



UNHCR TÜRKİYE EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO EARTHQUAKE

23 February 2023

Refugee volunteers in Şanlıurfa sort, pack and prepare donations to deliver to people affected by the earthquake. ©UNHCR/Periklis Kortsaris

BACKGROUND AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

- Two further powerful earthquakes of magnitude 6.4 and 5.8 were registered in Hatay Province on 20 February, resulting in 6 deaths and close to 300 people injured, and causing significant damage to already affected buildings. These earthquakes occurred two weeks after the quakes of 7.7 and 7.5 magnitude in Kahramanmaraş Province impacted eleven provinces in Türkiye's southeast region and neighbouring Syria on 6 February. Over 7,184 aftershocks have been registered in the region since.
- [According to](#) the Disaster and Management Authority of Türkiye (AFAD), as of 21 February, 42,310 people have lost their lives, while 448,018 people have been evacuated to other provinces. As of 6 February, a three-month state of emergency is in place in provinces directly affected by the earthquake.
- According to the [Minister of National Defence](#), over 20,000 Syrians have returned to Syria after the earthquake. This figure mostly represents temporary exits to Syria, and mainly to check on family and to attend burials and funerals.
- The Turkish government is leading the response through coordination by AFAD. The Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) and several humanitarian organisations are working alongside AFAD. The Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) is coordinating the response with regards to refugees and asylum-seekers, among others. The Ministry of Family and Social Services is dealing with child protection and psychosocial services.
- As a formal inter-agency coordination structure is being set up, partners, NGOs and UN agencies are meeting on a regular basis to coordinate a response under the guidance of the local authorities and provincial directorates. The results of the first OCHA-led rapid inter-sector needs assessments is being completed and will inform the multi-sector earthquake response.
- The most pressing needs according to the Turkish authorities and preliminary assessments by the humanitarian community are food, hygiene items, tents, containers and clean clothes.
- UNHCR is responding with life-saving core relief items upon the request of the Turkish government. These include mainly emergency shelter materials, tents, blankets, hygiene and kitchen items, and solar lamps.

UNHCR PRESENCE IN THE AFFECTED AREAS

- As of early February, UNHCR had three offices in Gaziantep, Hatay and Şanlıurfa with 85 staff.
- UNHCR teams are currently operating from Gaziantep with daily missions to Hatay and affected provinces.
- UNHCR is setting up a working space in Hatay, the province most impacted by the earthquake, to facilitate and maximise response efforts in Hatay, Adıyaman and Kahramanmaraş provinces. In coordination with UNDAC, UNHCR has temporarily set up two tents at the humanitarian hub in Hatay until a light base camp is established by the Turkish authorities.

UNHCR OPERATIONAL FIGURES TO DATE



UNHCR tents are used in Gaziantep as psychosocial support units of the Ministry of Family and Social Services. ©MoFSS

UNHCR CAPACITY AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Delivery of Life-Saving Assistance

- UNHCR is supporting the relief efforts of the Government of Türkiye in liaison with AFAD and PMM, prioritizing the delivery of core relief items, winter clothing, tents and shelter materials, and working with partners and communities to identify and assess the overall needs of refugees and the host community.
- UNHCR is procuring and dispatching core relief items and hygiene materials from its in-country and global stocks in Europe, the Middle East and Asia regions to provide urgently needed shelter assistance. Items are dispatched through airlifts and road transport.
- With PMM, UNHCR is coordinating the provision of core relief items, including blankets, mattresses, kitchen sets, hygiene kits, heaters, food packs and warm clothing for **PMM-managed centres**, including 12 temporary accommodation centres (TACs) to accommodate affected refugees and local residents.
- So far, UNHCR has provided 19,500 high thermal blankets, 12,000 foam mattresses and 19,500 kitchen sets, 12,500 supplementary food packs, 9,000 hygiene parcels, as well as heaters, winter clothes and boots, and other standard core relief items to **PMM** for distribution in the TACs.
- UNHCR has also provided **AFAD** with over 26,100 family tents and close to 600 all-weather tents, 28,700 foldable beds, 48,000 high-thermal blankets, close to 26,800 hygiene parcels, 10,000 tarpaulin and 3,100 foam mattresses. UNHCR is also supporting the **Ministry of Family and Social Services** with over 100 tents, 3 Rub Halls and over 800 powerbanks.

Coordination and Needs Assessment

- **Needs assessments:** UNHCR field units are working with the local authorities, partners, community leaders and refugee associations to carry out preliminary assessments, follow the movements of residents of affected areas, identify basic shelter needs and understand the needs on the ground. As more tents are being set up in various provinces and neighbourhoods, the most pressing needs of people living in tents are blankets, mats, winter clothes, socks, diapers, baby food, and shoes.
- **Coordination:** As a formal inter-agency coordination structure is being set up, partners, NGOs and UN agencies are meeting on a regular basis to coordinate a response under the guidance of the local authorities and provincial directorates. During the past week, sectoral meetings at the provincial and regional levels have identified the most pressing needs as shelter, winterization kits, hygiene kits, WASH support, and core relief items. Partners have highlighted plans to conduct training on mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS).

Field Response and Community Engagement

- In provinces neighbouring the affected areas, UNHCR's field teams are working with the local authorities to identify needs, challenges and population movements as they receive individuals from the earthquake affected provinces.
- UNHCR's field teams across the country are following up with the provincial directorates of migration management issuing travel permits, partner NGOs and refugee leaders and associations to track the refugee movements into receiving provinces. Accommodation is being provided by refugee relatives, local associations as well as municipalities, sports centres, dormitories and removal centres. Based on observations on-refugee population tracking by UNHCR field offices, over 218,000 refugees were reported to have arrived in 25 provinces from their earthquake-affected home regions. Mersin has the highest number with 160,000 reported arrivals, followed by İstanbul and Bursa. Out of the total, 77 per cent are reported to be Syrians.
- Efforts to ensure safe and informed movements are made both at the affected and receiving provinces. UNHCR has observed AFAD, TRC and local volunteers at train and bus stations, as well as airports, providing information on travel and transportation, welcoming newcomers, and providing food, drinks, warm clothes and shoes. Soup kitchens and distributions of food packs are also available at reception areas.
- UNHCR and its partners have recorded 322 temporary settlements for earthquake survivors in 10 provinces most affected by the earthquake through an online tool, with two thirds of the settlements in Adana, Hatay, Gaziantep and Sanliurfa. AFAD [announced](#) on 21 February that around 301,000 tents had been set up in the region and would soon increase to 350,000.
- UNHCR protection teams are following up on individual protection cases from the affected provinces. Some of them contact UNHCR on their own, others are being referred by partners. The most urgent needs raised with UNHCR are shelter, food, heating and medicine support. Many also request assistance to obtain travel permits and for accommodation. Based on UNHCR's assessments, people approaching UNHCR report experiencing anxiety due to the traumatic experience and future uncertainty. Psychosocial services are an urgent need for all affected population, especially those on the move, including refugees.

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES AND LOCAL RESPONSE

- The Gaziantep provincial directorate of family and social services (PDoFSS) social workers assigned to Islahiye are long-standing UNHCR partners trained in psychological first aid. They reported to UNHCR psychosocial needs among both aid workers and populations on the move. Staff report insomnia, stress-related gastric issues, general stress and anxiety, and expect post-traumatic stress disorders especially amongst children.
- In the Aegean region, 16 municipalities have mobilized their resources to support the earthquake zone by establishing tent areas and providing humanitarian support, while seven municipalities are providing direct support to the survivors within their municipal area.
- Some Syrian refugee-led NGOs in Mersin have reportedly been contacted by 20,000-25,000 Syrians upon their arrival in Mersin. Through the efforts of the local Syrian community, around 5,000 Syrian nationals are currently settled in 20 buildings. Others are hosted by relatives and friends or in communal centres.

INTER-AGENCY

- UNHCR is working with OCHA and the Humanitarian Country Team on finalising the earthquake coordination structure under the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC). Discussions with the RC/HC, UNDP and OCHA underline the continued importance of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) and the synergies between the earthquake response and 3RP structures, including for refugees moving from earthquake-affected provinces to other regions.

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