



**Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier  
at an event to commemorate the victims of the earthquake  
in Turkey and Syria, organised by the Turkish Community  
in Germany (TGD) and the Union of German-Syrian  
Organizations (VDSH)  
on 20 February 2023  
in Berlin**

It is almost two weeks since an enormous earthquake shook the region around the Turkish-Syrian border. The news from the destroyed towns and cities leaves us speechless. The images have burned themselves into our memories. A once-in-a-century disaster!

The horror of it can hardly be put into words. More than 47,000 people have lost their lives. Tens of thousands who were rescued from the ruins of their houses have suffered severe physical and psychological damage. Countless more are still buried in the rubble. And there is now little hope of pulling them out alive.

Many survivors are in shock, in utter despair, with no idea what to do next. No idea what tomorrow will bring. No idea who among their family is still alive. Everywhere in the disaster zone, people are mourning mothers and fathers, daughters and sons, sisters and brothers. Everywhere are people who have lost their homes and all of their worldly belongings. Some are now in tents and emergency accommodation, others are still having to sleep out in the open, with no shelter to protect them from the icy cold, no water or power, no warm clothing, no food, no medical care.

The grief and despair are great, and not just there! In our country, too, live many people who have lost friends and relatives.

We have gathered here in Berlin this evening to share in a moment of reflection and to commemorate the victims of this terrible disaster. We are united in remembrance of the dead. We are united in grief and pain.

Our thoughts are with the survivors in the disaster zone. We are thinking of you, the people of Adana, Gaziantep and Urfa. And the people of Malatya, of Kahramanmaraş, of Idlib, of Aleppo. All the people of Turkey and Syria whose cities and whose dreams lie in ruins. We say to you: We see your suffering and your need. We hear your calls for help. We will not abandon you!

This evening, we are also thinking of the many people in our country who have friends and relatives in Turkey and Syria. Of all the women and men here in Berlin and in countless other German villages, towns and cities who in recent days have hoped, feared, prayed and wept. So many of them in vain!

Today, I want to say to all of you: Many people in our country share in your grief and your worries. Your pain is our pain.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a tragedy! Images and reports, faces and voices from the earthquake zone are deeply affecting people around the world. In our country in particular, we are seeing a wave of solidarity for which I am truly thankful.

Rescue teams from Germany are among those on the ground pulling people from the rubble, caring for the injured, burying the dead. Aid organisations such as the Federal Agency for Technical Relief and numerous others are there, and many volunteers have travelled to the disaster zone of their own accord to contribute their efforts. Everywhere in our country, people are collecting donations and organising relief deliveries – in schools and daycares, offices and workshops, associations and local communities. Many families are taking care of the bereaved, offering them comfort and support.

To all of the many people who are helping – I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Your humanity is a light in this dark time! Your compassion gives others courage, hope and optimism!

In the north-west of Syria, many people are still waiting for assistance. It is good that the United Nations now has a presence on the ground there, that it is making its way to those who are buried beneath the rubble, that it is attempting to get deliveries of assistance through to where they are needed most. But today I appeal in particular to the political leadership in Syria: Let the helpers carry out their life-saving work! Nobody has the right to block humanitarian assistance!

It is clear to us that the people in the region need our help now, and they will continue to need it in the future. Anyone who looks at the extent of the destruction can imagine that it will be a long time before the survivors in the disaster zone are regularly provided with the basic necessities.

What we need now is enduring solidarity. Our humanity will still be needed when the images from the earthquake zone have long since been displaced by other news. Everyone can help – some a little less, some a

little more. Some in practical ways, some by donating money. The important thing is for us to do it. For us to do it together. For us to say: Germany, the country that we share, is there for you!

I am here today, we are here today, to show all of the people affected by this disaster: We stand by your side. We will remain by your side.

Biz her zaman yanınızdayız.

Nabqa bi-janibikum.

Emê li cem we bin.