



## Humanitarian assistance in cases of natural disasters and the 2023 earthquake in Turkey and Syria

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| ARTICLE INFO  | ABSTRACT   |
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| <p>Received : 21 March 2023<br/>                     Revised : 02 May 2023<br/>                     Accepted : 07 May 2023</p> <p>Available online: 10 May 2023</p> <p><b>Key Words:</b><br/>                     Earthquakes<br/>                     Human Rights<br/>                     Humanitarian Aid<br/>                     International Law<br/>                     International Relief<br/>                     Natural Disasters<br/>                     United Nations</p> | <p>Natural disasters represent a grave danger that threatens the countries of the world as a whole due to the enormous losses that result from them at all human, economic, social, and environmental levels, which justifies the urgent need for international cooperation in providing humanitarian and relief assistance to the victims affected by these disasters. The importance of research related to the legal scope of humanitarian aid in cases of natural disasters appears with the increase in the frequency and intensity of disasters, the growing losses resulting from them, and the insufficiency of the material or technical capabilities to rescue the victims. Hence, there is a need for a regulating and binding law for the international community that is more stringent and enjoys the spontaneity and speed of the initiative in the moment of disaster. The recent events of the massive earthquake that struck southern Turkey and northern Syria revealed a significant gap in the mechanisms of dealing with the disaster after it occurred, which doubled the human and economic losses in particular. This is especially true with transparency and objectivity in presenting the dimensions and limits of the disaster through media coverage and social media.</p> |

### Introduction

Natural disasters threaten humanity around the world, cause severe damage to lives and properties, and exceed the capacity of the states because of their adverse effects on human health and safety, and the resulting destruction of property and damage to infrastructure and services, which leads to economic and social turmoil for the affected country and requires the solidarity of society to confront it (Fatoni *et al.*, 2022). To confront them, the international community must unite to avert these disasters, face their difficulties, and expedite relief for those needing aid and recovery from their devastating effects. Furthermore, emphasis must be placed on the need to provide the appropriate environment to prepare for disasters and reduce their risks, in addition to diligent and persistent work to provide humanitarian assistance in cases of natural disasters, taking into account the application of the principles of humanity, neutrality, integrity, and the approval of the concerned country must also be obtained under the principle of respecting the sovereignty of the affected country and not

interfering in its internal affairs. This will be detailed in the research later.

This research sheds light on the basic principles on which efforts to provide humanitarian assistance should be based, especially humanity, integrity, and neutrality. This is while respecting the rules of traditional international law, on top of which is the sovereignty of states and non-interference in their internal affairs. The research focuses on the extent of the affected country's responsibility to protect the people on its territory. It also deals with the consequences of the devastating earthquake that struck Turkey and Syria recently to identify the extent to which countries and international organizations are committed to their duty to provide humanitarian aid to the victims of the earthquake.

The main objective of the research is to define the importance of the need for a legal framework that calls on the international community to overcome the gaps and to come up with innovative new mechanisms that contain this type of natural disaster. Unfortunately, the countries directly

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concerned with the problem may fail to note the sudden losses due to their lack of capabilities, the enormity of the disaster, or their inaction and complacency, which requires concerted international efforts and speedy enforcement to achieve the desired feasibility. The research problem is manifested in the insufficient financial and logistical capabilities in the countries afflicted by natural disasters to advance the sudden consequences of devastating disasters on a large scale (The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015). This necessitates an urgent need for immediate humanitarian aid from other countries and international organizations. However, aid delayed for days in this disaster to save those affected is useless. After all, those trapped under the rubble may be killed by hunger, thirst, and psychological stress if they do not die from their wounds (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs A, 2023).

The research summarizes legal mechanisms that can be implemented to minimize the effects of natural disasters and meet the needs of those affected in the best way by answering the following main questions:

- a) How effective are the efforts made in the local and international humanitarian response related to the 2023 earthquake in Turkey and Syria?
- b) Moreover, how can we ensure the most effective and timely delivery of humanitarian assistance?

The descriptive method was used to investigate the issue of humanitarian aid in cases of natural disasters from a theoretical perspective by defining the concept of disasters and their impact on human rights and revealing the legal principles that govern the provision of aid (Manjunatha, 2019). In addition, the analytical approach was used by analyzing the relevant international legal texts, including international treaties, resolutions, international legal documents, and official reports issued by the relevant international institutions. It also used the comparative approach to provide a brief comparison of the earthquake that struck Turkey and Syria and how to deal with it and respond to it at the national and international levels, to finally reach a set of recommendations aimed at improving the reality of humanitarian aid and achieving the desired goal of its provision.

### **The Concept of Natural Disasters and their Impact on Human Rights**

Natural disasters are catastrophic events that occur suddenly and unexpectedly, such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, hurricanes, and other natural hazards such as landslides, tsunamis, floods, and droughts that affect the daily lifestyle. As a result, people direly need national and international assistance to cover their needs for protection and housing, food, medical care, and other needs (United Nations Statistics Division, 2011). Alternatively, it is the occurrence of a severe disruption in the life of a society, which constitutes a widespread threat to human life, health, property, or the environment, whether that defect results from an accident, natural cause, or human activity, and whether it is sudden or develops because of complex long-term processes (Tampere Convention, 1998). Consequently, natural disasters cause a severe disruption in the life of society, as they result in massive human, material, economic or environmental losses on a large scale, which exceed the ability of the affected society to face them by relying only on its resources (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2008).

In 2021, about 432 natural disasters occurred in different parts of the world. In this way, hurricanes, floods, and other natural disasters caused 10,492 deaths and an estimated economic loss of US\$ 252 billion (The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, 2022). Furthermore, the Disaster Risk Reduction Report issued in 2022 indicated that the average annual economic losses from disasters have doubled over the past three decades, with an estimated increase of about 145%. This equates to an average of \$70 billion annually in the 1990s to more than \$170 billion annually at the end of 2022 (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2002).

Affected people suffer from the adverse effects of disasters, foremost of which is the displacement of large numbers of people, or they are forced to migrate from their homes in search of safety and shelter. In 2021, the number of internal displacement cases recorded worldwide reached 38 million, and 23.7 million were caused by natural disasters (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2022).

Disasters constitute a significant threat to people's health, as they lead to deaths and serious physical

injuries. Meanwhile, health risks are exacerbated by the damage to medical facilities, in addition to the mental and psychological problems that disaster victims are exposed to in their mental and psychological health resulting from crises and psychological trauma associated with the loss of loved ones and property (Giorgadze *et al.*, 2011).

Among other problems associated with disasters, we mention the long-term environmental effects related to the decline in agricultural production, drinking water pollution, and damage to infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, religious facilities, and roads. We further note that the effects of disasters are exacerbated in developing countries more than others, whether in terms of loss of life or economic loss, which calls for immediate and long-term help (The Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015).

However, disasters are linked to food security because they cause damage to crops, livestock, and livelihoods and exacerbate hunger and malnutrition. For example, the average level of undernourishment in countries highly exposed to climate disasters increased by three percentage points compared to other countries (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2022).

Disasters often affect education because of the resulting death, displacement, disease, and health problems for students and teachers. Disasters also lead to the destruction of educational facilities and school buildings, in addition to affecting the income of parents of students and losing their sources of livelihood, which negatively affects their ability to spend on their children and thus declines their academic achievement and production (Kousky, 2016).

### **The Humanitarian Principles Governing the Provision of Humanitarian Aid in Cases of Natural Disasters**

Natural disasters are similar to armed conflicts in that both represent a severe challenge to the international community and lead to humanitarian crises that require a humanitarian response on the part of the affected country or regional and international efforts according to the size of the disaster and the resulting losses and the extent of the affected country's ability to respond. This is to ensure the survival of disaster victims, meet their basic needs, reduce their exposure to danger, and

carry out their rescue, rehabilitation, and assistance (Human Rights Council, 2014). From this viewpoint, human suffering is the same. As such, the principles related to international humanitarian law that govern international and non-international armed conflicts apply to the management of natural disasters, represented by these humanitarian principles:

#### **The Principle of Humanity**

The principle of humanity is considered the cornerstone of protecting people under the provisions of international human rights law. The principle is intended to treat all those affected by natural disasters humanely and equally in a way that guarantees to save their lives, respect their rights and dignity, and alleviate their suffering in all circumstances. (Rubin & Dahlberg, 2017). The human suffering of disaster victims in afflicted countries must be addressed, respected, and protected from any brutal or humiliating treatment (International Review of the Red Cross, 1993). It should also pay special attention to the needs of the most vulnerable, such as women, children, the sick, the elderly, and refugees (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2007). In other words, giving priority when providing humanitarian aid can be discriminatory if it is based on the extent of the need of the affected people. All international governmental and non-governmental organizations that provide humanitarian assistance related to rescue, relief, and rehabilitation must carry out this assistance without discrimination between the victims and with purely humanitarian motives (United Nations General Assembly, 1988).

#### **Integrity Principle**

Humanitarian assistance in disaster situations must be provided fairly and objectively, with no considerations in assisting based on race, religion, color, gender, or any other criteria. This principle has been mentioned in many international documents related to the legal readiness to deal with natural disasters. For example, the Guidelines on the Right to Humanitarian Assistance stipulate that humanitarian assistance must be provided to all people in dire need of it impartially and with no discrimination or prejudice (International Review of the Red Cross, 1993).

**The Impartiality Principle**

This principle stems from the importance of all persons enjoying fundamental rights and freedoms equally with other persons, where humanitarian assistance related to natural disasters is supposed to be provided with no discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, color, sex, political opinion, social class, or any other consideration. Instead, the priority in providing aid must be based on the extent of need (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, n.d.).

Therefore, it is unacceptable for humanitarian assistance in natural disasters to be based on discrimination. All states must respect the rights of people on their lands and be subject to their jurisdiction with no discrimination (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966).

Based on the preceding, humanitarian assistance must not involve any form of discrimination, which leads to excluding those in need of assistance or prioritizing those who do not deserve it based on discriminatory criteria.

**The Principle of Neutrality**

The principle of neutrality refers to the impartial nature of actions related to the response to disasters, where the interest of the affected people must be placed at the center of attention of humanitarian aid efforts, in addition to refraining from taking any actions or positions of a political, religious or ideological nature that constitute interference in the internal affairs of the affected countries. The principle of neutrality must be above all consideration for all those who provide humanitarian assistance (United Nations General Assembly, 1988).

**Providing Humanitarian Assistance in Cases of Disasters and The Principle of Non-interference in Internal Affairs**

The principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of states is one of the most well-established principles in international law, as it is the basis for ensuring the international order. Furthermore, the principle represents the embodiment of legal means for protecting the sovereignty of states and ensuring their independence. Since the establishment of the United Nations Organization in 1945, the principle of non-interference has emerged strongly in the Charter, Article 2(7) of the Charter states that "Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters

which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter, but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII."

Based on respect for the state's territorial sovereignty and non-interference in its internal affairs, the duty to protect and provide relief to persons affected by natural disasters rests primarily with the affected state (International Review of the Red Cross, 1993). Therefore, this state must care for its victims and secure their basic needs. Accordingly, it draws up plans for humanitarian assistance within its territory and is concerned with organizing, coordinating, and implementing it (United Nations General Assembly, 1988). The affected country also must develop and implement effective measures to deal with the disaster, control its internal conditions, and mitigate the severity of the disaster, in cooperation with relevant international and regional organizations and bodies, to protect the lives of people in its territory and protect its national wealth and infrastructure from the effects of the disaster (United Nations General Assembly, 2008). It must be considered that the affected state's fulfillment of its responsibility to assist the affected and protect them effectively requires the support of the public authorities through a mixture of official and voluntary work efforts. The essential role played by civil society organizations, such as the National Societies of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Movement, is highlighted here (Sphere Association, 2018).

In emergencies resulting from natural disasters, the situation usually exceeds the capabilities of the affected country. Consequently, countries must cooperate to provide aid and assistance and coordinate relief operations with the disaster-stricken country (United Nations General Assembly, 1990). When the affected state cannot provide adequate humanitarian assistance to victims under its jurisdiction or effective control, it may seek assistance from competent international organizations or other states. Although the responsibility for preventing the risk of natural disasters and taking effective measures to reduce them rests with the state on whose territory the disaster occurred, international cooperation and solidarity in relief in cases of natural disasters rest

with all states and international governmental and non-governmental organizations alike (World Conference on Disaster Reduction, 2005). On this basis, the affected state bears the responsibility in the first place to protect its citizens from disaster. At the same time, states and international organizations can offer or provide humanitarian assistance to the afflicted country, provided that the sovereignty of the country receiving the aid is considered, to avoid considering it an illegal interference in the internal affairs of the affected country (United Nations General Assembly, 1988). Thus, humanitarian operations are subject to the state's consent and approval. However, in the event of an apparent failure of the state to play its role in protecting its citizens, or the state's arbitrary refusal and non-acceptance of the entry of humanitarian relief operations into its territory without a serious reason or legal justification for this refusal, The United Nations can intervene through its agencies to provide relief, despite the lack of consent of the concerned country, considering that depriving civilians of humanitarian relief and not preserving their fundamental rights is a threat to international peace and security. So, it is the duty of the affected state not to consider humanitarian assistance provided by other states or organizations to victims as interference in their internal affairs and not to refuse assistance without justification if such refusal could lead to a humanitarian disaster or endanger the fundamental rights of the victims. In such a case, the United Nations and other competent global and regional organizations may take appropriate coercive measures to urge the affected country to comply with the rules of international law and to enable it to deliver its aid and alleviate the suffering of the victims (International Review of the Red Cross, 1993). Whether the humanitarian aid is related to providing relief to the survivors and those affected by the disaster, providing them with immediate assistance, securing decent places to stay for those who have lost their homes, or if the assistance is related to the later stages during rehabilitation and reconstruction. We conclude that the relief offered by states and international and humanitarian organizations cannot be considered illegal interference in the state's internal affairs if

humanrights are seriously violated, and the life or health of the victims is seriously endangered.

### **The Position of International Law Regarding the Providing of Humanitarian Aid in Cases of Natural Disasters**

Obtaining humanitarian assistance from natural disasters is considered one of the most important rights guaranteed by international law, which ensures that people affected by disasters will be entitled to the right to life, health, protection, and other rights necessary for their survival and well-being (International Review of the Red Cross, 1993). Several international policies, agreements, and guidelines emphasize the obligation of states and regional and international organizations to take the necessary measures to protect those affected by natural disasters and avoid and mitigate the human suffering resulting from there. This is through providing humanitarian assistance immediately and directly or in the post-disaster recovery phase and the need to rebuild infrastructure and provide housing for affected survivors.

International cooperation in providing the necessary humanitarian assistance in disaster situations is one of the well-established duties enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, which is related to the promotion of friendly relations and cooperation between states in solving international economic, social, or humanitarian problems, including the provision of assistance to victims of disasters, especially food, medicines and medical care. At the same time, it is the responsibility of the countries near the place of the disaster to provide assistance and participate as much as possible to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to the victims, especially in areas difficult to reach (United Nations General Assembly, 1988). After all, disaster risk reduction requires sharing responsibilities among all concerned governments and sectors, each according to its circumstances, in a way that respects and promotes human rights and protects people's lives, property, and sources of livelihood, as well as environmental and cultural resources (The Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015).

The charters relating to humanitarian assistance within the scope of managing natural disasters are based mainly on the International Bill of Human Rights, represented in the Universal Declaration of

Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. This is because the right to humanitarian assistance is closely linked to the right to life stipulated in all the aforementioned international documents. Many international agreements stipulate the importance of international cooperation in strengthening the capacity of the affected country in cases of natural disasters. For example, the Tampere Convention clarified mechanisms for providing telecommunications resources to mitigate disasters and facilitate cooperation in relief operations. Also, it specified how to provide international assistance in telecommunications, following the principles of the United Nations for humanitarian assistance, the nature of the natural disaster, and the ability of the affected country to prepare for it or respond to it (Tampere Convention, 1998).

In the United Nations' goal to provide support and humanitarian assistance to the affected countries in cases of disasters, it has established the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Disaster Relief Operations, which is responsible for coordinating international assistance in cases of natural disasters, facilitating access to disaster areas, organizing needs assessment tasks and collecting resources. In addition, many international and regional bodies are concerned with supporting the efforts of countries facing natural disasters, such as the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Program, and the United Nations Children's Fund. These include the International Council of Charities, African Humanitarian Action, the Asian Network for Disaster Reduction and Response, and the Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation.

The Sphere Handbook Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response "Sphere Guide" are among the most critical initiatives related to humanitarian standards that should govern disaster response. These documents aim to improve humanitarian work quality at the level of all sectors related to planning, managing, and implementing humanitarian responses and taking the necessary steps to mitigate human suffering from disasters. This, in turn, ensures that the affected population obtains protection and security, receives aid, lives in dignity, and

participates in decisions related to their recovery (Sphere Association, 2018). The Gender Manual in Humanitarian Action includes the procedures to be followed by humanitarian actors to ensure that the specific gender needs, priorities, and capacities of different women, girls, men, and boys are considered in a way that ensures the promotion of gender equality in all aspects of humanitarian response, targeting assistance to the neediest groups, and monitoring the impact of assistance programs on the beneficiaries. The ultimate goal is to improve those programs' levels and facilitate disaster-affected communities' recovery (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2018).

The Sendai Framework outlined priorities to prevent new disaster risks and reduce the risks of existing natural disasters. These priorities are understanding, monitoring, and assessing disaster risks, enhancing effective response by transferring, exchanging experiences and technical knowledge, and investing in disaster risk reduction. In addition, the goal is to increase the ability to confront all concerned institutions and sectors and strengthen early warning systems and disaster preparedness. This would improve the understanding of the causes of disasters and thus enhance the capabilities to deal with them and rebuild better in the stages of recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction (The Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015).

#### **The February 6 Earthquake and the Assessment of National and International Responses to it**

On February 6, 2023, southern Turkey and its neighboring regions in Syria were subjected to devastating earthquakes. One earthquake, which had a magnitude of 7.8 on the Richter scale, was classified as one of the ten deadliest earthquakes in the twenty-first century (Cohen, 2023). According to official statistics, the earthquake and the resulting aftershocks caused widespread damage, including killing about 41,000 people, injuring 108,000 others, displacing hundreds of thousands due to the collapse or damage of thousands of buildings, and destroying infrastructure facilities, including water pipes, telephone, and electricity lines, as well as the Internet, and the destruction of roads, railways, bridges, and dams (Turkey-Earthquake: Emergency Situation Report, 2023).

Since the first hours of the earthquake, the Turkish government declared a level four emergency in the

affected areas for three months, which enabled it to provide flexibility in taking the necessary measures and actions to protect the public interest, confront the disaster, contain its effects, and recover from it. Furthermore, it sent rescue teams to the affected areas immediately to search for survivors under the rubble and transfer them to hospitals, informed the residents to refrain from entering the damaged buildings, provided them with alternative shelter, and called for the mobilization of all national forces. Beyond this, it also called on other countries and international organizations to extend a helping hand and provide international assistance to support rescue efforts (Al Jazeera, 2023). Indeed, many countries rushed to provide in-kind and cash assistance, medical equipment and staff, search and rescue teams, and a group of governmental and non-governmental organizations joined to provide humanitarian support to the Turkish government. For example, the World Health Organization sent medical teams to treat the injured, supported health workers, and provided health services to nearly 400,000 people affected by the earthquake. More actions include supporting 120,000 surgeries and strengthening mental health services and psychosocial support (WHO Foundation, 2023). The United Nations Development Program also pledged its assistance in repairing damaged water facilities, managing, removing, and recycling debris, paving the way for deliveries of vital supplies and food, and to start restoring livelihoods and returning to everyday life by supporting the Turkish authorities in providing essential social services, and protection of damaged cultural heritage monuments (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). At the same time, the World Food Program provided nearly one million general food aid, meals, and ready-to-eat rations to those affected by the earthquake (World Food Programme, 2023).

Despite the global and regional relief response to the emergency caused by the earthquake in Turkey, many volunteers were involved in the medical relief operations, and field hospitals were built. The difficulty of rescue operations and the complication of vital international aid deliveries due to bad weather, a blizzard, and three airports out of service due to the earthquake, given that Turkey hosts the most significant number of refugees worldwide (Al

Jazeera, 2023). The response to the emergency resulting from the earthquake in Turkey also showed the need to provide earthquake monitoring centers to reduce its risks and the need for more corporation and coordination to provide services promptly (Responding to the Türkiye–Syria Earthquake, 2023).

On the Syrian side, the Syrian government announced taking urgent measures to deal with the state of emergency resulting from the earthquake. It urged citizens to provide assistance and alleviate the impact of the humanitarian disaster as much as possible. However, the Syrian authorities did not officially declare an emergency in the affected areas. On the other hand, the areas under the influence of the Syrian authorities have received support from some countries and international humanitarian organizations, especially allied countries such as Iran and Russia or friendly countries such as Iraq and Algeria, as land and air convoys loaded with food, relief, and medical supplies were sent to them (United Nations Secretary-General, 2023).

Despite the concentrated humanitarian efforts in the Syrian territories, the humanitarian situation was complicated in the areas affected by the earthquake, especially with the displacement of tens of thousands of those affected who lost their homes in the cities of Aleppo, Hama, and Latakia, and there are not enough safe shelters for them. In addition, water pumping stations and sanitation facilities were seriously affected because of the earthquake (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs B, 2023). This led to the spread of mental and psychological health disorders and increased disease cases after the earthquake, whether outbreaks of infectious diseases such as lice and scabies, various infections, and respiratory diseases due to cold weather. This was due to the lack of resources and the urgent need to provide baby food, medicines, equipment, and medical supplies (Responding to the Türkiye–Syria Earthquake, 2023).

Turning to the areas outside the control of the Syrian authorities and under the control of the opposition, in the north-west of the country, which is the area most affected by the earthquake on the Syrian territory, the Civil Defense Forces known as the White Helmets took over the response to the

earthquake and declared north-west Syria a completely disaster-stricken area after the earthquake that hit it. This resulted from the catastrophic situation resulting from the large numbers of dead, injured, and stranded people due to the collapse of buildings and sharp cracks in them because they are not durable and do not meet the conditions for resistance to earthquakes amid a lack of capabilities and services and the lack of shelters, food insecurity, stormy and freezing weather conditions, and low temperatures. The Civil Defense Forces called on all local forces to mobilize their cadres. They called on international humanitarian organizations to intervene quickly to relieve the afflicted and meet their needs (Mistou, 2023). Indeed, aid was provided, but it was somewhat late due to supplies, financing, and delivery difficulties. After all, the Syrian authorities delayed delivering aid to the affected people in need. The first UN aid convoy entered the affected areas in northwestern Syria three days after the earthquake (United Nations Secretary-General, 2023). There has been the politicization of the process of distributing humanitarian aid and its delivery to areas under the control of the opposition. In this way, the Syrian government insists that any foreign aid should be sent through it, with allegations that some relief materials and food aid parcels are sold on the black market instead of delivered to the earthquake victims (Khatib, 2023).

This has complicated relief efforts in what can be considered a violation of the principles of humanitarian work, which are supposed to be based on the principles of humanity, neutrality, and integrity. This is especially the case if we consider that most of the Syrians affected by the earthquake, who reside in southern Turkey in the Syrian areas under the control of the opposition, were displaced initially due to the country's crisis for 12 years.

Thus, it seemed as if there was tolerance for the collective suffering of the Syrians, whose humanitarian needs, according to the United Nations, have reached their highest level since the outbreak of the conflict nearly 12 years ago (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs C, 2023). The humanitarian catastrophe that befell Turkey and Syria as a result of the earthquake highlighted the failure of the international community to assume its

responsibilities in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake disaster. Considering the growing needs of the affected people in the two countries, the slowdown in the provision of aid, and the delay in the arrival of first aid and participation in operations to save lives at risk convoys to the region to the earthquake victims in Syria. It is important to remember that the earthquake was associated in Syria, in particular with deteriorating living conditions, poor infrastructure, a shortage of health personnel, and the lack of necessary medical care for those affected by the earthquake or those suffering from chronic diseases who could not find the required treatment for them.

### **Conclusion**

Despite the importance of the efforts made within the scope of the international humanitarian response related to facing the dangers of the 2023 earthquake in Turkey and Syria and limiting its losses. We have felt the mobilization of the affected country, Turkey, with all its capabilities to note the problem that struck the country, taking all possible measures to protect the affected people. This enabled it to limit the losses and reduce them despite the severity of the disaster, helped by the support it received from the international community. On the contrary, the local and even international response to the earthquake in Syria is considered insufficient. After all, the support provided was not commensurate with the enormity of the damage caused by the devastating earthquake and the difficulties in delivering aid. This, in turn, necessitates the urgent need for more international cooperation at all social, economic, and health levels. To ensure the provision of the most significant amount of adequate humanitarian assistance and to work to reduce the effects of the earthquake. The research recommends:

- Conclusion of a binding international agreement concerned with protecting those affected by natural disasters, mobilizing immediate assistance, and organizing international relief efforts to build the necessary capabilities to prevent, respond to, and mitigate natural disasters.
- Integrating precautionary plans for managing natural disasters into countries' development plans. Such as providing early detection techniques for natural disasters and warning

- residents to forestalled their effects in the event of their occurrence.
- Training the population to perform the necessary first aid methods in disasters to help reduce the possibility of heavy losses of life and property.
  - Ensuring effective follow-up with local authorities, the international community, and humanitarian organizations assume their relief responsibilities while respecting the human rights and dignity of those affected by natural disasters.
  - Facilitating the arrival of humanitarian aid, organizing its distribution process, and providing relief equipment, rescue teams, and human cadres trained in dealing with natural disasters.
  - Providing early detection techniques for natural disasters and warning residents in the event of their occurrence to reduce damage to them and their property.
  - Increasing community awareness of dealing with natural disasters and developing clear plans for evacuating buildings in emergencies.
  - Adopting strict laws for the construction of housing and facilities in Turkey and Syria to avoid the recurrence of the humanitarian catastrophe associated with the February 6 earthquake.
  - Providing urgent essential services such as health, food, water, sanitation, and urgent housing for people displaced by the earthquake in Turkey and Syria and supporting livelihoods and rehabilitation in the areas affected by the earthquake.

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### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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