

Turkey earthquake: At least 31 dead as buildings collapse

At least 31 people have been killed and more than 1,600 injured in a powerful earthquake in eastern Turkey.

The magnitude-6.8 quake centered on the town of Sivrice in Elazig province caused buildings to collapse and sent residents rushing into the street.

Forty-five people have been rescued so far, with more than 20 feared to remain trapped, officials say.

Earthquakes are common in Turkey – about 17,000 people died in a quake in the western city of Izmit in 1999.

Friday's quake struck at about 20:55 local time (17:55 GMT).

Tremors were also felt in neighbouring Syria, Lebanon, and Iran.



This woman was pulled from the rubble in Elazig – EPA

More than 400 aftershocks were recorded, Turkey's Disaster and Emergency

Management Authority (Afad) said.

Rescue teams worked through the night, using their hands, drills, and diggers to try to find people in the rubble of fallen buildings. They also brought beds and tents for those displaced and warned residents against returning to damaged buildings because of the danger of aftershocks.

Afad said that most of the casualties were in Elazig province, and deaths were also reported in the neighbouring province of Malatya.

Some 1,607 people were injured by the earthquake, according to the latest count.

- History of deadly earthquakes

Reports said an elderly woman was pulled alive from the rubble about 19 hours after the earthquake.

Another woman left buried was saved after calling her relatives from her mobile phone and telling them where she was trapped.

But a 12-year-old boy rescued from the wreckage later died in hospital.



The quake caused many buildings to collapse – Reuters



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (centre-right) attends the funeral of some of the victims in Elazig - EPA

“It was very scary - furniture fell on top of us. We rushed outside,” AFP news agency quoted 47-year-old Melahat Can, who lives in the city of Elazig, as saying.

“Our houses collapsed...we cannot go inside them,” a 32-year-old man from Sivrice told Reuters.

The region struck by the quake, some 550km (340 miles) east of the capital Ankara, is remote and sparsely populated, so details of damage and fatalities could be slow to emerge.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan canceled plans in Istanbul on Saturday to instead visit the affected area and attend the funeral of two of the victims.



“We are doing everything we can as the state and nation, and we will continue to do so. Our efforts at all rescue sites will continue,” he said.

In its advisory on Saturday morning, the emergency authority said the overnight temperature had fallen to -8C (17.6F), with similar cold expected the following night.

The Turkish Red Crescent has also dispatched hundreds of personnel with emergency supplies, it said.

Sivrice, a town of about 4,000 people, is a popular tourist spot on the shore of Hazar lake, the source of the river Tigris.

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