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Syrians in Turkey cross border after earthquake

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Turkey–Syria earthquakes 2023



EPA

| Syrian people at the Cilvegözü border crossing on Thursday

By James Gregory

BBC News

Hundreds of Syrians living in Turkey have returned to the war-torn country

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Almost four million Syrians have settled in Turkey since civil war broke out in their home country 12 years ago.

Some survivors of last week's earthquake are making the trip to the crossings in an attempt to reunite with family members back in Syria, some of whom they have not seen for years.

Among them is Reem, who with her nine-month old baby wrapped in a blanket, said she was travelling back to Syria after her home in Turkey was destroyed.

She told the BBC she believed hostility towards Syrians in Turkey had grown since the earthquake.

"We tried to find another place to stay but they [the Turkish] kept chasing us away asking us to return to Syria," she said.

"We tried staying at mosques but they kicked us out. They also didn't give us any tents. Should I stay in the street with my children? Where should we go?"

Many of those queueing have travelled with their families and large amounts of luggage, waiting for security personnel to allow them forward for processing.

Abbas Albakour told the AFP news agency he was returning home to Syria after his home in Kharamanmaras, near the earthquake's epicentre, had been destroyed.

"In Syria, there have been problems for 12 years, but right now the biggest catastrophe is in Turkey," he said at the Cilvegozu border crossing.

About 1,500 Syrians living in Turkey are thought to have died in the earthquake. Around 3.5 million Syrians in Turkey are registered as refugees, according to the United Nations (UN).



| Trucks carrying aid after crossing the Bab al-Hawa border crossing

Meanwhile, rescue efforts are continuing in Turkey. On Friday, two more people were pulled alive from the rubble in the city of Antakya some 11 days

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Nurse Deborah Swan, who was part of the UK's search and rescue response in the Hatay province, told the BBC she treated a man who had been trapped under a collapsed building for three days when a large aftershock occurred.

"It's quite disconcerting being in an unstable, collapsed structure particularly when there's a large aftershock," she told Radio 4's Today programme.

"We have to leave the building immediately [when an aftershock occurs] but as soon as we realise the building is okay, we go straight back in."

The rescued man stands a "very good chance of surviving", Ms Swan said.

But such rescues are becoming increasingly rare. The death toll in Turkey now stands at more than 38,000, making it the deadliest in the country's history.

In Syria, more than 5,800 people have died - the majority in the north-west, an area held by rebel insurgents who are at war with the government of President Bashar al-Assad. The conflict has complicated aid efforts in the country.

The UN announced on Friday that more than 140 lorries carrying aid have crossed into north-western Syria from Turkey since the earthquake.

Before the earthquake struck, almost all humanitarian aid was delivered through just one crossing - Bab al-Hawa.

But earlier this week, Syria agreed to allow the UN to open two further border crossings to help bring in more aid for the earthquake and conflict-hit area.

"We expect to have trucks crossing every single day," UN spokesman Jens Laerke told reporters in Geneva.

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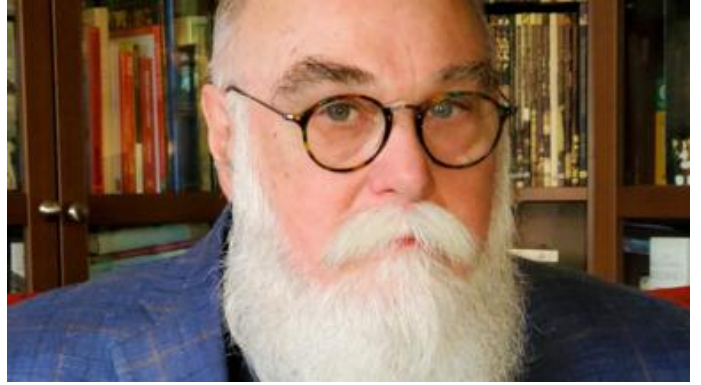
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