

# Earthquake hits Kurdish regions in Turkiye/Syria

The earthquake that hit parts of the Turkish and Syrian states on Monday is a tragic disaster for millions of people in the region, *writes Mike Picken*. Tens of thousands are already known to have died and the scale of human disaster is unfolding every hour.

Many of the worst affected populations are in towns, cities and villages with large Kurdish populations. Aid is being mobilised by states and governments around the world, but there is a big issue about the Turkish state government and the officially recognised Syrian state governments being used to coordinate emergency support.

The Turkish government of President Erdogan has sought to repress its Kurdish population for decades and with an election originally scheduled for May has increasingly been attempting political attacks and bans on Kurdish-supporting parties and taking military action in Kurdish areas, including invading and attacking Kurdish communities within the neighbouring states of Iraq and Syria prior to the earthquake. The declaration of a state of emergency gives the Turkish state massive military powers in the affected regions (the Turkish state has the second largest army in NATO after the USA).

The Syrian dictatorship of Assad, backed by the Russian state, has waged a brutal war for a decade with the help of Russian forces against all opposition to the despotic regime, including the Kurdish liberated zone of [Rojava](#) that stands as a beacon of hope.

The Turkish state also has an appalling record of mismanagement of funds for emergencies and is now apparently

blocking independent aid entering Turkey. The progressive Turkish party, the pro-Kurdish HDP under threat of being banned, has issued a briefing to Members of the European Parliament that we are publishing below that warns of the role of the Turkish government and the steps European powers need to take to ensure aid goes to those who need it.

Kurdish fighters were the key element of the resistance to Daesh/ISIS in the region in recent years, but the progressive Kurdish movement is under attack by governments around the world who accept the Turkish and Syrian states' repressive behaviours.

## **Aid must be independent of the Turkish and Syrian states**

The Kurdish community in the region cannot rely on the Turkish or Syrian states to come to their aid in this disaster. It is therefore urging that solidarity and aid pass through appropriate NGO bodies, particularly Heyva Sor (the Kurdish 'Red Crescent/Moon' humanitarian group). Getting funds to Heyva Sor, which is repressed by the Turkish state, is difficult. We don't yet know whether the Disasters Emergency Committee of 14 UK charities is prepared to work with independent Kurdish organisations or whether it will accept the veto of the Turkish state.

So, we are therefore calling for fundraising efforts in Scotland and the rest of Britain to support the efforts of the London-based registered charity the Refugee and Workers Cultural Association which has launched an appeal for fundraising via gofundme as the quickest way of getting monies to support Kurdish and other communities on the ground. It is also possible to donate from the UK directly to Heyva Sor via its German account. Links for both these appeals are below.

The main organisations in Britain coordinating solidarity and aid in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake are [Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan](#) and the [Kurdistan Solidarity Network](#) covering England and Wales. We urge readers to support these two organisations. You can also follow developments on the independent news channel [MedyaNews](#). We also publish below the statement of the **Workers Party of Turkey** on the disaster (Workers Party of Turkey is a left wing extra-parliamentary party [supported by members of the Fourth International in Turkey](#)).

## ***Supporting victims of devastating Earthquake***

*FERHAT AKGUL is organising this fundraiser on behalf of REFUGEE WORKERS' CULTURAL ASSOCIATION.*

*At Gik-Der we are dismayed and heartbroken to hear of the terrible earthquakes that have affected various cities in Turkey, in which thousands of people have tragically lost their lives. Many of our members and wider community in the UK are from areas where the devastation has been worst, and we note with a solemn heart that relatives and those dear to us are among those who have been killed. As we come to terms with this grief and loss, we are equally outraged at the government's failure to act with any degree of care and decisiveness in preparation for such events, despite continued warnings from the community. Natural disasters like this are not simply acts of God – the devastation and destruction, the loss of life and limb, are unforgivable failures of a state which places no value on lives.*

*The first and most important foundation for any such struggle is solidarity, and for this reason, we are immediately starting a campaign to fundraise for relief for those effected by this tragedy.*

*Funds will be sent directly to organisations working on the ground to support the victims.*

*Update by FERHAT AKGUL, Organiser*

*Donations are reaching out to those effected. Teams we work with our working tirelessly day and night supporting the victims of the earthquake, even clearing snowy roads to reach the aid to those in need.*

*GOFUNDME Appeal by Refugee and Workers Cultural Association*  
<https://gofund.me/f9db8b43>

## ***HDP Briefing to Members of the European Parliament***

*Instead of monopolising aid, which given the Erdoğan government's track record of financial mismanagement will simply generate more chaos and bureaucracy, we recommend the following seven-point plan to Brussels:*

*The European Parliament and the EEAS should, through resolutions, delegations and diplomatic notes, call on the Turkish government to allow all civil society and political actors to participate in humanitarian relief efforts without facing politically-motivated obstruction;*

*The member states of the European Council should establish and facilitate a joint crisis and recovery group to coordinate relief and rescue operations. The group should include Turkish state and civil society actors such as HD, TTB, KESK, DISK and Egitim-Sen, as well as international institutions.*

*Grants made to the Turkish state in the context of the crisis*

*should be subject to constant scrutiny to prevent nepotism, embezzlement, and misuse of aid funds.*

*It should be made easier for aid organised by European charitable initiatives or smaller aid organisations to cross Turkey's borders.*

*On 8 February, President Erdoğan declared a three-month state of emergency in ten provinces affected by the earthquake. The government is seeking parliamentary approval for this unprecedented measure. This is unnecessary and will most likely serve to further weaken the opposition in the country, which already faces liquidation in the form of ongoing legal efforts to ban the HDP. The EU and international organisations, should strongly emphasise that it is not necessary to declare a state of emergency and concomitant rule of law, while pointing out that this difficult transition can be managed through alternative legislative mechanisms.*

*In addition to the political and humanitarian crisis resulting from ten years of war, Syria has suffered major damage in the recent earthquake. Due to Damascus' obstruction of aid to opposition-held areas, the main routes for aid to enter Syria are via neighboring states. Therefore, it is recommended that all border crossings to Syria be opened so that humanitarian aid can also reach Syria via neighboring states, reaching all regions of Syria including those out of Syrian Government control.*

*The consequences of this earthquake are long-reaching in nature. Millions of people are affected, not only because of the earthquake, but more generally because Turkish society is in a severe economic crisis. Therefore, longer-term support is needed to help people rebuild their communities and homes. Planning longer-term reconstruction assistance for Turkey should be an crucial issue for the EU and international institutions not only in the present crisis, but also in the*

months and years ahead.

*If you have any further questions about the situation after the earthquake in Turkey or Syria, please do not hesitate to contact the crisis coordination office of the HDP*

## ***Earthquake Appeal – Kurdistan Solidarity Network (England/Wales)***

*Thousands in Turkey and Syria are still trapped from the earthquake and are sending messages to loved ones from under the rubble. The region affected is largely Kurdish. Please donate to Heyva Sor (the Kurdish Red Crescent). They are the main Kurdish charity on the ground carrying out rescue operations right now.*

*“Today, 6 February, an earthquake of magnitude 7.8 occurred in the Pazarcik district of Maraş city in Northern Kurdistan. After that, there was a second earthquake with a magnitude of 6.4 in Nurdagi district of Dilok and a third earthquake with a magnitude of 6.5 in Islahiye district of Dilok.*

*These strong earthquakes mainly affected the cities of Amed, Malatya, Urfa, Semsur, Dilok and many other areas in northern Kurdistan, the cities of Adana, Hatay, Kilis, Osmaniye and Kayseri in Turkey, and the areas of Cizre, Euphrates and Shehba in northern and eastern Syria. The earthquake also affected the surrounding countries. As a result of the earthquake, hundreds of citizens have lost their lives and thousands are injured. Thousands of people are still under the rubble. Many houses and buildings have been destroyed, with winter conditions making rescue operations difficult.” – Heyva Sor*

*More from Heyva Sor and a link to a Direct Paypal donation, or the bank transfer details to their European branch in*

Germany:

<https://www.heyvasor.com/en/banga-alikariya-lezgin-ji-bo-mexduren-erdheje/>

The Direct Paypal donate button link:

[https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted\\_button\\_id=ST5BWWFB7FPGS](https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=ST5BWWFB7FPGS)

As of today, Monday 7th, the day after the earthquakes the death toll has reached 6,000 with the search for survivors ongoing. With at least 8,000 people rescued from debris in Turkey with 380,000 taking refuge in shelters.

Please donate what you can to the ongoing rescue efforts, and share this appeal as wide as you can.

Thank you.

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<https://kurdistansolidarity.net/2023/02/07/earthquake-appeal/>

***“Our country does not deserve this cruelty – we stand in solidarity with our people with all our strength”***

*Statement by the Workers Party of Turkey*

*Upon receiving the news of the earthquake that shook our country this morning, we in the Workers’ Party of Turkey took immediate action, and rapidly established a Disaster Coordination Center. Since then, we reached out to many compatriots in the earthquake zone and coordinated humanitarian aid coming from citizens in other provinces.*

*So far, the TİP Disaster Coordination Center has received more than 1500 calls for help. The number of calls reveal the severity of the situation we are facing.*

*– > In many neighborhoods of the Hatay province, especially in Defne and Samandağ, as well as in provinces Kahramanmaraş, Gaziantep and Adıyaman, people have been left to their fate in the harsh winter conditions.*

*– > In these areas, many buildings, old and new, subcontracted via state tenders under the AKP government - public institutions such as hospitals, dormitories, hotels, AFAD and municipality buildings- collapsed. The pro-government construction companies, and the ministries and directorates which awarded these tenders to them are responsible for the death of the young, the children, and the patients. We demand the prosecution of those who caused the death and suffering of thousands of citizens.*

*– > Against all the protests of Hatay residents, experts, and environmental activists, Hatay Airport was built on the Amik Plain, and is now unusable. With the cities' highways and viaducts damaged, it is now impossible to reach Hatay, and tens of thousands of people cannot receive aid.*

*– > Institutions such as the Turkish Armed Forces and AFAD are tasked with search and rescue and providing food during emergencies. However, under the AKP rule, they have been systematically disempowered, their staff and personnel reduced, and thus they have been rendered useless in search and rescue operations. Besides, many specialized, volunteer search and rescue groups were not allowed to get involved because they couldn't get the necessary certification issued by the pro-AKP bureaucracy.*

*– > In the aftermath of the massive earthquake of 17 August 1999 in northwestern Turkey almost 25 years ago, the "earthquake taxes" collected nationwide were not spent on*



*preparing for earthquakes and ensuring the safety of the citizens, but on roads and bridges that the AKP has built in order to generate political gains and enrich pro-government contractors.*

*– > Our country was hit by two very severe earthquakes during the coldest days of winter. Effective search and rescue in the earthquake region, especially in Hatay, Kahramanmaraş and Adıyaman, is virtually impossible. Besides, there is a lack of food and water supply. Our citizens are trying to rescue their relatives from the rubble by digging with their hands, while those who survived struggle in the freezing cold.*

*– > Our country has been facing a great challenge for hours since the two devastating earthquakes. But the state, the government institutions, specialized experts, means for transportation and sustenance are nowhere to be seen.*

*The people of our country do not deserve to be abandoned to such despair, nor do they deserve the remorselessness of the government.*

*We will never forget and never forgive those who abandoned our people to this fate.*

*We have mobilized with all our power to stand with our fellow citizens who have been left to fend for themselves in these harsh winter conditions.*

*Our people will heal their wounds through solidarity.*

*Our fellow citizens will never be alone and helpless.*

*7 February 2023*

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