

TÜRKIYE AND SYRIA

Update: Earthquakes in southeastern Türkiye and northwestern Syria



KEY PRIORITIES

52,000

DEATH TOLL
AS AT 9 MARCH 2023

29 million

PEOPLE AFFECTED IN
TÜRKIYE AND SYRIA
AS AT FEBRUARY 2023

High risk

OF DISEASE OUTBREAK

2.2 million

BUILDINGS DAMAGED
IN TÜRKIYE AND SYRIA

FUNDING AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

- UN agencies
(WHO, UNICEF, IOM)
- Several INGOs

CRISIS IMPACT OVERVIEW

One month after the 7.8 and 7.5 earthquakes hit Türkiye and Syria on 6 February 2023, recovery response is still underway. The earthquakes severely affected northwestern Syria, where about 4.5 million people live (DFS 07/03/2023). In Türkiye, the most affected provinces are Adana, Adıyaman, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis, Malatya, Osmaniye, and Sanlıurfa, where about 14 million people reside, including 1.8 million Syrian refugees (IOM 06/03/2023). Two weeks after the initial earthquakes, on 20 February, two additional earthquakes of magnitude 6.4 and 5.8, respectively, hit southern Türkiye, in Hatay (The Guardian 21/02/2023). According to the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency in Türkiye, as at 1 March, more than 14,000 aftershocks had affected the southern Turkey since the initial earthquakes (AFAD Deprem Twitter 06/03/2023; TRT World 04/03/2023). Severe aftershocks in Hatay and Malatya have aggravated the damage to buildings and infrastructure, increasing the number of injuries and casualties.

About 52,000 earthquake-related deaths had been reported in Türkiye and Syria as at 9 March 2023 (Sky News 09/03/2023; OCHA 07/03/2023). Among them, nearly 6,000 were reported in northwestern Syria, where the highest number of deaths were recorded in Harim and Jisr-Ash-Shugur districts of Idlib governorate and Afrin and Jebel Saman districts of Aleppo (OCHA 07/03/2023; IMC 02/03/2023; DFS 07/03/2023). Almost two-thirds of all reported injuries were in Harim district (OCHA 07/03/2023). As at 5 March, nearly 46,000 people, including more than 4,200 Syrian refugees, had died in Türkiye (TRT World 05/03/2023; STL 08/03/2023). As at 9 March, approximately 10,200 people in Syria and 115,000 in Türkiye had been injured (Business Standard 05/03/2023; OCHA 07/03/2023; IMC 02/03/2023; WHO accessed 10/03/2023).

It is important to note that the numbers of affected people have varied across different types of sources. According to OCHA estimates in flash appeals from 14–16 February, at least 8.8 million people were affected in northwestern Syria and 15.6 million in Türkiye (OCHA 14/02/2023 and 16/02/2023). Out of the 8.8 million people affected in northwestern Syria, the number of those in government-controlled areas (GCAs), mainly in Aleppo, ranged from

4 to 6.1 million (Health Cluster/WHO 07/03/2023). Also according to OCHA, as at 7 March, at least three million affected people in Syria were in Idlib governorate alone (OCHA 07/03/2023). On the other hand, the latest OCHA situation reports estimated six million affected people in Syria as at 5 March and 9.1 million affected people in Türkiye as at 6 March (OCHA 05/03/2023 and 06/03/2023). In Türkiye, the number of affected people also varies between 13 and 20 million across different reports (Al Jazeera 25/02/2023; TRT World 04/03/2023).

Information regarding Syria is much more limited than on Türkiye because of access and operational constraints varying across GCAs and non-government controlled areas (NGCAs). As a result, it is difficult to holistically understand the impact of the earthquakes. Challenges in identifying displaced people outside displacement sites have also been reported in Syria (OCHA 05/03/2023).

In Türkiye, IOM has reported roughly 2.7 million people displaced within and outside the earthquake-affected areas, but government data estimates the number to be high as 3.8 to 5.3 million (IOM 06/03/2023; OCHA 09/03/2023; AA 06/03/2023; AFAD 01/03/2023; SHGM accessed 10/03/2023). Accurate displacement numbers for northwestern Syria are much more difficult to attain, and they vary according to sources. As at 7 March, OCHA reported at least 86,000 new IDPs directly linked to the earthquakes, but REACH reported at least 103,470 as at 2 March (OCHA 07/03/2023; REACH 09/03/2023). This adds to the reported 360,000 displaced people in GCAs only as at 7 March (Health Cluster/WHO 07/03/2023).

The Turkish authorities have allowed Syrian refugees from the earthquake-affected areas to voluntarily return to NGCAs in northwestern Syria and then go back to Türkiye as long as they do so within six months (Al Jazeera 09/03/2023). Since April 2022, Syrian refugees had not been allowed to return to Türkiye after crossing the border to Syria. The current return programme is also available only for Syrian refugees in Türkiye who hold a temporary protection permit and does not extend to those with tourist residency permits or even a dual Syrian-Turkish citizenship. The programme allows eligible Syrians to consider whether to stay in Syria or return to Türkiye based on their access to services and coping mechanisms in each country post-earthquake. Those who decide to permanently return will likely require livelihood support in Syria.

More than 14 million people in Syria have been identified to need humanitarian assistance (CCCM Cluster accessed 09/03/2023). The number of people in need in Türkiye has not yet been identified.

Syria has been experiencing a significant shortage of fuel even prior to the earthquakes, not only affecting humanitarian operations and their ability to reach people in need but also constraining daily activities for people, such as heating their homes (OCHA 15/01/2023).

CRISIS IMPACTS

Shelter and NFIs

In both countries, displaced people have been reported to share overcrowded tents and containers, exposing them to health and protection concerns. The high demand for shelter and NFIs in both Syria and Türkiye, combined with inflation and increased material costs, has constrained the procurement of shelter items for northwestern Syria (OCHA 07/03/2023). Challenges in cross-border movement between northwestern Syria and Türkiye is also likely to hinder the procurement of necessary items from Türkiye.

In Syria, as at 5 March, about 1,900 buildings were entirely damaged, and more than 8,800 buildings were only partially damaged but still uninhabitable (OCHA 05/03/2023 and 07/03/2023; Global Shelter Cluster 05/03/2023). The earthquakes have left at least 11,000 families homeless in northwestern Syria, mainly in Harim district in Idlib governorate and Afrin district in Aleppo. Roughly 57% of the partially and fully destroyed buildings are located in Harim and Afrin districts (OCHA 05/03/2023 and 07/03/2023). On 5 March, a windstorm in Idlib governorate damaged more than 250 tents, many of which were sheltering earthquake-affected people (OCHA 07/03/2023).

The number of people estimated to be in need of shelter and NFIs ranges from 280,000–900,000 (OCHA 07/03/2023 and 14/02/2023; Global Shelter Cluster 05/03/2023).

According to OCHA, as at 7 March, at least 86,000 people, of whom 57% were children, remained displaced because of the earthquakes, with the majority of IDPs sheltering in Salqin town in Idlib and Jandairis town in Aleppo. REACH reported a higher number of earthquake-induced IDPs, with the figure reaching over 103,470 as at 2 March, while the health sector reported a total of 360,000 IDPs in GCAs alone as at 7 March (REACH 09/03/2023; Health Cluster/WHO 07/03/2023). These figures add to the 1.9 million people already internally displaced across about 1,430 sites as a result of the protracted conflict that has entered its 12th year in 2023 (OCHA 07/03/2023). At the same time, roughly 47,250 returnees and cross-border movements from Türkiye into Syria had been recorded as at 2 March (REACH 09/03/2023).

The Turkish authorities have allowed Syrian refugees to voluntarily return to NGCAs of northwestern Syria through Bab Al Hawa, Bab al-Salam, and Jarablus border crossings for up to six months (Al Jazeera 09/03/2023).

In Türkiye, the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change reported that as at 7 March, about 232,000 buildings were severely damaged, demolished, or in urgent need of demolition (AFAD Twitter 02/03/2023; AA 06/03/2023). Among the buildings to be demolished, 96% were built prior to the 1999 earthquakes, after which stricter building regulations were introduced (STL 08/03/2023; USAID 07/03/2023). At the same time, there were still reports of a lack of enforcement of the building regulations following the earthquakes, as well as poor urban planning (CNBC 09/02/2023). Shelter support is required in rural areas, where affected people prefer to remain close to their homes and properties and stay under tarpaulins and greenhouses instead of sheltering in collective sites in city centres (STL 08/03/2023). The materials used for makeshift tents, such as tarpaulin, are flammable and present a risk of fire, especially as affected people rely on burning wood and other materials to stay warm during the current winter season.

As at 7 March, about 1.6 million people lived in tents, 53,000 people lived in containers, and over 299,200 people lived in makeshift settlements in the 11 affected provinces (AA 06/03/2023). IOM estimates that 2.7 million people are displaced within and outside the affected areas of Türkiye. Government data shows that the estimated number could be as high as 3.8 to 5.2 million (IOM 06/03/2023). Based on available data, over 1.9 million people are displaced in the affected provinces. The figures will likely change as more data becomes available. As at 26 February, Facebook mobility data used in a Crisis Ready report showed that the population density across western Turkey was increasing (CrisisReady 28/02/2023).

The outer districts of Hatay province of Türkiye have received significant numbers of displaced people from the affected districts of Antakya, Iskenderun, Kirikhan, and Samandag (STL 08/03/2023). There are roughly 27,415 people living in temporary settlement zones within Hatay city, where 24% of them are living in tents and 75% are sheltering in containers. As at 7 March, in Adiyaman province, roughly half (over 300,000 people) of the population had left the province. In Kahramanmaraş, 30,000 people were living across 15 temporary shelter settlements (STL 08/03/2023).

Health

In Syria, the number of casualties and injuries resulting from the earthquakes has worsened pre-existing pressures on health facilities. The disaster partially or fully damaged about seven hospitals and between 55–116 health facilities, and there is a lack of surgical types of equipment and ICU beds to address the needs of the affected population (OCHA 07/03/2023);

WHO accessed 10/03/2023). More than 20% of the 604 communities assessed by REACH did not have access to healthcare as at 15 February, particularly in Badama and Harim towns of Idlib (REACH 15/02/2023). People will likely have to travel long distances to access medical care, exposing them to protection risks along the way. In northwestern Syria, patients with longer-term health needs, such as cancer and diabetes, are likely unable to access adequate treatment because of a lack of medical supplies.

As at 4 March, more than 570 cases of cholera and 23 associated deaths were confirmed in northwestern Syria, resulting from the lack of access to adequate WASH facilities and healthcare (NPA 04/03/2023). As at 7 March, there were 50,000 suspected cases of cholera in the region (DFS 07/03/2023).

In Türkiye, although an outbreak has not been reported, there is an increased risk of waterborne diseases in the affected areas because of water shortages and a lack of WASH facilities. In the 1,474 displacement sites assessed by IOM across the 11 affected provinces, about 15% of key informants reported that there were no health facilities nearby, and 23% of key informants stated that they lacked access to basic medicine because of unavailability (IOM 16/02/2023). According to WHO, the prevention and control of disease outbreaks is a priority health concern (STL 08/03/2023).

As at 8 March, UNFPA reported around 226,000 pregnant women in the disaster-affected areas, with roughly 25,000 births expected to occur over March/April (STL 08/03/2023). Immediate trauma care and post-trauma rehabilitative care for injured people, essential medicine, emergency kits, and prenatal and natal care are among priority health needs. The presence of sharp debris in affected areas has been reported as a risk for children.

Dust pollution from damage resulting from the earthquakes is likely to increase the risk of respiratory illnesses among people still living in the affected areas of both countries. They also require access to psychosocial support, as affected people are likely to have experienced psychological trauma from facing multiple disasters within a short time frame. Psychosocial needs among Syrian refugees in Türkiye and people living in northwestern Syria are likely higher, as they have faced multiple displacements over the years because of the protracted conflict in Syria.

WASH

In Syria, about 64% of the people affected by the earthquake require WASH facilities and sufficient access to WASH services. In GCAs, a lack of funding challenges the repair or rehabilitation of damaged water networks and water tanks (DFS 10/03/2023). The lack of WASH facilities, combined with unhygienic and overcrowded living conditions, are contributing to the spread of waterborne diseases. Over 80% of people affected by the earthquake require

hygiene kits, according to initial assessments conducted by WASH partners in northwestern Syria (DFS 07/03/2023; Global Shelter Cluster 05/03/2023).

In Türkiye, although detailed information about displacement sites is not yet available, there have been reports of WASH facilities not being enough to accommodate the number of people, with the ratio of latrine to people falling well below Sphere standards. 36% of the 1,474 displacement sites assessed by IOM did not have shower facilities (IOM 16/02/2023). Among existing WASH facilities, 55% were not appropriate for people with disabilities, and most facilities did not have safe access for women, children, and people with disabilities. Hygiene kits are highly needed in displacement sites, with most sites currently not having any.

Network water has been supplied to most affected areas, but the Government has cautioned people to not use it as drinking water (STL 08/03/2023). There is a severe water shortage in Hatay province leaving people without drinking water. The lack of heating amenities also affects people's ability to use water, as they are sourcing their bathing water from unsanitised sources, requiring that the water be heated before use for hygienic purposes.

Food security

In both countries, hot meals and ready-to-eat foods are still needed. A lack of access to baby food has also been reported by affected people in both countries. In Türkiye, 20% of the 1,474 sites assessed by IOM reported a lack of baby food (IOM 16/02/2023).

In Syria, markets are generally accessible for 80% of the affected communities, but a shortage of food items has been reported, particularly in Ariha, Harim, and Jisr-Ash-Shugur districts of Idlib and Jandairis and Sheikh El-Hadid districts of Aleppo (OCHA 07/03/2023; DFS 07/03/2023).

In Türkiye, 51% of the 1,474 assessed displacement sites by IOM indicated that people purchased their food on their own. In the distribution sites, food assistance is not sufficient to meet the needs of all the people relying on their services (IOM 16/02/2023).

The earthquake has likely damaged agricultural land and resulted in the loss of livestock in both countries, where agriculture is a significant income-generator, likely resulting in longer-term challenges with food availability in the affected areas. Available food items are unlikely enough to meet the significant needs of people. Livelihood disruptions and inflation can also be expected to decrease the purchasing power of the affected populations in Türkiye and Syria, with households consequently relying on negative coping mechanisms (DFS 07/03/2023; Global Shelter Cluster 05/03/2023).

Protection

In Syria, the number of protection cases is growing. As at 3 March 2023, around 146 children were registered as unaccompanied and separated (UNICEF 03/03/2023). In overcrowded shelters, gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, is an increasing risk. 22% of key informants in a rapid protection assessment reported that affected people were resorting to negative coping mechanisms, such as child labour, begging, and violence against women and children (OCHA 26/02/2023; TAS 20/02/2023; World Vision 16/02/2023).

Many people have lost their identity cards and documents, putting them under extra pressure amid the emergency conditions (DFS 07/03/2023; Global Shelter Cluster 05/03/2023). This includes Syrian refugees in Türkiye, who may face difficulties in accessing basic services without proper documentation.

In Türkiye, as at 10 March, 1,649 unaccompanied children among the 1,915 rescued from the debris had been identified and reunited with their families. Around 266 children remained under the care of the Ministry of Family and Social Services, and around 78 were still unidentified (BBC accessed 13/03/2023).

Education

In Syria, about 1,800 educational facilities were reported damaged by the earthquake. 188 were non-operational as at 26 February (OCHA 26/02/2023). As at 7 March, 20 schools in the affected areas were hosting about 1,260 IDP households, with eight of the schools located in Idlib governorate (OCHA 07/03/2023). As at 2 March, around 151 schools were being used as shelter in Aleppo, Hama, Latakia, and Tartous (OCHA 05/03/2023). The number of school attendees is very low, even in open schools (DFS 07/03/2023; Global Shelter Cluster 05/03/2023).

In Türkiye, education was suspended until 1 March 2023 in ten out of the 11 affected provinces (Expat Guide Türkiye 14/02/2023; Hurriyet Daily News 12/02/2023). On 11 February, the Turkish Government ordered all universities to switch to online learning so that the student dormitories could be used to shelter affected people (DuvaR 11/02/2023; Hurriyet Daily News 12/02/2023). Many schools and learning centres have reopened in March (TRT World 02/03/2023). Lessons also continue to be provided in tent schools, in areas where makeshift shelters have been established, to continue the provision of educational support to displaced children.

Teachers and students likely need psychosocial support in both countries.

IMPACT ON CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

In Syria, the earthquakes have caused an estimated USD 1.5 billion in material damage, which, according to the World Bank, is equivalent to 10% of Syria's gross domestic product (NPA 03/03/2023). Damage to internet connectivity is hampering communications, and damage to the electricity grid is also affecting the response (DFS 07/03/2023).

In Türkiye, the earthquakes have caused an estimated USD 100 billion worth of material damage, according to UNDP (STL 08/03/2023). Electricity is still disrupted in parts of some affected areas, such as in Hatay.