



**For immediate release**

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## **Urgent Health Needs in Northwestern Syria After the Earthquake: A Call for Action**

The earthquake that struck Syria and Turkey has caused widespread devastation in northwestern Syria, resulting in almost 14,000 injuries and more than 3600 deaths in the first five days, according to the health directorates. The UN's coordination mechanism, which relies on the Health Cluster in Gaziantep, has been paralysed due to extensive damage to the city. Meanwhile, networks of organisations like the Syrian NGO Alliance (SNA) have been unable to activate their role, as many of their workers were among those directly affected by the earthquake. As a result, individual organisations, Aleppo Health Directorate, Idlib Health Directorate and the White Helmets (Syrian Civil Defense) working without one coordination mechanism as was previously the case.

### **Urgent Needs in the Health Sector:**

The health sector has been working tirelessly in response, but its already limited resources, such as diesel and medical supplies, are rapidly depleting. This is further compounded by the fact that many hospitals have become increasingly dependent on electricity from Turkey and have reduced their dependence on diesel generators, leaving them with insufficient reserves. In addition, the exhausted medical staff, many of whom have lost colleagues and family members, are in dire need of support, including psychological support.

It is crucial that the health sector in Northwest Syria receives support over the next 10 days. If the golden hour for the rescue response is **three days**, we believe that the golden period for the health response extends to about **15 days**. as patients will require monitoring and follow-up in the aftermath of the earthquake. Moreover, many injured were placed on the surgical lists for the coming days due to the lack of capacity to deal with the large numbers.

The essential needs over the **first two weeks** are:

- Fuel to keep hospitals, oxygen generators, and ambulance vehicles operational around the clock.
- Vital medications, such as anaesthetics, antibiotics, and pain relievers.
- Surgical kits, laboratory materials, and dialysis treatments.
- Orthopaedic supplies, including external fixators, plates, screws, and Kirchner wires.



- Continuation of the response to the cholera outbreak, as well as other infectious diseases, as it is possible for the numbers to increase dramatically in such circumstances.
- Psychological first aid for medical staff and patients.

### Supporting the Response Efforts:

Supporting the local leadership of the health directorates and the White Helmets is crucial in meeting the urgent health needs in northwestern Syria. Action is needed to provide financial support to purchase the required materials and supplies from within Syria, where there is **ample availability in the local market to meet the immediate needs of the response effort**. Resources in warehouses of the organisations in Turkey must be liberated and their **access to northwestern Syria through the Bab al-Hawa crossing facilitated**. Moreover, **reactivating the Gaziantep Health Cluster** in another city, such as Ankara or Geneva, is critical in the interim.

### Post-Acute Response Needs:

In the aftermath of the earthquake, the health sector will require continued support to address its most critical needs, including ambulance cars, additional intensive care units, restoration of damaged hospitals, and orthopaedic and neurosurgical consumables.

### Take Home:

Urgent action is needed to address the immediate and long-term health needs in Idlib in the aftermath of the earthquake. Supporting the local leadership and providing the necessary resources will ensure a prompt and effective response to the health crisis.

Written by Dr Munzer Alkhalil, surgeon and public health specialist. Past director of Idlib Health Directorate and committee member of the Syria Public Health Network.

For more information, you can communicate directly with the Health Directorates through the following emails:

- Idlib Health Directorate: [IHD.Director@ihd-sy.org](mailto:IHD.Director@ihd-sy.org)
- Aleppo Health Directorate: [aleppo.hd2020@gmail.com](mailto:aleppo.hd2020@gmail.com)

To support local organizations on the ground, please visit the following links:

- White Helmets: <https://www.whitehelmets.org/en/>
- Union of Medical Relief and Care Organization (UOSSM): <https://www.uossm.org/donate>
- Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS): <https://www.sams-usa.net/donate/>
- Syria Relief and Development (SRD): <https://srd.ngo/>
- Syria Forum USA: <https://sf-us.org>
- MedGlobal: <https://medglobal.org/donations/general-donation-form/>
- Molham Volunteering Team: [https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted\\_button\\_id=QGVWWJWYRJWZ8](https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=QGVWWJWYRJWZ8)



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