News

A boy wearing a blue jacket crouches with his face in his hands beside a large pile of rubble

A boy cries near the debris of a home in the aftermath of an earthquake in Herat, Afghanistan, Oct. 8, 2023. More than 2,000 people have died after the magnitude 6.3 earthquake struck western Afghanistan, the Taliban said Oct. 9, as the nation reels from another quake at a time of deep economic crisis. (OSV News photo/Reuters)



by OSV News

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The death toll in one of the deadliest earthquakes to strike Afghanistan in two decades has risen to 2,000, Taliban officials confirmed on Oct. 8.

The 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck on Oct. 7, 25 miles (40 kilometers) west of Herat city in the western Herat province.

Initial assessments of the United Nations indicated that the quake caused deaths across eight villages. Mahal Wadakah was the worst affected village.

Following the initial quake, which struck around 11 a.m. local time, several aftershocks have occurred, with tremors felt in neighboring Badghis and Farah provinces, according to OCHA, U.N. humanitarian office.

"Once again, children and families in Afghanistan have been affected by a devastating earthquake, this time in western Herat province," UNICEF Afghanistan

said in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter, on Oct. 7. "UNICEF Afghanistan is on the ground with our U.N. colleagues to assess the full impact. Our heartfelt condolences go out to all families affected," United Nations Children's Fund wrote.

The presence of church charity organizations is close to zero with the Taliban government, an official from one of the Catholic organizations told OSV News. Some try to work with local partners, however.

"Our humanitarian partners have begun relief efforts, sending medical and trauma support to regional hospitals, as well as emergency shelter, food assistance and other supplies to the affected area," Anne Bousquet, Catholic Relief Services' country representative for Afghanistan told OSV News over email. CRS is the international relief and development agency of the U.S. Catholic church.

"CRS, along with other humanitarian organizations, are participating in assessments to determine the scale of the damage and needs in Herat to identify where CRS can best support the response efforts," Bousquet said on Oct. 8.

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The U.N. OCHA release said 465 houses had been reported destroyed and a further 135 were damaged.

"Partners and local authorities anticipate the number of casualties to increase as search and rescue efforts continue amid reports that some people may be trapped under collapsed buildings," the U.N. said.

The World Health Organization in Afghanistan said it dispatched 12 ambulance cars to Zenda Jan to evacuate casualties to hospitals, according to The Associated Press.

"As deaths and casualties from the earthquake continue to be reported, teams are in hospitals assisting treatment of wounded & assessing additional needs," the U.N. agency said on X. "WHO-supported ambulances are transporting those affected, most of them women and children."

Taliban-run Afghanistan suffers from a deep economic crisis.

The World Bank recently warned that two-thirds of Afghan families currently face "significant challenges in maintaining their livelihoods."

Earthquakes are a regular phenomenon in a country that often experiences seismic activity.