



Turkey/Syria Earthquake

Situation Report

February 16, 2023

Background

The earthquakes in Kahramanmaraş affected both Syria and Turkey, though causing much more damage in Syria. Turkey has very good engineering for infrastructure, but many older structures collapsed, and the early morning timing of the earthquake resulted in an increased number of fatalities.¹ The devastation in Syria was worse, as buildings were not equipped to handle earthquakes. They were built without considering the occurrence of natural disasters, and the country generally has weak infrastructure.² The collapse of buildings was especially prevalent in northwestern Syria, where cities have suffered violent attacks from heavy weapons over the past 10 years, and there is also an absence of technical and engineering regulations.³

Since 2011, conflict between numerous internal and external armed groups has devastated Syria and left the ravaged country particularly ill-prepared for a natural disaster of this magnitude. The divided control of Syrian territory and restrictions and political sensitivities around delivering aid across different regions of the country have further complicated the response.

Overview

On February 6, 2023, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck 27 kilometers east of Nurdağı, Turkey, near the northern border of Syria. This was followed by a second magnitude 7.5 earthquake that struck four kilometers south-southeast of Ekinözü, Turkey.⁴ As of February 14, the combined death toll in Turkey and Syria surpassed 40,000.⁵ This was one of the strongest earthquakes to hit the region in more than 100 years, and thousands of buildings collapsed in both countries.⁶ Aid agencies are particularly concerned about the areas where millions of people already rely heavily on humanitarian aid, especially as international assistance has been slow to reach Syria for the earthquakes. Survivors are also confronting unusually cold winter conditions.

¹ [Earthquakes in Turkey, Syria underscore need to overhaul old infrastructure | Northeastern Global News](#)

² [Infrastructure to blame for high Syria earthquake death toll | Al Jazeera](#)

³ [Ibid.](#)

⁴ [2023 Turkey-Syria Earthquake | Center for Disaster Philanthropy](#)

⁵ [Quake Updates: Toll in Turkey and Syria Surpasses 40,000 Dead | The New York Times](#)

⁶ [February 6, 2023 Turkey-Syria earthquake news | CNN](#)

Syrian Communities

In Syrian communities, particularly in northwestern Syria, the earthquake has exacerbated devastation that has already occurred due to the civil war. For example, buildings across this region already suffered damage from shelling due to the conflict. These communities also were struggling with a cholera outbreak, the brutal winter, and ongoing conflict.⁷ In northwest Syria, 4.1 million out of 4.5 million residents are dependent on humanitarian aid, and almost 3 million people were already internally displaced.⁸ Syria's dire economic situation is also slowing relief efforts. While OCHA's spokesperson Jens Laerke has stated that there is a window of about seven days where they will find survivors alive, search and rescue efforts are slowed due to a lack of equipment to remove debris.⁹ Despite the urgent need for international aid, the UN veto on the UN Security Council and the Syrian government have both made it difficult for humanitarian aid to reach rebel-held areas.¹⁰ **With international aid slow in coming, Syrians are relying on each other for help while they wait.**¹¹

Palestinian Communities

According to Quds News Network, as of February 15th, the earthquake killed 104 Palestinian refugees in Syria.¹² The number of victims is expected to increase as the search continues. The Palestine News Agency reports that the Raml refugee camp in Latakia and the Neirab and Handarat refugee camps in Aleppo were affected by the earthquake.¹³ According to UNRWA, **about 90% of Palestinian refugee families in Syria need humanitarian aid because of the disaster.**¹⁴

Need for Medical Donations and Non-Food Items

The earthquake has caused a dramatic spike in the need for medical donations and non-food items, especially in northwest Syria. **Items such as blankets for displaced persons, tents, pocket warmers, sleeping bags, medications, and winter clothing are in high demand as the temperatures continue to drop.**¹⁵ The earthquake injured tens of thousands, but at the same time damaged health facilities, destroyed inventories of medicines/supplies and medical equipment, and also disrupted vital supply channels.¹⁶ According to the WHO, 60,000 people are reported injured

⁷ [Türkiye, Syria quake latest: full scale of disaster still unfolding, UN humanitarian warn | UN News](#)

⁸ [Northwestern Syria needs humanitarian assistance. Getting it there must be a priority. | Brookings](#)

⁹ [Ibid.](#)

¹⁰ [Northwestern Syria needs humanitarian assistance. Getting it there must be a priority. | Brookings](#)

¹¹ [After earthquake, residents of war-torn Syria struggle to get aid and rebuild | PBS](#)

¹² [104 Palestinians killed by earthquake in Syria and Turkey | Quds News Network](#)

¹³ [55 Palestinians among the dead in Syria, Turkey earthquake | The Jerusalem Post](#)

¹⁴ [Türkiye, Syria quake latest: full scale of disaster still unfolding, UN humanitarian warn | UN News](#)

¹⁵ [Turkey and Syria earthquake: where to donate in the US to help victims | The Guardian](#)

¹⁶ [Turkey-Syria Earthquake: Modeling Humanitarian Need in a Disaster | Direct Relief](#)

across the two countries, and 15 hospitals in Turkey are reported destroyed.¹⁷ In northwestern Syria, at least 57 hospitals and primary healthcare facilities have been reported partially damaged or to have suspended services.¹⁸

Alycia Clark, Direct Relief's head of pharmacy, specified the types of medical attention the survivors will likely need.¹⁹ Crush injuries and wounds in addition to delayed access to care will lead to more significant infections. Debris and particulates in the air will most likely create new respiratory issues and exacerbate chronic ones. Others may have eye irritation and injuries, and breaks in the water supply and contaminated water may lead to gastrointestinal illnesses on top of the already present cholera outbreaks. Some severe injuries may require surgery. Priority should be given to chronic disease management medications, because the earthquake led to the loss of a significant amount of the available stock.²⁰

Anera's Response

Anera is putting together shipments of humanitarian aid for Syria. While Anera does not have programs in Turkey or Syria, we do have staff and relationships with trusted, local organizations in Lebanon and Jordan. And Anera has an amazing cadre of international donors who work with us to ship medical aid and humanitarian relief in times of crisis.

Our regional staff are purchasing medicines and other vital relief supplies in Jordan. We are also coordinating with medical aid donors to airship to Jordan medicines and healthcare supplies. Anera will transport the aid to Syria, where our trusted partners will ensure that the supplies being delivered reach affected populations.

Anera is raising funds now for purchasing tents, blankets, food and other necessities for immediate shipment to Syria. We also need to cover the costs for shipping those items and donated medical supplies that we will deliver via Jordan.

¹⁷ [Turkey-Syria Earthquake: Modeling Humanitarian Need in a Disaster | Direct Relief](#)

¹⁸ [Ibid.](#)

¹⁹ [Ibid.](#)

²⁰ [Ibid.](#)