



# TURKEY, SYRIA EARTHQUAKE KILLS THOUSANDS - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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The Latest on the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that devastated parts of southeast Turkey and northern Syria early Monday.

War-ravaged Syria is calling on the United Nations and all member states to help with rescue efforts, health services, shelter and food aid following a massive earthquake that killed thousands in Syria and Turkey.

The quake-damaged area in Syria is divided between government-held territory and the country's last opposition-held enclave, which is surrounded by government forces and borders Turkey.

Syria's U.N. Ambassador Bassam Sabbagh told reporters the U.N. secretary-general "assured us that the U.N. will do all it's possible in helping Syria in this very difficult situation." Sabbagh said he had delivered a letter to Guterres from the country's foreign minister requesting help.

Sabbagh was asked whether Syria would agree to allow the U.N. to deliver aid through other crossing points from Turkey, if that is feasible. He didn't respond directly, but said the government is ready to help and coordinate aid deliveries "to all Syrians in all territory of Syria."

The rebel-held territory has depended on a flow of aid from nearby Turkey for everything from food to medical supplies.

Civil defense workers and residents search through the rubble of collapsed buildings in the town of Harem near the Turkish border, Idlib province, Syria, Monday, Feb. 6, 2023. A powerful earthquake has caused significant damage in southeast Turkey and Syria and many casualties are feared. Damage was reported across several Turkish provinces, and rescue teams were being sent from around the country. (AP Photo/Ghaith Alsayed)

#### KEY DEVELOPMENTS:

- The death toll in Turkey and Syria is expected to rise after the earthquake toppled thousands of buildings.
- Rescuers worked to pull more survivors from the rubble as cold, snowy conditions shorten the time needed to save lives.

- The earthquake wreaked new damage and suffering in Syria's **last** rebel-held enclave after years of fighting and bombardment.
- Dozens of countries are sending experts and aid to help rescue efforts.
- What to know about the science behind the powerful quake and its aftershocks.
- Soccer player Christian Atsu is missing and believed trapped under rubble.
- A glance at some of the world's deadliest earthquakes since 2000.

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President Joe Biden called Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday to express condolences. The White House in statement said that Biden underscored "the readiness of the United States to provide any and all needed assistance" to its NATO ally Turkey.

White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said the Biden administration was sending two, 79-person urban search and rescue teams to support Turkey's efforts.

Biden and Erdogan discussed other assistance that may be needed by people affected by the earthquakes, including health services or basic relief items, according to the White House.

Civil defense workers and residents search through the rubble of collapsed buildings in the town of Harem near the Turkish border, Idlib province, Syria, Monday, Feb. 6, 2023. A powerful earthquake has caused significant damage in southeast Turkey and Syria and many casualties are feared. Damage was reported across several Turkish provinces, and rescue teams were being sent from around the country. (AP Photo/Ghaith Alsayed)

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has declared seven days of national mourning following the deadly quakes that hit the country Monday. Turkish flags will fly at half-staff across the nation and at its diplomatic missions overseas.

Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said at least 1,651 were dead and 11,119 injured across ten provinces. Hundreds more reported dead in neighboring Syria.


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The Roman Catholic official responsible for the church's properties across the Middle East is offering food and shelter to victims of Monday's earthquake.

The Rev. Francesco Patton, the Jerusalem-based Custos of the Holy Land, says he will open all of the church's buildings in northern Syria to provide shelter for families who have lost their homes.

His office, the Custodia Terrae Sanctae, says the properties can shelter hundreds of people and provide food and medical care for thousands.

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Diplomats from the 193 member countries of the United Nations have stood in silent tribute to victims of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

General Assembly President Csaba Kőrösi on Monday extended "our deepest sympathy and heartfelt condolences" to the government and people of both countries.

He then asked diplomats "to stand and observe a minute of silence  tribute to the memory of those who lost their lives." Kőrösi spoke at the start of a meeting to hear Secretary-General Antonio Guterres outline his priorities for 2023.

Civil defense workers and security forces carry an earthquake victim as they search through the wreckage of collapsed buildings in Hama, Syria, Monday, Feb. 6, 2023. A powerful earthquake has caused significant damage in southeast Turkey and Syria and many casualties are feared. Damage was reported across several Turkish provinces, and rescue teams were being sent from around the country. (AP Photo/Omar Sanadik)

Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay said such a disaster could hit "once in a hundred years" and that his country should be prepared for the death toll to rise.

Oktay also said some 145 aftershocks have been registered following the deadly quake overnight, with three that were larger than 6.0 magnitude.

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Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said the European Union "stand ready to offer our support" to Turkey as well. Sweden currently holds the EU's rotating presidency.

The president of Turkey's disaster management authority, Yunus Sezer, says more than 40 countries have so far offered help.

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Turkey's minister of education said schools throughout the country's 81 provinces would be closed until Feb. 13 following the deadly earthquake.

Schools were closed for a two-week holiday and were set to open Monday but had remained shut in some cities because of snowstorms.

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Britain is sending 76 search-and-rescue specialists with equipment and dogs, as well as an emergency medical team, to Turkey.

The U.K. government said the teams, due later Monday, were bringing equipment including seismic listening devices, concrete cutting and breaking equipment, propping and shoring tools.

British Ambassador-designate Jill Morris said that "the British Embassy in Ankara is in close contact with the Turkish authorities to understand how we can best support those on the ground."

The U.K. also says it's in contact with the U.N. about getting support to victims in Syria.

A number of other countries joined the expanding international relief effort, including the United Arab Emirates which will set up a field hospital in Turkey and Qatar which was sending rescuers and emergency supplies.

Romania, Spain and Poland joined a European Union effort, sending rescuers, medics, dogs and specialized equipment. \_\_\_ While most of the international aid was headed for Turkey, Russia said it also planned to send assistance directly to its close ally Syria.

Russian President Vladimir Putin told Syrian President Bashar Assad in a phone call that Moscow will deliver urgent aid and send rescue workers to assist the earthquake-hit country. The Russian military in Syria has deployed 10 units numbering 300 people that started clearing the debris and searching for survivors, the Russian Defense Ministry said. \_\_\_ Egypt and Liverpool soccer star Mohamed Salah has offered condolences to Syrians and Turks following Monday's devastating earthquake.

The striker wrote on Twitter: "Terrible news coming out of Syria and Turkey. My condolences for the lives lost and I wish all those injured a full recovery." \_\_\_ The World Health Organization says it is helping a massive international effort to support Turkey and Syria deal with devastating earthquake damage and is in contact with Turkish authorities.

Hans Kluge, head of the WHO in Europe, said Monday that regional offices of the United Nations agency in the eastern Mediterranean were assisting the expanding international effort to swiftly transport medicine and relief equipment to quake-hit areas.

Kluge wrote in a tweet, "Amid the devastation wrought by today's earthquake in Turkey – a WHO Europe member state – and Syria, deep condolences to all affected communities."

Earthquake victims receive treatment at the al-Rahma Hospital in the town of Darkush, Idlib province, northern Syria, Monday, Feb. 6, 2023. A powerful earthquake has caused significant damage in southeast Turkey and Syria and many casualties are feared. Damage was reported across several Turkish provinces, and rescue teams were being sent from around the country. (AP Photo/Ghaith Alsayed)

Japan's Foreign Ministry says the country is sending a group of about 75 rescue workers to Turkey to help in search and rescue operations.

An advance team of 18 people, including officials from the ministry, police, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency, Japan Coast Guard and the Japan International Cooperation Agency, is to leave later Monday to set up their operation.

The ministry said Japan is dispatching the team as part of its emergency humanitarian support at the request of the Turkish government and based on humanitarian considerations as well as Japan's friendship with Turkey.

Separately, the Swiss rescue dog service REDOG said it is preparing to send 22 rescuers with 14 dogs to the earthquake-hit region of Turkey.

Firefighters carry the body of a victim in Diyarbakir, in southeastern Turkey, Monday, Feb. 6, 2023. A powerful earthquake that struck southeast Turkey and northern Syria has killed more than 640 people with hundreds injured. The toll is expected to rise as rescuers search for dead and survivors in dozens of collapsed buildings across the region. (AP Photo/Mahmut Bozarsan)

Russian officials say the country's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu has called his Turkish counterpart Hulusi Akar to offer condolences over the quake and proposing assistance.

Moscow is planning to send help to Turkey and Syria despite Russia's western-led international isolation due the war in Ukraine.

Earlier Monday, Russian President Vladimir Putin sent a telegram to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to express his condolences.

In the telegram made public by the Kremlin, Putin said Russia is ready to "provide the necessary assistance" and offered his "profound condolences on the numerous fatalities and massive destruction caused by a powerful earthquake in your country."

The Russian president also conveyed "sincere sympathy and support to the families of the deceased and wishes of a speedy recovery to everyone injured in this calamity."

Rescue workers try to reach trapped residents in a collapsed building in Kahta, in Adiyaman province, southeastern Turkey, Monday, Feb. 6, 2023. A powerful earthquake that struck southeast Turkey and northern Syria has killed more than 640 people with hundreds injured. The toll is expected to rise as rescuers search for dead and survivors in dozens of collapsed buildings across the region. (AP Photo)

The European Union's top foreign policy official says ten member states are providing urban search and rescue teams to help Turkey deal

with massive earthquake damage.



In a joint statement, High Representative Josep Borrell and the EU Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarcic said teams have been mobilized from Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania to support the first responders on the ground.

Italy, Spain, and Slovakia have offered their rescue teams to Turkey as well.

They said the EU's Copernicus satellite system had also been activated to provide emergency mapping services.

Greece and the Czech Republic announced details of their rescue missions, and are sending rescuers, rescue dogs, specialized vehicles, structural engineers, doctors and seismic planning experts.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis expressed "deep sorrow" over the earthquake, adding that Greece is "placing all our rescue forces at Turkey's disposal depending on what else they may ask us for." A spokesperson for the Lebanese Red Cross told The Associated Press that Lebanon's government is sending a team consisting of Lebanese army soldiers, Red Cross and Civil Defense first responders, and firefighters to Turkey to help with its rescue efforts. \_\_\_

Russia's Rosatom company, which is building a nuclear power plant in the southern Turkish province of Mersin, some 270 kilometers (170 miles) from the epicenter, said the site was not affected by the quake.

In a statement Monday, Anastasia Zoteeva, general manager at the Akkuyu plant, said experts have not detected any damage to the buildings, equipment and cranes and that construction and assembly work are continuing at the site.

People walk next to a mosque destroyed by an earthquake in Malatya, Turkey, Monday, Feb. 6, 2023. A powerful quake has knocked down multiple buildings in southeast Turkey and Syria and many casualties are feared. (DIA images via AP)

Turkey's disaster management agency has reported that a new earthquake of magnitude 7.6 occurred close to the epicenter of Monday's previous deadly quake, which also generated dozens of aftershocks. The U.S. Geological Survey recorded the magnitude of the latest shock that occurred around 1024 GMT at 7.5 magnitude, with a depth of just 10 kilometers. Shallow earthquakes cause more damage.

It put the temblor near the town of Ekinozu, Turkey, also close to the southeastern city of Gaziantep which has a population of 2 million people and where the temperatures on Monday were hovering just above freezing. Orhan Tatar, an official from the Turkish disaster agency, told reporters that the two quakes were independent of each other. He said hundreds of aftershocks were expected after both.

The latest shock was felt as far as the eastern Mediterranean island nation of Cyprus, where people took to social media to post footage of swaying curtains, while employees working in some high-rise buildings in the capital, Nicosia, quickly rushed outside.

\_\_\_ Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said offers for help had been received from some 45 countries in the aftermath of Monday's deadly earthquake and powerful, still ongoing aftershocks.

In a televised address, Erdogan announced that Turkey's death toll had reached 912, adding that about 5,400 people were injured, while around 2,470 people were rescued from collapsed structures.

Some 3,000 buildings collapsed in the earthquake, he said. His announcement brought the death toll in Turkey and neighboring Syria to more than 1,300 people.

"Because the debris removal efforts are continuing in many buildings in the earthquake zone, we do not know how high the number of dead and injured will rise," Erdogan said.

"Our hope is that we recover from this disaster with the least loss of life possible, he added. "I pray that God protects us and all humanity from such natural disasters."

\_\_\_ NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said members of the alliance were mobilizing support to help Turkey deal with the aftermath of Monday's devastating earthquake.

Stoltenberg expressed "full solidarity with our ally Turkey in the aftermath of this terrible earthquake ... NATO Allies are mobilizing support now."

In a tweet, Stoltenberg said he was in contact with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu. Several NATO members have already said they are planning to send support to help victims of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

Earlier, the European Union's EU Civil Protection Mechanism said it had been activated to help provide international assistance, noting that rescue teams from the Netherlands and Romania were already on their way.

People search a collapsed building following an earthquake in Azmarin town, Idlib province, northern Syria, Monday, Feb. 6, 2023. A powerful earthquake has caused significant damage in southeast Turkey and Syria and many casualties are feared. Damage was reported across several Turkish provinces, and rescue teams were being sent from around the country. (AP Photo/Ghaith Alsayed)

Taiwan's foreign ministry said it would donate \$200,000 to help Turkey with the rescue efforts and was coordinating with Turkey about sending specialized search and rescue teams. China also said there are no Chinese citizens among the victims. It did not say if it would be sending search and rescue teams. \_\_\_

Russia says it is readying rescue teams to fly to Turkey to help earthquake victims there and in neighboring Syria.

A minister of emergency situations, Aleksandr Kurenkov, said teams of 100 search and rescue personnel are on standby to be sent to Turkey with two Il-76 transport planes.

Russian President Vladimir Putin also offered condolences in telegrams to the leaders of Syria and Turkey and expressed readiness to help.

The offer was made despite Russia's international isolation led by Western nations over Moscow's war on Ukraine.

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Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte says a search and rescue team from the Netherlands will travel to the region of southeastern Turkey and northern Syria that was hit by a devastating earthquake.

"Terrible news about the earthquake in Turkey and Syria. Our thoughts are with all the victims of this severe natural disaster," Rutte said in a tweet Monday. He said he had sent condolences to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Dutch organization Urban Search and Rescue sends teams, including rescue workers, construction experts, doctors, nurses and sniffer dogs to the scenes of disasters around the world.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has also offered help.

Rescue teams try to reach trapped residents inside collapsed buildings in Adana, Turkey, Monday, Feb. 6, 2023. A powerful quake has knocked down multiple buildings in southeast Turkey and Syria and many casualties are feared. (IHA agency via AP)

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says authorities are preparing to send aid and assistance to Turkey following the deadly

earthquake there. He said Israel was readying to send search and rescue teams and medical aid, after a request from Turkey's government.

The two countries, once close regional allies, are in the process of mending ties after years of tensions.

Meanwhile, from neighboring Egypt, where the quake was also felt, the head of the Arab League called on the international community to also aid the Syrian people in the aftermath of the quake.

Ahmed Aboul-Gheit, the secretary-general of the pan-Arab organization, wrote on Twitter that an international assistance is required to help those impacted by "this humanitarian catastrophe."

Rescue workers and medical teams try to reach trapped residents in a collapsed building following an earthquake in Diyarbakir, southeastern Turkey, early Monday, Feb. 6, 2023. A powerful earthquake has caused significant damage in southeast Turkey and Syria and many casualties are feared. Damage was reported across several Turkish provinces, and rescue teams were being sent from around the country. (AP Photo/Mahmut Bozarsan)

Turkey's neighbor Greece and other countries in the region have offered to send immediate assistance to help with the rescue effort after Monday's devastating earthquake that struck southeast Turkey and northern Syria.

"Greece is mobilizing its resources and will assist immediately ... (we are) deeply saddened by the devastating earthquake disaster," Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis wrote in a tweet. Writing in Turkish, Israeli President Isaac Herzog offered help in a message on Twitter, adding: "The State of Israel is always ready to send aid by any means possible. Our hearts go out to the families and Turkish people who are grieving at this painful time." The Egyptian Foreign Ministry, in a statement early Monday, offered help to both Turkey and Syria following the powerful earthquake.

The deadly quake was felt in the Egyptian capital of Cairo and across parts of the region. The offers of assistance were made despite strained relations between Turkey and several countries in the area including Greece and Egypt.

A car is seen under the wreckage of a collapsed building, in Azmarin town, in Idlib province, northern Syria, Monday, Feb. 6, 2023. A powerful earthquake has caused significant damage in southeast Turkey and Syria and many casualties are feared. Damage was reported across several Turkish provinces, and rescue teams were being sent from around the country. (AP Photo/Ghaith Alsayed)

The president of war-torn Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, has sent a message of support to Turkey to offer assistance in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that hit southeastern Turkey and northern Syria on Monday. "I am shocked to learn of deaths and injuries of hundreds of people as a result of the earthquake in Turkey," Zelenskyy wrote in a tweet. "We send our condolences to the families of the victims and wish the injured a speedy recovery. At this time, we stand by the friendly Turkish people and are ready to provide the necessary assistance." Ukraine has close ties with Turkey, which helped negotiate a Black Sea grain agreement last summer to resume vital exports as the war in the country continues. \_\_\_ Syria's health officials say the death toll from Monday's earthquake in government-held areas of the country has risen to 237, with 639 reported injured. The announcement brought the combined death toll in Turkey and Syria to total 360, and includes 76 people reported killed in Turkey and 47 in opposition-held areas of Syria. In Turkey, the powerful quake destroyed a historic castle perched on top a hill in the Turkish city of Gaziantep.

Parts of the Gaziantep Castle's walls and watch towers were levelled while other areas of the structure were damaged, images from the region showed.

The castle was first used as a watch tower and was expanded into a castle during Roman times. It underwent renovation numerous times, the last time in the early 2000s.

People try to reach trapped residents in a collapsed building in Diyarbakir, southeastern Turkey, early Monday, Feb. 6, 2023. A powerful earthquake has caused significant damage in southeast Turkey and Syria and many casualties are feared. Damage was reported across several Turkish provinces, and rescue teams were being sent from around the country. (AP Photo/Mahmut Bozarsan)

Turkey's Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu has issued a public appeal for people in quake-hit areas in southeast Turkey not to enter damaged buildings due to the risks and to help keep roads clear to give ambulances and rescuers access to damaged buildings.

"Our priority is to bring out people trapped under ruined buildings and to transfer them to hospitals," Soylu said.

At least 130 buildings tumbled down in Turkey's Malatya province, neighboring the epicenter, Gov. Hulusi Sahin said. In the Turkish city of Diyarbakir, at least 15 buildings collapsed.