of the population in the area, flooding, and could block transportation routes⁹. Turkey’s ministry of transport and infrastructure reported that trains are being used as emergency accommodation, sheltering 3,400 people during the first night following the earthquakes¹.

In Syria, the northwest (NWS) region was heavily affected, specifically Northern Aleppo (Azaz and Afrin), as well as Idleb, Latakia, Hama and Tartus, including structural damage to at least 210 buildings¹⁰. NWS hosts around 4.4 million conflict-affected people who were already in need of immediate humanitarian assistance, including 2.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) of whom 1.8 million live across 1,400 camps and improvised shelter sites¹¹, 75% of whom are women and children¹².

UPDATES FROM THE FIELD

RI country office in Gaziantep, which operates as the base for Türkiye operations and the remote management team for NWS operations, is closed until further notice. As power outages continue and communication channels, including internet, in Gaziantep and NWS are disrupted, access to information and staff updates is limited. All Türkiye country office staff and NWS staff based in Gaziantep were accounted for as of early morning Monday, many of whom reported seeking refuge and warmth in personal vehicles, sports facilities and mosques. However, RI team is still trying to establish contact and confirmation of safety of staff based within NWS.

SYRIA

Thus far, four staff deaths have been confirmed in NWS and several injuries have been reported among staff and their families. Meanwhile, a number of colleagues and/or their family members remain under the rubble.

TÜRKIYE

As mentioned above, as RI’s Türkiye team is based in the affected area, they are part of the affected population and there is need for them to attend to their personal basic immediate needs.



EMERGING NEEDS ON THE GROUND

The severe weather (freezing temperatures, heavy snow, rain, etc.) exacerbate the risks to the affected population, as people are left without shelter^{3,7}, it hampers rescue efforts as challenges are faced in reaching affected areas¹, and those under the rubble face greater risk as they cannot survive as long in these weather conditions, so rescuers need to reach people in a shorter amount of time than would otherwise be possible². Urgent needs include shelter (tents), heaters, blankets, thermal clothes, ready to eat food, and basic first aid kits⁷.

SYRIA

Urgent medical care is needed to care for the injured¹³, especially as hospitals continue to fill-up with survivors⁴. Areas of NWS are experiencing displacement due to the destruction of buildings¹⁰. Volunteer rescue workers and the Syrian Civil Defense forces (the White Helmets) in NWS have indicated that they lack basic necessary provisions to reach people still trapped under the rubble, including fuel required to operate the machinery³. Major humanitarian needs are emerging including access to clean water, safe shelter and disease outbreak prevention, are especially important given the harsh weather conditions.

TÜRKIYE

Turkish Red Crescent has indicated the need for blood donations, encouraging Turkish citizens to make donations⁶. Search and rescue, as well as preparing for increased need for trauma care are initial areas of focus as the scale of the damage exceeds that which Türkiye was prepared for. Additionally, this is compounded with a potentially weakened health system due to damage to health facilities¹⁴.



Destruction at RI's one-stop center in Sarmada, Northwest Syria.

RESPONSE COORDINATION AND PLANNING

RI has initiated communication with donors regarding programmatic implications and is considering pre-positioning in anticipation of humanitarian needs in the coming days and weeks. In both countries, teams have been identified to begin building assessments to ensure integrity of structures including RI offices, health facilities, and partner facilities.

SECURITY

TÜRKIYE

With aftershocks continuing, safety in buildings across cities is not ensured. Turkish authorities are advising residents to avoid staying indoors; many reportedly are seeking shelter in parks, gyms and vehicles. The Gaziantep municipality declared that for the next five days, no one can enter any buildings that have not been cleared by the authorities. The Gaziantep airport was closed for the day, while the Hatay Airport is likely to be closed for several weeks due to severe damage.

SYRIA

A State of Emergency has been issued in Syria by The Syrian Salvation Government (SSG), the Syrian Interim Government (SiG) (for their respective areas of control), as well as by the Syrian Civil Defence (also known as the White Helmets)⁶. Additionally, local authorities in NWS have temporarily closed the Bab Al-Hawa crossing to all commercial and civilian movements.⁶



INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

UN Secretary General António Guterres has called for an international response, highlighting the pre-existing severity of humanitarian needs in the affected areas, especially those to which there is limited access⁶. Following Türkiye's request to activate the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, the European Union mobilized ten Urban Search and Rescue teams from Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Greece, the Netherlands, Poland, and Romania to support first responders on the ground. In addition, the UK has indicated it will send 76 specialists, equipment and rescue dogs, and other countries including France, Germany Israel, and the US have pledged to provide assistance⁶. Türkiye has indicated that it has received offers of assistance from 45 governments³. Various NGOs have launched emergency appeals to respond to immediate needs of the aftermath of the earthquakes¹. Currently the UN is coordinating two separate responses given the differing contexts – one for Türkiye, one for Syria. WHO is reportedly sending medical supplies, including surgical trauma kits, to Turkey and Syria from its logistics hub in Dubai. WHO's emergencies chief, Dr. Mike Ryan, indicated that the impacts of these earthquakes will require sustained response for months to come, saying "the scale of this disaster is going to require a sustained response and the secondary impacts of this disaster are going

to also going to go on for months and months, especially for those people already affected, already vulnerable for many other reasons in the region, and especially in Syria."²

Many NGOs inside Syria are reporting the mobilization of resources for assessments and potential interventions, although no response plans have been widely shared yet.



Destruction at RI's one-stop center in Sarmada, Northwest Syria.

RELIEF INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

RI's immediate response in Türkiye and NWS has been to establish contact with affected colleagues, confirm staff safety, and assess capacity to respond.

SYRIA

In NWS, RI's offices are closed, and all protection activities have ceased for the time being. In terms of health facilities, as of 17:00 Syria time 7th February, one of RI's primary healthcare centres is not functioning due to damage to the infrastructure. The remaining

12 static health facilities continue to operate despite potential partial damage. A priority for RI is to confirm the structural integrity and safety of all RI-supported facilities as early as possible. Mobile clinics are not operational at the moment.

Based upon initial needs identified, as described above, RI is in discussion with other humanitarian agencies to support a coordinated rapid needs assessment. Some initial activities under consideration include:



Rescuers working to rescue persons from underneath the rubble in Harim, Northwest Syria.

- Assessment of all buildings inside Syria, to identify which facilities can be opened and to determine required rehabilitation work; priority will be given to the most affected health facility to ensure that delivery of services continue where possible and without putting staff and patients at risk
 - Rapid needs assessment in locations where RI operates, focusing on protection, health and basic needs; coordination with other humanitarian agencies to avoid risk of duplication
 - Redefinition of mobile medical clinics to start covering areas with highest needs and low medical coverage
 - Provision of ready to eat food in all HFs for patients and their families
 - Repurposing in-tact protection centers and/or procurement of tents to function as additional space for HFs, if needed, for less severe cases for a limited period
 - Attaining more cars to transport patients
- and staff, to help mitigate the challenges regarding access
 - Distribution of hygiene kits
 - Distribution of fuel for generators in facilities and cars
 - Additional procurement of critical pharmaceuticals and medicals consumables to cover the anticipated surge in needs
 - Provision of psychological first aid and referrals to available support Revision of emergency cash for protection outcome SOPs to be used for larger types of protection risks/vulnerabilities

TÜRKIYE:

Organizations which are accredited with AFAD are mobilizing their resources to respond to this emergency. RI is participating in coordination groups, government reach out, assessments, and donor engagements to position for a response. RI is in touch with interagency coordination group to understand how best we can support the emergency.

DONOR MESSAGING

RI teams and operations were quite heavily affected in both countries. While focusing on supporting our teams in this difficult time, we are also planning our interventions in the coming days. RI has mobilized its emergency response capacity in Türkiye and is working to mobilize a team in NWS. We continue to work with partners and other stakeholders to provide our staff and affected people with the needed support.

CONTACT

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ENDNOTES

1. Turkey and Syria earthquake: death toll passes 5,000, with 5,775 buildings confirmed collapsed – latest (theguardian.com)
2. Live Updates | Turkey: 13.5 million living in quake-hit area - ABC News (go.com)
3. Difficult conditions frustrate rescue efforts after Turkey and Syria earthquakes as toll reaches 5,000 | Syria | The Guardian
4. Turkey-Syria quakes updates: Thousands dead; searches ongoing | Earthquakes News | Al Jazeera
5. Magnitude 7.8 Earthquake in Nurdağı, Turkey - Türkiye | ReliefWeb
6. Turkey earthquake: Death toll could increase eight-fold, WHO says - BBC News
7. ReliefWeb, IBC appeals for emergency assistance, February 6, 2023.
8. The New York Times, Turkey-Syria Earthquake Live Updates
9. M 7.8 - 26 km E of Nurdağı, Turkey (usgs.gov)
10. INSO Update. 06/02/2023 at 17:07.
11. UNOCHA, NWS Situation Report, December 2022.
12. IOM, Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, August Advocacy Paper, 2022.
13. UPDATE: MSF is responding to Turkey-Syria earthquakes | Doctors Without Borders – USA
14. Türkiye earthquakes: Supporting the emergency response - Türkiye | ReliefWeb