



**World Health  
Organization**  
Syrian Arab Republic

## SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC RESPONSE TO EARTHQUAKE

SITUATION REPORT #1  
8 FEBRUARY 2023



Critical health supplies delivered to hospitals throughout Latakia



**10.9 MILLION**

PEOPLE AFFECTED  
AFFECTED



**4.1 MILLION**

NEED IMMEDIATE  
ASSISTANCE



**2 MILLION  
estimated**  
DISPLACED



**4+**

GOVERNORATES  
AFFECTED

### HEALTH CONCERNS

- TRAUMATIC INJURIES AND PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS are immediate need
- CONTINUITY OF ESSENTIAL HEALTH SERVICES is critical to prevent excess mortality and morbidity.
- 8 HEALTH FACILITIES affected so far, with assessments ongoing
- 3 PRE-EXISTING OUTBREAKS IN AFFECTED AREAS:
  - Cholera (all affected governorates, especially Aleppo)
  - Hepatitis A outbreak in Latakia
  - Measles (NES)

### HIGHLIGHTS

- A 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck southern Türkiye in the early morning of 6 February 2023. Hundreds of aftershocks occurred in the coming day.
- In Syria, Latakia, Hama and Aleppo governorates are the worst affected areas, with further impact reported in Tartous and Deir ez-Zor.
- Search and rescue operations are ongoing.
- To date, 1 250 deaths and 2 054 injuries are recorded in Aleppo, Latakia, Hama, and Tartous governorates, with the death toll expected to rise.
- Water, food, shelter, medicine, and the provision of health services are of immediate priority needs.
- World Health Organization (WHO) co-chaired the first humanitarian health sector meeting within 24 hours of the earthquake and is now co-leading the health sector with the National Department of Health.
- In addition to supporting the immediate trauma response to casualties, WHO is working with partners to prevent and prepare for potential outbreaks of epidemic-prone diseases, strengthening surveillance, enhancing the existing public health programmes and pre-positioning supplies.
- At least 4 health hospitals are reportedly damaged in Latakia and 4 in Aleppo. Further assessments are ongoing.

## SITUATION UPDATE

In the early morning of 6 February 2023, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake occurred in southern Türkiye near the northern border of Syria. The earthquake was followed 11 minutes later by a magnitude 6.7 aftershock. Many aftershocks are still being felt across the region. Whilst the impact is still being assessed, initial reports evidence significant damage in the areas of southern Türkiye and northern Syria.

In response, the Syria Ministry of Health (MoH) activated its emergency operations centre (EOC) on 6 Feb 2023 under the chairmanship of the Deputy Minister. In all affected governorates, public and private health facilities and medical convoys have been repurposed to support the response and are being managed by the National Ministry of Health (MoH) and Directorate of Health (DoH) at governorate level. Support has been directed to affected areas, with medical convoys including 28 ambulances and 7 mobile clinics, deployed from the health directorates of Damascus, Rural Damascus, Quneitra, Homs, Tartous, Aleppo and Latakia. At the same time, 4 trucks loaded with medicines and surgical and emergency supplies were dispatched to Aleppo, Latakia, and Hama.

To date, 2 054 injuries and 1 250 deaths have been recorded in the governorates of Aleppo, Latakia, Hama, and Tartous, with additional reports expected as the search and rescue efforts continue. So far, 3 health workers have reportedly died. The greatest number of injuries were reported from Aleppo, Hama, and Latakia with search and rescue still ongoing. Due to building damage, as well as fear to return to residences, thousands of families have been displaced with people sheltering vehicles, outside in public parks, mosques, schools and other community centres. Priority response actions include distribution of life-saving and essential supplies and services such as health care, water, shelter and protection.

Currently a joint needs assessment is being conducted to understand better the full extent of impact and need.

### Area Impact

#### Latakia and Tartous

Governorate	Deaths	Injuries
<b>Latakia</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>792</b>
<b>Tartous</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>36</b>

- In Latakia, 53 buildings have collapsed, 196 partially destroyed, 9 water tanks destroyed, water turbidity and water flow stopped in some locations, 16 schools partially damaged.
- At least 4 hospitals reported some level of damage, assessments are ongoing.

#### Aleppo

Deaths	Injuries
<b>&gt;250</b>	<b>&gt;600</b>

- Updated Casualty data yet to be provided.
- 52 buildings collapsed
- At least primary health centers (PHC) reported some damages (Nobull, Al Zahraa, New Aleppo, Police association)
- The Aleppo DoH offices has also been affected
- Casualties – more than 500 cases have been received at area hospitals:
  - Al Razi Hospital: 41 admitted cases in Al Razi Hospital, all received the needed life-saving treatments and surgeries (2 are on the list of tomorrow operation list), in addition to 5 ICU cases (stable).
  - Aleppo University Hospital: 43 admitted cases (including 4 children) all received the needed life-saving treatments and surgeries, in addition to 6 ICU cases.

#### Hama:

Deaths	Injuries
<b>49</b>	<b>75</b>

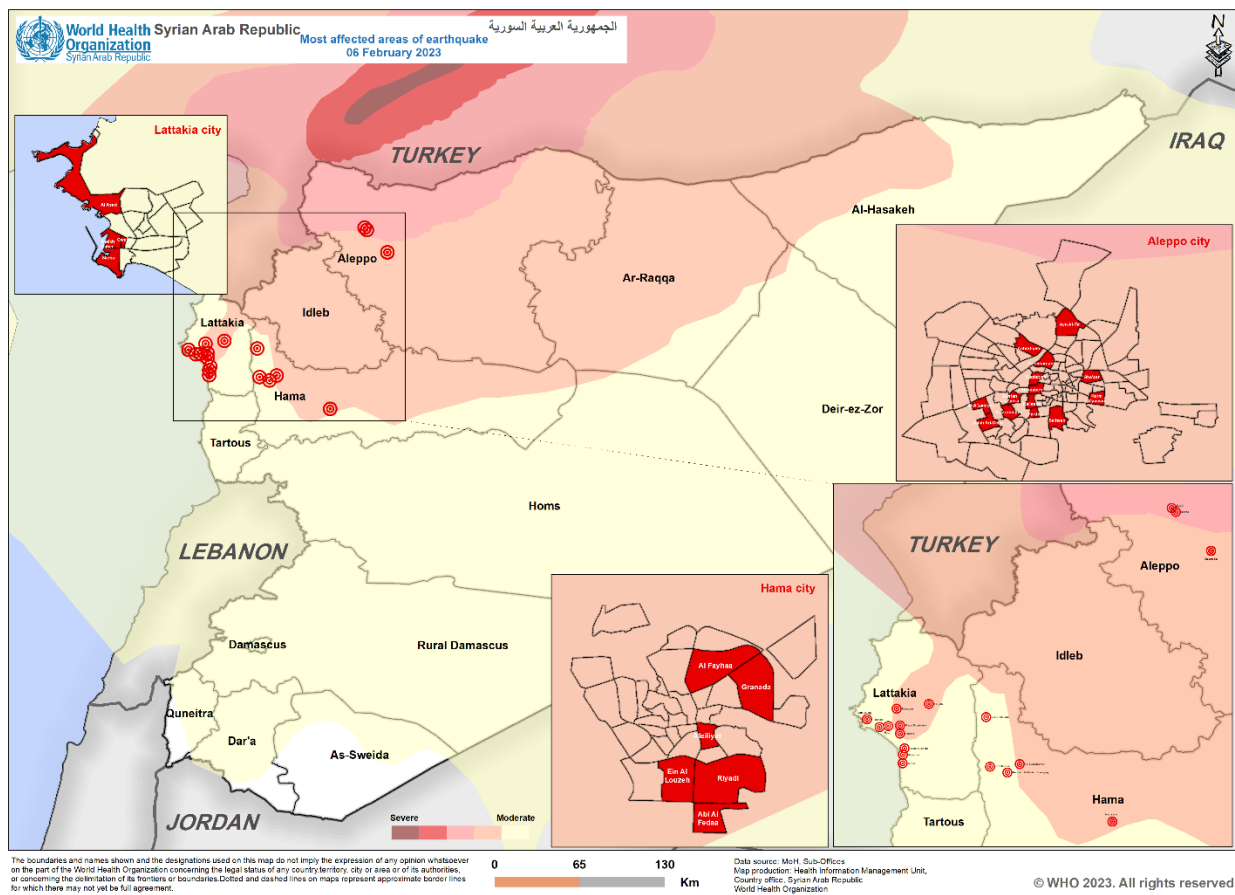
- In Hama, a seven-story and a three-story building collapsed, many buildings were partially or mildly

- damaged. 12 water tanks in different villages, mainly in the Sqelbiya district, were totally damaged
- The city of Hama was heavily impacted, especially in the Arbaeen neighbourhood, and Sqelbiya district (Ein Kromm village)
- Casualties – more than 75 (mild and severe injuries), and of which 9 cases are hospitalized.
  - National Hama hospital:** 3 abdominal surgeries, 4 cases of fractures and planned for orthopaedics surgery, 2 cases of concussion. The majority of cases were treated and discharged from the hospital.
  - In 3 private hospitals:** approximately 40 cases with mild traumatic injury were receive

**Deir ez-Zour**

Deaths	Injuries
0	1

- 6 buildings collapsed while 2 buildings have been evacuated in the first day (Jubila).
- The most affected neighborhoods are: Jubila (2) – Al Rushdiah (2) - Al Hamydia (1) – Umal (1).
- More than 600 families are reportedly displaced from their homes due to damages while an additional 68 families were forcibly evacuated.
- Casualties – Al Assad Hospital: 1 case was admitted mild traumatic injuries
- No injuries were reported among health workers or even health partners.



**Public Health Impact**

- Within the affected areas hospitals are currently struggling to cope with the surge of patients, and public insights are emerging that hospitals are overwhelmed.
- Prior to the earthquake, 1120 public health facilities were included in quarter HeRAMS of which only 28 public hospitals and 540 primary health centers (PHCs) were fully functional and 15 public health hospitals and 80 PHCs were partially functional. Assessments are ongoing to determine extent of damage on facilities with at least 8 facilities reporting damage so far.
- Immediately following the earthquake, trauma-related deaths and injuries from collapsed building and debris were reported. Additional needs related to plastic and orthopaedic surgery, as well as provision of physical rehabilitation, prosthetics and assistive devices are expected.

- Due to the extreme trauma and stress resulting from the earthquake on affected populations, in particular experienced by children, as well as the response workforce, mental health support has been identified as a priority need.
- Significant damage to the water networks has been reported, however further WASH assessments continue. Turbidity, contamination and reduced functionality have been reported, and as such there is anticipated higher risk of waterborne illness, including exacerbation of pre-existing cholera and hepatitis A outbreaks.
- Due to crowded shelter conditions, there is a higher increase the risk of outbreaks and disease transmission, including spread of respiratory illness such as COVID-19 and influenza, as well as those related to pre-existing outbreaks of cholera, hepatitis A and measles.
- Persons exposed to harsh weather conditions as a result of displacement and/or damage to their accommodation are at high risk for hypothermia.

## RESPONSE PILLARS

### Leadership and Coordination

- The emergency health response is being led by the MoH and DoH at governorate level and the Emergency Operations Center has been fully activated at the MoH.
- On 7 February 2023, World Health Organization (WHO) co-chaired the first humanitarian health Sector meeting within 24 hours of the earthquake and is now co-leading the Health sector with the MoH.
- WHO has activated a full-scale incident management response, activating all pillars under the Emergency Response Framework.
- A 1<sup>st</sup> draft of health emergency response plan has been drafted and shared with IMT.
- A WHO grading call was conducted, with the event graded at the highest level of Grade 3.
- WHO field-level colleagues are currently working closely with their counterparts in the DoH's to assess both the scope of needs and the impact of the earthquake, including conducting health facility assessments.
  - In Aleppo, a health partner coordination meeting was co-chaired with DOH and local NGOs for joint planning, resource mobilization and response coordination. DoH has provided a list of needs received and a brief on 4 hospitals partially affected.
  - In Hama, WHO participated in the intersectoral group meeting held with health response partners.
  - In Latakia, WHO participated in a meeting with Latakia governor and the emergency response committee, as well as a bilateral meeting with the DoH for health sector coordination and response.

### Information Management and Surveillance

- Official casualty figures are being reported by national MoH.
- WHO is closely coordinating with surveillance teams and rapid response teams to ensure ongoing surveillance and detection, as well as readiness for any surge in infectious disease cases, especially in affected areas.
- Rapid Response Team (RRTs) needs have been estimated and shared for procurement

### Procurement and Logistics

- In response to MoH and DoH requests for additional medical supplies and equipment, WHO has mobilized immediate essential supplies to the affected areas while also initiating procurement from local and global sources.
- Within the first 24 hours of the response, WHO dispatched essential medicines and supplies to Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Tartous and Latakia, in addition to the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC). Supplies will enable the provision of 102,415 treatments, 300 trauma cases, in addition to 550,00 water disinfection tablets.
- On 7<sup>th</sup> February 2023, surgical and trauma kits weighing 0.6 tons of were delivered to Aleppo DoH.



- 11,700 and 13,433 medical supplies and equipment have been shipped to Latakia and Tartous respectively.
- In Hama, WHO dispatched a cholera periphery kit, oxygen masks and an oxygen cannula (650 kg).
- A WHO chartered flight is scheduled to reach Damascus on 8 February bringing in trauma and emergency surgical kits (a total of 138 pallets, 178 cubic meters). To be followed by the second flight (74 pallets, 102 cubic meters) bringing trauma kits, body bags, instruments.
- NCDs treatments for 1,000 people is in the pipeline for procurement, with the need for continuation of essential services to affected populations.

## Health Operations and Technical Expertise

- **Trauma:** In addition to dispatch of supplies, a trauma specialist has been deployed to Aleppo from WHO EMRO. Assessment is ongoing regarding further orthopedic and plastic surgery needs, as well as physical rehabilitation and provision of orthopedics and/or assistive devices.



- **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS):** WHO is focused firstly on support staff and their families in this challenging time. In its coordination role for MHPSS working group, WHO is mobilizing local stakeholders and sectors, including MoH, NGOs, as well as child protection and protection, to provide MHPSS support to affected communities. The MoH and Ministry of Education MHPSS personnel trained on Psychological First Aid (PFA) and Basic Psychosocial Skills (BPS) are forming quick response teams in the affected areas. As of 8th February, 72 PHC in the affected governorates 8 Hama, Latakia 14, Tartous 20, Aleppo 19, Deir Ezzor 5, Homs 6 PHC provide integrated MHPSS services

- **WASH:** In addition to the dispatch of water disinfection tablets and brochures, WHO is working with focal points on the ground to monitor water quality and prepare for impacts on water infrastructure.
- **Essential Health Services:** WHO has made arrangements deploy mobile medical teams (MMTs) via WHO standing partnerships with NGOs, health services and support are being readied for deployment to affected communities in Aleppo, Latakia, Hama and Deir Ez Zour. Type of services to be provided include:
  - Medical consultations on child health, internal medicine including communicable and non-communicable diseases and gynecology.
  - MHPSS services relating to Psychological First Aid/ First Line Support, individual psychological counselling sessions, raising awareness sessions on MHPSS / GBV topics and group psychological interventions sessions.
- **Risk Communication and Community Engagement:** WHO has initiated social listening to track community perceptions and concerns related to the earthquake and response and is developed an integrated health outreach package for community health responders, including information on various health risks, encourage care-seeking behaviors, and supporting referral. WHO has co-led the first RCCE national coordination meeting with partners to coordinate community outreach and communications to affected population. WHO's NGO partners will focus on raising awareness on primary health care topics, especially cholera and other water borne diseases.

## CHALLENGES

- Limited hospital capacities (human and health resources) to address mass casualties.
- High risk of:
  - Spread of water and food borne diseases due to disrupted water supplies, including exacerbation of ongoing cholera and Hepatitis A outbreaks (pre-existing outbreaks)
  - Disease transmission in crowded shelter conditions, including respiratory illness, measles (pre-existing outbreak)
  - Significant mental distress and disorders, especially among children.

- Harsh winter weather and extreme cold temperatures complicate search and rescue efforts, as well as shelter solutions.
- Significant distress and fear within the affected population, with households not returning to residences. Likelihood of rumors and misinformation increasing as situation evolves.
- Ongoing fuel crisis has hindered response efforts.

## PRIORITY NEEDS AND ACTIONS

- **NEEDS:**
  - **New resources are urgently needed**, however reduced funding is severely affecting operational capacity and ability to respond to any additional/emerging crises.
  - Need for additional supplies are urgently required, in particular trauma and surgical supplies, prosthetics and assistive devices, basic first aid kits.
- **ACTIONS:**
  - Access to most affected populations.
  - Facilitate entry and distribution of medicines, supplies, equipment, and surge support staff.
  - Continuity of health care services, especially for women, children, elderly, persons with NCDs
  - Ensuring access to MHPSS for the affected population, in particular children.
  - Fuel for re-deployment of health workers, ambulance transport, search and rescue, community outreach, etc.
  - Support to partners, in particular NGO partners providing immediate services, to ensure supply of sufficient safe water and continuation of essential health services.

## FUNDING NEEDS FOR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

For the first 3 months, WHO estimates it will require 3.5 million USD for immediate response needs. Further resources will be required to support repair and rehabilitation of affected health facilities, which have yet to be assessed, as well as respond to anticipated outbreaks and longer term health needs of those affected by the crisis.

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