

Türkiye and Syria Earthquake: Calling for Humanitarian Access

Washington, D.C. - The American Relief Coalition for Syria (ARCS) is deeply saddened by the destruction and loss of life in Türkiye and Syria resulting from the 7.8 magnitude earthquake, the additional earthquakes and aftershocks that followed on February 6th, 2023. At this time, over 1020 Syrian lives have been claimed in Northwest Syria with the death toll reaching 7,100 between both countries and the numbers are expected to rise as first responders continue to work through the rubble.

This earthquake, the strongest the region has seen in over 100 years, comes during the harsh winter in Syria and at a time where 4.2 million Syrians in the northwest are already in need - the highest number recorded since the start of the humanitarian crisis in Syria in 2011. With the Syrian humanitarian crisis approaching its 12th year anniversary in March, this catastrophe has caused mass devastation to the already fragile infrastructure. In addition, the underfunded health system is struggling to keep up as multiple hospitals have to be evacuated as a result of the earthquake and as the number of deaths and those injured continues to rise. As of now, UN agencies have stopped providing aid across the border from Bab Al-Hawa crossing point, the only crossing point that is allowed to be used under United Nations Security Council Resolution 2672 (2023), due to the immense destruction of roads in Hatay, Türkiye.

“This earthquake has caused mass devastation in Syria. ARCS, its members and the humanitarian community are working around the clock to support rescue efforts and provide aid to the survivors. The effects of this disaster will be felt for years to come.” said ARCS member, SAMS’ President Dr. Amjad Rass.

As rescue efforts by Syrian NGOs and teams continue, and the response to the humanitarian needs of the earthquake survivors becomes a priority, restriction of humanitarian access will be the main challenge in providing an adequate humanitarian response in a situation as complex as the one in Northwest Syria. In order for UN agencies to participate in life-saving efforts and provision of essential humanitarian aid, **ARCS is urging the UN Secretariat and Secretary-General to recognize that the UNSC is no longer needed for UN-coordinated cross-border aid provision in Syria**, and is calling for the UN and its agencies to utilize all accessible crossing points, and available systems and tools such as United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) to provide activities pertaining to the cross-border humanitarian response under the mandate of the UN Secretariat. Using the legal bases advanced in the recently published legal analysis, [*2014 is not 2022: Why the Continuation of UN-Coordinated Cross-Border Aid into Syria Absent a UN Security Council Resolution is Lawful*](#), commissioned by ARCS and drafted by Guernica 37 Chambers, we believe that humanitarian access should revert back to established International Humanitarian Law (IHL) provisions applicable to the facts of the Syrian conflict. Humanitarian needs on the ground should be the sole driver of the humanitarian response.