A Total of **7,259** Syrians including **2,153** Children and **1,524** Women, Died Due to the Turkey-Syria Earthquake: **2,534** Died in Non-Regime Territories, **394** in Regime Territories, and **4,331** in Turkey

The Syrian Regime Has Stolen Roughly 90 Percent of the Aid Intended for the Earthquake Victims

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyses in Syria.
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I. Methodology

One of the Syrian Network for Human Rights’ (SNHR) main teams is charged with documenting those victims who have been extrajudicial killed. Under normal circumstances, this team does not document cases of natural deaths or deaths caused by disasters. However, given the extraordinary circumstances of the devastating earthquake that hit southern Turkey and northern Syria on Monday, February 6, 2023, and the inescapably dire need, our victims team was tasked with documenting the victims who died as a result. In this work, our team relied on its extensive experience, wide network of relations, and geographical dispersion. Despite this experience and knowledge, we have faced extraordinary challenges in this process, most notably the fact that a great number of the team’s members were themselves affected by the earthquake, with some dying as a result. The second challenge is the massive number of victims, compared even to the largest single massacre committed by the Syrian regime in Eastern and Western Ghouta dating back to August 21, 2023, in which 1,144 victims, including 99 children, were killed. In that massacre, documenting the victims took many days even though the death toll was geographically confined in two areas compared to the earthquake that hit a much wider geographical area and left a far greater death toll.

On February 15, we released our first report on the death toll from the earthquake, in which we stated that we would subsequently release more detailed updates building on the first report. Accordingly, this is the second such report, although we must also stress that this does not represent the final death toll; nonetheless, this report presents a more accurate and detailed summary of the death toll than our initial report, with our team managing to make sense of the initial shock and overcome some of the previous challenges. However, this report only reflects the bare minimum of information, with further updates to come at a later date.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, Executive Director of SNHR, says:

Delivering aid through the Syrian regime and the organizations founded by the security apparatus of the Syrian regime might take the donor states and supporting organizations away from the framework of humanitarian work to supporting and funding the terrorism and crimes against humanity that the Syrian regime has committed against its people. While we acknowledge the good intentions of the donor states and organizations, we must stress that the Syrian regime does not steal only 30 or 40 percent of the aid donated - in reality, the Syrian regime pillages up to 90 percent of the aid delivered.

II. A Total of 7,259 Syrians Died due to the Earthquake and the UN and International Aid Arriving Late

SNHR has documented the deaths of 7,257 Syrians, including 2,153 children and 1,524 women, due both to the earthquake and to the late arrival of UN and international aid between February 6, 2023, and February 27, 2023. The death toll is distributed according to location as follows:
A Total of 7,259 Syrians, including 2,153 Children and 1,524 Women, Died Due to the Turkey-Syria Earthquake: 2,534 Died in Non-Regime Territories, 394 in Regime Territories, and 4,331 in Turkey

- 2,534 in the areas not controlled by the regime (northwestern Syria).
- 394 in the areas controlled by the regime area.
- 4,331 refugees in Turkey.

The victims are distributed by the place of death as follows:

1. **Non-regime territories**

SNHR has documented 2,354 deaths due to the earthquake in the region of northwestern Syria currently under the control of the armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA) and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). These are distributed as follows:

A. **Idlib suburbs**: In this region, we recorded 1,297 deaths, distributed as follows:

   ![Idlib suburbs deaths](image)

B. **Aleppo suburbs**: In this region, we recorded 1,237 deaths, distributed as follows:

   ![Aleppo suburbs deaths](image)
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2. Regime areas
SNHR has documented 394 deaths caused by the earthquake in the areas under the control of Syrian regime forces, distributed as follows:

- **Latakia governorate**: 297 deaths, most of which were in Jabla
- **Aleppo city**: 63 deaths.
- **Hama city**: 32 deaths.
- **Damascus suburbs**: two deaths in Harasta.

3. In Turkey
SNHR has documented 4,331 deaths of Syrian citizens caused by the earthquake. The victims are distributed by their governorate of origin, rather than the location of their death in Turkey:
4. Earthquake-related deaths among Syrian medical personnel, media workers, civil defense members, and humanitarian workers

- **Medical personnel**
  We documented the deaths of 73 medical personnel due to the earthquake that hit northwestern Syria and southern Turkey on February 6, 2023

- **Media workers**
  We documented the deaths of five media activists due to the earthquake that hit northwestern Syria and southern Turkey on February 6, 2023

- **Civil Defense personnel**
  We documented the deaths of four Civil Defence rescue workers (White Helmets) due to the earthquake that hit northwestern Syria and southern Turkey on February 6, 2023

- **Humanitarian workers**
  We documented the death of 62 humanitarian workers due to the earthquake that hit northwestern Syria and southern Turkey on February 6, 2023
III. The “Little Aid is Better than Nothing” Policy Has Failed Miserably Because the Syrian Regime is Pillaging 90 Percent of the Aid

Since 2014, we have been documenting the Syrian regime’s theft of UN and international aid, having released a number of reports and statements on this issue. With an increased flow of humanitarian aid going to the Syrian regime in the wake of the earthquake, we must underline the crucial point, that the disastrous idea that ‘delivering some aid is better than nothing’ has failed miserably in Syria. This statement was the answer given by the majority of the relief workers in the areas under the Syrian regime’s control to queries about this aid. This failure, in the view of SNHR, stems from three main points:

First: While we realize that those affected by the earthquake in regime areas are hostages who must be helped, the methods attempted to deliver such help to date have proven to be a failure since the sole beneficiary of this aid is the Syrian regime itself, rather than the victims. If the Syrian regime had, like other dictatorships, ‘only’ ransacked 20 to 30 percent of the aid donated for the victims, we might have understood why those methods are still being used, for lack of any alternative. However, the Syrian regime and its forces openly steal as much as 90 percent of all aid delivered, which is then distributed to regime insiders and sold at a profit. This being the case, delivering aid donated for earthquake victims or others via the Syrian regime is, effectively, providing support for a regime involved in terrorizing its people, using chemical weapons, and committing multiple other crimes against humanity.

Second: None of the organizations operating in the areas under the Syrian regime’s control have any autonomy, whether we’re talking about the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), the Civil Defense, or any other groups founded by the regime’s security apparatus. International organizations, however, deal solely with these regime-controlled entities, effectively handing control of aid to the regime’s security apparatus and enabling it to pillage the vast majority of this aid. This same security apparatus is involved in crimes against humanity, including torturing people to death and ‘disappearing’ nearly 100,000 Syrian citizens.

Third: The Syrian regime is exploiting the flow of humanitarian assistance and the sympathy expressed towards the earthquake victims and survivors for political gain. In reality, the Syrian regime does not care about the Syrian people, whether in the areas under its control or those outside its control.

The SARC and the Syrian regime’s Civil Defense have received the overwhelming majority of the aid. Below is a brief overview of these bodies:

The Syrian regime’s Civil Defense
A state institution affiliated with the Syrian regime’s Ministry of Defense, the regime’s Civil Defense body is managed by regime army officers rather than autonomous civilian experts. This can be confirmed by the overview of the organization found on the official website of the Syrian regime’s Ministry of Defense.

Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC)
The SARC was founded pursuant to the legislative decree 117/1966 issued by the then-President of Syria Nureddin al-Atassi. The group enjoyed wide-ranging privileges which gave it a relatively high degree of administrative and financial autonomy.
Bashar Assad cancelled many of those previous privileges, however. One major example of this came on December 27, 2016, with the issuing of a decision by Emad Khamis, the then-Prime Minister of the Syrian regime’s government formally giving the head of the Syrian government the power to select one of the four candidates to chair the organization, even if this candidate had no experience in the humanitarian field. In line with this amendment, the pro-regime businessman Khaled Hboubati was appointed as head of the SARC. Hboubati has a long history of supporting the Syrian regime since before 2011. Hboubati, who had never been affiliated with the SARC or with any other humanitarian body for that matter, was appointed solely on the basis of his deferential loyalty to the Syrian regime.

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

- There is a dire and urgent need to increase humanitarian assistance to the families of the victims and the displaced, more especially in the wake of the devastating February 6 earthquake, across all areas of Syria, especially in northwestern Syria which is suffering from severe overpopulation, with hundreds of thousands of people forcibly displaced by the Syrian regime’s violations who were already suffering terribly even before the recent earthquake.
- The noble mission of humanitarian assistance should not be perverted and debased to turn it into a tool of funding and support for regime involved in perpetrating multiple crimes against humanity against its own people which continue to this day.
- The Syrian regime is pillaging the vast majority of aid donated for the victims. The regime does not care about the victims, whether they support or oppose the regime.

Recommendations to the UN and donor states

- Establish an international support platform to manage the process of coordinating humanitarian assistance in northwestern Syria. Such a body would provide an autonomous alternative option, in addition to the UN.
- A branch of this body would be devoted to negotiating with the Syrian regime as one entity, and would oversee the delivery and distribution of aid in regime areas.
- Increase both the quality and quantity of humanitarian assistance designated for Syrian relief organizations that have proved their integrity and autonomy, more especially shelter, with a special focus on the needs of women and children.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

We extend our most sincere and heartfelt gratitude to the victims’ and survivors’ families, including the activists who collaborated with us despite their own exceptionally difficult circumstances. May the victims of the earthquake rest in peace. We express our most heartfelt condolences to their families and friends.