

MOUNTING TOLL

Turkiye says 76 nations sent rescuers; toll tops 40,000

BLOOMBERG/AP — ISTANBUL

The number of dead in Turkey and Syria rose to 40,835 according to Turkish officials and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which uses a network of activists on the ground. Tens of thousands of people were still missing.

A woman and her two children — a boy and a girl — were extricated from a collapsed apartment building in Antakya, Turkey, a full 228 hours after the first 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck in the early hours of February 6. All three were taken to a hospital.

Rescuer Mehmet Eryilmaz said the woman, named Ela, asked what day it was when she was pulled from the wreckage.

"First, I held her hand," Eryilmaz told Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency about reaching her in the rubble. "We talked, chatted and calmed (her) down. After that, we continued our work... We are very happy, it's the fifth life we saved."

Eryilmaz, who is a member of a team trained to perform mine rescues, added: "She asked for water in the first place but we did not give anything before the medical teams intervened."

A woman and her two children, a boy and a girl, were rescued from a collapsed apartment building in Antakya, Turkey, a full 228 hours after the earthquake.

She asked 'What day are we on?' Health worker Ali Parlaz, who treated Ela and her son and daughter, said the three were dehydrated but in reasonable condition.

Meanwhile, Turkish foreign minister thanked the international community yesterday for its support following the earthquakes.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said 76 countries sent search and rescue teams to help Turkish personnel comb through collapsed buildings. Twelve of the foreign teams have returned home after completing their missions, he said.

"Of course, everything isn't perfect. There were shortcomings, shortcomings in coordination in the beginning, but in a short time, the system was established," Cavusoglu said of the emergency response.

The minister said 36,000 tents had arrived in Turkey to help shelter the tens of thousands of people left homeless and that another 51,000 were en route along with shipping containers that Qatar used to house football fans during last year's World Cup tournament.

Cavusoglu said his government also was working to ensure "urgent housing needs" were met with the local production of tents and containers that would be used for temporary shelter.

Along with the more than 35,000 people killed in Turkey, nearly 3,700 deaths were confirmed across the border in war-torn Syria, where the quakes multiplied the suffering of residents who had endured 12 years of civil war.

The president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mirjana Spoljaric, said in a statement after visiting Syria that "communities already devastated by the years of conflict are now being pushed beyond their limits." She emphasised an immediate need for clean water.

Orhan Tatar, general director of earthquake and risk reduction at Turkey's disaster management authority, said that the earthquakes



This aerial view shows collapsed buildings during ongoing rescue operations in Kahramanmaraş, southeastern Turkey. (AFP)

had produced a shift of about 7.3 metres in the ground and a massive crack of about 400 kilometres.

The two earthquakes took place on five faults and were followed by some 3,900 aftershocks, Tatar said, calling the number a "very serious" and "unusual" amount. The aftershocks

have meant people in the affected areas could feel significant shaking every 15 minutes, the official said.

Tatar said billions of cubic metres of rubble would have to be removed. He also warned that heavy snow in some rural areas was creating a risk of avalanches.

TRAGEDY

UN: 73 migrants presumed dead in vessel mishap off Libya

AP — GENEVA

An inflatable rubber boat carrying migrants wrecked off the coast of Libya and 73 people were missing and presumed dead, the UN migration agency said yesterday. It was the latest tragedy involving migrants seeking better lives in Europe.

The UN International Organization for Migration said in a statement that the disaster took place on Tuesday and that Libya authorities had retrieved 11 bodies. It said the boat, packed with

around 80 migrants, reportedly departed from the village of Qasr Al Akhbar, 80km east of the capital, Tripoli. The migrants were heading to European shores, it said.

The dead included one woman and 10 men, said Safa Msheli, IOM's spokesperson.

It was not immediately clear what happened to the vessel but images showed the deflated broken-up rubber boat on shore.

Seven migrants, all men, survived the mishap and made it to Libyan shores, the UN said, and were in "extremely dire conditions."

They were taken to a hospital.

Qasr Al Akhbar officials shared footage online showing Libya's Red Crescent workers handling dead bodies that washed ashore. The footage also showed the broken-up inflatable rubber boat.

A survivor said in a different video shared by the municipality that scores of migrants were killed in the shipwreck. They were paid between \$3,000 to \$5,000 each to smugglers to make the ill-fated trip.

In video comments, Salem Awag, the top Qasr Al Akhbar official, called on authorities in

Tripoli to step up support to the village to help guard the shore and prevent further crossings.

Tuesday's shipwreck was the latest tragedy in the central Mediterranean Sea, a key route for migrants. The death toll on that route has reached at least 130 migrants this year, IOM said. In 2022, more than 1,450 migrants died, according to the IOM's missing migrants project. "This situation is intolerable," said Safa Msheli, the organization's spokesperson. She called on governments to increase search and rescue efforts.



Ahmed Nejib Chebbi (C), political committee chief of Tunisia's Amal Party and leader of the opposition National Salvation Front, speaks during a press conference in Tunis yesterday. (AFP)

Tunisia opposition decries 'repressive' arrests

AFP — TUNIS

Tunisia's main opposition coalition yesterday slammed a string of "repressive" arrests, mainly targeting critics of President Kais Saied, including members of the Ennahdha party.

Police in the North African country — birthplace of the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings — have arrested 10 public figures since Saturday, also including the director of a popular radio station and a prominent businessman.

Calling the arrests "violent and legally baseless", National Salvation Front head Ahmed Nejib Chebbi said the government's "fumbling and resorting to violence will deepen the rot" of Tunisia's political system.

The arrests come 18

months after Saied froze parliament and seized far-reaching powers, moves critics have labelled a coup.

Chebbi, whose anti-Saied alliance includes Ennahdha, accused the President of "the use of repression" and exacting "vengeance" on his rivals. "The country is in crisis and the government is only thinking about how to neutralise its opponents," Chebbi told journalists in Tunis.

The latest arrests have come as Tunisians grapple with grave economic problems, including shortages of basic goods such as petrol and sugar.

Police on Monday night arrested former justice minister Nouredine Bhiri and Mosaïque FM director Nouredine Boutar.

TENSIONS

Rwanda says Congolese soldiers attack border post

AP — KIGALI

Rwanda's army said its troops briefly exchanged fire with soldiers from Congo earlier yesterday, in a new spike in tension between the neighbours who have accused each other of supporting armed rebel groups on the other side of the border. Congo denied that account.

A statement said twelve to fourteen Congolese soldiers entered the no man's land near the western district of Rusizi and opened fire at a Rwandan border post, in "an act of provocation." "Our security forces responded and (the Congolese) soldiers withdrew," the Rwandan statement said. "There were no casualties on the Rwanda side and the situation is calm." Congo's government said there were clashes between its military and a group of "bandits" near the border in Bukavu, but denied entering the neutral zone. "In no case did (the army) cross the neutral zone, let alone open fire in the direction of Rwanda," Theo Ngwabidje Kasu, governor of South Kivu province, said in a statement.

Social media monitoring tech - in public safety

Social media monitoring is extremely advantageous to have in our lives for public safety reasons. The latest technologies make it easy to identify issues relating to public safety in real time on social media platforms.

The relevant authorities can monitor and respond to emergencies when required by detecting meaningful patterns and trends in the information flow and streams of messages. They can identify events through significant spikes in activity and the meanings can be determined by changes in content.

Social media monitoring technology can be used by the police, government officials, community organisations, businesses and the general public to improve public safety and well-being.

Communication is the key Social media enables us to stay in touch and relay information to the people we choose. Communication is the key to our well-being and today's social media platforms have become increasingly versatile and powerful.

The latest evolution in social media monitoring technology enables authorities and companies to listen to the general chatter found online. It can be used as a means of communicating important information to the public in a direct and personal way.

Crisis alerts Recognising a potential crisis, alerting the public and putting the relevant emergency measures in place is one way social media can aid public safety.

The most widespread social media tools are Facebook and Twitter, with 2.91 billion and 237.8 million users respectively. These two channels alone have had a central role in monitoring world events, such as the London riots, the northern Africa revolutions and the nuclear accident and tsunami in Japan.

Social media was used by citizens for organising and spreading information, while it was also a vital communication link and major source of information for emergency services managers. Communicating in real-time enabled rescue efforts to focus on the right places.



Emergency management Europe has several different technical systems in place for emergency management. These include satellite-based warning systems, high-level strategic and organisational systems, sirens and automated emergency messages. Social media complements these physical systems to communicate crisis information to the wider population.

Crisis communication strategies are vital for every organisation, private or governmental. Best practices during a crisis include using social media technology aligned with overall crisis communication strategies.

Disaster relief A recent study into using social media monitoring to aid disaster relief found it was generally considered an effective platform to improve awareness among communities.

Emergency responders use social media to tailor crisis information to address people's needs and to understand the sentiments of communities. In doing so, the information they provide can mitigate rumours and dispel panic.

Regardless of the official authorities' presence on social media platforms, the public can keep up the conversation about the crisis or emergency. This can then be flagged up to the relevant organisations to give them real-time updates.

Importance of reliable sources A warning from a credible source, such as a government department, or the emergency services, will have a greater impact that general chatter. This is why it's crucial that official bodies make use of social media monitoring technology to focus on what's happening in the world.

If a source isn't considered as reliable and the appropriate authorities haven't picked up on what is genuine news and added their weight to the information, people tend to doubt its authenticity.

When the content is from a reliable organisation and addresses factors such as the time, location, impact and magnitude of an event, the public are more likely to believe the message and will become motivated to take protective action.

Social media monitoring technology is an important part of our lives for public safety reasons and should be embraced and developed.

How social media monitoring technology improves public safety in the aviation industry

Communication is key in our modern society, with social media platforms making it easier than ever to stay in touch and relay information to the people you want. This is equally true for the aviation industry, which has a duty of care to its passengers and the general public. To facilitate this duty, the aviation industry benefits greatly from social media as a way to communicate with passengers and the public.

Emergency industry and social media During social media's infancy, many airline companies used this platform as a complaints handling system. Disgruntled airline passengers would take to social media platforms like Twitter to complain about poor service or an issue during the flight. Social media culture has changed significantly since then, and social media platforms have become more powerful and versatile in their application.

Social media monitoring technology is the latest evolution in social media, and it allows companies to listen to the chatter found online. Moreover, social media monitoring can be used as a way to communicate with passengers and the public in a more direct way.

Helping prepare for disruptions Social media monitoring can be an excellent tool for the aviation industry to predict and prepare for disruptions in travel. British Airways left passengers irate in 2019 after an IT error at Gatwick Airport caused significant delays and flight cancellations. Passengers were quick to take to social media to air their

grievances with the company. However, this fracas could have been avoided if British Airways used social media monitoring to analyse and track the complaints on social media. If complaints start to develop online in a public space, social media monitoring can alert airline companies to the growing frustrations and deploy an emergency response procedure. This should focus on public relations and requires expert social media communication to dispel the complaints.

Real-time flight tracking and alerts One of the most common challenges facing the aviation industry is cancellations and amendments to flight schedules at short notice. This is an everyday occurrence that could potentially result in complaints, confusion and chaos at airports. Cancellations or amendments to flights can occur for many internal and external reasons — from bad weather to staff shortages.

The aviation industry can benefit greatly from using social media to inform their passengers about any upcoming delays or cancellations in real-time. Although this doesn't provide a complete fix to the problem, many passengers will see these notifications with enough time to amend their travel plans. Real-time social media responses can empower the aviation industry with a way to communicate in real-time about things like weather updates and changes to flights.

As we develop more useful ways to communicate through social media, the aviation industry could stand to benefit from these innovations. From providing accurate, real-time information to passengers about flight changes to keeping passengers informed about technical difficulties, social media can be an incredibly powerful tool. Moreover, it brings passengers and airlines closer together which can improve trust levels with airlines.

IN BRIEF

Kuwaiti, Chinese officials discuss advancing relations

QNA — KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Mansour Al Qatibi met yesterday with Deputy Director of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Zhur Ri in Kuwait yesterday.

They discussed aspects of bilateral relations, and ways to develop them in all fields.

UAE pledges additional \$50m in quake aid to Syria

AFP — DUBAI: The UAE yesterday pledged an additional \$50m in assistance to quake-hit Syria. WAM news agency said, bringing the total value of pledges to over \$100m.