

CRISIS OVERVIEW

On 6 February 2023 at 4:17h (GMT+03:00), a 7.8 earthquake hit the region of Kahramanmaraş in southeastern Türkiye, affecting areas of southern Türkiye and northwestern Syria. Less than 12 hours later, at 13:45h (GMT+03:00), a 7.6 earthquake hit the same region. While the total figures of people in need are still to be determined, 12 million people reside in the affected areas of southeastern Türkiye, including two million Syrian refugees (BBC 06/02/2023; IBC 06/02/2023). In Syria, more than six million have been affected, including in non-government-controlled areas in the northwest (OCHA 11/02/2023). As at 17 February, the death toll in Türkiye and Syria was more than 44,000. This number is expected to continue to rise with current search-and-rescue efforts (Al Jazeera accessed 17/02/2023).

METHODOLOGY

A rapid anticipatory analysis was conducted with a time focus of one month after the publication of this report. Contextual and technical experts started by gathering information about the current situation and mapping relevant factors that have a determining influence over the crisis (variables) and their interrelations. The variables were then clustered according to themes, and relevant assumptions were ideated. Based on this, we identified and described four potential deteriorations to watch and their triggers.

This report aims to be a preliminary 'heads-up' report, with the goal of calling for careful attention on and the monitoring of some variables to watch. That said, it does **not** attempt to provide an in-depth analysis. ACAPS analyses will follow providing a closer look into what is highlighted in this report.

RATIONALE FOR THIS REPORT

In the aftermath of the earthquakes, most of the humanitarian work is focused on search-and-rescue activities and responding to the immediate humanitarian needs of the affected populations. With the complex evolution of the crisis and new dynamics emerging, there is also a need to anticipate the development of the situation in the near future. An overview exposition of what to watch for over the next month, highlighting key variables to monitor that could play a role in the development of the crisis, can contribute to informing the strategic planning, programming, and preparedness of humanitarian responders.

These earthquakes are a crisis within multiple crises. We aim to comprehend what that means and anticipate potential developments by examining factors beyond the immediate effects of the earthquakes. Some questions that guided our analysis are as follows:

- What is missing/being overlooked in the response?
- Which variables might have a strong influence on future outcomes? In which directions could they move?
- Which developments could aggravate the humanitarian needs of the populations affected?
- Which possible future events could have a relevant impact in changing the course of the crisis?
- Which main deteriorations of the current situation can we anticipate?

What would you like us to do next?

ACAPS will continue to monitor and analyse the [earthquake crisis in Türkiye and Syria](#). If you work in the humanitarian response, we would like to hear your thoughts on which topics our analyses should focus on and what information gaps you are facing. Please contact us at info@acaps.org to share your insights, and let us know what kind of analysis would be helpful for your work.



KEY VARIABLES TO WATCH

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Key variables to watch

Considering the current situation in Türkiye and Syria, our analysis identified key variables that can have a determining influence over the direction the crisis will take. We clustered them according to five domains: worsening pre-existing humanitarian needs, humanitarian access/response capacity, additional large-scale disasters (including extreme weather events), the geopolitical landscape, and displacement.

The clusters are further categorised into the geographical area in which the variables apply. As you move down the layers, the variables apply to any box that is included within another box (i.e. the variables of the outer layer “Earthquake-affected areas” apply to all boxes within it, including the affected areas in “Türkiye” and “Syria”; for the boxes within “Non-government-controlled areas”, the variables from the “Syria” and “Earthquake-affected areas” layers would also apply).

WORSENING PRE-EXISTING HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

SYRIA

Cumulative effects of prolonged conflict

- Mass internal displacement, including people living in informal settlements and camps
- Deteriorated infrastructure, including housing, healthcare facilities, and roads
- Disrupted access to essential services (e.g. food, water, healthcare, education, protection, shelter, power)
- Compromised livelihoods and economic security
- Widespread psychological trauma
- Landmine and explosive ordnance contamination
- Depleted coping capacities
- Limited presence of humanitarian assistance

Non-government-controlled areas

- Isolation from the international community, including for humanitarian response
- Cholera and other infectious disease epidemics

TÜRKIYE

- Mass concentration of refugees
- Discrimination and/or exclusion of pro-opposition and minority population groups (e.g. the Kurdish and Syrian communities)

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS/RESPONSE CAPACITY

ALL EARTHQUAKE-AFFECTED AREAS

Capacity to respond

- Fuel availability and affordability
- Electricity and power access
- Availability of essential food and NFIs, including medical supplies
- Infrastructure for essential services (e.g. shelter, medical services, food distribution, etc.)
- Availability of equipment for heavy lifting and debris removal
- Technical expertise
- Impact of severe weather conditions on the response

Physical access to affected populations

- Transportation infrastructure (i.e. presence and conditions of roads, seaports, airports)
- Communication infrastructure
- Safety and security
- Political considerations and government policies (e.g. visas, movement restrictions within the country, interference in the implementation of humanitarian activities targeted to specific groups)

Response coordination in a complex humanitarian and political landscape

- Quality and reliability of information and data
- Availability of unrestricted communication channels

SYRIA

- Information gaps
- Limited presence of international response expertise and capacity
- Funding limitations and conditionalities for donors and responders
- Discrimination and/or exclusion of population groups based on religious and political affiliations

Non-government-controlled areas

- Impediments to enter the region, including border crossing restrictions and conditions
- Availability of evacuation corridors for injured people

ADDITIONAL LARGE-SCALE DISASTERS INCLUDING EXTREME WEATHER CONDITIONS

ALL EARTHQUAKE-AFFECTED AREAS

- New earthquakes
- Collapse of dams and subsequent flooding
- Escalating social discontent leading to violence
- Severe worsening of winter weather conditions (e.g. cold waves, extreme precipitation, large amounts of snow, storms, severe seasonal floods)

SYRIA

- Escalation of armed conflict
- Large-scale disease outbreaks
- Explosion of landmines and other explosive ordnance

GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

ALL EARTHQUAKE-AFFECTED AREAS

- Veracity of information and data under a government-controlled information landscape
- Discrimination and/or exclusion of certain population groups (e.g. Syrian refugees, the Kurdish population, IDPs from Syrian non-government-controlled areas)
- Engagement with local humanitarian responders, including those opposition-affiliated (e.g. Kurdish-affiliated NGOs, The White Helmets)
- International diplomatic relations, including with the UN and permanent member states of the UN SC
- Response coordination in a complex humanitarian and political landscape

TÜRKIYE

- Impacts of the upcoming elections
- Effectiveness of the Government's response
- Political manoeuvring by opposition parties
- Current economic crisis
- Implementation of the emergency state
- Civil discontent, unrest, and looting
- Anti-state opportunistic activities (e.g. by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, and other non-state armed groups)
- Diplomatic relations with the Syrian Government and non-state armed groups in Syria

SYRIA

- Relations with non-government-controlled regions
- Restrictions on humanitarian access to certain regions/population groups
- Military operations in affected areas
- Diplomatic relations with Türkiye
- International implementation of existing sanctions and waivers

Non-government-controlled areas

- Military capacity of existing non-state armed groups
- Emergence of new non-state armed groups
- Support from the Turkish Government
- Border crossing restrictions and conditions at Bab al-Hawa, Bab Al-Salam, and Al Raei border crossings and others

DISPLACEMENT

ALL EARTHQUAKE-AFFECTED AREAS

- Government capacity to provide shelter and basic services in affected areas
 - Collaboration with NGOs for shelter, supplies, and service provision
- Coping capacities of affected populations, particularly the displaced and isolated
 - Presence of family support networks
 - Access to cash, including remittances
- Existing migration corridors
 - Safety and security for the movement of people
- Existing and new settlement areas, including camps and temporary shelters
- Presence and capacity of international humanitarian agencies and organisations
- Moving people's documentation and legal status
- Effects of extreme weather events and cold temperatures

TÜRKIYE

- Discrimination and/or exclusion of displaced population groups and minorities (e.g. Syrian refugees, the Kurdish population)
- Government refusal to welcome new refugees from Syria

SYRIA

Non-government-controlled areas

- Status of border crossings and their accessibility
- Capacity of communities living in non-government-controlled areas in northeastern Syria to assist displaced people from northwestern regions

What to watch over the next month in Syria and Türkiye

Building on the variables listed above, our analysis identified four critical developments that could occur in Syria and Türkiye over the next month. These developments could lead to a significant rise in unmet humanitarian needs and/or a major shift in the crisis dynamics. For each development, we provided a list of potential triggers that could lead to such deteriorations.

What could **escalate humanitarian access constraints**

- ❑ Aggravating politically motivated restrictions to **movement across borders** to non-government-controlled areas in northwestern Syria (CSIS 07/02/2023, FP 07/02/2023).
- ❑ **Extreme weather conditions** (e.g. cold waves, extreme precipitation, large amounts of snow, and storms) hampering rescue efforts, including by causing a deterioration in transport and communication infrastructure conditions and impeding debris-clearing operations (Aljazeera 06/02/2023).
- ❑ Impossibility of supplying **fuel and electricity** in Syria and Türkiye as a result of availability, accessibility, and affordability issues (OCHA 15/02/2023, CNBC 07/02/2023).
- ❑ Deterioration of the **information and communication** landscape because of government restrictions and control over data, media, and the internet, including social media (EFJ 09/02/2023).
- ❑ Reduced humanitarian space given **politically motivated impediments** by the governments on specific humanitarian organisations or intervention sectors (CoE 10/03/2021; EUI 03/06/2022).
- ❑ Increasing **insecurity** resulting from outbreaks of violence in Türkiye and conflict escalation in northwestern Syria (The Guardian 11/02/202; MEE 07/02/2023).
- ❑ Increasing threat of **landmine** and explosive ordnance contamination, which has been moved by the earthquakes, particularly in northwestern Syria (Humanity and Inclusion accessed 15/02/2023, Global Protection Cluster 01/06/2022, The Monitor accessed 15/02/2023).
- ❑ Increasing **limitations on donor funding** because of budget restrictions, other priorities, sanctions, and counterterrorism policies (NRC 15/02/2023; Almayadeen 11/02/2023; AI monitor 09/02/2023).

There are instances where the four developments share common characteristics or have areas of overlap, but we categorised them separately to ensure clarity. It is also important to note that the triggers identified are assumptions based on existing data and expert judgement; they indicate a plausible direction that a variable can take and do not necessarily reflect the situation at the current moment.

What could **increase the level of unmet humanitarian needs due to increasing politicisation of aid**

- ❑ Increasing restrictions on humanitarian access to populations in need as a result of politically motivated restrictions on **movement across borders** to non-government-controlled areas in northwestern Syria (CSIS 07/02/2023; FP 07/02/2023).
- ❑ Breach on the principle of impartiality, with **an unequal distribution of aid and services** to particular regions and population groups by government-linked responders (Haaretz 07/02/2023).
- ❑ Reduced humanitarian space resulting from **impediments by governments** on specific humanitarian organisations, intervention sectors, and particular regions and populations groups (CoE 10/03/2021; EUI 03/06/2022).
- ❑ **Instrumentalisation of aid** by governments and opposition parties in relation to the upcoming general elections in Türkiye and active conflict in northwestern Syria (Haaretz 07/02/2023; The Independent 09/02/2023).
- ❑ Abuses in the implementation of emergency state measures leading to **human rights violations** (FP 08/02/2023; FIDH 10/02/2023).
- ❑ Increasing conditionalities of donor funding to humanitarian operations because of sanctions and counterterrorism policies (Almayadeen 11/02/2023, AI monitor 09/02/2023).

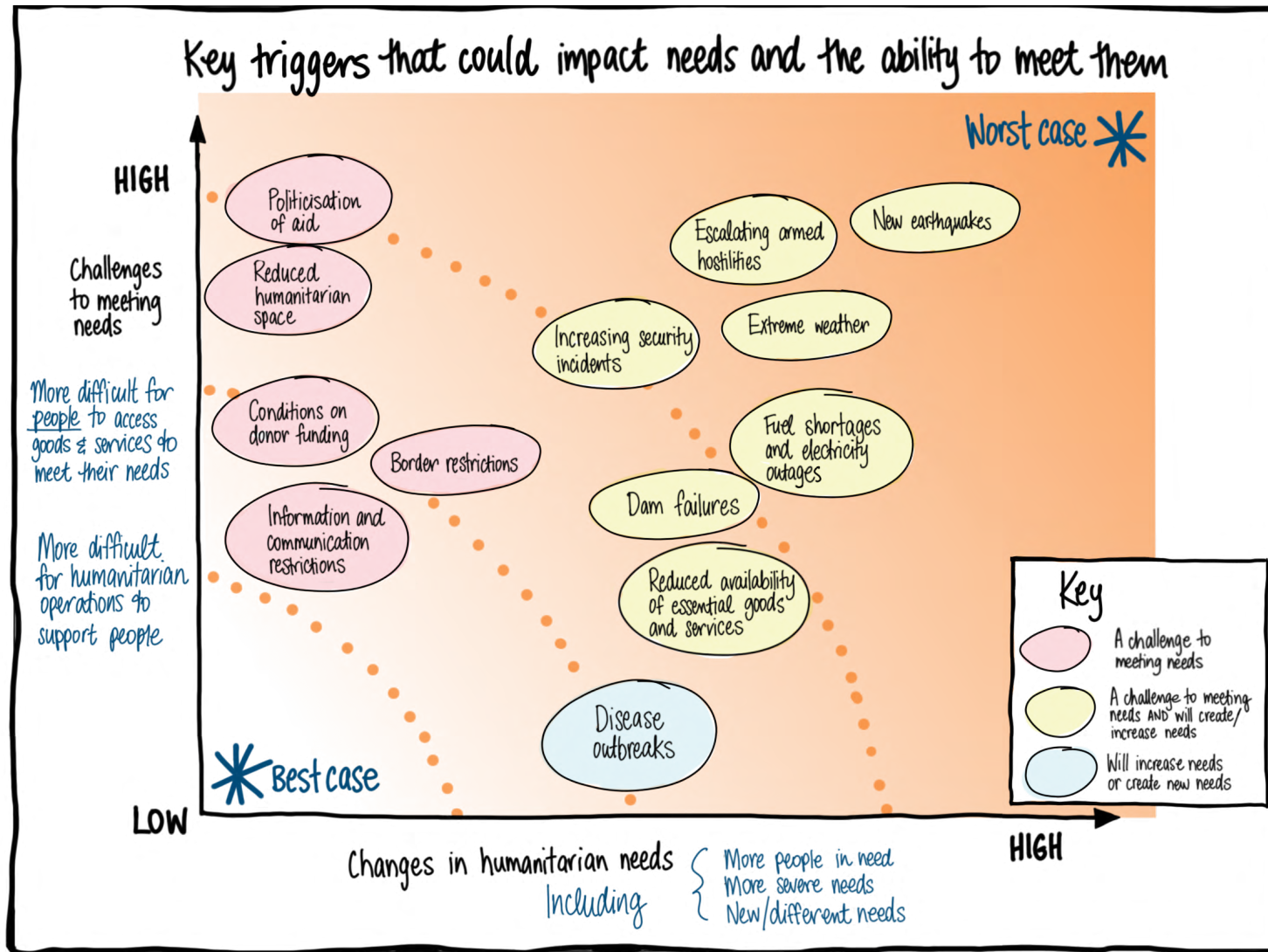
What to watch over the next month in Syria and Türkiye

What could increase the level of unmet humanitarian needs due to a new major disaster/event or a severe worsening of current conditions

- ❑ New earthquakes (CRED 22/12/2022).
- ❑ **Dams** failing or collapsing leading to floods (Reuters 09/02/2023; Enab Baladi 07/02/2023).
- ❑ Worsening of **winter weather conditions** (e.g. cold waves, extreme precipitation, large amounts of snow, storms, severe seasonal floods) (TWP 08/02/2023, BBC 10/02/2023).
- ❑ **Conflict** escalation in northwestern Syria and outbreaks of violence in Türkiye (MEE 07/02/2023; The Guardian 11/02/2023).
- ❑ Rising **social unrest and looting** (Insider 12/02/2023).
- ❑ Large-scale **disease outbreaks** (Al Jazeera 12/02/2023).
- ❑ Severe reduction in the availability of **essential goods and services** (STC 13/02/2023).
- ❑ **New disaster or major event elsewhere** from the affected areas that diverts humanitarian attention.

What could lead to rising tensions and the escalation of conflict, particularly in northwestern Syria

- ❑ Opportunistic **military incursions** or **violent activities** by the parties to the current conflict, such as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, and the Syrian and Turkish Governments (BBC 23/11/2022, The Independent 09/02/2023).
- ❑ Deteriorating **diplomatic relations** between the Syrian and Turkish Governments (France 24 28/12/2022).
- ❑ Deteriorating **diplomatic mediation** and/or escalation of tensions between relevant external entities, such as the US, EU, Russia, China, and the UN (France 24, 10/02/2023).
- ❑ Escalating **social unrest** leading to large-scale violence (Insider 12/02/2023).
- ❑ Emergence of **new armed entities** in locations under fragile control, such as northwestern Syria (Brookings 27/01/2023).



Source: ACAPS