

Humanitarian appeal



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# Thousands of children at risk after devastating earthquakes hit south-east Türkiye and Syria

06 February 2023



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**NEW YORK/GENEVA/AMMAN, 6 February 2023** – Thousands of children and families are at risk after two devastating earthquakes and dozens of aftershocks hit south-east Türkiye and Syria today.

According to authorities, in the two countries, more than 2,300 people have been killed, including children, with thousands more injured. These numbers are only likely to increase. In Türkiye, efforts are currently focused on search and rescue and UNICEF is coordinating with the Government, and the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency on the emerging needs linked to the wider humanitarian response. In Syria, UNICEF is assessing the impact of the earthquakes and preparing to support the humanitarian response in coordination with partners.

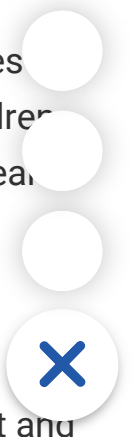
The initial 7.7 magnitude earthquake hit just after 04:00 local time, when many children and families were asleep at home, with a second 7.5 magnitude quake hitting later in the day.

Thousands of homes are likely to have been destroyed, displacing families and exposing them to the elements at a time of year when temperatures regularly drop below freezing and snow and freezing rain are common. Heavy snowstorms have also recently hit parts of Syria and Türkiye, with further sub-zero temperatures forecasted.

“The images we’re seeing out of Syria and Türkiye are heart-wrenching,” said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. “That the initial earthquake happened so early in the morning, when many children were fast asleep, made it even more dangerous, and the aftershocks bring continuing risks. Our hearts and thoughts are with the children and families affected, especially those who have lost loved ones or who have been injured. Our immediate priority is to ensure children and families affected receive the support they so desperately need.”

It is likely that schools, hospitals and other medical and educational facilities will have been damaged or destroyed by the quakes, further impacting children. Potential damage to roads and critical infrastructure will also complicate search and rescue efforts and the wider humanitarian response.

Children in Syria continue to face one of the most complex humanitarian situations in the world. A worsening economic crisis, continued localized hostilities after more than a decade of grinding conflict, mass displacement and



devastated public infrastructure have left two-thirds of the population in need of assistance. Food insecurity, reliance on unreliable and alternative water sources protection concerns, high levels of school dropouts are acute.

Waterborne diseases pose another deadly threat to children and families affected. In Syria, a cholera outbreak declared on 10 September 2022 quickly spread across the country, with children especially vulnerable.

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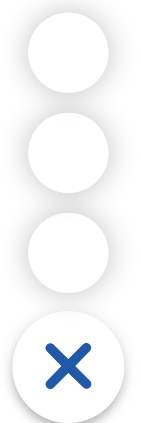
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