

*WHO says almost 26 million
people affected by deadly Turkey-
Syria quake, as death toll
continues to rise*

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Geneva, February 13 (RHC)-- The World Health Organization says around 26 million people have been affected by the deadly and devastating earthquake that has hit Turkey and neighboring Syria. The United Nations health agency sounded the alarm on Saturday, saying the natural disaster had so far affected 15

million people in Turkey and 11 million others in Syria.

According to the organization, the staggering figure includes more than five million people who are particularly vulnerable, including close to 350,000 elderly people and over 1.4 million children. The world body made the announcement as the death toll from the temblor that hit the two countries on Monday approached 30,000.

Turkey said its total death toll from the earthquake had risen to 24,617 by late Saturday, as the toll for Syria was announced at about 5,000.

The WHO appealed for \$42.8 million to help it address the quake-stricken population's immediate and overwhelming health needs. "WHO's goal is to save lives in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, to minimize its downstream health consequences, including mental health, and to rapidly restore essential health services across all earthquake-affected populations," the organization pleaded.

Also on Saturday, WHO chief, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, arrived in the northwestern Syrian city of Aleppo, tweeting that he was "heartbroken to see the conditions survivors are facing." His agency said it had flown 37 metric tons of trauma and emergency surgery supplies to Turkey on Thursday, while 35 metric tons had arrived in Syria on Friday.

"These life-saving supplies will be used to treat and care for 100,000 people as well as for 120,000 urgent surgical interventions in both countries," it said. A third flight carrying a similar load is scheduled to reach Syria on Monday.

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