

Insights from International Search and Rescue Responders to the 2023 Turkey-Syria Earthquakes

Abdulhadi Al Ruwaithi¹, PhD, CDRE; Mahmoud Alwidyan², PhD

¹ Umm Al-Qura University; ² Jordan University of Science and Technology

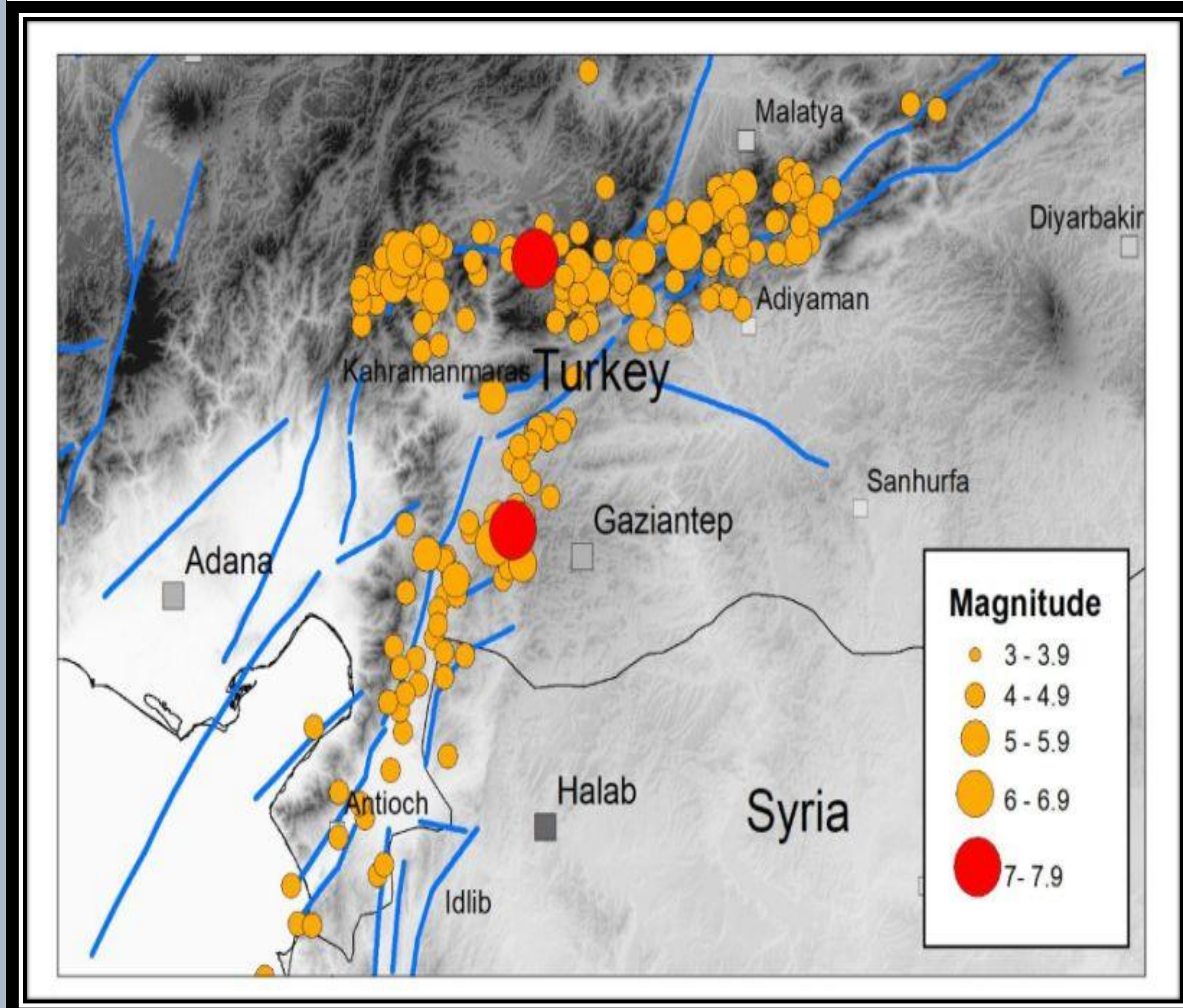


جامعة أم القرى
UMM AL-QURA UNIVERSITY



Introduction

In the early morning of February 6th, 2023, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck southeastern Turkey and parts of northern Syria. The earthquake was followed by multiple high-magnitude aftershocks (5.6 - 7.5). The disaster caused 50,339 deaths and 311,000 collapsed or severely damaged houses. Following the disaster, the Turkish Government requested global assistance for search, rescue, and medical aid.



The map source: The British Geological Survey. Available at <https://www.bgs.ac.uk/>

Objectives

- To investigate the effectiveness of international responders in search and rescue operations.
- To explore the essential operations and techniques required for coordinated international responses.
- To understand the challenges and obstacles hinder an effective international response.

Methods

Qualitative study with a semi-structured interview guide, developed by a panel of experts, was utilized to interview 18 first responders from the Jordan International Search and Rescue team (JSAR) who were deployed to Turkey to participate in the search and rescue operations. The JSAR team is certified as a heavy international team and operates under the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG).

JSAR Operations

- Deployment process
- Coordination with the local authority
- Locations of search and rescue
- Impacts (low-priority areas)
- Gaps and logistics challenges



Images courtesy of the Jordanian Public security Directorate. Available at: <https://psd.gov.jo/>

Data Collection

The interview guide focuses on gathering information about Jordanian first responders' experiences in the 2023 Turkey-Syria earthquake.

- Personal experiences and reflections
- Challenges faced
- Response and operations' details
- Preparedness
- Areas for improvement

Findings

- Coordination among over 90 international teams.
- Encountered numerous obstacles and difficulties due to the magnitude of the catastrophe.
- Challenges in resources management, including inefficient allocation and suboptimal collaboration with local authorities and volunteers.
- Additional challenges from local conditions: extreme weather and treacherous road conditions.
- Issues in communication and coordination: difficulties in communicating with local authorities and the home country.

Conclusion

The findings emphasize the urgent need to improve disaster relief methods by enhancing resource management, adapting to local conditions, and improving communication and coordination. A comprehensive protocol review is necessary to better prepare for future emergencies and save more lives.

Contact information

