UNHCR Syria Flash Update #3

Emergency Response to Earthquake

8 February 2023 / Updated as of 16:00 hrs

People affected by the earthquake take shelter in a school in Aleppo which has been converted into a collective shelter.
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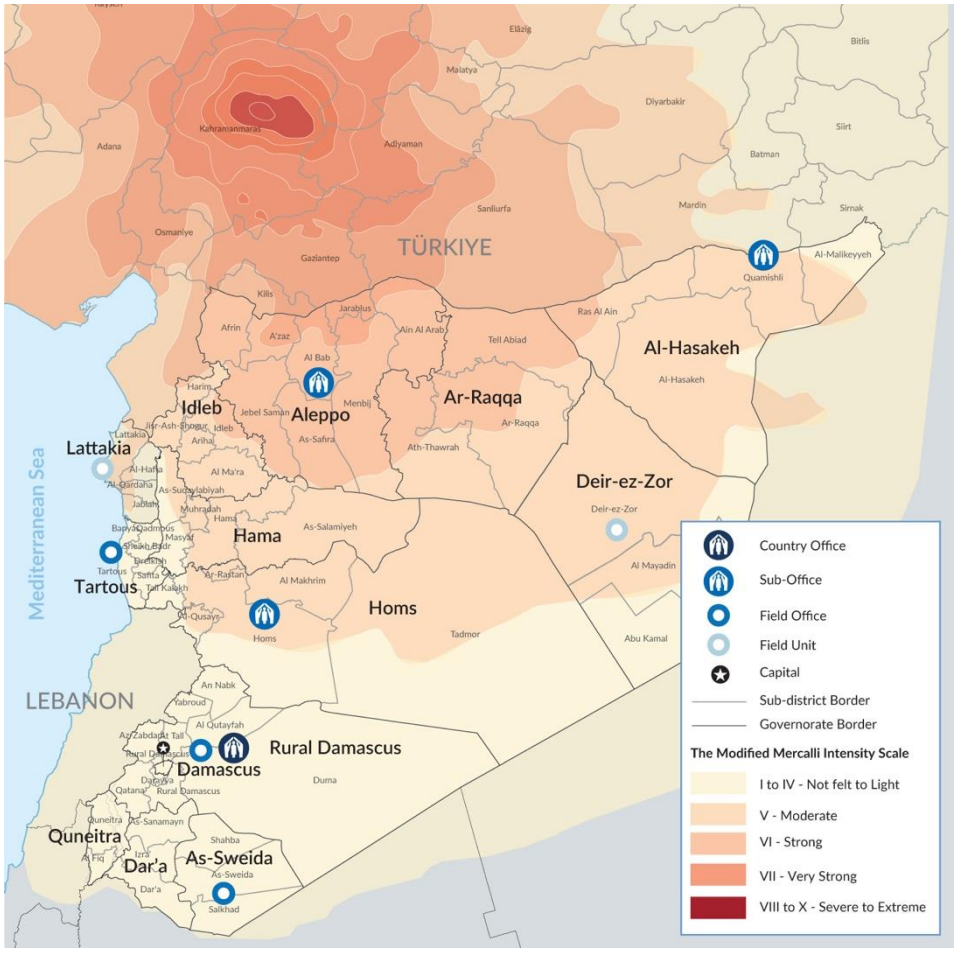
Over 3,500
People killed or injured in Syria according to the Syrian Ministry of Health

2,140
UNHCR core relief item kits were released to partners for distribution

Core relief item kits are being distributed in
Aleppo, Latakia, Hama and Tartous



Overview of Developments

- A major earthquake of magnitude 7.8 struck south-east Türkiye and north Syria at approximately 04.20 hrs on 6 February. Preliminary assessments indicate that Aleppo has been the most impacted area within Government-controlled parts of Syria, although Hama, Latakia, Tartous and Idleb Governorates are also affected. The death toll is expected to continue to rise, as is the number of damaged buildings.
- As of 8 February, the Syrian Health Ministry reported that at least 1,262 people were killed and over 2,285 were injured as a result of the earthquake across the Government-controlled areas of Aleppo, Latakia, Hama and Tartous Governorates.
- This new emergency is compounding suffering in a country already devastated by 12 years of crisis. The region also continues to witness extremely cold temperatures, complicating response efforts.

UNHCR Emergency Response

Core relief items

- Core relief items (CRIs) are being released to partners for distribution. As of 8 February at 16:00 hrs, UNHCR had released CRI kits[1] for distribution to around 2,140 affected families (1,000 families in Aleppo, 440 families in Tartous, 400 families in Latakia and 300 families in Hama). Additional CRI kits will be released in the next hours and coming days.
- UNHCR Syria has 30,000 core relief item (CRI) kits in stock in Aleppo, Homs and Tartous that can be immediately used for the earthquake response in affected areas. UNHCR also plans on distributing 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

- UNHCR staff in the field are fully engaged in inter-agency needs assessments for shelter support which are still ongoing in Aleppo, Hama and Latakia/Tartous. So far, UNHCR has provided two generators with floodlights to support relief activities in Latakia during the night.
- UNHCR has 19,900 tents available in stock in Damascus, which can be deployed to affected areas. In addition, UNHCR has Rubb halls (large tents) which can be used for reception areas or collective shelters if needed. Moving these items from Damascus to any other warehouse will take an estimated 24 hours.

Protection

- UNHCR has redirected all non-essential activities in its community centres and community-based structures (including outreach volunteers and mobile teams) to focus on the earthquake emergency response. This includes identification and prioritization of needs in affected areas and

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

referrals. It also includes 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.

Education

- Humanitarian partners including UNHCR met with Ministry of Education to discuss support needed following the earthquake. Reportedly over 200 schools have been damaged in eight Governorates (the majority in Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Latakia). As of 7 February, 92 schools are reportedly being used as collective shelters (85 in Aleppo and 7 in Latakia). The Ministry requested support to repair damaged schools and ensure the safe return of children to education and avoid further interruptions to their learning. The need for informal education classes and psychosocial support for children was also highlighted.

Situation Updates

Aleppo Governorate

- An estimated 255 people were killed in the earthquake and over 600 people are estimated to be injured.
- A total of 52 buildings have collapsed and an unspecified number of buildings sustained damages. There are 126 official collective shelters but the actual number (including unofficial shelters) is estimated to be higher. Shelter partners are currently undertaking assessments of the collective shelters in Aleppo city and rural areas.
- UNHCR and its partner are distributing an initial batch of 500 core relief item kits in affected neighbourhoods of Aleppo city. The team is also visiting affected sites to identify the most pressing needs especially related to shelter, which is undoubtedly the priority need for the families affected.
- Ten out of a total of 31 UNHCR-supported community centres are open and functional as of yesterday (7 February). Community centres are prioritising awareness raising sessions on safety in the aftermath of the earthquake. Case managers are also providing psychosocial support and referrals to multi-sectoral emergency services.
- Many staff in community centres and mobile teams have themselves been affected by the earthquake, including psychologically. UNHCR has also identified structural damages in two community centres in Aleppo city (Al-Fardous and Kallaseh).
- Civil registry offices and courts have been closed in Aleppo since the earthquake and it remains unclear when services will be reactivated. This will have an impact on those who could benefit from the limited grace period provided by the decree no. 24/2022, which waives fines imposed on late registration of vital events.

Homs/Hama Governorates

- On 7 February, UNHCR participated in an inter-sector assessment mission to affected sites in Hama city in coordination with local authorities. As of 8 February, approximately 100 people are reported to have been received in collective shelters in the area. Further assessments and distributions of shelter and core relief item assistance are planned for the coming days.
- UNHCR and partners plan to disseminate key messages on the earthquake response through its network of community centres, outreach volunteers and mobile units. Outreach volunteers and mobile teams are being mobilized to assess needs and trained staff will deliver psychosocial first aid.

Tartous/Latakia Governorates

- In the coastal area (Tartous and Latakia Governorates), at least three tremors/ aftershocks were felt between 18:34 hrs on 7 February and 09:10 hrs on 8 February. However no additional damages were reported and all UNHCR staff in these areas were accounted for.
- Reported damages include the collapse of 109 houses and 18 partially damaged buildings in Mislun in Al-Haffa resulting in displacement of 200 individuals. Other structural damages were reported in Dahr Safra in rural Tartous.

- UNHCR is distributing CRIs to families affected by the earthquake. As of 8 February, CRIs have been distributed to 112 families in Latakia and 42 families in Tartous. This includes 47 CRI kits distributed to the residents in Al-Basel collective shelter.
- The number of families in the "Sports City" collective shelter (Latakia Governorate) has reached 190 households. UNHCR and its partner are planning to establish a distribution point there to provide assistance. Meanwhile, a UNHCR partner is conducting a technical assessment of the collective shelters in coordination with the Governorate to determine needs.
- UNHCR teams also visited villages in rural areas of Latakia and Tartous Governorates to assess needs. Buildings and homes have collapsed across a number of areas.
- Structural damage was also reported in key infrastructure like hospitals in Latakia and Jablah. A civil registry building in Latakia city suffered moderate damage and requires further technical assessment.
- All UNHCR-supported community centres are functioning so far, however partners are still checking buildings for any structural damage.

Southern Governorates

- There are unconfirmed reports that some schools in Dar'a Governorate were affected by the earthquake. UNHCR is working to verify this information through partners.

For additional information, please refer to: Syrian Arab Republic - Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Coordinated Response Flash Update #3 - Earthquake (As of 8 February 2023)

Impact on UNHCR Staff and Premises

- All UNHCR Syria staff country-wide were safe and accounted on 6 February.
- The UN Hub where colleagues live and work from in Aleppo city has sustained damage, and UN staff are working from home to allow time for assessments.
- Some of the homes of UNHCR staff in the north, coastal and central regions have sustained damage.

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Damage caused by the earthquake in Al-Haffeh, Latakia Governorate. © UNHCR