



Health worker Abd Al-Basit Khali in Harim lost his daughter and wife to the earthquakes. February 2023. Photo credit: OCHA/Bilal Al-hammoud

Key figures in north-west Syria

4,500+

Deaths due to earthquakes

8,700+

Injuries due to earthquakes

10,000+

Partially or fully damaged buildings

50,000+

Suspected cholera cases

“I buried them and went back to work.”

Abdul Al-Basit Khalil, an anesthetist at the Harim General Hospital, lost his wife and daughter to the earthquakes. He was on call at the time, tending to patients, when the walls suddenly shook without any warning.

His first instinct was to run and check his nearby home. But by the time he got there, the building was no longer recognizable.

“It is a difficult feeling when your family is under the rubble yet you cannot do anything about it,” he said.

Abdul Al-Basit recalled going back to work immediately as the hospital was quickly flooded with patients injured by the earthquakes. He was hopeful that two of the incoming cases were his wife and daughter but they never showed up.

Three days later, a bulldozer came to his neighborhood and recovered the bodies of his loved ones from the pile of debris of what was once their home.

“I buried them and I went back to work at the hospital,” he shared. “I could not save my family, but there are still many people whose lives are in danger and they need our help.”

A crisis after crisis

Three weeks in since the earthquakes first struck, health workers in north-west Syria are working around the clock to save lives. Abdul Al-Basit Khalil was on duty at the same hospital when a [UN interagency delegation](#) visited Harim in the Idlib governorate for the first time on 21 February.

The impacts of the earthquakes – which struck the region on February 6 and February 20 – have compounded humanitarian needs in north-west Syria, a region where millions of people have endured a crisis after crisis for more than a decade.

The health situation is particularly dire, overstretched by COVID-19 and an ongoing cholera crisis, where at least 55 health facilities have been damaged by the earthquakes. Over 110 health facilities today are in need of fuel or medicines. The closure of the Türkiye-Syria borders for the transfer of medical cases further adds to the burden. Prior to the earthquakes, as many as 30 cases crossed in a day. Partners reported that procurement of medical supplies is increasingly challenging and patients with complications, such as cancer and kidney issues, are left with little to no option for treatment.



Some schools in Harim in Idlib are over 100 years old, making them highly vulnerable to earthquakes. Students from this damaged school were luckily transferred to another school. 27 February 2023. Photo credit: HFOs

Active shelling continues to be reported over the last weeks amidst ongoing earthquake relief efforts. Some schools in Idlib have reportedly resumed over the weekend, however, at least 20 schools remain as shelters for people seeking safety.

More than 86,000 displacement movements were recorded in north-west Syria, with departures principally coming from Jandairis, a town where at least 1,000 people have died from the earthquakes.

At least 80 reception centers have now been established, supported by humanitarian partners, to provide temporary accommodation. Um Maryam and her daughters currently live in a temporary shelter center in the town of Qah in northern Idlib. Her husband, once the breadwinner of the household, did not make it out of their collapsed home in Salqin.

“We slept under a tree for three days, hoping to pull my husband out alive,” she recounted. Once it was clear that he could not make it, she fled with her eight-year-old and six-month-old daughters in search of a safe space.

Now living in a tent, Maryam laments: “I do not know what the future holds for us. I only know that it will be different from the life we had prior to the earthquakes.”

Addressing needs beyond the short run

The UN and humanitarian partners are scaling up its cross-border operation which has served as lifeline to millions of people in north-west Syria since 2014. As of 27 February, [over 420 trucks](#) loaded with aid provided by six UN agencies have crossed from Türkiye to north-west Syria using three border-crossings: Bab Al-Hawa, Bab Al-Salam and Al Ra’ee.

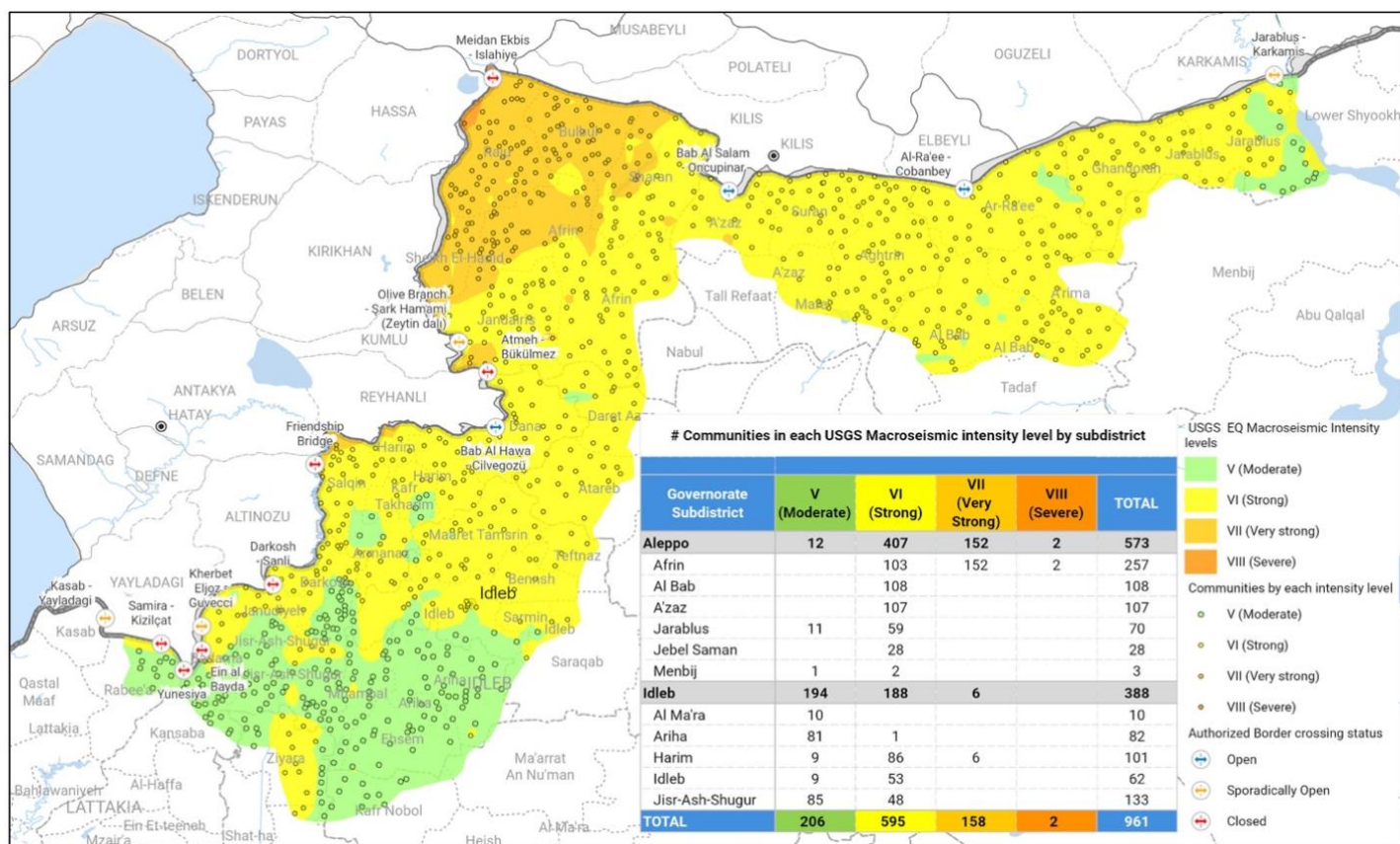
The UN has so far completed 17 cross-border missions to north-west Syria since the first interagency visit to Idleb on 14 February. The first area-based coordination meeting took place on 23 February in Sarmada with over 20 NGOs to discuss the response in Greater Idleb. Missions involving technical and needs assessment teams have also been conducted.

While immediate needs are critical at this moment, partners are also calling for attention to medium and long-term needs. Many people are at risk of not being able to return to their former homes given that over 10,000 buildings have been partially or fully destroyed in north-west Syria. Progress on dignified shelters, which has been on-going since the launch of its [Action Plan](#) in March last year, is critical.

A new [REACH joint rapid market assessment](#) also highlights the importance of cash assistance, noting that it can mitigate “logistical challenges associated with in-kind aid.” In its earlier [released rapid assessment](#), multi-purpose cash was identified among the top three needs cited by communities in addition to winterization and shelters. As of 27 February, more than 100,000 people have been supported with cash assistance designed to cover one-month needs.

On 20 February, the [Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund \(SCHF\)](#) launched the [first phase of its Reserve Allocation](#), valued at \$30 million, to address immediate life-saving needs. Once this allocation is completed, a second phase, valued at least \$20 million, will be launched to address life-sustaining needs in the medium term. The SCHF has also reprogrammed ongoing activities, worth \$7 million, towards the earthquake response.

Impact, Needs and Response



Earthquake-affected communities in north-west Syria and border-crossings (as of 15 February 2023)



Impact

- **At least 3 million people** affected by the earthquakes are in the Idleb province.
- **More than 4,500 deaths and more than 8,700 injuries** due to the earthquakes have been reported in north-west Syria, as of 26 February, according to the Health cluster.
- The districts with the **highest number of deaths and injuries** as of 25 February remain Harim, followed by Afrin and Jisr-Ash-Shugur.
- As of 26 February, **more than 1,700 buildings** have been completely destroyed and **more than 8,600 buildings** have been partially destroyed. Some 60 per cent of partially destroyed buildings were reported in Harim in the Idleb governorate and Afrin in the Aleppo governorate.
- Following the 6.4 and 5.8 earthquakes that struck **Türkiye** on 20 February, almost 150 additional injuries have been reported in north-west Syria.
- Several buildings within the city of Jandairis, the city of Salqin, and the towns of Kherbet Eljoz, Hamziyeh, and Maland collapsed in the aftermath of the 20 February earthquakes.



Humanitarian needs

86,000+post-earthquake
displacements**50,000+**Households in need
of emergency shelters**1260**Households currently
hosted in schools**110+**Health facilities need
fuel or medicines

- **Priority needs: Winterization, shelter and multi-purpose cash support** were cited as the top priority needs, according to a REACH [rapid assessment](#) involving 604 communities.
 - ✓ Assessments continue and around 70 assessments are being tracked.
- **Internal displacement updates:** 55,000 households are estimated as displaced, either within or between assessed communities, according to the REACH assessment.
 - ✓ **The Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) cluster** has tracked over 86,000 new displacements in north-west Syria. Around 80 Reception Centers have been newly established.
 - ✓ Pre-earthquake and post-earthquake displaced populations share similar needs: shelter, winterization and multi-purpose cash assistance.
 - ✓ The majority of newly arrived internally displaced persons (IDPs) are reportedly being hosted for free by friends or relatives.
- **Shelter and winterization needs:** At least 50,000 households are in need of tents or emergency shelter, according to REACH. At least 88,000 households need mattresses, high thermal blankets and clothing.
 - ✓ Most of the affected population have been displaced within their own communities, but many have also arrived in reception centers or pre-existing camps, increasing the burden on facilities and services provided in those locations.
 - ✓ **The Shelter/Non-Food Item (SNFI) cluster** reported that the most urgent needs are tents and other temporary shelter units, NFI kits, basic and winter clothing, and heating fuel. Adaptation of collective shelters and minor repairs to damaged buildings are also urgent requirements.
 - ✓ **The SNFI cluster** calls to increase dignified shelter delivery and planning on longer-term shelter solutions as soon as possible.
 - ✓ Challenges in procuring items in Türkiye or locally in north-west Syria due to the high needs, inflation and increase in prices are recorded. Furthermore, concerns were raised about potential difficulties to get sandwich panels across the border into north-west Syria.
- **Prices of key commodities (bread, lentils, vegetable oil, sugar and rice) increased** in almost all of the earthquake's heavily hit governorates compared to the week before the disaster, and are likely to spike further. Wheat shortages are being registered, especially in Azaz areas.
- **Post-earthquake health needs amidst a cholera outbreak:** At least 20 per cent of 604 assessed communities by REACH reported that they do not have access to healthcare, notably in the Badama and Harim sub-districts.
 - ✓ At least 55 health facilities have been damaged, as of 26 February, according to the Health cluster. 15 health facilities have been suspended.
 - ✓ At least 121 health facilities in the most affected areas (Harim, Afrin, Jebel Saman, A'zaz, Jisr-Ash-Shugur, and Ariha) are in of need fuel and 112 health facilities are in need of medicines.
 - ✓ Over 560 cholera cases and 21 associate death were registered in north-west Syria as of 25 February.
- **Education services resumed in the Idlib area on Saturday, 25 February.**
 - ✓ 20 schools are currently being used to host IDPs (1260 households). 12 schools are in Afrin, Jandairis and Souran, and eight are in Idlib. This is a decrease from 46 schools being used to host IDPs, as reported in the previous Flash Update.

- ✓ This decrease is related to the following reasons: i) the reopening of schools in Idleb, and ii) the perception of insecurity that was felt after the February 20 earthquakes, leading people to move out from schools to the schoolyard or use them only at night.
- **Markets have remained relatively resilient following the earthquakes:** A new [Joint Rapid Assessment of Markets](#) has been released by REACH.
 - ✓ Assessed markets across north-west Syria broadly remain open. In the vast majority of assessed communities, vendors reported that either all vendors were operating or only a few shops were closed
 - ✓ Sub-districts such as **Harim, Jandarjis and Sheikh Al-Hadid**, which were heavily impacted by the earthquakes, reported limited or no availability of basic food items.
 - ✓ Other sub-districts that were less impacted by the earthquakes, but previously were underserved, such as **Ehsem, Ariha and Ziyara** sub-districts, also reported limited or no availability of food items.
 - ✓ The majority of purchases are realized through credit. Reduce capacity to purchase credit is also registered. Winter items are reportedly the most unavailable items
 - ✓ Limited availability of fuel is reported in the Jandairis and Ar Ra'ee sub-groups.
- **WASH needs putting people at risk of water-borne diseases:** Top WASH needs of persons displaced by the earthquakes include water, water tanks, latrines, hygiene items and sewage infrastructure.
 - ✓ 93 per cent of 43 assessed collective centers reported that they need hygiene support.
- **Age, gender, diversity:** Accessibility issues were registered for the disabled and the elderly.
 - ✓ **Gender-based violence (GBV):** 10 out of 93 previously available GBV service points were put out of function due to devastation by the earthquakes. As a result, the capacity to deliver assistance through dignity kits and cash-based interventions has been hampered.
- **Border closure is escalating health needs:** Before the quakes, around 30 medical cases used to cross from north-west Syria to Türkiye on average per day. However, this capacity has been affected.
 - ✓ Procurement of medical supplies is increasingly challenging.
 - ✓ Psychological first aid (PFA), case management and safe service points are overwhelmed with rising needs in the earthquakes' aftermath.
- **Urgent funding needed to replenish food stocks:** Shortages of food items in Idleb and surrounding areas have been reported by **the Food Security & Livelihoods (FSL) cluster** partners.
 - ✓ Large proportion of assistance reported by **FSL** partners is one-time/one-off (42 per cent of cooked meals and 25 per cent of bread distribution) and is not sustained over time.



Humanitarian response

4.4 million+

Medical supplies distributed

300,000+

People reached with bread

170,000+

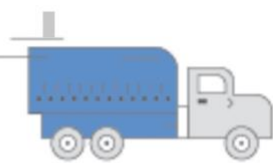
People reached with multi-purpose cash

110,000+

Square meters of debris removed

- **UN cross-border aid operation:** As of 27 February, a total of 423 trucks loaded with aid provided by six UN agencies (IOM, UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP, WHO) have so far crossed to north-west Syria since the earthquakes. For more information, [click here](#) to view the cross-border operation dashboard.

38

Trucks on
27 February 2023

2

Agencies on
27 February 2023

423

Total Trucks
since 9 February 2023

6

Total Agencies
since 9 February 2023

Total Trucks by Border Crossing Point



336



77

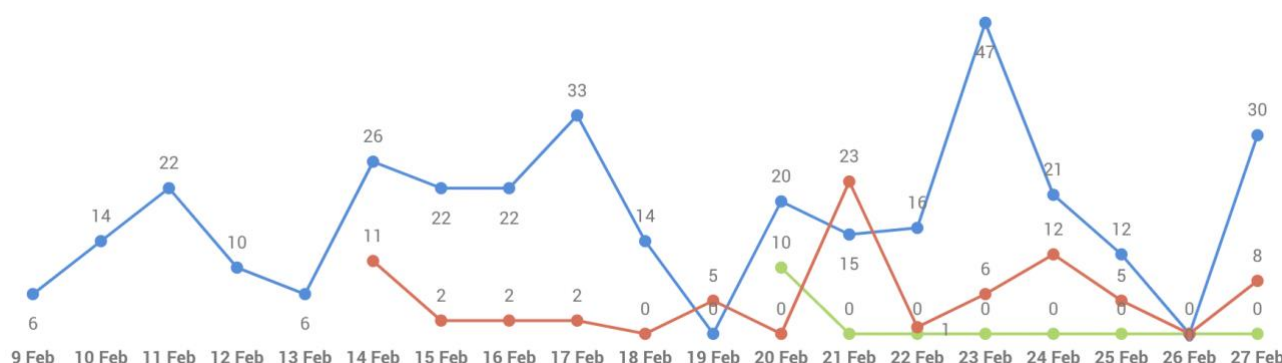


10

Bab al-Hawa | Bab al-Salam | Al Ra'ee

Number of Trucks Crossed per Day by Border Crossing Point

● Al Ra'ee ● Bab al-Hawa ● Bab al-Salam



- ✓ The UN resumed its cross-border operation on 9 February following three days of temporary disruption due to damaged roads connecting Gaziantep to the UN Transshipment Hub in Hatay.
 - ✓ As of 14 February, three border-crossing points are opened for UN aid delivery: Bab Al-Hawa, Bab Al-Salam and Al-Ra'ee. On the same day, the first aid convoy crossed to north-west Syria through Bab Al-Salam since 2020.
 - ✓ On 20 February, the Al-Ra'ee gateway was operationalized for the first time. 10 IOM trucks carrying medical and NFI aid to cover the needs of 3,500 beneficiaries crossed.
 - ✓ On 27 February, a total of 38 trucks crossed Bab Al-Hawa and Bab Al-Salam border crossings with humanitarian aid provided by IOM and WFP.
- **Debris removal:** Damage assessments are ongoing, according to the **Early Recovery and Livelihoods (ERL) cluster**.
 - ✓ As of 20 February, seven partner organizations have reported debris removal and an estimated 117,652 m² of debris have been removed. In the coming months, enormous work is needed to conduct debris management, including rubble removal activities, in Azaz, Jihra Ash Sungur, Jabel Saman.
 - **Short-term job creation:** 1,250 individuals have benefitted from short-term work opportunities (emergency employment), reported the ERL cluster.
 - ✓ Support was reached mainly in the areas of Idleb, Harim, Dana, Jandairis, and Salqin, including in displacement camps.
 - ✓ The type of work opportunities ranges from rubble removal works, rehabilitation of sewage systems affected by the earthquakes, production of woolen products as well as reinstallation of tents.
 - **Shelter and Non-Food Item (SNFI):** The **SNFI cluster members** are responding with emergency shelters and NFIs in affected communities, reception centers, existing camps, and collective centers.
 - ✓ 25 SNFI cluster members have reported completed or ongoing responses.

- ✓ As of February 27, more than 30,000 individuals have been reached with tents. Close to 80,000 individuals have been reached with the provision of emergency NFIs. Over 4,700 individuals have been reached with the provision of emergency shelter kits.
 - ✓ The SNFI cluster, in collaboration with RedR UK, has conducted two online training sessions on Shelter Structural Damage Assessments on 24 and 27 February, targeting engineers and technical staff.
- **Food support and cash voucher assistance: FSL cluster** partners are providing emergency response to the food needs of people affected by the earthquakes, including ready-to-eat (RTE) food (which covers the food needs of a family for one week), cooked meals, emergency cash vouchers and multi-purpose cash (MPC).
 - ✓ Over the last week, 55,990 people have been reached through RTEs distributions. 45 FSL partners reported distributing RTE ration. The FSL cluster reported that around 300,000 unique people have been reached with RTEs since the beginning of the response post-earthquakes.
 - ✓ 14 partners reached 178,614 people with one-off emergency MPC grants valued at US\$150 (designed to cover one-month basic needs). 21,725 people received cash for food.
 - ✓ Sevens partners distributed supplementary food – mainly free or subsidized bread reaching over 310,000 people in the last week.
 - ✓ Partners distributed one-off emergency food baskets to 64,042 affected people who have access to cooking facilities.
- **Health:** A 90-day response strategy was developed by Health partners. The plan includes preparedness for outbreaks and continuity of essential services and early recovery.
 - ✓ As of 26 February, 64 mobile clinics are operational in seven districts, the majority of which are in Jandairis, Dana, Harim and Maaret Tamsrin.
 - ✓ More than 4.4 million medical supplies have been distributed to 245 health facilities, reported the Health cluster as of 20 February.
 - ✓ The Health cluster has initiated an assessment to identify needs in Trauma and Disability Services.
 - ✓ UNICEF and partners continue to provide Psychosocial Support (PSS) and Psychological First Aid (PFA) activities, reaching 2254 people in the last 24 hours (including 740 girls and 746 boys).
- **Nutrition assistance:** To date, 44,003 children under five and 272 pregnant lactating women were screened for malnutrition. 555 children were treated for Severe Acute Malnutrition.
- **WASH: The WASH cluster** is continuing to provide desludging and water trucking support and is developing an emergency response plan. A capacity mapping of cluster partners, on available stocks, response plans, presence, warehousing, and speed to respond was completed.
 - ✓ Since the earthquake response began, UNICEF and partners have reached 330,126 affected people residing in 101 reception centers and affected communities with lifesaving WASH supplies and services in north-west Syria. Over 120,895 affected people received hygiene kits.
 - ✓ UNICEF continues to support the water quality management of five water stations that serve 209,241 affected people with safe domestic water supply.
 - ✓ Services such as water trucking, solid waste management, and desludging of septic tanks reached over 147,320 people.
 - ✓ Hygiene promotion sessions have been delivered to 162,330 people.
- **PSEAH Hotline:** UNICEF and partners have established a functional Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment (PSEAH) hotline as of 16 February.
- **Funding:** The UN and humanitarian partners are calling for US\$397.6 million in a [Flash Appeal](#) for Syria launched on 14 February.

- ✓ **The Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund (SCHF)** has received generous pledged contributions from donors, including towards the earthquake response. These pledged contributions to SCHF are worth some \$73 million. OCHA request all donors to complete the pending contribution process for funds to be utilized in time for the Reserve Allocation
- ✓ On 20 February, a Reserve Allocation, valued at least \$30 million, endorsed by the SCHF, was launched. This first allocation will allow SCHF partners to respond to the immediate needs of affected communities. Once the first allocations are paid, a second allocation will be launched to address mid-and long-term responses.

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To contribute to the Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund (SCHF), please [click here](#).

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