UNHCR Syria Flash Update #4

Emergency Response to the Earthquake

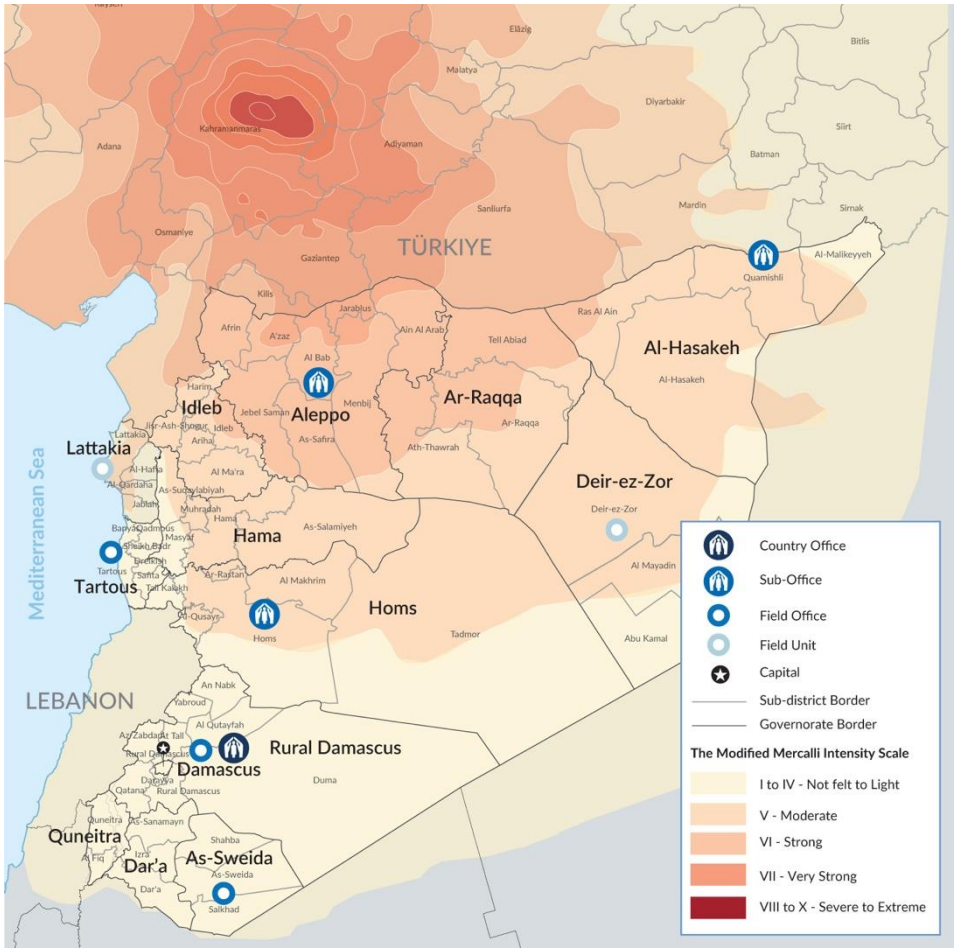
9 February 2023 / Updated as of 16:00 hrs

Distribution of core relief items to people taking shelter in a mosque in Aleppo. ©UNHCR/H. Maarouf

Over 3,600
People killed or injured in Syria according to the Syrian Ministry of Health

9,440
UNHCR core relief item kits authorized for release to partners for distribution

Distribution of core relief item kits are ongoing 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 9 February, the Syrian Health Ministry reported that at least 1,347 people were killed and over 2,295 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 9 February, UNHCR has authorized the release of 9,440 CRI kits[1] for distribution to affected families (8,300 families in Aleppo, 440 families in Tartous, 400 families in Latakia and 300 families in Hama).
- UNHCR Syria is ensuring that 30,000 CRI kits remain in stock in Aleppo, Homs and Tartous that can be immediately used for the earthquake response in affected areas. UNHCR is also ensuring that Aleppo, Homs and Tartous each have at least 10,000 winter jackets/clothing kits in stock.

Shelter

- UNHCR staff in the field continue to be fully engaged in inter-agency needs assessments for shelter support which are 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 developed and shared guidance with staff working in community centres, where activities have been redirected to focus on the response to the earthquake. Specific key messages on the earthquake response were developed for staff engaged in child protection, prevention and response to gender-based violence, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, support to persons with disabilities and elderly people, and psychosocial first aid.

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

Situation Updates

Aleppo Governorate

- An estimated 451 people were killed in the earthquake and over 700 people are estimated to be injured.
- A total of 54 buildings have collapsed and an unspecified number of buildings sustained damages. The number of collective shelters has increased to a total of 173, and they are reportedly hosting around 12,640 families (over 52,840 individuals). Overall, an estimated 150,000 people have been displaced from their homes.
- UNHCR teams are currently undertaking a rapid multi-sectoral assessment of the most affected collective centres and sites. Based on initial feedback from partners and staff, the most pressing needs include food, water, blankets and mattresses.
- UNHCR has released 1,500 CRI kits which are being distributed to affected families. Items being distributed include sleeping mats, mattresses, blankets, jerry cans, kitchen sets, jackets and winter clothes.
- As of 8 February, 17 out of a total of 31 UNHCR-supported community centres are operating and functional. Eight community centres are closed due to structural damages, negatively impacting the delivery of services in those areas. Other centres remain closed because staff are unable to report to work.
- Community centres are prioritising the delivery of awareness raising sessions on safety and earthquake response, psychosocial support and referrals to available emergency services. Case managers are providing support on gender-based violence and child protection issues. In addition, 20 mobile units (out of a total of 28 mobile units) and 560 outreach volunteers were actively reaching out to affected people today (9 February), focusing on psychological first aid, information sharing and referrals to required services.

Homs/Hama Governorates

- All 17 UNHCR-supported community centres in Homs and Hama Governorates are operational and offering support to families affected by the earthquake.

Tartous/Latakia Governorates

- On 8 February at 22:12 hrs, another tremor was felt in the coastal region, but no damages were reported. All UNHCR staff in the area was safe and accounted for.
- An estimated 566 people were killed in the earthquake and over 880 people are estimated to be injured. There are reports of children being separated from their parents.
- Reported damages include the collapse of 102 buildings in Latakia and Jableh and more than 114 buildings damaged in different locations including Banyas and Tartous city. People have sought safety in collective shelters and in rural areas, including 230 families in Jableh. The priority needs for those families are food and drinking water, core relief items and winter items.
- The Governorate has shared a list of 47 available reception centres which are currently hosting a total of 6,000 families (30,000 people).
- On 9 February, an inter-sector assessment mission took place to collective shelters in Latakia. The UNHCR team started by visiting two reception centres in Jableh including one mosque (hosting 250 families) and one sports facility (hosting 120 families). In Latakia city, the mission visited three other shelters including "Sports City" (278 families), Al-Basel centre (53 families), and Tishreen school (93 families). Some of the centres lack privacy and WASH facilities. Overall needs include shelter support, WASH, health, CRIs and protection services.
- Medical support, psychosocial support and psychological first aid are also emerging as key needs among affected families. Many have been traumatized by the earthquake.
- In collaboration with partners, UNHCR distributed CRIs to 30 families in the "Sports City" shelter. UNHCR's partner is also supporting around 60 families who were reportedly displaced from Aleppo to Mashta Helou (Tartous Governorate).

- Partner legal teams have visited a number of collective shelters. So far, they have identified 359 families who have reported the loss of personal documents.
- UNHCR provided emergency cash assistance to four refugee families whose buildings collapsed in Latakia city, Jableh, and Al-Haffeh.
- All UNHCR-supported community centres remain operational.

Rural Damascus Governorate

- There has been no largescale destruction in Damascus and Rural Damascus. However, last night (8 February) a four-story residential building collapsed in Harasta (Rural Damascus). There were initial reports of two casualties. The building was reportedly already damaged during the crisis. UNHCR has a satellite centre (smaller version of a community centre) in Harasta that stands ready to offer support to affected families.
- All 27 community/satellite centres in Damascus and Rural Damascus are functioning and ready to support people affected by the earthquake. Mobile teams have also been mobilized to reach out to people who may be unable to approach community centres for a variety of reasons.

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

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Buildings damaged by the earthquake in Hama. ©UNHCR/S. Sawas