

# on the horizon

Horizons International Newsletter – April 2023

"I WILL SAY OF THE LORD,

# HE IS

**MY REFUGE**

**MY FORTRESS**

**MY GOD...**

IN WHOM I TRUST"

PSALM 91:2



## Note:

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*photo taken by Horizons staff member Laya Yamout*



## LAYA YAMOUT

### SERVING IN SYRIA THROUGH EARTHQUAKE RELIEF

My name is Laya and I serve with Horizons Lebanon. I was a Neonatal ICU nurse for three years but moved back to Tyre nine months ago to serve in the medical ministry. After the earthquakes hit, I joined a team from Horizons that went to Syria to assess the needs and see how we can support the churches there.

**Syria is heartbreaking!** There's so much damage. People are sleeping on the streets or in tents. It's really, really cold at night, but they have nowhere to go. They are surviving on food portions from churches, but they have to eat them right away because they don't have refrigerators. And people are living in trauma and fear—which has been worsened by many smaller aftershock earthquakes.

What makes it worse is that these people have already been through so much. They survived the civil war only to be hit by an earthquake. Thousands of buildings were damaged or destroyed by the war, but this completely shut down the infrastructure. None of the remaining buildings look safe to live in—balconies are falling apart, ceilings are crumbling, and electric wires are in the streets. There's no way of telling when the next stone will fall or when a balcony is going to break off.

I met a pregnant mother sleeping in a makeshift tent on the side of the road—she had nowhere else to go. People were going through piles of rubble trying to find their possessions and their legal papers, so they've even lost their identities. It's all completely gone.

**Local churches have opened their doors to provide food and shelter, but they are overloaded—they need all the help they can get.** People have been given food, blankets, and clothes, but their biggest need is a roof over their heads. At the church where we stayed, nearly 300 people were sleeping in shifts on the pews and on mattresses on the floor, day and night.

We held two church services for believers in the area, and many Muslims came and heard the gospel. Right now, it's as if people have stopped differentiating between Muslims and Christians—everybody needs help. **Muslims are coming to Christians to ask for help, and that is leading to gospel conversations.** People have been so open. Normally, in Syria, this would not be okay, but God has opened new doors!

# GLOBAL UPDATES

## HONG KONG

The Horizons International Asia (HIA) team has seen 19 Muslims come to Christ in the last year! Each weekend, up to eight evangelism teams are conducting gospel outreach on the city's streets, and more than **70 Muslim families are hearing the gospel through weekly home visits.** They have seen a particular increase in openness to the gospel among Indonesian women.

These outreach teams are equipped through discipleship and evangelism training events that are held four times a year. In the last 12 months, HIA has trained more than 100 people to effectively reach Muslims. Pray for salvation for the many Muslim families in the area, and for new believers to grow in discipleship.



Home visits open doors to the gospel in Hong Kong

## SOUTH AFRICA

In December 2022, Nicole Ravelo-Hoërsen traveled to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to lead a conference that equipped Christian women to reach Muslims for Christ. Nicole presented a challenging message to correct the traditional stereotype of women being silent and submissive in Islam. It was an inspiring message about how Muslim women need to hear that true submission to the Lord is not restrictive or oppressive, but honoring and freeing.

The message was well-received, with many attendees realizing the importance of equipping women in their congregations to serve amongst Muslims. Some reported that they now felt compelled to reach Muslim women in their communities for Christ. Christians from Muslim backgrounds also shared how they were encouraged to persevere in witnessing to Muslims despite persecution!



Conference empowering women in Ethiopia

## KOSOVO

Despite having just launched in November, the Balkan Institute for Missions (BIM) has wasted no time in **equipping the local church for ministry to Muslims** throughout former Yugoslavia and the rest of the Balkan region. Directly after its launch in November 2022, BIM organized its first training course at a Bible Seminary in Pogradec, Albania, with 15 students attending this event. A second training course was hosted by a church in Prizren, Kosovo, equipping more than 20 believers.

In March, Georges Housney presented a Train the Trainers conference for church leaders in Durrës, Albania, to train fellow workers to equip their churches in evangelism. This inaugural event brought together around 40 leaders from Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. Missionaries and leaders from outside the Balkan region also attended.



First training course organized by BIM



*"My people are dying every day. Pray for my people... Our children's future has been destroyed."*

— Pastor Nihad at the Shahbaa refugee camp



**\$34.2B — direct physical damages in Türkiye**

(World Bank GRADE report)

# EARTHQUAKES DEVASTATE SYRIA AND TURKEY

Number of homeless as a result of the quake:

Syria: 5.3 million people

Turkey: 1.25 million people



On February 6th, two powerful earthquakes rocked Turkey and Syria, causing an astonishing amount of destruction to huge areas of both countries. Since then, more than 50,000 people have died and over 150,000 have been injured, with numerous towns and cities left in ruins and hundreds of thousands of people displaced and without shelter.

**Horizons earthquake relief project is working simultaneously in four heavily impacted areas** (two in Turkey and two in Syria), collaborating closely with like-

minded local churches to serve their communities efficiently and effectively.

In Turkey, we are providing temporary shelter, hygiene supplies, winter clothing, and meals. We also **plan to establish a construction team in Syria to help rebuild homes and resettle at least 200 families**, and provide up to 20 portable bathroom stalls to improve the hygiene conditions of heavily affected areas in Aleppo, Syria. In Shahbaa, Syria, we are helping our Kurdish church partner to expand its ministry by administering gospel-centered humanitarian aid in their community.



**10,000+ aftershocks since the February 6th earthquakes**



*"...When I woke up, I felt myself swinging. I felt so afraid."*

— Sister Dalia in Nabaa, Lebanon

**At magnitude 7.8, the February 6 event was twice as powerful as the largest previously recorded earthquake in the region**



*"This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD Almighty."* — Haggai 2:6-7

# THE LORD IS SHAKING THE NATIONS

TRANSFORMING TRAGEDY INTO BLESSING

Is it mere coincidence that three tectonic plates converge on the historic city of Antioch, the place where God sparked the missions movement 2,000 years ago?

Throughout history, God has always intervened in tragedy to bless needy people and glorify his name. After decades of witnessing God's work, whenever we see catastrophes we have learned to look for open doors.

Haggai 2:6 says: "I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land... **I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations will come**"—that is Jesus. When people are shaken through pain, struggles, and suffering, they are more receptive to God.



Ministering to earthquake survivors

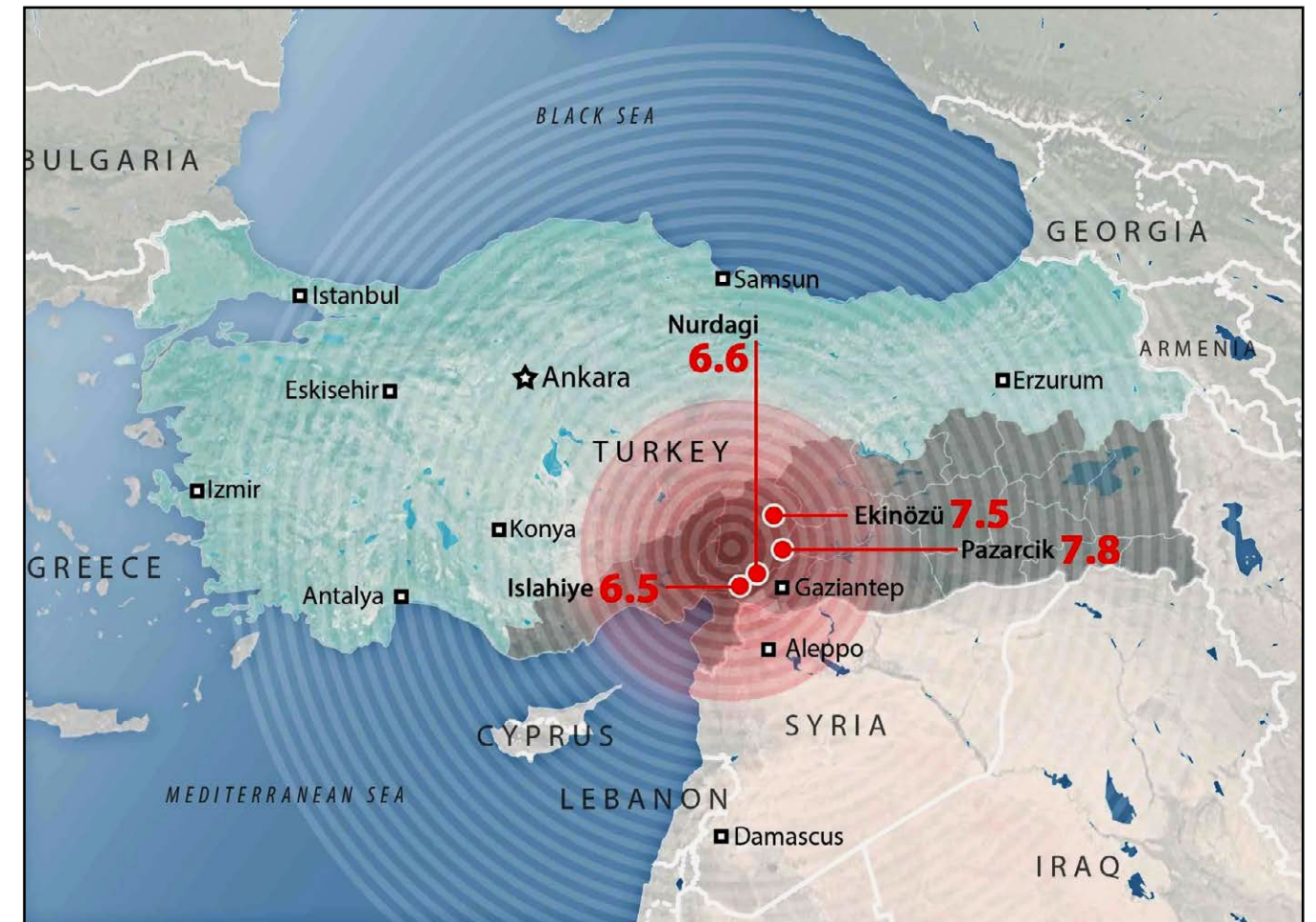
In Iraq, the Gulf war brought thousands of Kurdish people to Christ, after years of little fruit. Within a year of the brief war, God grew the Church in Kosovo from 58 believers to over 3,000 converts—now there are 43 churches across the country. Civil war in Syria brought two million refugees to Lebanon—now we see tens of thousands of Syrians filling churches in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan.

**Where the Lord is opening hearts to the gospel—that is our sign to follow him into those places.** In Syria and Turkey, there are vast areas without schools or churches. We need to follow relief work with planting churches, Christian schools, and ministry centers that will make a spiritual impact in these areas, because this is where God is opening the hearts of our Muslim neighbors.

Though our hearts grieve with those who are suffering, we can also rejoice with those who are being saved, and join the Lord with anticipation as coworkers for his Kingdom. **This is an extraordinary moment in time for us to be the hands and feet of Jesus.**



Ruined buildings in Aleppo



*The earthquakes that have so powerfully impacted Syria and Turkey struck at the intersection of three tectonic plates. The Arabian plate is moving northwards into Europe, pushing the Anatolian plate (where Turkey is located) westwards into the African plate. This movement builds up pressure along the fault zones, and the sudden release of this pressure has caused the earthquakes which devastated large swathes of Turkey and Syria.*



Makeshift shelter in Syria

Interested in getting involved in ministry in Syria or Turkey? Visit our Take Action page: [horizonsinternational.org/take-action](https://horizonsinternational.org/take-action)

*Please share with your friends, family, and churches.*



SCAN ME

# EARTHQUAKE RELIEF FUND

The February 2023 earthquakes have created unprecedented devastation in a region already full of needs and neglected people. Horizons' teams have rushed to the gap to provide gospel-centered humanitarian aid to thousands of Muslims. This is a critical moment for the Church to respond by being the hands and feet of Jesus!

Thanks to your generosity, we have already raised over \$540,000 (as of March 7<sup>th</sup>), enabling us to send teams to provide humanitarian aid, share the gospel, pray with people, and work with local churches toward long-term recovery.

Yet the needs are overwhelming. Cities have been destroyed and hundreds of thousands are left homeless, sleeping on the streets, or in makeshift tents. Most do not have access to clean drinking water, showers, or bathrooms, putting millions of vulnerable people in danger of diseases.

Your gift to the Earthquake Relief Fund will provide survivors with food, water, clothing, tents, and medical supplies—but more importantly, it will enable local churches to reach their communities with the gospel!

Act today and be a part of God's  
transformative plan for Turkey and Syria.

[horizonsinternational.org/earthquakerelief](https://horizonsinternational.org/earthquakerelief)

## Employment & Ministry Opportunities

Horizons is looking to hire staff  
in training, marketing, and media positions.

Learn more at

[horizonsinternational.org/opportunities](https://horizonsinternational.org/opportunities)



**CLICK HERE TO GIVE**