

Death toll from earthquakes in Turkey and Syria tops 7,800



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Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has declared a three-month state of emergency ????

Ankara, February 8 (RHC)-- Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has declared a three-month state of emergency after the death toll from Monday's catastrophic earthquakes topped 7,800 and continued to rise. The World Health Organization warns the number of dead could ultimately increase eightfold, with some 23 million people affected by two major earthquakes that struck southeastern Turkey and northern Syria. Hundreds of aftershocks followed.

The quakes caused thousands of buildings to collapse, trapping people under rubble amid freezing temperatures.

In Turkey's border province of Hatay, residents anxiously searched for loved ones among the wreckage. One survivor told reporters: "Our relatives are dead. My sister's daughter died. She was 17. My sister-in-law's children are stranded under rubble. She's there with three children. They are not rescued yet. God, please help us. Please pray for us. I beg you: Pray for us. Pray for us. There are aftershocks. It's

uncertain what will happen to us.”

The earthquakes struck as fighting continued along the Turkey-Syria border between Turkish forces and Kurdish fighters. The United Nations reports more than 4 million people in northwest Syria where the deadly earthquake struck already rely on humanitarian assistance.

The U.N.'s humanitarian coordinator for Syria said Monday the quake is preventing aid workers from accessing northern Syria through the single border crossing into the region. El-Mostafa Benlamih said: “The infrastructure is damaged. Roads that we used to use for humanitarian work are damaged. We have to be creative in how to get to the people and how to get to them the assistance.”

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