**Turkey-Syria earthquake**

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Earlier this month Turkey and Syria were jolted by a series of massive earthquakes. The first one of these was of a staggering magnitude of 7.8 and it hit South-Central Turkey near the Syria-Turkey border at around 4:15 a.m. Then after a string of aftershocks the second largest shock carried a magnitude of 7.5 in the afternoon, leaving hundreds of buildings flattened. Worst of all, over 40,000 people lost their lives and over a hundred thousand were critically injured in what President Erdogan has called the “The Disaster of the Century.”

Following the earthquakes, dozens of nations from all over the world rushed to offer financial and humanitarian help. A total of over 9000 rescuers from 80-plus countries raced against time to help the survivors stuck under the rubble. Furthermore, despite having undiplomatic relations with Syria, Israel declared humanitarian aid for Syria and dispatched a rescue team of 150 aid workers, engineers, and medical staff to Turkey. Even Pakistan, a country stuck in the worst economic turmoil, immediately announced moral and financial help for the victims. In addition, Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also paid an official visit to show solidarity with the people of Turkey. The response of the international community has been overwhelming. For every sigh of despair, there has been a hand for help. The Turkish President has vowed to reconstruct the Quake-hit areas of Turkey and rehabilitate the victims as soon as possible.

[Death toll from Russian missile strike in Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia rises to 13](https://www.nation.com.pk/06-Mar-2023/death-toll-from-russian-missile-strike-in-ukraine-s-zaporizhzhia-rises-to-13)

This is not the first time that Turkey has been faced with this calamity and unfortunately it would not be the last. This is because Turkey is located over the three major tectonic plates including the Eurasian, Arabian and African plates, making it one of the most seismically active zones of the world. A similar earthquake hit Turkey’s Marmara region in 1999 with an M7.4 at around 3 a.m. Like the present Kahramanmaraş Earthquake, this earthquake was extremely destructive as it swallowed over 17,000 lives, leaving over 50,000 injured. It also caused immense Infrastructure damage. After this 1999 devastation, the Government of Turkey passed several laws to prepare the country for future earthquakes including emergency management, updating building code reforms, earth quaking zoning, and awareness campaigns among people.

However, following the massive destruction that followed the present earthquake, it is being argued that lessons from the 1999-Izmit Earthquake had not been learned properly and the verdict has somehow shifted the blame for the destruction to the Turkish Government. The matter of fact is that the apartments in the region were newly constructed and according to the construction companies they complied with the latest standards. If this is true, why did buildings collapse? The latest standards for construction were last updated in 2018. The basic standards required that the buildings in earthquake alert zones use high-quality concrete along with steel rods. In addition, it is also necessary that beams and columns, especially the taller buildings be distributed in such a symmetry to absorb the shocks and reduce damage. Since many buildings were newly built, it follows that they should have been built according to the 2018 code but it seems like these standards had not been enforced properly as experts claim that the magnitude 7.8 shaking was strong but not strong enough to knock well-constructed buildings down.

[PTI approaches SC for Imran's appearance in courts through video link](https://www.nation.com.pk/06-Mar-2023/pti-approaches-sc-for-imran-s-appearance-in-courts-through-video-link)

In addition, the Turkish Government had previously granted construction amnesties which, according to experts, can prove to be disastrous in an episode of an earthquake. Under these amnesties, constructors who had not followed the required precautions and regulations had been exempted from fines. It then follows that the scale of the catastrophe amplified, not due to the absence of regulations but due to a lack of their enforcement. The Government has now released warrants for the arrest of 131 engineers, architects, and contractors that were involved in building the earthquake-struck region. While it is true that the earthquakes of 6th February were severe and successive and that any country would have faced similar challenges as Turkey is now facing, the poor construction and a lack of law enforcement definitely exacerbated the situation.

No country is spared by nature in that almost every nation on the planet is prone to a risk of natural disaster. What differentiates nations is their ability to prepare themselves for the worst and to tackle with resilience, the calamities which befall them. We cannot undo history but we can make sure that it does not repeat itself. Countries prone to earthquake risk, including Pakistan, need to ensure sufficient construction regulations and more importantly their enforcement to prevent the loss of precious lives and resources. The events of 6th February have been unfortunate for Turkey and Syria. In this time of distress, we pray for those who lost their lives in this cruel act of nature and we stand in solidarity with the survivors of the Turkey-Syria Earthquake who had to undergo unspeakable loss.