



Turkey: 2023 Kahramanmaraş Earthquakes

Community Resilience in the
Face of Catastrophe

On February 6, 2023, two massive earthquakes struck southeastern Turkey within hours, creating one of the deadliest natural disasters in the country's modern history. The response demonstrated both the strength of Turkey disaster systems and the power of community solidarity.

The Catastrophe

At 4:17 AM, a magnitude 7.7 earthquake struck near Kahramanmaraş, followed nine hours later by magnitude 7.6. The timing—in the middle of a cold winter night—maximized the tragedy. Entire apartment buildings pancaked, trapping thousands. Eleven provinces were severely affected, with over 50,000 deaths and millions displaced.





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Immediate Response

Within hours, Turkey mobilized its largest emergency response in history. AFAD deployed search and rescue teams from across the country. Thousands of volunteers rushed to help, digging through rubble with bare hands. International rescue teams from over 80 countries joined the effort. Despite freezing temperatures and damaged roads, rescuers worked around the clock, pulling survivors from collapsed buildings days after the quake.

Shelter and Recovery

With hundreds of thousands of homes destroyed and winter temperatures below freezing, providing shelter became critical. Container cities-temporary housing made of insulated shipping containers-were rapidly constructed. Community kitchens served hot meals. Mobile health clinics provided medical care. Psychosocial support teams helped people process trauma. The government launched a massive reconstruction program to build earthquake-resistant housing.

Community Solidarity

The response showcased extraordinary solidarity. Neighbors helped neighbors. Businesses donated supplies. Medical professionals volunteered in affected areas. The Turkish diaspora raised funds globally. This collective effort helped communities begin healing and rebuilding.

Key Lesson

Even with strong systems in place, major disasters test every capacity. Community solidarity, combined with organized response systems and modern building standards, makes the difference between catastrophe and recovery.