

# [***Turkey s Biggest Disaster In The Last Century : Earthquake Death Toll Crosses 21,000***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:67HH-RGM1-JBCM-F00W-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 664 words

**Byline:** Brian Bushard, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** Rescue efforts are ongoing in southern Turkey and northern Syria amid freezing temperatures.

**Body**

**Topline**

The death toll from the earthquake that rattled Turkey and Syria on Monday surpassed 21,000, according to officials in both countries, as rescue workers continue to sift through the rubble left behind from what Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogancalledthe biggest disaster in the last century.

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The death toll from the devastating earthquake that hit Turkey and Syria this week climbed to 20,000, officials said Thursday.

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**Key Facts**

Turkish officialsestimatethe death toll from the 7.8 magnitude earthquake has climbed to 16,546, with more than 66,100 residents in the country s southern region injured.

Syria s health ministry on Thursday said the death toll in government-controlled regions in northern Syria has risen to 1,347, with more than 2,200 injured, according tostate media.

The death toll in rebel-held areas in northwestern Syria where residents had already been relying on humanitarian aid from the country s decade-long civil war increased to 2,030, according to theSyrian Civil Defense, while nearly 3,000 residents have been reported injured.

That puts the total number of casualties above the number theWorld Health Organizationestimated Monday night, after the earthquake and a 7.5 magnitude aftershock just minutes later rattled Turkey and Syria, and as sub-freezing temperatures and more than 300 smaller aftershocks complicated rescue operations.

**What We Dont Know**

How much more the death toll will climb. Nearly 26,000 search and rescue workers in Turkey are on the ground searching through toppled buildings and piles of rubble for survivors,according tothe country s Disaster and Emergency Management Authority. In Syria, rescue teams are contending with a very vulnerable situation, United NationsResident Coordinator for Syria El-Mostafa Benlamlih said. According to Benlamlih, there are roughly 15.3 million people in Syria s government-held and rebel-occupied territories in need of humanitarian aid, including 100,000 in the city of Aleppo believed to be homeless. On Wednesday, however, University College London Professor Ilan Kelman warned the period for successful rescues is rapidly closing, noting the chance of survival drops substantially after 72 hours.

**Key Background**

The powerful earthquake toppled residential buildings, mosques and offices just after 4 a.m. Monday morning, with an epicenter roughly 20 miles east of the city of Gaziantep, Turkey making it thedeadliest in the worldsince the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan left nearly 20,000 people dead. More than a dozen countries, including the U.S., South Korea and China, as well as the European Union, havesentsearch and rescue teams and humanitarian aid into Turkey. President Joe Bidensaidthe U.S. has offered our full support to Turkey, a NATO ally, as well as equipment and assistance for humanitarian organizations in Syria amid tense diplomatic relations.

**Tangent**

Turkish officialsrestored residents accessto Twitter Thursday morning, one day after the social media platform was blocked following some criticism over the Turkish government s purportedly slow response to the earthquake and for earlier planning policies that allegedly caused more wreckage. Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the head of Turkey s opposition party,accused Erdoganof being responsible for the devastation,blamingErdogan s systematic profiteering ***politics***. Turkish policearrestedfive people on Wednesday over provocative posts regarding the earthquake on social media, while journalists have been attacked by Turkish authorities forallegedly spreading disinformation.

**Further Reading**

Turkey-Syria Earthquake: WHO Estimates Death Toll May Cross 20,000 As Freezing Weather And Aftershocks Slow Rescue Efforts(Forbes)

More Than 12,000 Dead In Turkey And Syria Earthquake As Death Toll Nearly Doubles(Forbes)

Worst Earthquakes And Where Turkey s Fits In: The 10 Deadliest And 10 Strongest Ones Since 1950(Forbes)

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