



Press release

NORTHWEST SYRIA: A YEAR AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE

Voices and testimonies of survivors of the deadly earthquake, in a video released by the organization Still I Rise

Rome, 02/06/2024 - 365 days have passed since a roar in the heart of the night shook the lands of Turkey and Syria. On the night between February 5 and 6 2023, a devastating magnitude 7.8 earthquake hit Northwest Syria. One year later, **the situation for the population in Northwest Syria area has still not improved**. On the anniversary day, the non-profit organization Still I Rise shares the testimonies of some survivors.

"The earthquake was completely different from all the emergencies we have responded to in the past," says **Ismail Abdullah**, spokesperson for the White Helmets, an emergency response organization operating in the area. "We said from the beginning that we needed help, but this help did not arrive in the early days. That's why we lost many lives."

In the three days following the earthquake, [no aid reached Northwest Syria](#), beyond the control of Bashar Al-Assad's regime, due to political negotiations at the United Nations Security Council. This led to a higher number of casualties. **The area most affected in Syria was the Northwest**, particularly the districts of Afrin, Harim, and Jabal Sam'an. The earthquake caused enormous damage and loss to the people in these districts. 74% of the total recorded casualties in the Country were concentrated in this area, with 4,400 dead, over 10,500 injured, more than 100,000 displaced, and **280,000 people in a state of dire need**. In total, **out of 4.55 million people there are currently 2.87 million internally displaced persons in the area** (source: [Ocha](#)).

Despite this dire situation, 2023 turned out to be the first year since 2010-2011 in which [international funding for the whole of Syria was lower than in previous years](#). Only 38% of the Humanitarian Response Plan was funded, compared to 53% the previous year, with devastating consequences for the entire Syrian population.

As if that were not enough, in December 2023 the **World Food Programme** announced [the suspension of its general food assistance program](#) for the whole of Syria in 2024, due to insufficient funds. In the previous year, this program had provided food parcels and vouchers to nearly 1.3 million people in Northwest Syria, so its suspension had a negative impact on the most vulnerable people.

"It's been a long time since we received support, nothing for our children. The camp, in general, is in a really terrible situation. I paid for the tent I live in; no one gave me



anything. We are threatened to be kicked out of this camp at any time, and **we have nowhere to go**. Many times, I get angry and hate everything in this world: we have no home, help, land. We have nothing," says **Kusar Mohamed Ali**, a displaced survivor in one of the refugee camps in the Afrin district. "There are many children who do not go to school and have nothing. We have two boys aged 14 and 15 and four girls, one of whom is ten years old: it is their right to go to school."

The **effects of the earthquake on education** have been equally devastating. It is estimated that, in Northwest Syria alone, 1000 primary and secondary schools were destroyed, while 40% of the 300 temporary education structures were damaged (source: [Ocha](#)). In the camps for internally displaced persons in Northwest Syria, [57% of children](#) do not have access to primary schools, and 80% do not have access to secondary schools. In the city of Ad Dana, an hour from Idlib, the earthquake fortunately spared the Still I Rise Academy - Ma'an, allowing it to resume its activities after the earthquake.

"After a year from that horrible night, where people saw their worst nightmares, we are here at Still I Rise, still providing all services to our students. These are essential services for these people to continue their lives and build their dreams," concludes **Abdulkafi Alhamdo**, Program Manager at Still I Rise. "While on the other hand, we see the United Nations (note: *WFP*) suspended aid to Northwest Syria, leaving these people suffering alone, without anyone to help."

VIDEO CREDITS

"NORTH WEST SYRIA EARTHQUAKE: 1 YEAR AFTER"

Production and concept: Still I Rise (www.stillirisengo.org)

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