



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

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(*attending Cabinet*)

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To: All MPs and Peers
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Dear Colleagues,

EARTHQUAKES IN TURKEY AND SYRIA

The Foreign Secretary and I wrote to you on 8 February regarding the UK's response to the terrible earthquakes of 6 February in Turkey and Syria. I am writing to update further on the action we have taken.

The effects of the earthquake have been devastating: the death toll is now over 41,000 across the region, at least 25 million people have been affected, more than 101,000 have been injured and buildings and key infrastructure have been destroyed. Our thoughts remain with the people of Turkey and Syria, particularly with those affected by the earthquake; the first responders who have worked so valiantly to save those who are trapped; and the aid workers providing relief to those who have been affected.

British nationals

We continue to prioritise the safety and security of British nationals in the aftermath of the earthquake. Our Consular staff have supported those British nationals and/or their families who have contacted FCDO to request assistance. British nationals in Turkey who still require consular assistance can call the British Embassy on +90 312 455 3344 where consular staff are available 24 hours per day. British nationals in Turkey should also follow the information and advice of the local authorities and sign up for FCDO Travel Advice email alerts: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/turkey/email-signup>. Anyone in the UK concerned about friends or relatives should call the FCDO on +44 (0)20 7008 5000.

Whilst we have great sympathy with those Turkish nationals affected by the earthquake, FCDO is only able to provide consular support to British nationals. Turkish nationals will be supported by the Turkish authorities. Visa enquiries should be directed to UK Visas & Immigration at <https://www.gov.uk/apply-to-come-to-the-uk>.

Within Syria, Consular support is not available from the British government as all services of the British Embassy in Damascus are suspended and all diplomatic and consular staff have been withdrawn. If you or a constituent need to speak to a consular officer regarding any British national in Syria, please call FCDO in London on +44 (0)20 7008 5000.

UK response

The UK responded swiftly and decisively to this crisis. The Government is giving significant humanitarian support in response to the urgent need in Turkey and Syria, in close coordination with the Turkish authorities, the United Nations, International and NGO partners. On 8 February, we announced a package of life-saving support that included: the deployment of a UK International Search and Rescue Team in Turkey and rapid delivery of RAF flights containing life-saving items such as emergency shelter, medical equipment and blankets to Syria and Turkey.

The UKISAR team returned to the UK on 15 February after working around the clock on search and rescue operations. The team rescued multiple people who were trapped under the rubble, including a 2-year old girl and a 90-year old woman.

In our 8 February letter, we referred to the 7 February UK uplift of £800,000 to our existing support to the White Helmets (Syria Civil Defence). Since then, the UK has increased our support further: our uplift to the White Helmets now totals £3.8 million. This funding has been drawn from our Conflict, Stability and Security Fund and has helped provide life-saving search and rescue and emergency relief operations in north west Syria. Since 6 February, White Helmets volunteers have been able to carry out search and rescue operations in 60 villages across 182 locations, helping thousands of civilians. We salute the bravery, courage and resilience of those involved in these relentless efforts to save lives.

To provide immediate relief to affected Syrians, UK-funded UN and NGO partners have delivered life-saving assistance, including essential emergency shelters, WASH, winterisation kits, medicines and medical supplies to affected communities. This aid assistance comes from pre-positioned stock and from new aid that has been mobilised as part of our response.

Following a UK medical team assessment, on 11 February, a UK Emergency Medical Team arrived in Turkey and set up a field clinic to start treating patients who sustained traumatic injuries and people suffering from the secondary effects of the earthquake.

On 15 February, the UK announced a further package of support to address urgent humanitarian needs in Turkey and Syria. This will fund additional emergency relief supplies such as tents and blankets for families made homeless in freezing conditions and the ongoing deployment of world-class UK medical expertise through the joint MoD-

FCDO Field Hospital established in Türkoğlu. The Field Hospital was fully operational as of 15 February, and includes an emergency department, 24/7 operating theatre and accompanying medical staff, and is providing lifesaving medical care working side-by-side with Turkish medics.

This new humanitarian package will also support the work of the UN and aid agencies on the ground in Syria, helping communities ravaged by war and this national disaster, as well as the recovery effort in Turkey led by the government. There will be a particular focus on protecting women and girls, including by helping with childbirth and midwifery and reducing the risk of gender-based violence for communities who have been displaced.

The UK is working closely with the UN, International and NGO partners, and looking at all options to mobilise further UK and international support to ensure that aid reaches all those in need of humanitarian assistance. We welcome the UN-brokered agreement on 13 February to open additional border crossings into north west Syria for an initial period of three months; the proof however is in the delivery and we will continue to support our partners on the ground and at the United Nations Security Council, to drive the humanitarian response, calling for improved aid access through all routes into Syria. Easing cross-border aid from Turkey for the long term will ensure life-saving assistance reaches those in need, quickly.

To further facilitate humanitarian relief efforts in Syria, the UK issued two General Licences related to the UK's Syria sanctions regime on 15 February, building on existing humanitarian provisions. These Licences will strengthen the timely and effective delivery of relief efforts by removing the need for individual licence applications. These were issued following extensive engagement with NGOs and service providers, and do not diminish our continued commitment to holding Assad's regime to account for the atrocities it has committed during the conflict in Syria.

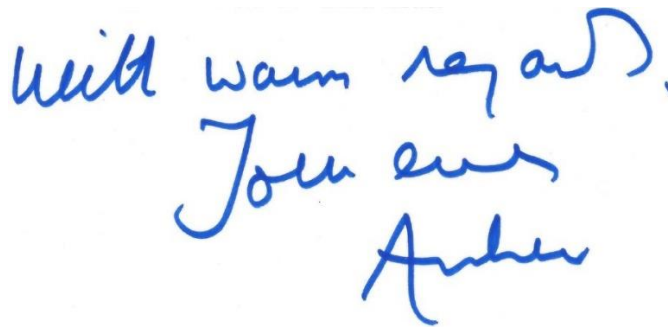
The UK government supported the opening of 'Syria House' in Trafalgar Square, liaising closely with the Asfari Foundation to identify potential venues and facilitate contact with the Greater London Authority and the Metropolitan Police – and enabling His Majesty the King to visit on 14 February. The Foreign Secretary also visited on 16 February. This was an important opportunity for the UK to express solidarity with the people of Syria and Turkey.

The British public has also displayed enormous generosity. On 8 February the Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) launched a joint appeal for Turkey and Syria, and the Government committed to match fund £5 million to support British aid organisations. This appeal has now raised over £84 million for both Turkey and Syria and the aid organisations are on the ground delivering our assistance. The response has also benefited from the UK's existing funding through multilateral channels. UK is a top donor to the UN's Syria Cross-Border Humanitarian Fund, a multi-sector, multi-donor pooled fund that is the critical mechanism that allows the international community to respond flexibly to emergency needs cross-border. The UK is also the second largest donor to the UN's 'Education Cannot Wait' Fund, which announced a \$7 million grant allocation on 14 February.

I trust that the latest details of the UK response will reassure colleagues of my and the government's commitment to respond to the disastrous events we have seen in Turkey and Syria. I am most grateful to colleagues from across government, particularly the Ministry of Defence, with whom the FCDO has worked seamlessly.

I plan to visit areas affected by the earthquake soon to see the scale of the international response and discuss with those on the ground what more we can do in the recovery and reconstruction phase. I will update colleagues next week following my visit, and the incredible response from the DEC.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink. The first line reads "With warm regards,". The second line reads "Yours ever,". The third line reads "Andrew".

Rt Hon. Andrew Mitchell MP
Minister for Development and Africa