UNHCR Syria Flash Update #1

Emergency Response to Earthquake

6 February 2023 / Updated as of 16.00 hrs

Destruction in Aleppo city, 6 February. ©UNHCR Syria/H. Maarouf

Update on Developments

- A major earthquake of magnitude 7.8 struck south-east Türkiye and north Syria at around 04.20 hrs on 6 February. Based on initial reports, it appears Aleppo, Hama, Lattakia and Idleb are among the areas most affected within Syria, with casualties and material damage being reported. The earthquake was also strongly felt in Damascus. As of 16.00 hrs on 6 February, there was still little information on the damage in other cities including in Rural Damascus. Many of the buildings already damaged during the crisis are at high risk of collapse.

- The earthquake came as the Middle East is experiencing a snowstorm that is expected to continue until Thursday (9 February).

- As of 16.00 hrs on 6 February, the Syrian Health Ministry reported over 326 people were killed as a result of the earthquake across the Government-controlled areas of Aleppo, Lattakia, Hama and Tartous governorates. The Ministry added that more than 1,000 people are injured. There was no clear estimate of how many people were killed in opposition-controlled areas of north-west Syria.

UNHCR Capacity and Emergency Response

Core relief items

- As of 6 February, UNHCR has a total of 18,100 core relief item (CRI) kits[1] in stock that can be used for the response in the most impacted locations (4,500 CRI kits in Aleppo, 5,700 CRI kits in Homs, and 7,900 CRI kits in Tartous).
- UNHCR has already urgently deployed additional CRI kits to ensure that there will be a total 10,000 CRI kits in stock in each of these locations (Aleppo, Homs and Tartous). The items are currently *en route*.
- In addition to the CRI kits in stock, UNHCR stands ready to make available winter jackets and clothing kits. UNHCR is ensuring that Aleppo, Homs and Tartous each have at least 10,000 winter jackets/clothing kits in stock.

Shelter

- As of 6 February, UNHCR has 19,900 tents available in stock in Damascus, which can be deployed to affected areas if needed and requested.
- In addition, UNHCR has Rubb halls (below) which can be used for reception areas or collective shelters if requested. Moving these items from Damascus to any other warehouse will take an estimated 24 hours.

[1] A CRI kit includes the following items: high-thermal blankets, mattresses, kitchen sets, plastic sheeting, jerry cans and sleeping mats.

Destruction caused by the earthquake in Aleppo city. ©UNHCR/H. Maarouf

Protection

- UNHCR plans to temporarily suspend all non-essential activities in its community centres and community-based structures (including outreach volunteers and mobile teams) and will focus/redirect activities towards the earthquake emergency response. This will include identification and prioritization of needs in affected areas and referrals.
- As of January 2023, UNHCR Syria was supporting 119 operational community/ satellite centres across the country. In addition, UNHCR is supporting 111 mobile units linked with 2,600 outreach volunteers across the 14 Syrian governorates.
- Resources will also be redirected to ensure sufficient psychosocial support for affected persons with a particular attention to the most vulnerable including but not limited to children, persons with disabilities and the elderly.
- UNHCR is ensuring that protection considerations will be reflected across sectors in the response, particularly in relation to gender-based violence and child protection.

Preliminary Overview of the Situation

Aleppo Governorate

- There are very high levels of structural damage reported. As of Monday (6 February), 40 buildings are understood to have collapsed with many more at risk of collapse. Efforts are ongoing to pull people out from under debris.
- Initial information suggests a dire need for food, core relief items and WASH support. Health facilities are stretched and private hospitals are opening to accommodate the growing needs.
- UNHCR is on standby to support rapid assessment of the damaged buildings in collaboration with sector members including for the possible removal of debris.

Homs/Hama Governorates

- The main impacted areas are Hama city and north rural Hama Governorate.
- In Hama city an eight-floor building collapsed in Al-Arbaeen neighbourhood and Al-Fayhaa and several houses have partially collapsed in Al-Tal neighbourhood of Al-Suqaylabiyah town. Some damages were also reported to a mosque in Hama city.
- In north rural Hama Governorate, a building partially collapsed in Ein Elkorum town and rescue efforts are ongoing. A building also collapsed in Al Hawaiq town.
- No significant damage has been reported in Homs city although a partially damaged unoccupied building reportedly collapsed in Al-Qusayr (Homs Governorate).

Idleb Governorate

- Limited information was available at the time of writing, but some unoccupied buildings reportedly collapsed in southern Idleb Governorate.

Tartous/Lattakia Governorates

- Lattakia appears to be significantly more affected than Tartous, and preliminary information suggests the collapse of 53 buildings with others partially damaged. Rescue efforts are ongoing.
- Other governorates are sending support including debris removal vehicles and ambulances.
- Local authorities have identified two collective shelters for emergency accommodation (30 rooms). Shelter partners have been requested to assess suitability of the collective shelters. However, no families had approached collective shelters as yet.

For additional information, please refer to: Syrian Arab Republic - Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Coordinated Response Flash Update - Earthquake (6 February 2023)

Impact on UNHCR Staff and Premises

- All UNHCR Syria staff country-wide were safe and accounted for as of 6 February morning.
- The UN Hub where colleagues live and work from in Aleppo city appears to have sustained some damage, and UN staff are working from home to allow time for a damage assessment, in line with the recommendation of the UNHCR Head of Office who is Area Humanitarian Coordinator.
- UNHCR is preparing to deploy staff from the Country Office Damascus to the field to support the response.

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