



Second earthquake hits Turkey less than 12 hours after first - video report

Turkey

Earthquake in Turkey and Syria kills thousands and devastates cities

7.8-magnitude tremor hit early on Monday, with second major quake mid-morning hampering rescue efforts

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Ruth Michaelson in Istanbul and Deniz Barış Narlı

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More than 2,000 people were killed when an earthquake struck central [Turkey](#) and north-west Syria, in one of the most powerful quakes in the region in at least a century, while a second powerful tremor hours later threatened to overwhelm rescue efforts.

Thousands more were injured as the quake wiped out entire sections of major cities in a region filled with millions of people who have fled the civil war in [Syria](#).

The magnitude-7.8 quake, which hit in the early darkness of a winter morning, was followed by a second 7.7 quake in the middle of the day on Monday, as rescuers in both countries were still attempting to search for survivors. The Turkish state broadcaster TRT showed images of panicked people sheltering in the street as buildings around them quaked during the aftershock in the town of Kahramanmaraş, north of Gaziantep.

Turkey's vice-president, Fuat Oktay, said the death toll had surpassed 1,500 people in Turkey alone by the early evening. Yunus Sezer, who heads Turkey's disaster relief agency Afad, said at least 8,500 were injured in the country's south. "One hundred and thirty aftershocks have been recorded after the earthquake. Nearly 15,000 search-and-rescue personnel have been deployed to the region," he said.

In Syria, already wrecked by more than 11 years of civil war, the health ministry said more than 326 people had been killed and 1,042 injured. In the Syrian rebel-held north-west, rescuers said 147 people had died.

The toll was expected to rise as rescue workers and residents searched frantically for survivors under the rubble of crushed buildings in cities on both sides of the border.

The quake struck at 4.17am local time (0117 GMT) at a depth of about 17.9km (11 miles) near the Turkish city of Gaziantep, which is home to about 2 million people, the US Geological Survey said.

Television images from Turkey showed shocked people standing in the snow in their pyjamas, watching rescuers dig through the debris of damaged homes. Buildings were levelled while many people were still asleep.

Tremors were felt as far away as Lebanon, Greece, Israel and the island of Cyprus.

In the southern Turkish town of Gaziantep, 150 miles from the border with Syria and 50 miles from the epicentre of the earthquake in Kahramanmaraş, people felt aftershocks hours later.

“We woke up with a jolt, as the electricity was off. We laid still and waited for the shaking to finish. Our house was full of broken glass,” said Sinan Şahan, a tradesperson in Gaziantep. “We used our phone’s flashlight so we could get dressed, and hurried out of the house. Anyone able to save themselves has now fled somewhere. I have relatives in Kahramanmaraş, their houses were destroyed.”

He added: “I was in Istanbul when the big earthquake hit in 1999, this was more severe than that.” He broke off as another aftershock hit.

Images from Gaziantep appeared to show that the earthquake caused the collapse of the city’s historic castle, an ancient and imposing stone structure atop a hill used as an observation point during Roman times.





Historic castle in Turkey badly damaged by earthquake - video

The head of the Turkish Red Crescent, the biggest humanitarian organisation in Turkey and part of the International Red Cross, said it was mobilising resources for the region and urged people to evacuate damaged homes. The head of Turkey's disaster management agency [said](#) "all capabilities of our state were mobilised" after the quake, warning civilians to keep communication to urgent texts only to help emergency services find survivors.



People try to help victims at the site of a collapsed building in Diyarbakir, Turkey. Photograph: Deniz Tekin/EPA

Images on Turkish television showed rescuers digging through the rubble of levelled buildings in Kahramanmaraş and neighbouring Gaziantep, where entire high-rise blocks were destroyed. A fire lit up the night sky in one image from Kahramanmaraş, although its origin remained unclear.

Buildings also crumbled in the cities of Adıyaman, Malatya and Diyarbakır, where people rushed on to the street in panic.

People in the town of Pazarcık said they feared for those trapped under fallen buildings. Nihat Altundağ said the powerful shocks from the earthquake woke his family.

“Our house looks solid from the outside but there are cracks inside. There are destroyed buildings around me, there are houses on fire, there are buildings that are cracking. A building collapsed just 200m away from where I am now,” he said. “We are waiting for the sun to rise so that we can see the scale of the earthquake. People are all outside, all in fear.”



The partially damaged Yeni mosque after the earthquake in Malatya, Turkey. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Agency/Getty images

“Pazarcık is in ruins,” said another resident, Hüseyin Satı. “The building where I live is not so tall, and was built in compliance with earthquake regulations, so it didn’t collapse. But still there are cracks on the walls. A neighbour of mine broke his back while jumping from the balcony during the earthquake and is now in hospital.”

Satı said civilians were desperately trying to help dig their neighbours out from under collapsed buildings. “Two of my friends are under the rubble now, we are trying to reach them,” he said.

The Turkish president, [Recep Tayyip Erdoğan](#), who will be under pressure to oversee an effective response to the disaster heading towards an election on 14 May, said search and rescue teams had been dispatched to the affected areas. “We do not know how high the number of dead and injured will go. Our hope is to get through this disaster with the least loss,” he said in a speech.

“This is the biggest disaster we’ve experienced in the last century after the 1939 Erzincan earthquake,” he added, citing an incident in which more than 32,000 people were killed in eastern Turkey.

Vahap Altınok, an official with the local opposition Republican People’s party (CHP) in the town of Malatya, 162 miles from the epicentre, described the tremor as “the biggest earthquake I’ve ever experienced, the longest and the strongest”.

“Lots of buildings were destroyed, there’s rubble everywhere,” he said. “People are overwhelmed. There is heavy snowfall and it’s badly affecting rescue efforts,” he said.

The Syrian health ministry reported damage across the provinces of Aleppo, Latakia, Hama and Tartus, where Russia is leasing a naval facility.

Even before the tragedy, buildings in Aleppo, Syria's prewar commercial hub, often collapsed due to the dilapidated infrastructure after more than a decade of war as well as little oversight to ensure safety of new construction projects, some built illegally.

The Syrian Civil Defence, a rescue service known as the White Helmets that works to save those trapped under debris from airstrikes, **said it had declared a state of emergency** to rescue the many people feared trapped under collapsed buildings in areas around Idlib and across opposition-held areas in north-western Syria.

Multiple apartment buildings have collapsed after a powerful earthquake in southern Turkey pic.twitter.com/wydrBj94RL

– BNO News (@BNONews) [February 6, 2023](#)

In a statement, the organisation described “a catastrophic situation with buildings collapsed or suffering major cracks, hundreds injured and stranded, dozens dead and a lack of services as well as safe shelters and assembly points in stormy and snowy weather conditions and low temperatures”.

The group also added a plea for aid from the international community “to prevent the situation from worsening” and to pressure both the Syrian government and their backers in Moscow to hold back on airstrikes in the area to prevent further tragedy.

People in Damascus, as well as in the Lebanese cities of Beirut and Tripoli, ran into the street on foot and took to their cars to get away from their buildings in case of collapses, witnesses said.

Horrific news of tonight's earthquake in **#Turkey** & northern **#Syria** – the damage looks

extensive.

The epicenter region is home to millions of refugees and IDPs, many of whom live in tents & makeshift structures. This is the absolute nightmare scenario for them. And it's winter.

pic.twitter.com/oACzWYtWb2

– Charles Lister (@Charles_Lister) [February 6, 2023](#)

“Paintings fell off the walls in the house,” said Samer, a resident of Damascus, the Syrian capital. “I woke up terrified. Now we’re all dressed and standing at the door.”

Aid groups fear the disaster will worsen the situation for Syrians already displaced after a decade of civil war. “This is a disaster that will worsen the suffering of Syrians already struggling with a severe humanitarian crisis,” said Carsten Hansen, of the Norwegian Refugee Council.

He added: “Millions have already been forced to flee by war in the wider region and now many more will be displaced by disaster. In the midst of a winter storm and an unprecedented cost of living crisis, it is vital that Syrians are not left to face the aftermath on their own.”

Turkey is in one of the world’s most active earthquake zones, with land stretching over the Anatolian fault line in the north of the country that has caused large and destructive tremors. İzmit and the surrounding Kocaeli region, close to Istanbul, was rocked by a 7.4-magnitude earthquake in 1999, the worst to hit Turkey in decades.





A view of destroyed settlements and damaged vehicles in Aleppo, Syria. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

The quake killed more than 17,000 people, including at least 1,000 in Istanbul, amid widespread destruction. Experts have long warned a large quake could devastate Istanbul.

Naci Görür, an earthquake expert with Turkey's Academy of Sciences, urged local officials to immediately check the region's dams for cracks to avert potentially catastrophic flooding.

Reuters, Agence France-Presse and Associated Press contributed to this report

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