



**Türkiye**  
**Earthquake Response:**  
Crowdfunding  
Campaign for  
Cultural Heritage  
Restoration





# Türkiye Earthquake Response: Crowdfunding Campaign for Cultural Heritage Restoration



The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is proud to lead an international effort to restore the priceless cultural heritage destroyed in the earthquakes of February 2023.

The **UNDP Crowdfunding Campaign for Cultural Heritage Restoration** is collecting funds to rebuild the historical treasures and traditions that symbolize the region's rich cultural diversity.

Your contribution via [savethelegacy.org](https://savethelegacy.org) can help us restore this unique cultural mosaic.

## A legacy under threat

The earthquakes that hit southern Türkiye in February 2023 killed more than 50,700 people and destroyed more than 313,000 buildings. Across 11 provinces, 3.3 million people – 20 percent of the region's 15.6 million population – were left homeless. Nearly one million people remain in temporary accommodation as residential housing is reconstructed. The region's fractured economy is struggling to recover.

The earthquake devastation did not spare the region's unique cultural heritage: 3,752 of 8,444 historical structures in the region suffered damage or destruction. The casualties reflect the diverse cultures

and religions that have thrived in the region since antiquity, with ancient mosques collapsing alongside churches and synagogues, and Byzantine mosaics crumbling together with Ottoman-era marketplaces.

The ancient center of Antakya, site of one of the world's first Christian cave churches, was completely levelled. In this compact area, the earthquakes destroyed the first mosque constructed in Anatolia, the world's first illuminated street, and the national assembly building (and former cinema) symbolizing the integration of Hatay province into Türkiye.



Iskenderun St. Nicholas (Orthodox) Church



Habib-i Neccar Mosque (the first mosque of Anatolia)

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Kurtuluş Street in Antakya (world's first illuminated street)  
Photo: Murat Germen



Former Hatay State National Assembly Building  
Photo: Murat Germen

### Why rebuild cultural heritage?

Restoration of cultural heritage is a priority on par with other earthquake recovery efforts. The point is not just to protect and restore the relics of the past, as important as this is to Turkish and world culture. Cultural heritage is a vital source of livelihoods, in tourism and the production of traditional crafts. It also shapes and sustains attitudes and aspirations, creating the specific spirit of local communities. In the wake of a disaster of such vast proportions, restoring local monuments can help to revive local spirits.

This is why UNDP has been working with Türkiye's Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCT) since the earthquakes to support cultural heritage restoration. In the immediate aftermath, UNDP provided customized storage containers to damaged museums to protect artifacts for future reconstruction. Later, UNDP supplied drones, cameras and other equipment to help in damage assessment and inventories.

The time has come for a larger-scale restoration effort. For some of the hallmark structures in the region, reconstruction funding has already been secured, whether from central or local Government sources, private-sector donations or civil society and community resources. But, with total damage to cultural heritage estimated in the billions of dollars, the needs dwarf the resources available.

#### A call to global friends of local culture

This is why UNDP is launching an international crowdfunding campaign for cultural heritage restoration. The campaign, coordinated with the MoCT, will engage international donors, members of the Turkish diaspora, private foundations,



One of dozens of storage containers delivered by UNDP to archeological museums after the earthquakes

multinational private companies, and cultural and religious organizations in Türkiye and worldwide to assist local communities to preserve and restore their rich cultural heritage.

Funding will be sought not only for the physical restoration of tangible structures, but also to revive distinctive local crafts, cuisine and other expressions of intangible heritage.

In addition to raising funds for cultural heritage restoration, the campaign is also designed to raise awareness among domestic and foreign audiences of the importance of earthquake-affected historical sites, religious monuments and traditional crafts to present and future generations.



## How does crowdfunding work?

The heart of the UNDP campaign is the dedicated website [savethelegacy.org](https://savethelegacy.org). Individual contributors visiting this website will be able to make donations of up to US\$1 million easily and safely by following a link to the [Every.org](https://every.org) platform (a UNDP crowdfunding partner). The campaign will be promoted globally through UNDP social media channels and traditional visibility tools such as press releases and briefings.

At the same time, the campaign will seek large-scale contributions from donors and the private sector. To date, more than US\$4 million has already been committed to support the effort and encourage other

donors. Several anchor partners have already signed on to support the campaign. From the private sector, Meta (formerly Facebook) is providing both funding and technology support in the form of promotion via digital platforms and use of Augmented Reality (AR) technologies. This will aid in visualizing the campaign's objectives and creating a lifelong educational resource about the cultural heritage of the earthquake-affected region.

## What comes first?

With advice from the MoCT, UNDP has selected six specific targets for the crowdfunding campaign:

Arsameia Archaeological Site, Adiyaman



Gaziantep Castle



Mar Yuhanna Greek Orthodox Church, Hatay



Sarımiye Mosque, Hatay





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Hatay Archaeology Museum



Historical Bazaar, Kahramanmaraş



Intangible Cultural Heritage



These targets were chosen to reflect the full cultural diversity and geographic scope of the earthquake-affected area. But the campaign does not stop here: UNDP is also soliciting funding more broadly for the restoration of other cultural heritage monuments, in close cooperation with the MoCT.

In addition, UNDP will focus on securing resources to promote the revival of livelihoods that depend on the region's impressive intangible cultural heritage, including gastronomy and crafts such as mosaic art.

UNDP will directly manage all funds collected through the crowdfunding campaign. Contributions will be reserved exclusively for the reconstruction and restoration of cultural heritage and the revival of livelihoods based on intangible heritage. Individual donors will be able to follow the progress of reconstruction on the campaign website. UNDP will publish regular reports on the status of contributions collected and funds disbursed. Individual contributions made in the United States will be tax-deductible.

## How to support the campaign

For information on becoming a crowdfunding campaign partner or other ways to get involved, please visit [savethelegacy.org](https://savethelegacy.org) or contact Seher Alacacı Ariner, UNDP Assistant Resident Representative (Programme) ([seher.alacaci@undp.org](mailto:seher.alacaci@undp.org)), or Aslı Çakın Dağlı, UNDP Project Manager ([asli.cakin@undp.org](mailto:asli.cakin@undp.org)).



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