



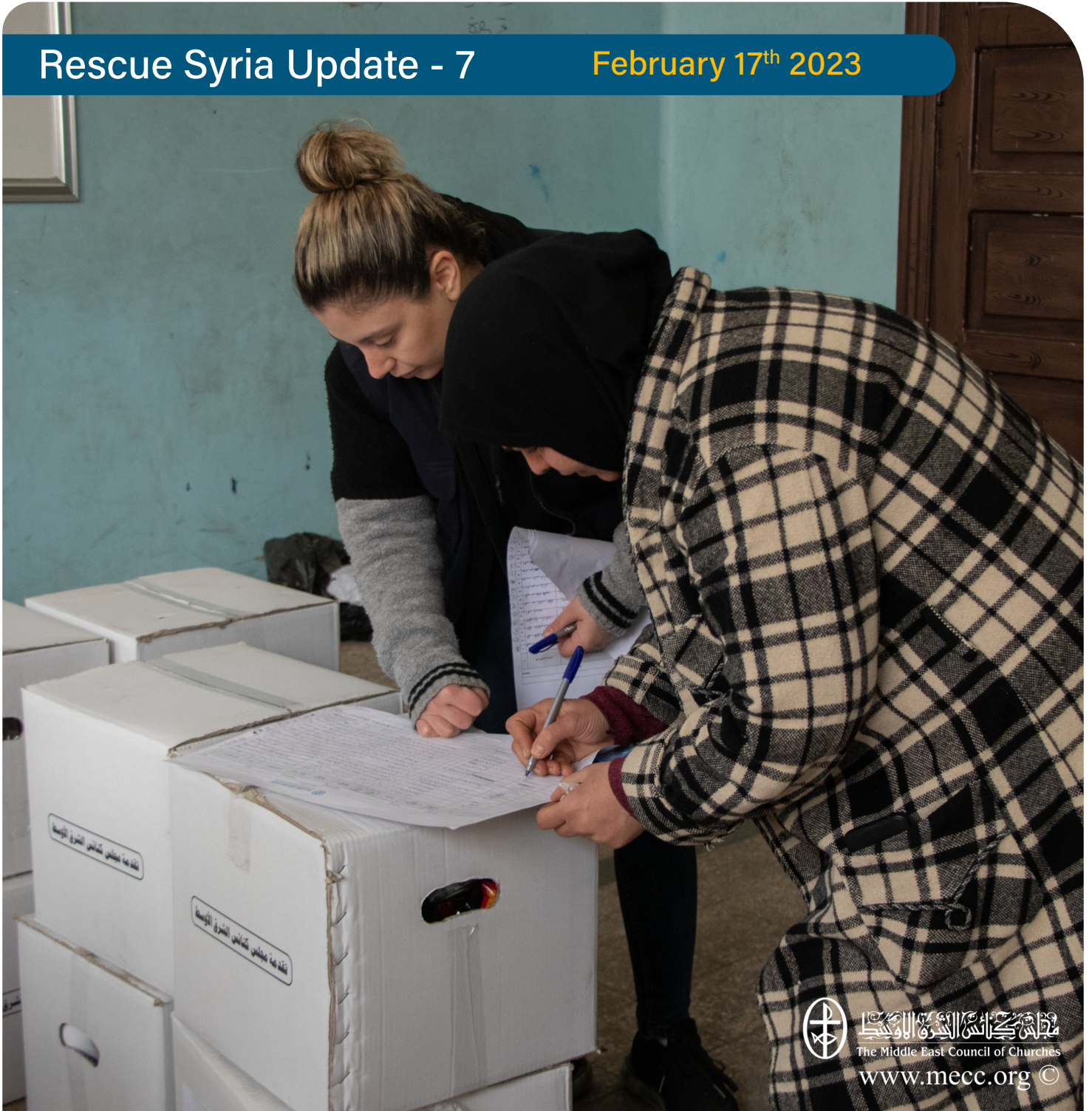
مجلس كنائس الشرق الأوسط

The Middle East Council of Churches

## DIAKONIA DEPARTMENT- SERVICE IN DIGNITY

Rescue Syria Update - 7

February 17<sup>th</sup> 2023



مجلس كنائس الشرق الأوسط

The Middle East Council of Churches

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## Once Again on the Move

*With the outbreak of the war, the Syrian people knew the real meaning of displacement and migration. Many Syrian families became “displaced” families, and some of them moved many times from one region to another hoping to find safety and protection.*

*However, when the Syrians started to go through their path towards stability amidst the enormous economic pressures as a result of the war, a new catastrophe came and hit the country. A devastating earthquake struck entire neighborhoods and destroyed everything in less than moments, leaving thousands of victims, injured and millions of afflicted people.*

*Children are the most affected, as they witnessed one of the harshest experiences in their life. This tragedy will have devastating effects on children’s mental health and psychological state, in light of the terrifying scenes that they passed through. This is in addition to the harsh living conditions inside the unequipped shelters, which were supposed to be a place for education, recreation and sources of happy memories.*

*Following the earthquake catastrophe, Syrian people are back to displacement, they lost their beloved ones and everything they owned, and they are passing through heartbreak and pain. Syrian people are, since ever, struggling without knowing the sense of comfort and stability.*



# Highlights

An earthquake of 7.6-magnitude has hit southeastern Turkey. It followed a quake registering 7.8 that struck the region earlier on 06 February. More than 41,000 <sup>1,2</sup> People are known to have been killed in Turkey and northern Syria, the toll is expected to rise sharply on both sides of the border. The early morning 7.8-magnitude temblor was centered about 20 miles from Gaziantep, a major city and provincial capital in Turkey. Hundreds of after-shocks, ranging in magnitude from 1.8 to 4,6 have been recorded, according to the National Earthquake Center. At least 8.8 million people have been affected by the earthquake in Syria. Prior to the earthquake, an estimated 15.3 million people in Syria were already in need of humanitarian assistance. This new emergency is compounding suffering in a country already devastated by 12 years of crisis.

As of 14 February, about 1,414 people had been killed and 2,357 injured <sup>3</sup>. The numbers of deaths and injuries are expected to rise dramatically as many buildings collapsed with large numbers of people buried under the rubble. Aleppo, Lattakia, Hama, Tartus, Idlib and surrounding areas have been affected severely. Residents were displaced due to the high destruction that took place hence the number of displaced people hosted only in the crowded collective shelters of Aleppo reached 180,000 so far. <sup>4</sup> There is significant displacement, but not all movements are to shelters as some people stay with their relatives. Moreover, the very bad stormy weather hitting the area, made that people are not only facing displacement but extreme cold, reaching -2 degrees at night.

In Aleppo and Latakia, many families are staying in churches' hall and in schools because their homes are not safe and there are fears that possible aftershock earthquake may occur. According to MECC liaison staff in Aleppo, there are more than 8500 internally displaced persons (IDP) from all religious backgrounds staying in several churches community halls and Diakonal institutions. The hardship winter cold with the absence of fuel and electricity are putting more pressure on people who have been struggling to survive in such a dramatic situation. Many building have already been affected by witnessing cracks on walls and structural testing needs to be done soon in order to assess if buildings are safe to be inhabited again. In Lattakia, many buildings nearby the shore were badly affected and some have fallen down. The total number of collapsed buildings in Tartous, Lattakia and Aleppo reached 159. The estimated damaged houses in Homs and Hama is 4,705 but the actual number of displaced people is increasing and still to be confirmed. In Lattakia and Tartous, more than 1,500 buildings are under infrastructural assessments. The Governorate has evacuated over 236 buildings inhabited by around 200,000 persons as per initial estimations. <sup>5</sup>

To date, 661 schools have been reported damaged. This number is subject to increase as the assessment in all areas is still ongoing. The Ministry of Education (MoE) figure states the number of 700 damaged schools. <sup>6</sup> One hundred thirty-two schools are being used as shelter for affected families (100 in Aleppo, 20 in Latakia, 6 in Hama, in Homs, 1 in Tartus). The number of schools used as shelters has slightly increased because some new shelters were opened in Hama <sup>7</sup>. The Ministry of Education requested support to repair damaged schools, ensure the safe return of children to education and avoid further interruptions to their learning.

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[1] CNBC, 13 Feb

[2] Washington post, 15 Feb

[3] MOH, 14 Feb

[4] Syria HCT: Protection Sector Earthquake Update: February 15, 2023

[5] Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Coordinated Response Flash Update #9 - Earthquake (As of 14 February 2023)

[6] Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Coordinated Response Flash Update #10 - Earthquake (As of 15 February 2023)

[7] Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Coordinated Response Flash Update #10 - Earthquake (As of 15 February 2023)

## 01 Aleppo Governorate

As of now, the total number of affected people in rural areas is around 4,000<sup>8</sup>, while, the number of affected people across Aleppo governorate is 2,044,627. Currently, the total number of IDPs in rural areas is 3,977.<sup>9</sup> The number of displaced people who have been hosted only in the crowded collective shelters of Aleppo has reached 180,000 displaced people so far.<sup>10</sup> The Syrian Bakeries Corporation undertook a rapid assessment of the bakeries across Syria. In Aleppo, 32 bakeries were assessed, 20 have been found to be affected by the earthquake, six in the city and 14 in rural areas<sup>11</sup>.



## 02 Hama and Homs Governorates

According to information as of 14 February, 213 families arrived at Homs, 196 of which are hosted by local community members in the city and rural areas while 17 have been temporary accommodated in Mahmoud Othman collective shelter.<sup>12</sup>

Three new collective shelters were designated in Hama Governorate on 14 February bringing the total number to nine. In Hama Governorate, where the overall number of damaged elevated reservoirs is 1311.<sup>13</sup> 109 schools in Hama and 63 in Homs have been damaged.<sup>14</sup>

## 03 Tartous and Lattakia Governorates

The number of people staying in collective shelters now in Tartous and Lattakia is around 30,000 (around 6,000 households). 58 families from Lattakia and another 160 families from Aleppo settled in Tartous governorate.<sup>15</sup> People affected by the earthquake continue to arrive to Tartous Governorate mostly from Aleppo and Lattakia. So far, 318 families have arrived to Tartous from Aleppo, Latakia, and Hama Governorates. 213 families were displaced from Lattakia city and Jableh to rural areas of Lattakia Governorate. The total number of IDPs families outside collective shelters in Lattakia and Tartous is 1071 families<sup>16</sup>. Lack of privacy and overcrowding inside of the collective shelter remain key issues, as each room hosts more than six families and there are no separated rooms for males and females.

The main identified needs are food, CRIs, clothing, hygiene kits, protection services and medicines. There is an increase in the number of people requiring psychosocial support, especially among children.

124 schools in Lattakia, and 96 in Tartous have been damaged as a result of earthquake.<sup>17</sup>

[8] UNHCR Syria Flash Update #9 Emergency Response to the Earthquake

[9] Syria HCT: Protection Sector Earthquake Update: February 15, 2023

[10] Syria HCT: Protection Sector Earthquake Update: February 15, 2023

[11] Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Coordinated Response Flash Update #10 - Earthquake (As of 15 February 2023)

[12] Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Coordinated Response Flash Update #10 - Earthquake (As of 15 February 2023)

[13] HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAM (HCT) COORDINATED RESPONSE FLASH UPDATE #10 - EARTHQUAKE

[14] HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAM (HCT) COORDINATED RESPONSE FLASH UPDATE #10 - EARTHQUAKE

[15] Syrian Arab Republic - Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Coordinated Response Flash Update #9 - Earthquake (As of 14 February 2023)

[16] Syria HCT: Protection Sector Earthquake update: February 15, 2023

[17] HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAM (HCT) COORDINATED RESPONSE FLASH UPDATE #10 - EARTHQUAKE



## 04 Southern Governorates

The southern governorates witnessed an arrival of families displaced from the most affected Governorates that around 22 families arrived in Dar’a Governorate and 24 in Al Soueida Governorate. Most of the families came from Aleppo and Lattakia and are being hosted by relatives or the host community.<sup>18</sup> So far 118 families were displaced from earthquake-affected areas in Aleppo and Lattakia to the rural outskirts of Damascus, Damascus and As-Sweida.<sup>19</sup>

# International In-kind assistance

- The Ikea Foundation has sent 5,000 flat pack shelters to southern Turkey and northern Syria to house people left homeless by the earthquake last week, as organizations around the world pledge help.<sup>20</sup>
- After the earthquake occurred, 73 planes from 19 countries arrived in Syria, loaded with food, medical and relief aid, and rescue equipment, weighing more than 2,100 tons. In addition to rescue teams from several countries, the UAE topped the aid list, providing more than 1276 tons of relief materials to Syria.



[18] UNHCR, 12 Feb

[19] HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAM (HCT) COORDINATED RESPONSE FLASH UPDATE #10 - EARTHQUAKE

[20] The guardian, 14 Feb

# Updates on MECC Interventions & response preparation

It has been ten days since the devastating earthquake that caused one of the worst catastrophes in decades. The question remains, what will happen after the earthquake? Can the world remain silent in the face of the wounds of thousands, even millions, of people who have been displaced, lost loved ones, and lost everything they owned, finding refuge only in shelters?

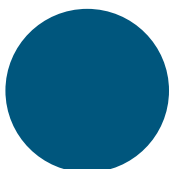
Thankfully, the world has not remained silent since the earthquake struck the cities of Aleppo, Lattakia, Idlib, Hama, and other cities and villages in Northern Syria. On the first day of the disaster, the Middle East Council of Churches, through its General Secretariat and Diakonia and Social Service Department, worked tirelessly on the ground to provide aid and assistance to those affected by the earthquake and secure their urgent humanitarian needs.

It is truly a great and beautiful thing to bring hope to the hearts of sad people who have suffered through wars and disasters and to put a smile on the faces of those exhausted by years of hardship. In response to the humanitarian crisis, the Middle East Council of Churches is working through its Diakonia and Social Service Department to provide basic necessities to the thousands of families who have been displaced by the earthquake in the cities of Aleppo and Northern Syria.

On the first day of their intervention, the Middle Council of Churches distributed, in partnership with PLAN International, 210 aid kits, including food and health supplies, at the Al-Ma'ari School shelter in the Sulaymaniyah neighborhood as part of their emergency response to provide relief and help people return to a normal life with dignity.

However, the needs of those affected by the earthquake are still significant and urgent, particularly as nearly five million people have become homeless.

The MECC continues to work on the ground to provide emergency response and relief efforts to ensure that the children and families who have been affected by the earthquake disaster receive the necessary



# Testimonies

## From the Field



One of the survivors of the earthquake disaster who resides in the Al-Ma'ari School shelter, Sulaymaniyah neighborhood, says:

"We can't take any new grief! Doesn't the hardship of these days have an end? I can't forget the terrifying moments when the earthquake hit. I don't know how I managed to take my two children in my arms and run with my wife into the street. 10 days since the earthquake, my kids are still today afraid to sleep, cry when they are in a closed room and think that the ceiling will collapse and fall on us.

The health and food kits that the Middle East Council of Churches provided us with can support us for a good period of time. The food basket includes varieties of nutritious food items. The health kits also include useful materials. The shelter we went to is not equipped, even tissue papers, soap and sanitizers are not available. We still need more assistance, especially a financial subsidy to rent a house. We can't stay in the shelter, as it is a school including wooden chairs and one bathroom, noting that a big number of families have taken refuge in it.

A 50-year-old earthquake woman who survived the quake and residing in Al-Ma'ari School shelter, Sulaymaniyah neighborhood, says: "I lost my home and all my memories... I lost everything. The walls that fell down carried the last remaining memories of my son who died as a martyr in the war. My neighbors and I took refuge in a shelter which is not equipped and we still need many things. The Middle East Council of Churches provided us with a health kit and a food kit, and this is what I need now because I no longer have money to buy food. I lost all my money under the rubble.

I do not know how we will be able to live in a house away from shelters. I am a widow and I have no breadwinner except my brother, whose house also was destroyed. If we could rent a house to live in, we will still need essential household necessities such as kitchen materials and others."

J., one of the survivors, who resides with his wife and children in Al-Ma'ari School shelter, Sulaymaniyah neighborhood, says:

"On the 6th of February, we woke up to a very powerful earthquake; we rushed to the street in our pajamas, and the first place we took refuge in was the public garden, then we came to the shelter. Amidst the tragedy we live due to the war, the earthquake was a fatal blow... I am a worker and I only get paid for the days I work. Since the earthquake struck, I have not been able to work. So I really appreciate what MECC provided me with: the food basket includes nutritious and needed food materials for my children; and the health kit is also useful and includes the needed soap, shampoo and sanitizers, as a big number of families reside in this unequipped shelter."



# Video Reports :



**1- Syria Is in Distress Due to the Earthquake that Hit It**  
Video - Safir Salim Describes the Situation in the Salesian Church in Aleppo



**2- Moments of Terror Following the Earthquake that Struck Syria**  
Video - Georges Batikha Survives the Disaster and Highlights the Urgent Needs



**3- Searching for Hope Following the Earthquake that Hit Syria**  
Video - Rogina Makhoul Describes the Fear of the Afflicted Families and Children



**4- An Interview with His Eminence Ephraim Maaloui, Greek Orthodox Metropolitan of Aleppo, Alexandretta and Dependencies, after the Earthquake that Struck Syria**



# Eye witness from the Field

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30*



*Church is where the Heart is!*