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Dire situation in quake-ravaged SE Turkey, NW Syria



The death toll from two devastating earthquakes in southeast Turkey and northwest Syria, which struck on Monday, rose on Wednesday, as rescuers face shortages of emergency vehicles, fuel and time.

According to news reports from the quake-stricken areas of Turkey and Syria, the victims now exceed 11,000.

Crews have rescued more than 8,000 people in Turkey alone. However, the chances of unearthing people still alive in the heaps of rubble have dramatically dropped, as the third day of rescue efforts dawned on Wednesday.

The situation in Syria is even more dire, relief officials said. There is a severe lack of fuel, authorities there do not have enough machinery to dig through the debris and frequent power cuts are making it difficult to keep clinics running.

According to reports, the Greek state will also send aid to the affected areas in Syria, with a Greek mission preparing to depart as soon as possible, after

Damascus activated a relevant request with the European Civil Protection Mechanism.

The humanitarian aid to Syria will include tents, medicine and other goods and supplies for people that are now homeless and need immediate support.

In a related development, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis commended the ongoing rescue efforts in quake-stricken regions, in a tweet posted in Turkish on Tuesday evening.

A second Greek search and rescue unit with 21 first-responders, five physicians and paramedics, as well as two specially trained K9 units, was scheduled to fly to southeast Turkey on Wednesday.

A day earlier, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, His All Holiness Bartholomew I, conveyed his sincerest condolences to the President of the Turkish Republic, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, along with a pledge of support by the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

His All Holiness also spoke by phone with the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, His Beatitude John X, expressing the Ecumenical Patriarchate's support for the unspeakable tragedy caused by the powerful earthquakes in areas under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Antioch.

His All Holiness cited a willingness and readiness of the Mother Church to assist in every possible way towards the support of Orthodox brethren living in the affected areas, as well as every fellow human being who is suffering from the natural disasters.



Church of Greece

Back in Greece, hierarch members of the Holy Synod of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Greece expressed their sympathy and support towards the victims and the afflicted, with the Church of Greece announcing that assistance will be collected, in coordination with the Greek state, for dispatch to the quake-devastated areas.

The Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, His Beatitude Ieronymos, also congratulated Metropolitans in the Thrace border region of northeast Greece, who were among the first hierarchs who announced that they were collecting aid in the Metropolises with the intent of sending it to devastated regions.

Elsewhere, the Patriarch of Serbia, His Holiness Porfirije, on behalf of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Church, on Tuesday expressed his condolences to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Patriarch of Antioch John X, as well as to the leaderships of Turkey and Syria.

In a statement, His Holiness noted that “...we pray to the Lord to grant heavenly homes to the righteous and to comfort their relatives, as well as to save the lives of all other people in the areas affected by this natural disaster.”