



[The Economic Impact of the Earthquake in Turkey and Syria](#)

The economic impact of natural disasters and conflicts can be significant and can extend the suffering of affected communities long after they have concluded. Turkey and Syria were both recently shaken by a 7.8 magnitude earthquake, and the suffering will likely be compounded by their already fragile economic situations. In Syria, the ongoing civil war has resulted in significant economic challenges, including high unemployment, inflation, and a significant decline in GDP. The country's infrastructure has also been severely damaged, which has affected the ability of businesses to operate and has limited access to basic services such as healthcare, water, and electricity. Prior to the disaster, Syrians were already grappling with a fuel shortage, a cholera outbreak, and mounting food insecurity. With the vast majority of northwest Syria's population, which includes at least 2.6 million displaced people, dependent on humanitarian aid. Civilians in these areas are essentially trapped. They lack the necessary resources to relocate, are unable to cross into Turkey, and fear what will happen if they try to move to government-controlled regions. This dire situation has created a complex set of challenges that must be addressed to help those most in need. The destruction of critical infrastructure and the disruption of economic activity can lead to a long-term decline in economic growth, which can impact the well-being of individuals and communities for years to come. Similarly, in Turkey, the recent earthquake has caused significant damage to buildings and infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, and homes.

The Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation has estimated that Turkey may face a staggering cost of up to \$84.1 billion due to the recent earthquake, which was the country's most devastating in almost 100 years. The report outlined the anticipated expenses, with \$70.8 billion expected for the repair of thousands of homes, \$10.4 billion in national income loss, and \$2.9 billion in lost working days. Another estimate by a government official has put the figure at over \$50 billion. The earthquake, which had a magnitude of 7.8, has resulted in a combined death toll in Turkey and Syria that is rapidly approaching 40,000. As the focus of the response now shifts from rescuing survivors to providing essential resources such as shelter, food, and psychosocial care, it is likely that the death toll will increase even more in the coming days. Rebuilding housing, transmission lines, and infrastructure, as well as providing short, medium, and long-term shelter for the hundreds of thousands left homeless, are expected to be the primary costs. As Turkey grapples with the aftermath of the earthquake and prepares for upcoming elections, the country is facing significant economic challenges. In the 10 affected provinces, a state of emergency has been declared for three months, while the central bank has postponed loan payments.

The cost of rebuilding and repairing these structures will be significant, which can place a significant strain on the country's economy. The loss of income and livelihoods for those affected by the earthquake will also result in long-term economic impacts. In addition, the destruction of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and airports can limit access to markets and opportunities, which can further hinder economic growth. In both Syria and Turkey, those who were already facing economic and social challenges are likely to be hit the hardest.

Human Rights Watch has highlighted the United Nations Security Council-mandated cross-border aid mechanism in Syria as inadequate, in light of the slow humanitarian response to the recent earthquakes

that severely impacted opposition-held northwest Syria. On February 13, 2023, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad authorized UN aid deliveries to pass through two more border crossings to the besieged northwest from Turkey, but this decision came over a week after the February 6 earthquakes. As a result, millions of people in opposition-controlled areas of northwest Syria have been without critical search-and-rescue reinforcements and lifesaving aid since the earthquakes struck. The destruction of critical roads and infrastructure, warehouses, and coordination systems needed to organize aid deliveries through the only Security Council-approved UN aid corridor from Turkey into the affected areas further complicates situations. Urgent alternatives have been needed. The U.N. relief director stated during a visit to Syria on Monday that the phase of rescue is "coming to a conclusion", and that the focus is now shifting to shelter, food, education, and psychosocial care. The UN took more than 6 days to acknowledge the assistance needed following the initial earthquake, which is an unacceptably long period of time given the urgency of the situation.

In such instances, every second counts. The "crisis inside a crisis" is making it harder to distribute relief, according to a UN official in Syria. Starting in 2011, the Syrian conflict escalated from the brutal crackdown on peaceful demonstrators to the involvement of armed groups from foreign nations. Sivanka Dhanapala, the Syria representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said "As many as 5.3 million people in Syria may have been left homeless by the earthquake." As a consequence of the ongoing conflict, there has been extreme internal division, and approximately half of Syria's population before the war has been displaced from their homes, with a significant number seeking refuge in Turkey. This internal division is an integral contributing factor to the UNHCR having difficulties "rushing aid" to Syria's severely damaged regions. Dhanapala adds, "There are 6.8 million people already internally displaced in the country. And this was before the earthquake." In a promising move towards alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Syria, the Syrian government has announced its decision to collaborate with the UN and other humanitarian organizations to facilitate aid deliveries to rebel-held areas outside its control.

The UN has faced significant challenges in attempting to meet the dire humanitarian needs of those living in northwest Syria, exacerbated by obstruction of aid delivery from various parties to the conflict. Both the Syrian government and anti-government armed group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which controls a portion of northwest Syria, as well as the Turkey-backed Syrian National Army (SNA), which holds territory across northern Syria, have impeded the delivery of much-needed aid to the most severely affected regions of northwest Syria. This obstruction has created additional barriers to assisting those already struggling to cope with the consequences of the earthquake and other crises, further underscoring the importance of finding solutions to these challenges.