

*****MEDIA RELEASE*****

Caritas agencies respond to catastrophic earthquake in Turkey and war-torn Syria

7 February 2023

Caritas Turkey and other Caritas agencies are responding to a series of powerful earthquakes in southeast Turkey (officially known as Türkiye) and Syria, where thousands of lives have been lost already and the death toll increases by the hour.

It is expected that the death toll will increase up to eightfold in the coming days and weeks as more victims are found in the rubble.

Entire buildings have collapsed on both sides of the border, leaving thousands more injured, trapped or homeless in the bitter winter cold and freezing rain.

“This earthquake will have a long-term impact on people’s lives. People have lost their lives, their homes, and their livelihoods. The impact will last not for days or even months, but for years,” said Hombeline Duliere, CAFOD’s Syria Crisis Response Manager.

In Turkey’s south, poor internet connectivity and damaged roads have hindered efforts to assess the damage and respond in the worst-hit areas. The epicentre of the quake, Gaziantep, is also home to half a million Syrian refugees.

Syria is nearly at breaking point after 12 years of war, extreme poverty and a recent cholera outbreak. Vital infrastructure like hospitals, schools, utilities and water and sanitation systems have been damaged or reduced to rubble. The economy is in tatters, with more than 90 per cent of the population living in poverty.

“We haven’t seen an earthquake of this magnitude for a long time, and it’s already having a catastrophic impact on vulnerable families. People already had limited access to water and food. Millions of people have been displaced inside Syria. Some of them have lost everything already – and now they have few options left. We must do all we can to support,” Sally Thomas, Caritas Australia’s Humanitarian Emergencies Lead for the Middle East.

So far, all Caritas Turkey staff have been reported as safe, however, Caritas Turkey offices in Anatolia have collapsed and are now inaccessible.

Our partner Caritas Turkey and other Caritas agencies on the ground are coordinating with local authorities and other organisations to see how they can best assist. Your generous support can help provide emergency relief to help families recover and rebuild from disaster.

Visit caritas.org.au/donate/emergency-appeals/turkey-and-syria-earthquake/ or call 1800 024 413 toll free to provide much needed support to the Middle East by donating to our Middle East Emergency Appeal.

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NOTE: Sally Thomas is available for interview from Sydney.
International spokespeople may be available on request.

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