

09/02/2023

Tragedy unending in quake-devastated areas; Greece offering all help it can



The plight of hundreds of thousands of people left homeless by earthquakes in the southeast Turkey and northwest Syria grew more desperate on Thursday, as hopes faded of many more people being found alive amid the ruins, according to a Reuters dispatch.

The death toll from Monday's twin quakes, which struck in the early morning, surpassed 17,000.

It tremors marked the biggest natural disaster to strike the wider region since 1999, when an equally powerful quake killed more than 17,000 people in northwest Turkey.

On its part, the Greek state transported another 17 fire-fighter emergency

responders on Wednesday afternoon, along with a physician. Another two units of Greece's civil defense force are already operating in southeast Turkey. Meanwhile, a total of six flights loaded with humanitarian aid have departed Greece for the quake-stricken areas.

The Holy Synod of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Greece and individual Metropolises around the country have also commenced the collection of aid to be dispatched to those in need.

Syrian Christian leaders call for end to sanctions

Still on the same subject, three prominent Christian ecclesiastical leaders in Syria issued a joint letter this week calling for an end to sanctions against the strife-plagued country, charging that such sanctions are unjustly preventing vital aid from reaching the people most affected by the devastating earthquakes.

The Feb. 7 letter was signed by the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, His Beatitude John X, the Melkite Catholic Patriarch Youssef I and Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II.

The letter reads, among others, "This natural disaster adds to the ordeal of the Syrian people, who continue to suffer from the tragedies of war, crises, disasters, epidemics, and the harsh economic hardships resulting from inflation, the absence of indispensable materials, medications, and daily basic necessities needed in order for people to survive and live in dignity."



Lift the Embargo on the Syrian People

Following the earthquake which struck northern Syria on Monday February 6, 2023, thousands of Syrians lost their lives, many churches, institutions and homes were destroyed and a large number of families were displaced.

This natural disaster adds to the ordeal of the Syrian people, who continue to suffer from the tragedies of war, crises, disasters, epidemics, and the harsh economic hardships resulting from inflation, the absence of indispensable materials, medications, and daily basic necessities needed in order for people to survive and live in dignity.

We, the three patriarchs with the heads of churches in Syria, demand from the United Nations and the countries imposing sanctions on Syria to lift the embargo and the unjust sanctions imposed on the Syrian people, and to take exceptional measures and immediate initiatives to secure the delivery of the much needed relief and humanitarian aid. We also appeal to the conscience of all the people of good will to advocate on behalf of the Syrian in order to put an end to their misery and enable them to live in dignity as envisioned by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We pray for the victims and their families, asking the Lord to grant rest to the souls of the departed and recovery to the wounded. We, likewise, pray for all those working in the fields of relief, rescue, and hospitalization. We appeal to the governments, international organizations, NGOs, charities, and peace advocates everywhere to expedite the support of relief and rescue efforts, irrespective of any political consideration.

Damascus, February 7, 2023

John X

Greek Orthodox Patriarch

II Aphrem Ignatius

Patriarch Orthodox Syriac

Joseph I

Greek Catholic Melkite Patriarch

And the Heads of the Churches in Syria

At the same time, His Beatitude John X has instructed for the creation of volunteer units to provide assistance in the Hama, Lattakia and Aleppo districts of northern Syria, and the collection of humanitarian aid for the quake-stricken.

Additionally, Syria has, for the first time, requested assistance from the European Union, the European Commission announced on Wednesday.

The EU said it would provide additional emergency support to both Turkey and Syria.

Archbishop of America Elpidophoros



Halfway around the world, the Archbishop of America, His Eminence Elpidophoros, on Wednesday visited the Turkish consulate in New York City, where he met with Consul General Reyhan Özgür.

In a later Tweet, His Eminence said he expressed his condolences for the victims of the tragedy in Turkey and shared prayers for the rescue missions still underway.

I visited the [@TRConsulNY](#) and met with Consul General [@ReyhanOzgurTR](#)

, to whom I expressed my condolences for the victims of the tragedy in Türkiye and shared my prayers for the rescue missions still underway. [@GOARCH](#) is initiating an Earthquake Relief Fund for Türkiye and Syria. pic.twitter.com/IH76sWyXcJ

— Elpidophoros (@Elpidophoros) [February 8, 2023](#)

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America also announced it was establishing an earthquake relief fund for Turkey and Syria.

