

Earthquake death toll tops 36,000 as UN admits failure in delivering aid to Syria

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Damascus, February 14 (RHC)-- The United Nations' head of aid operations said the earthquake rescue phase is “coming to a close” and efforts would turn to providing shelter, food and care to survivors, as the

combined death toll in Turkey and Syria tops 36,000, though that number is expected to continue rising.

A little over one week after the first 7.8-magnitude quake rocked the two countries, the hope for miraculous rescues is fading, and anger is mounting as the U.N. admitted relief efforts “failed the people in north-west Syria.”

Over the weekend, the Syrian government approved aid deliveries to the rebel-held northwest after major delays to the war-torn region. Over 5 million additional people in Syria may become homeless after the quakes as the region also faces winter blizzards and an ongoing cholera outbreak.

Meanwhile, in Turkey, authorities ordered 113 arrests linked to the construction of collapsed buildings. Some 25,000 buildings collapsed or were badly damaged. Opposition parties have accused the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of not enforcing regulations. Some survivors, meanwhile, say rescue operations never reached them as their loved ones were stuck under the rubble.

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