

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

Thousands of families at risk as death toll continues to rise from Türkiye-Syria earthquake

9 February 2023

Thousands of families are at risk after the catastrophic Türkiye-Syria earthquake on Monday.

Over 12,000 people have been killed, with thousands more injured or trapped in the rubble. The death toll continues to mount.

“This disaster has hit people who were already displaced, in a region that has been devastated by more than a decade of civil war. Yet again, we’re seeing people fleeing for their lives and desperate for shelter in freezing winter conditions,” said Sally Thomas, Caritas Australia’s Humanitarian Lead for the Middle East.

“People are huddled in cars or around open fires, unsure if their loved ones are safe or if the rescue teams will reach them in time. Electricity is down so hospitals can’t run, and this means that newborn babies, women about to give birth and people with serious injuries are out on the streets. The situation is extremely dire.”

Northwest Syria is already cut off from the international community, and much of its key infrastructure, including hospitals, has been destroyed by the civil war. In this region, nearly 3 million internally displaced people live in poor conditions, which have been made unbearable by the quakes.

The logistics of getting vital humanitarian supplies to northern Syria are now further complicated by the destruction of a key road in the Syrian-Turkish humanitarian corridor during the earthquake.

“Despite the serious logistical challenges in reaching people, Caritas agencies are there on the ground already. They know the region well and they are well placed to respond. They just need our help in raising funds.”

“With the help of our supporters, we want to show Türkiye and Syria our generosity, to help the most vulnerable to survive this crisis and rebuild their lives again. We want to help provide that light in the deepest darkness, so that our Turkish and Syrian sisters and brothers have hot meals, blankets and clean water to get through this initial devastating period.”

Our partners Caritas Syria 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.

The Catholic agency for international aid and development

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

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NOTE: Sally Thomas is available for interview from Sydney. Sally has previously lived and worked in northern Syria and Gaziantep, the epicentre of the initial quake in Türkiye. She has worked in humanitarian response for over a decade in the Middle East and Africa.

International spokespeople may be available on request.

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