

7.1 LMM 28/02/2023 - SYMPATHIES FOR THE PEOPLE OF TÜRKIYE AND SYRIA

MOTION:

That City of Newcastle:

1. Acknowledges the catastrophic devastation caused by the magnitude 7.8 earthquake which struck Türkiye and Syria on 6 February 2023 and has resulted in the deaths of more than 50,000 people and left more than 1.5 million people homeless.
2. Expresses our deepest sympathies to the people of both countries for the destruction and loss of life that has occurred.
3. Writes to the Turkish Ambassador in Australia and the Honorary Consul of Syria in Australia offering the condolences of the City.
4. Encourages Novocastrians who would like to make a financial contribution to assisting both nations to donate through the United Nations Crisis Relief fund, with donations going directly to relief organisations delivering life-saving aid to the frontlines of the crisis.

BACKGROUND:

ABC NEWS: TÜRKIYE AND SYRIA EARTHQUAKE DEATH TOLL PASSES 50,000, AS 18,000 WAR REFUGEES RETURN TO SYRIA



War-torn Syrians pick up pieces after earthquake disaster.

The death toll from a devastating series of earthquakes that struck Türkiye and Syria this month has passed 50,000.

KEY POINTS:

- More than 1.7 million Syrian refugees lived in the Turkish provinces devastated by this month's earthquakes
- At least one air strike hit a rebel-held zone in north-west Syria on Friday
- The Turkish government plans to build 200,000 apartments and 70,000 village houses

The milestone was confirmed as thousands of Syrian refugees who had fled years of war returned to Syria from earthquake-hit cities in Türkiye.

Turkish authorities said 18,000 Syrian migrants returned to their country this month.

Many claimed they came to Türkiye, which is home to more than three-and-a-half million Syrian refugees, to escape the civil war, but the earthquakes were even more frightening than the conflict.

According to government estimates, more than 1.7 million Syrian refugees lived in the 10 southern Turkish provinces devastated by this month's earthquakes.



The UNDP estimates that the disaster had produced between 116 million and 210 million tons of rubble.

Most relied on temporary or international protection status, which confines them to the provinces where they are registered residents.

In the aftermath of the earthquake, the Syrian government ceased air strikes on rebel-held territory for several weeks, but on Friday, at least one strike hit a rebel-held zone in north-west Syria.

At least two people were killed.

Rescuers said they died when they were hit while riding a motorcycle in an area heavily affected by the earthquake.

There was no immediate confirmation of the target of the strike.

On Friday night, the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) announced the earthquake death toll in Türkiye rose to 44,218 on Friday night.

With Syria's latest announced death toll of 5,914, the combined death toll in the two countries rose to more than 50,000.

TÜRKIYE BEGINS TO REBUILD



After two weeks, the search-and-rescue effort is giving way to cleaning up. *(Reuters: Maxim Shemetov)*

On Friday, Turkish authorities began work to rebuild homes after more than 160,000 buildings containing 520,000 apartments collapsed or were severely damaged in the earthquakes.

Many survivors have left the region of southern Türkiye that was hit by the quake or have been settled in tents, container homes and other government-sponsored accommodation.

Facing an election within months, President Tayyip Erdogan pledged to rebuild homes within a year, although experts said the authorities should put safety before speed.

Some buildings that were meant to withstand tremors crumbled in the latest earthquakes.

"For several projects, tenders and contracts have been done. The process is moving very fast," an official said, speaking on condition of anonymity and saying there would be no compromise on safety.



The UNDP said it estimated that the destruction has left 1.5 million people homeless.

Authorities say tents have been dispatched for the many who are homeless, but people have reported trouble accessing them.

"I have eight children. We are living in a tent," said Melek, 67, who was waiting in a line to collect aid outside a high school in the town of Hassa.

"There is water on top [of the tent] and the ground is damp. We are asking for more tents and they don't give them to us."

The school was being used as an aid distribution centre by a group of volunteers called Interrail Türkiye.

One volunteer, Sumeyye Karabocek, said the shortage of tents remained the biggest problem.

BUILDING COLLAPSE INVESTIGATIONS WIDEN

Türkiye arrested 184 people suspected of responsibility for the collapse of buildings and investigations are widening, a minister said on Saturday, as anger simmers over what many see as corrupt building practices.



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Justice Minister Bekir Bozdag said that more than 600 people had been investigated in connection with collapsed buildings, speaking during a news conference in the south-eastern city of Diyarbakir, which was among 10 provinces hit by the disaster.

Those formally arrested and remanded in custody include 79 construction contractors, 74 people who bear legal responsibility for buildings, 13 property owners and 18 people who had made alterations to buildings, he said.

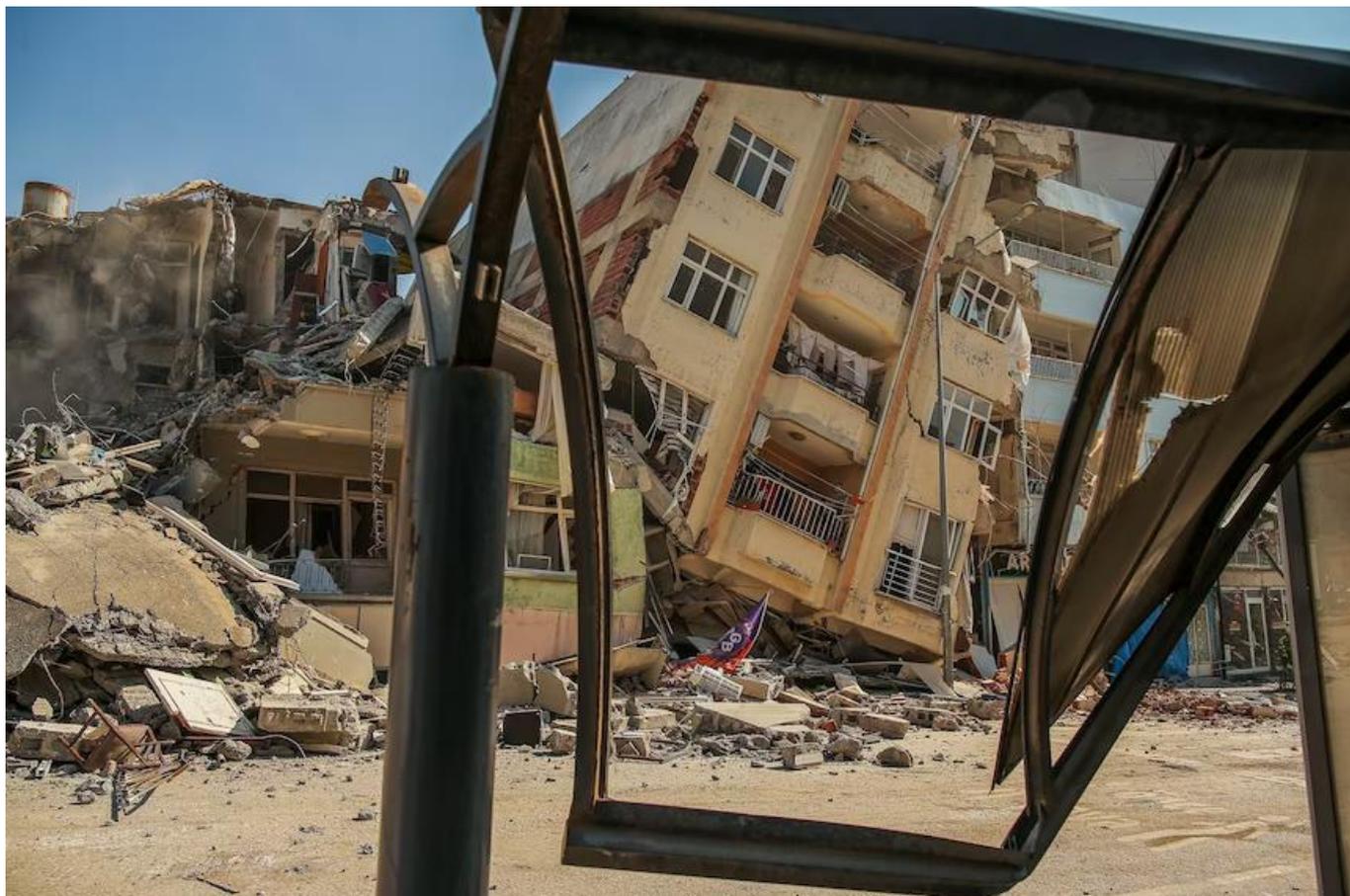
Many Turks have expressed outrage at what they see as corrupt building practices and flawed urban developments.

REBUILDING COULD COST \$37 BILLION

The Turkish government has endured a wave of criticism over both its response to the devastation and non-enforcement of construction quality control.

Mr Erdogan's government has endured a wave of criticism over both its response to the devastation and what many Turks say were years of non-enforcement of construction quality control.

The Turkish government's initial plan now is to build 200,000 apartments and 70,000 village houses at a cost of at least \$15 billion, he said.



US bank JPMorgan had estimated rebuilding houses and infrastructure will cost \$US25 billion (\$37 billion).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimated the destruction had left 1.5 million people homeless, with 500,000 new homes needed.

It said it had requested \$US113.5 million from the \$US1 billion in funds appealed for by the UN last week, adding that it would focus this money on clearing away mountains of rubble.

The UNDP estimates that the disaster had produced between 116 million and 210 million tons of rubble, compared with 13 million tons of rubble after the earthquake in north-west Türkiye in 1999.

Türkiye also issued new regulations under which companies and charities could build homes and workplaces to donate to the urbanisation ministry for people in need.



Türkiye-Syria Earthquake

One of the worst disasters this century has impacted millions of people and left thousands homeless following two devastating earthquakes near the Türkiye-Syria border on 6 February 2023.

The earthquake hit communities at the peak of winter, leaving hundreds of thousands of people, including small children and older people, without access to shelter, food, water, heat and medical care in freezing cold temperatures.

A massive search and rescue operation continues and humanitarian partners are rapidly ramping up efforts to provide life-saving assistance.

You can help too. Donate now.

Donations can be made at: <https://crisisrelief.un.org/>.