



Disaster Communication Forum

Resilience. Response. Recovery.



PRESIDENCY PUBLICATIONS OF THE
DIRECTORATE OF COMMUNICATIONS



PRESIDENCY OF
THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
**DIRECTORATE OF
COMMUNICATIONS**



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STRATCOM DISASTER COMMUNICATION FORUM

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Opening Remarks

Prof. Fahrettin Altun

Presidency's Director of Communications of the Republic of Türkiye



TÜRKİYE CUMHURİYETİ
CUMHURBAŞKANLIĞI
İLETİŞİM
BAŞKANLIĞI



Afet
İletişim
Forumu



Distinguished Participants,
Esteemed Panelists,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen Attending Our Meeting from
Türkiye and Abroad...

Türkiye Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı olarak düzenlediğimiz Stratcom Afet İletişim Forumu'na
hepiniz hoş geldiniz, şerefler verdiniz.

Welcome to the Stratcom Disaster Communication Forum, organised by the Presidency's Directorate of
Communications of the Republic of Türkiye.

This time, we will talk about disaster communication and hold discussions on the subject under the um-
brella of Stratcom, which has become a global hub for interaction in the fields of public communication
and strategic communication.

As you are aware, Stratcom, which we have been hosting since 2021, has developed into a dynamic
platform with events taking place continuously in Türkiye and abroad across a variety of formats and
themes. At Stratcom, where we have welcomed thousands of participants from dozens of countries
so far, we address current issues and trends in the field of strategic communication, ranging from na-
tion branding to crisis communication and citizen-centred public communication. Together with the
key partners of the strategic communication ecosystem, including the public sector, media, academia,
non-governmental organisations, and the private sector from Türkiye and other countries, we will be
focusing on disaster communication in today's forum.

We host the Stratcom Disaster Communication Forum with the theme of resilience, response and re-
covery. In addition to the panels, we will be hosting the most comprehensive event of its kind in our
country with a five-day programme that includes disaster communication training and the Hackathon:
National Disaster Communication Exercise. I wish this forum, which we believe will significantly contrib-
ute to disaster communication in Türkiye and around the world, to be auspicious and fruitful. I would
like to extend my sincere thanks to all our guests who will contribute to the forum with their experiences,
expertise and presence.

Distinguished Participants, Dear Guests,

On February 6, our country experienced one after another unprecedented and extremely destructive earthquakes, which were described as the "Disaster of the Century." More than 50 thousand people lost their lives as a result of earthquakes that affected 14 million citizens in 62 districts of 11 provinces. On this occasion, I wish Allah's mercy upon our citizens who lost their lives during the earthquake, and I would like to extend my condolences to our nation once again. The fact that our brothers and sisters lost their lives, our cities were destroyed, and our memories were lost caused every one of us unbearable agony. From the very beginning, our state stood by our citizens in the quake-hit area with all its means and in great coordination. Although the scale of the disaster we faced and the harsh winter conditions caused challenges in response and rescue efforts at first, every need, from search and rescue to shelter, has been met with the utmost effort. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan personally led all the operations carried out by visiting the earthquake zone numerous times and coordinating and directing the efforts of all our institutions working in coordination. The effective and rapid response of our state was complemented by our nation's mobilisation of solidarity and collaboration. To quote our President, our nation united as one heart and displayed the solidarity of the century in response to the disaster of the century. In this period, in which we have worked hand in hand as the state and the nation, our sole agenda has always been to heal the wounds of our brothers and sisters in the quake-hit area, meet their needs, and rebuild our cities, and it will continue to be so.

In the face of such large-scale destructive earthquakes, we, as a country, have definitely demonstrated the disaster response capacity we have developed in the last 20 years. From the very beginning, we have implemented our "Türkiye's Disaster Response Plan", which we have been preparing for a long time. Public institutions, non-governmental organisations, and our nation, particularly the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD), Turkish Armed Forces, Turkish Red Crescent, and the Ministry of Health, took part in coordinated search, rescue, and relief operations. Along with our ministers, 40 governors and 160 local administrators were deployed in the earthquake zone upon the directive of our President. Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of 35,250 search and rescue personnel, more than 100,000 citizens were rescued from the rubble. More than 275 thousand personnel operated in the field day and night to meet the needs of our citizens affected by the disaster, including food, shelter, healthcare, security, and psychosocial support, and to conduct many operations such as damage assessment and infrastructural works. More than 3 million people were evacuated from the disaster-hit area. Our citizens were provided shelter throughout the country, in addition to the tent and container cities that were established in the quake-hit area and the allocation of hotels, dormitories, and guesthouses. We did not abandon our citizens in the quake-hit area or wherever they relocated in the aftermath. In the meanwhile, as the state, we rolled up our sleeves to ensure that our citizens in this region have access to safe and permanent housing as soon as feasible. Our President promised that a total of 650 thousand residences and village houses would be constructed, with 319 thousand completed within one

year. For the time being, the construction of more than 105 thousand earthquake-resistant residences and village houses has begun. The groundwork for approximately 50,000 of these has been laid. Our President personally attended the groundbreaking ceremonies for earthquake-resistant houses to be built in Kahramanmaraş, Hatay, Adıyaman Gaziantep, Kilis, Elazığ, Malatya, Şanlıurfa, and Diyarbakır. On the second day of Eid, our President personally delivered the first village homes built in less than a year, merely 44 days.

Additionally, it is worth noting that on February 6, we officially launched the Türkiye National Risk Shield Model and designated the date as a significant milestone in disaster preparedness and response. We will make every effort to increase the resilience of our cities and buildings to all kinds of disasters, including earthquakes, floods, and fires, through the implementation of an integrated disaster management strategy. We will mobilise efforts at the same level as we did following the earthquake, focusing on disaster preparedness, especially urban transformation. We will persist in exerting our utmost effort, under the leadership of our President, to advance the robust capabilities we have cultivated over the past two decades with regard to disaster response and preparedness.

Dear guests, distinguished participants,

Communication management during disasters and extraordinary events is unquestionably another critical and strategic issue. The disaster of the century has proven this truth quite clearly and with very concrete examples. Key elements of the disaster response included ensuring unity of discourse, perception, and coordination among institutions, as well as providing the public with timely and transparent information while combating disinformation. In addition to the dimensions of preparedness, response, resilience, and recovery, we regard communication as a primary planning area and a focal point of our efforts in times of disaster. Clearly, Türkiye has built up a substantial capacity in all aspects of disaster management, as this I am certain all parties will agree. "Communication Working Group" is, as you are aware, one of the twenty-five working groups comprising the Türkiye's Disaster Response Plan. As the Presidency's Directorate of Communications, we serve as the principal solution partner for the Disaster Communication Group. We attach great importance to disaster communication as one of the key aspects of our strategic communication policies in the Directorate. Disaster and crisis communication constitutes an essential pillar of the Türkiye's Communication Model, which we have established under the leadership of our President. With the Türkiye Disaster Communication Model that we have implemented in this context, we have tried and are trying to strengthen truth and people-oriented process management in the preparation, response, and recovery processes against disasters. The Presidency's Directorate of Communications maintained uninterrupted communication and coordination with all

institutions and organisations during the earthquakes that struck Kahramanmaraş. We have ensured that the public had fast and transparent access to up-to-date information and announcements on all kinds of developments. We have provided essential referrals in response to social media-identified search and rescue alerts and notices of need. We have facilitated and supported the professional activities of national and international media members in the earthquake-hit area. CİMER, which operates under our Directorate, as well as our other communication platforms, have received a flood of requests and applications related to the disaster of the century. We added an "Earthquake Emergency" button to the CİMER system on the first day. More than 1 million 700 thousand requests received through CİMER were examined meticulously around the clock and resolved effectively and quickly. I would like to thank all my friends, my colleagues who have worked selflessly and tirelessly throughout this period. Thank you. The solidarity messages sent by our citizens to CİMER were also recorded as a sign of the unity and solidarity we displayed in this process.



On the other hand, we also faced systematic misinformation and disinformation campaigns that threatened to sabotage earthquake response efforts. Disasters, in which every second is vital, are among the situations where disinformation spreads the most rapidly. These disinformation, fake news and smear campaigns may sometimes reach such critical levels that they even endanger the safety of life and property of our citizens. As the Directorate of Communications, we have devoted a large majority of our resources from the first moment of the earthquake to identifying attempts at disinformation and manipulation, conducting necessary verifications, and disseminating accurate information. Furthermore, we are all aware that communication, in addition to preparedness and response processes, is critical to post-disaster recovery efforts. Following the earthquake, we conducted communication campaigns to foster greater hope, empathy, unity and solidarity—while never forgetting the pain we endured and acting with a human-oriented approach that was inspired by stories of solidarity. During this process, we aimed to increase solidarity and awareness at a national and international level with campaigns we organised, such as “Solidarity of the Century”, “Let My Home Be Your Home”, “Türkiye United as One Heart” and “We Stand with Türkiye”.

Dear guests, distinguished participants,

As the Directorate of Communications, we assume responsibilities not only in combating disinformation, informing the public, and coordination during disaster periods, but also in preparedness against disasters and in post-disaster recovery processes. In this regard, we consider this international event to be extremely valuable. Within the scope of the Türkiye Disaster Risk Reduction Plan, it is critical to inform and prepare the public for potential risks, and we seek to play an active role in this process. In addition, through our Directorate’s activities and publications, we seek to contribute to the development of a more resilient and conscious society in the face of disasters. For instance, the Directorate of Communications has recently released 12 new publications on disaster, risk, emergency, hybrid threats, humanitarian diplomacy, combating disinformation, disaster reporting and the processes of resilience, response and recovery against the risks of the new age. We also display these publications here. We provide such publications to the benefit of our entire nation and citizens, both in print and on our website. As you may recall, we held the Disaster Communication Workshop here in November of last year, with over a thousand participants. This workshop yielded very significant results in terms of ensuring coordination and unity of discourse during disasters and emergencies, bolstering the fight against disinformation and manipulation activities that proliferate during times of crisis, and promoting inter-institutional interaction and experience sharing. Our Directorate once again published the post-workshop report. In addition, as part of building a common language, we created a “Crisis Terminology Glossary” to promote the unity of discourse and avoid conceptual confusion during times of crisis. We believe that this glossary, produced with the contribution of nearly 20 institutions, addresses a significant need. The “National Disaster Communication Strategy Document” developed in the same vein will ensure

effective disaster and crisis management. I hope that the “Guide for Combating Disinformation” we prepared will prove useful in combating disinformation spread during disasters and crises. Naturally, on top of all of this, we also released publications that address common misconceptions regarding the Kahramanmaraş earthquake. Once again, I would like to thank all of my friends who contributed to these publications.

Esteemed participants, ladies and gentlemen,

As the Presidency’s Directorate of Communications, we continue our activities in the field of disaster communication in close cooperation with academia, media and civil society institutions and organizations, and we remain engaged in a wide range of national and international activities ranging from panels, books, field studies, field research, digital media and relations with the media. By launching the Stratcom Disaster Communication Forum, we are providing a fresh and, I think, solid link to our ongoing work in this field. It is without a doubt crucial for integrating cutting-edge approaches such as early warning systems, the use of satellite imagery, geographical marking and artificial intelligence into disaster management processes for resilience, response, and recovery. We are organising “Disaster Communication Training” and the “Hackathon: National Disaster Communication Exercise” as components of the Stratcom Disaster Communication Forum. These activities, which we have designed in the spirit of innovative strategies, demonstrate the significance we place on the process of disaster readiness.

Undoubtedly, solidarity and international cooperation are crucial components of disaster management. We will have the opportunity to hear the perspectives and experiences of national and international teams that assisted in search and rescue operations during the disaster of the century at the Stratcom Disaster Communication Forum. We believe that the Forum’s panels, speeches, publications, training, and exercises will benefit all stakeholders in the crisis and disaster communication ecosystem, as well as theoretical and applied research in this field. We will continue to produce qualified projects, research, and works and foster national and international collaborations in the field of communication as the Presidency’s Directorate of Communications. Türkiye’s disaster preparedness and response capacity will continue to increase as the country grows and gains further strength.

Distinguished participants,

As a Turkish citizen, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed, especially our President, for every revolutionary step that has been taken in recent days towards the growth and consolidation of Türkiye. Again, on this occasion, I believe that the launch of Togg, our national pride, on our divided roads, which we have increased from 6 thousand kilometres to 29 thousand kilo-

metres over the last 21 years, will be auspicious. On this occasion, I wish the domestic battery manufacturing that we have initiated, which is the guarantee of long-term independence in the electric vehicle sector, success. Once again, on this occasion, I wish for TCG Anadolu, our national pride and the world's first and largest UAV warship, to be auspicious. We all see the fervent interest of our citizens. The TCG Anadolu is currently en route to İzmir. I also shared it with our President. Tens of thousands of our citizens have applied to CİMER, asking us to extend the visit period of TCG Anadolu and to open TCG Anadolu to visitors in various regions of our country. I would like to take this opportunity to wish our new generation Altay Tank, another proud project in our goal of a fully independent defence industry, to be beneficial for our nation and the Turkish Armed Forces. I hope that Hürjet, which executed its first flight with triumph this morning and made us proud, will be beneficial to our country and nation. I would also like to wish the "Istanbul Financial Centre," an endeavour that will enhance the standing of our nation within the global ecology, to be auspicious. I hope that the arrival of natural gas, one of the most significant events of the past week, yields auspicious results. Our President has already demonstrated that our discoveries and investments will better serve our citizens in the Century of Türkiye. He declared that natural gas utilised in homes, kitchens and hot water systems would be supplied at no cost for one year. For a duration of one month, natural gas consumption will be provided at no cost to households across the country. Furthermore, I would like to direct your attention to the "Half is on Us" campaign on urban transformation, an additional significant undertaking that was executed per our president's directives. I extend my sincere hopes that this campaign proves to be advantageous. Our state will subsidise half of the expenses for those who reinforce their at-risk residences through urban transformation as a result of this campaign, and the rent assistance for urban transformation will be increased to 5,250 Turkish Liras. All of these steps are taken to ensure the peace, prosperity, and safety of our people. "Let the people live so that the state can live!". If they asked me, "What is the primary tenet of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's state administration?", I would say, 'Let the person live so that the state can live.' This statement is fundamental to our President's administration of the state and of course, another element is our President's struggle for justice. The pursuit of justice is another central tenet of our President's administration philosophy.

Distinguished participants,

As I conclude my remarks, I wish the Stratcom Disaster Communication Forum to be auspicious. I would like to extend heartfelt gratitude to our esteemed speakers, participants, and all those who contributed to making this significant event possible. Thank you. May you remain safe and healthy.



Communication in Times of Crisis

S P E E C H

Shelley Cheatham

**UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Regional
Director for Latin America and the Caribbean and
Türkiye Earthquake Response Field Coordinator**

Good morning, I am very pleased to be here today. First of all, I would like to thank Presidency's Directorate of Communications for organizing this event at such a time and I would like to express my gratitude and honour for inviting me. I have worked in the field in many areas such as storms and earthquakes and I hope that I will be able to share with you the experiences we have gained from this work, especially from the beginning of the disaster. In the past 10 years, the



world has faced serious disasters. It has experienced crises at the public level and in such scenarios, it is very important to provide timely and appropriate information. "Knowledge is power." It is said that in emergencies, information is actually life-saving. It is also useful for decision-makers to guide their vital decisions in times of crisis. But first of all, let's look at the decision-makers, because first of all we think of government officials. Heads of state, mayors and other government officials, but there are also those who provide assistance because information and communication facilitates their work in this sense... It allows them to reach the right people, to reach the right people at the right time, but that's not enough, it doesn't end there. Especially when people are in the middle of an emergency situation, when they are injured, affected, damaged by an earthquake, a storm or any other disaster, they have to make decisions. They need to take quick action and they need to communicate somehow, which is not easy. Therefore, communication comes in different forms, and it is a life-saving feature in every environment and in every disaster situation. It is very important to deliver critical information to the affected people and communication plays a vital role in this sense. It is important to have access to news, television programs, and radio programs, as well as to establish communication with neighbours and authorities. Objective and clear language should be used to convey precise meaning. And also, to the authorities, of course. In crisis situations, communication networks can collapse and at this point we actually need communication much more. What are the critical needs? There are needs such as food, shelter, medicine and so on. These are also jeopardized. For example, how can we find lost family members? How can we contact our friends, how will people reach me? Can anyone hear me? And these times can be really confusing and there are serious risks. At the same time, misinformation and also rumours start to circulate and even the most important messages can be complicated, contaminated, distorted. When our voices are heard, we aim to regain control of our lives. We want to actively shape services and hold service providers accountable. Our goal is to rely on each other and quickly move towards recovery. As the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, we play a role in facilitating this process. Information management and communication form the foundation of our work, particularly during times of crisis. We strive to reach individuals who are difficult to access, especially in the aftermath of disasters such as wars and conflicts. After disasters, we aim to provide access to affected individuals. Following the February 6 earthquake, we conducted a remote analysis to create a risk map. We combined satellite imagery with ground-level pictures to design immediate response capabilities within minutes. The collapse of mobile phone and internet networks had an impact on this process. Our focus was on determining when and where to send the teams, identifying hospitals, and assessing the types of emergencies present. We tried to focus on these, and after the first information we received, a state of emergency was declared from the first moment, and within 48 hours, the United Nations Disaster Teams were immediately in-

involved in the process with the Turkish government, and they reached the National Crisis Center in Ankara and started their work there. Within 72 hours, over 50 team members were involved in the process. Our teams were categorized and deployed, and more than 190 rescue dogs were activated. The work began promptly. We can say that it was the biggest rescue operation in history, and here, in fact, many countries immediately started to make efforts to respond to Türkiye's generosity and assistance in times of crisis, and thousands of search and rescue teams and dogs, despite speaking different languages, obtained important information and started their activities. This is how the work was done. Search and rescue teams actually have a common language. There are international standards in terms of equipment, information sharing and our centers have been established. The centers here started sharing information in a coordinated manner and then the signaling system was activated. What is this? Our teams were leaving a signal, if they were working on a building, so that another team would not come and work on the same building in the same place. I want to show you an example of a map here. Each search and rescue team has such information. It may not look very cool, but that's not really the point. We are trying to show where we are, what we are doing, how we are working. Sometimes it's more important to be able to do things easily and quickly and that's where our analysts came in and they worked on this to understand the scale, the magnitude of this disaster. They made maps. In addition to the search and rescue teams, local aid organizations provided support. Volunteers from different regions offered their services to ensure the flow of information, which was crucial for both the search and rescue teams and the affected areas. A Cooperation and Coordination Center was promptly established on the ground to facilitate communication. They tried to ensure the flow of information, especially in the most affected areas. This ensured that both family and cash assistance were directed appropriately. Our colleagues in the coordination center worked tirelessly to ensure the flow of information. Let's return to the picture of our friend. This is a colleague working in a tent in the middle of the night. It is not an unusual image that we all know and see, but it is important to emphasize. Because what we call information never takes a break. Maps were created to identify the affected areas and determine the reach of organizations. A multisectoral assessment was conducted to coordinate teams, followed by visits to the regions. This process highlighted the need for on-site coordination centers. During this process, it was necessary to gather in one place, exchange information, and establish contact with each other. Additionally, having a cup of tea or coffee together was also important. We tried to disseminate information both in Turkish and in English, both in the affected area and especially outside the affected area. Again, we tried to provide support to the government with a support of 1,000,000 dollars quickly. Our aim here was actually to create a plan that would cover 5,000,000 people for a period of 3 months, and now we have support from many countries, 18 countries in particular, and this assistance is continuing. Now we continue to work with organizations and

with the government. Information is being exchanged and gaps are being identified to inform government officials, the media, and the public about these issues. It is important to clearly communicate what actions are being taken and how they are being executed. Maintaining communication is crucial. We also shared this information with an organization of Turkish businessmen. We actually shared information in the most urgent situations and at points of great importance. 176 trucks, for example, carried aid here, they carried heaters, generators, and we did this with them because they also needed information on this issue. We tried to provide what is most needed where. The importance of communication lies in determining needs and deciding what should be accepted or rejected. This is the most critical aspect of communication. Moving on, we come to the third and perhaps most important group of decision makers. It is important to communicate with the people who live in the affected area, those who have lost loved ones, schools, livelihoods, and their way of life... How you interact with individuals, particularly during difficult times, can have a lasting impact on their lives. During a crisis, there may be disorder and confusion, and all those involved, including support providers and survivors, must be approached from all angles. It is important to establish effective channels of communication and reach out to the appropriate parties. Proper communication is crucial, especially in emergency situations. Radio and social media are two possible means of communication. You can prepare various materials; you can do it in different languages. Brochures can be prepared and distributed. Channels can be established like the channels established by the Ministry of Health during the Covid-19 pandemic. WhatsApp channels can be established and people can be contacted in this way. In fact, the homes of 100 thousand of people had become uninhabitable in a previous disaster, in a storm, and we know that the towers of radio stations were also destroyed. It was not possible to communicate in that sense, but there was another country nearby on the border. We contacted them and asked them, "Can we use their radio channels?" and tried to find a solution, "Can we get our messages to the affected area, to the affected people?" During the Covid-19 pandemic in Myanmar, a lockdown was implemented, resulting in the closure of schools and communication centers. It is important to consider how to effectively deliver information during this time. During that time, YouTube and Facebook videos were created to provide information, such as proper hand washing techniques. These communication channels were crucial for disseminating information. It is important to consider what information people have access to and how they access it. Of course, all of this is one-sided, one-way communication. In emergencies, of course, you also need two-way communication. So, the aid providers will listen to the needs, they will listen to the suggestions and they will listen to the complaints and they will act accordingly and then they will make their decisions accordingly. In a crisis situation, it is crucial for individuals to maintain communication with one another and with those outside of the affected area. Psychological support is also essential for coping with the aftermath of a

disaster. Therefore, it is important for people to remain connected and maintain hope. While progress has been made, there is still much work to be done. Governments, charities, and humanitarian aid organizations still have much to do in this regard. It is important to prioritize needs and provide services accordingly. For instance, individuals can call emergency hotlines. For example, there are currently 27 emergency hotlines in Türkiye. People can call them, report their complaints or get information, and in this way, communication can be ensured and teams can be gathered, but mobilization is of course important in this sense. However, it is crucial to establish a community-based communication system that enables the sharing and dissemination of up-to-date information. What does this mean? Of course, it also reveals the importance of working with women and women's organizations. This is something that is already happening and being done in Türkiye, but maybe we can take it a bit further. So, what have we learned from these recent experiences? Effective communication is crucial in today's society. It involves various factors such as language, culture, economic and social conditions, media, political values, and demographic factors. It is also important to consider the needs of vulnerable groups, including women, children, people with disabilities, the elderly, minorities, and other marginalized groups. One important lesson learned is the need for a thorough needs analysis. This includes assessing food, water, and shelter requirements, as well as communication preferences. It is crucial to evaluate these factors early on to facilitate further discussions and evaluations. Communication preferences may change over time. For instance, one month after the earthquake, how will they be able to contact their loved ones? Their needs and the conditions for communication may have changed by then. Individuals may require identity cards, official doc-



uments, or inheritance certificates, and may require assistance in obtaining them. Communication and access to information can take various forms, such as newspapers, radio, television, and brochures. There are many different preferences. They may want to access information in their mother tongue; they may need different information content according to ethnic groups or according to age. Of course, it is important that this information is trusted and only in this way can people stay in interaction with each other. To summarize, reliable, relevant and timely information is as important as food, water and shelter. Along with this, we need transparency. We need transparency when sharing communication in every sense. Information is a power and we need resources to transfer it. Disinformation is also very dangerous. All decision makers, of course, need reliable information, relevant and timely information in a crisis, and this is especially important for senior decision makers as they are under time pressure in government. It is important to know what will be needed in the coming days and weeks. At the same time, of course, knowledge also empowers people, what are they going to do with their lives, what decisions are they going to make? They make them based on this information. They make decisions about their loved ones, about their homes, about their possessions, about their property, and they make their decisions based on all this information. Thank you very much.



P A N E L

01

**Moderator:**

Adem Metan, Digital Publisher

Panelists:

Deniz Tüysüz, Reporter, NTV News

Fulya Öztürk, Special News Chief, CNN Turk

Mehmet Akbay (Gezegen Mehmet), Kral FM
General Coordinator



Media on the Frontline

Stratcom Panel - 1 : Afet Hattında Medya Stratcom Panel - 1 : Media on the Frontline

Moderatör
Moderator



Adem Metan

Panelistler
Panelists



Fulya Öztürk



Deniz Tüysüz



Mehmet Akbey



Adem Metan



Thank you, guys. Ahmet Hakan from CNN Türk was going to attend as the moderator but I think the ailments that entered into our lives especially after the pandemic has affected him a little. I will be taking over this task. Our goal is to provide informative insights during the next 45 minutes. Our panel includes esteemed individuals such as Deniz from NTV, Fulya from CNN Türk, and Gezegen Mehmet from Kral Group, who are highly regarded in their respective fields. Regrettably, natural disasters have become increasingly common in our lives, particularly in recent years. We don't want it to be like this, but especially in 2021, we faced a very sad fire disaster, then the flood disaster in Bozkurt, Kastamonu, and then the disaster of the century, and one of the places where the destruction centred on Kahramanmaraş was the greatest was Hatay. We also served there with our friends. It is important to note that these events have had a significant impact on our lives. Individuals perform their duties based on their brand positioning in their respective fields. Additionally, there is a media aspect to

Everyone in the media has the power to influence and interact with thousands or even millions of people. Everything we say leaves an impact on the society.

consider. In this sense, our job might be one of the most difficult. This panel is of great importance, and I would like to thank Stratcom for organizing informative activities in this field. Now Deniz, let's start with you first. You have been in the sector for a long time, you have been in disaster areas, you have been in the field, what would you like to say about your thoughts, experiences and reflections both in terms of what you feel and your thoughts at the point of transferring them after going to the field with the eyes of a media person?

Deniz Tüysüz



Thank you. We express our gratitude to the Directorate of Communications for organizing and inviting us to this event. We have all been at the region. As a field reporter with 22 years of experience, I have witnessed many disasters in Türkiye and abroad, including the 2011 earthquake in Japan. However, the current disaster surpasses any previous experience. Although I have many years of field experience, I was able to reach Hatay on the morning of the third day.

As is well known, airplanes faced weather-related problems during that time. Our team immediately set off by car. There were some of my colleagues who had arrived before we did. Upon arriving in Hatay at 3:30 a.m., I was shocked by the scale of the disaster, as was my cameraman friend Cüneyt Ali Horozal. The devastation was truly overwhelming. We are talking about Hatay here but it is worth noting that the earthquake affected 11 provinces. If I have to talk about Hatay, I couldn't believe what I saw. I mean I was shocked. Korhan Varoğlu, our NTV reporter, was following the search and rescue operations at a rubble, I was going to take over from him, because he had been awake for 2-3 days and I said to Koray, "What happened here?" I mean, I was really shocked, he said to me, "Forget all the disasters you have seen Deniz, forget all the big events, this is something completely different." It was really something entirely different and we started working right away. Of course, this is a team work, I work with very experienced friends at NTV. All our reporter and cameraman friends have been reporters and cameramen for 20, 25 years, so they work in coordination. There were 2-3 teams in Kahramanmaraş, Adıyaman, Malatya, Hatay, in every province. We aimed to work in coordination and support each other to report what is happening there in a clear and objective manner. The news we report is crucial, and many people are relying on us for updates. We have received numerous messages from viewers and others who are waiting for news. Therefore, as a reporter, the information you would convey on the screen in a live broadcast was very important. It was very important that the information was given in a confirmed manner. Of course, in those early days, we had difficulties in getting most of the information confirmed. Therefore, while conveying it, we tried to tell people without alarming them too much, as I underlined in the broadcasts and my other colleagues said, "It is information that needs confirmation, we think that more detailed information will be provided in a few hours".

Adem Metan:

During the previous disaster, it was crucial to prioritize verified information, right?

Deniz Tüysüz:

Yes. So now there is the topic of combating disinformation. Yes, this is very important because it is really dangerous to give false information.

I mean, it's not just you as a reporter, you are doing a job related to a lot of people there and they need the slightest bit of information from you and they attach great importance to it.

Therefore, we did our job aware of this one thing. Of course, the conditions were difficult, but compared to what the people were going through, the conditions of a reporter, a cameraman, a journalist were not very important or not a matter of great concern to people. We continued to work by somehow conveying the events, somehow informing the public, and if there was someone we needed to help, we helped them. I mean, what I would say is that I'm sure Fulya was asked all the time, "How was it, how was it as a woman, what did you eat, what did you drink, where did you sleep?" None of this mattered. I mean, where I ate and what I drank was not important in any way because it was a very difficult mission, people were struggling there under difficult conditions. Of course, NGOs, for example, were at the forefront. Especially during the search and rescue operations, as you know Adem, everyone tried to do something in some way. And of course, I also had very interesting stories. People were sending messages, "An apartment building collapsed over there, can you direct AFAD teams? Can you notify NGOs?" I mean, we tried to do as much as we could. We have a news editor in Ankara, Ahmet Ergen. He had communication on this issue. We forwarded every message we received to him, we sent every message to him so that we could help anyone, because saving even one person was very important. So, the first few days were exciting and hectic. Then a little more help came and things started to get better.

Adem Metan:

We have experienced numerous disasters both in Türkiye and around the world. I was among the first to arrive at the scene of the recent Ukraine–Russia conflict. As you mentioned in your speech, our colleagues who visited the region shared a common observation: this is not a typical disaster. Our responsibility is not only to report on the situation, but also to coordinate aid efforts.

Deniz Tüysüz:

So in that sense, yes. Because people are constantly texting or calling and you think, "It would be nice if we could help even one person". So let me speak for myself; my excitement, my sadness, my inertia or my wittiness didn't matter there. I did my broadcasts in a straightforward, objective way, telling what I saw. We really worked in coordination with the NTV teams. We had the advantage of working with an experienced staff. We also felt the support of our managers. Therefore, 7-8 days passed like that. In fact, those 7-8 days felt like 2 days to me.

Adem Metan:

It was almost as if time was repeating itself, wasn't it?

Deniz Tüysüz:

Exactly. Our company operates on a shift system. Teams arrive, rest, and swap shift. During my second visit, the atmosphere was noticeably more tranquil. But I was really surprised and couldn't believe it, especially in the center of Antakya. There is not much damage in the villages of Hatay. Although some villages have been affected, overall, they have survived with minimal impact. But there was a lot of destruction in the center of Antakya. I mean, even if you go there now, there is not a single intact building; for example, most of the buildings have been demolished, and the buildings that are still standing have heavy damage. We tried to display that. During the initial days, people were attempting to evacuate from both heavily and lightly damaged buildings. Traffic was heavy, with fire brigades and ambulances struggling to navigate the area. Moving from one location to another was also challenging. During my visit on the second and third day, I observed a unified effort among various groups including NGOs, Turkish Armed Forces soldiers, and gendarmerie. They were working together on search and rescue operations. The experience was challenging, but the unity among the team members was evident. During the 7-8-hour shift, the team worked together cohesively to save lives.

Adem Metan:

I will come back to you. Fulya and I were among the first journalists to arrive in the region, approximately four hours after the earthquake struck. We landed in Adiyaman. I stayed there for 47 days, Fulya stayed there for 63 days. Fulya, as a colleague with extensive field experience in disaster reporting, could you please provide your observations on the scenery and your general impressions of the field?

Specifically, how does the most recent disaster in Kahramanmaraş compare to those you have covered in the past?

Fulya Öztürk



Nothing is comparable to this. The recent earthquake has been a difficult time for me, as my family resides in Adana. While trying to obtain news from my family, I also attempted to travel to the region. Communication was cut off just 5 minutes after the earthquake at 04:17, following a brief period where base stations were still operational. During this time, I received a phone call from family friends in Hatay. “Fulya, the whole place has collapsed, have you reached your family?” I was worried and anxious as soon as I picked up the phone, wondering “what about my family?” I mean, I won’t lie, the first hours were spent in that anxiety and panic of “what about my family?” and trying to reach them. I couldn’t reach them at first either, but even though I couldn’t reach them yet, I had to go to the region somehow. It was as if it collapsed in Adana, Hatay, Antep or something like that, because we didn’t know the extent of it. And I received news like this: “1,000 buildings collapsed in half an hour.” After I reached my family half an hour later, of course I cried, I experienced a great pain. After I found out that my family was okay, I was talking to you and you said to me, “Fulya, what are we going to do? Let’s go, we have to go.” There were such big setbacks. The weather conditions in Istanbul were very bad. On February 6, while I was preparing the agenda the day before, our agenda for February 6 was snowfall in Istanbul.

On the morning of February 6, flights were canceled at Istanbul Airport. While the broadcasts and the agenda were only about this, at 04:17 in the morning, the agenda of the whole world and Türkiye was completely “earthquake”. So, I knew that Istanbul Airport was also closed because of the snow.

Adem Metan:

In fact, you were tailing us and you had a traffic accident.

Fulya Öztürk:

I also had a traffic accident on the Göktürk road on my way to Istanbul Airport. Despite hitting several barriers, I instructed my driver to continue driving and not to stop the car. I told my driver, “Please don’t stop. Let’s not get out of the car.” We went to Istanbul Airport in that condition. Somehow, the plane that was going to carry the search and rescue teams had taken off. You were there, we landed in Adıyaman, there were no phone lines. We needed to give accurate information and tell what was going on there. When you were in the car in Adıyaman, my God, I still feel like I was going out of my mind. “How could we bear it; how could we go through this?” I say this for all of us but also as a person who went through it. During the second 7.6 magnitude earthquake, the building collapsed on us in Adıyaman. On the one hand, I look at my friends; on the other hand, I try to reach my family thinking, “Oh my God, what about my family?” and I want to reach Istanbul to tell them. I mean, you have experienced it all. Our ability to broadcast in the region was hindered. I mean, we broadcast for 1-2 hours in Adıyaman. Then, when all the lines were cut, especially after the 7.6 magnitude earthquake, we said, “I am here as a journalist. If I am not going to broadcast, what am I doing here?” However, due to the lack of communication in Adıyaman, I was unable to send any news to Istanbul. We felt desperate in this situation.

Adem Metan:

Can I make an addition? Dear participants, please imagine something like this, I especially ask you to do this. We were in Adıyaman. In the second earthquake, a building collapsed on top of our car. My assistant was in the back trunk of the car, we could hardly get him out of

there and at that moment Korhan was on his way to Kahramanmaraş. There were many other colleagues and our only concern was, "We need to inform people about Adiyaman and call for help." Because there is no way of communication and we cannot leave the city. Yes, we were in such a big chaos.

Fulya Öztürk:

There was news from Kahramanmaraş. There was destruction in Kahramanmaraş but it was still not understood. Adiyaman was very bad. It was at least as bad as Hatay. No one knew about it. We had a mini meeting there. I said to Adem, "What are we going to do? Let's get out of Adiyaman. If we can't broadcast news, there is no point in us staying here." Adem and I set off with maybe 10 people in a Doblo-style car. In other words, we decided to go to Kahramanmaraş by sitting in the trunks and traveling under very difficult conditions. We took some footage in Adiyaman. We thought let's at least go to Kahramanmaraş, because there were 1-2 cell towers there. We caught a signal from a cell tower on the side of the road. I said to the channel in Istanbul, "Please put me on the air, I have things to tell." I was in the car on the side of the road. A cracked road. Semiha Şahin was there then. "Semiha, is there any journalist who can broadcast from Adiyaman? You are following it. We can't follow anything," I said, and she said, "No." No, there wasn't. Maybe no one knew about it. Because my journalist friends couldn't broadcast there either and I left hundreds of wreckages behind. "Please, Adiyaman is very desperate, Adiyaman needs support," I said. In other words, our only goal was to make the voices of those places heard, to raise awareness and to call for support for those places. I mean, we became like an NGO there.

Of course, it is the duty of a journalist to report what they see, hear, know and feel, but there was so much destruction that we all became like NGOs and that's how it should have been.

Adem Metan:

I still don't want to give in to my emotions, but the duty of a journalist is to report what happened. But as I just told Deniz, we found ourselves involved in the rescue activities there. In our vehicle, I think, a 1-year-old, 1.5-year-old baby lost his life and we, as journalists, witnessed such a moment. I mean, we didn't know what to do. We didn't even know where the health

centre was. On the one hand, there was a father wailing. Fulya was screaming. I was trying to stop an ambulance; it was really difficult.

Fulya Öztürk:

We took the baby to the hospital in our car. However, we were unfamiliar with the city of Adiyaman and did not know the way. We asked for directions and were fortunate to receive help from Adem, who pointed out that the car of the General Directorate of Forestry could lead us to the hospital. We stopped to give the baby to a passing car from the General Directorate of Forestry, in case the man knew the road. The car took the baby to the hospital. It was a terrible pain. We were aware that the media is a powerful tool, and a microphone holds significant influence. Our broadcasts are accurate, conscientious, and non-provocative. We pay close attention to what we say while there are people in pain. While some may have mishandled the situation, our goal was always to explain what was needed and missing in the most effective way possible. People may not be aware, but you are. I too fainted in the rubble, but that is not important. It was never disclosed. How many times I have had nervous allergy attacks, my hair turned grey, and I endured a lot of pain. While I was going through this, how were those people coping? How many times has such great pain been experienced in the world? I mean, Professor Orhan Tatar knows better. Did you not refer to it as the world's largest internal earthquake, unparalleled in history, Professor? Additionally, there were two significant earthquakes in succession. We, including our journalist friends, colleagues, soldiers, and gendarmes, did everything in our power. At the outset, there was also a lot of disinformation. Imagine it was two or three in the afternoon when we broadcasted, "Adiyaman is a lot worse." Unfortunately, there was an earthquake at four in the morning, and we were only able to make our voices heard at two in the afternoon.

Adem Metan:

Our first broadcast was around 14:30.

Fulya Öztürk:

Then we went to Kahramanmaraş.

Adem Metan:

And the teams that came to pick us up at the airport were also in shock. We say, "Take us quickly." "Where should I take you?" he says. We actually witnessed many different psychologies there.

Fulya Öztürk:

So yes, we need to underline the power of communication, accurate broadcasting, and accurate journalism. Thanks to all these broadcasts, we informed citizens about many things. Not only me but also everyone on all TV channels broadcast with that principle. "There is a sound coming from here, we need some support," "let's call out from here, here is the address." "Let me send a location if necessary" or we tried to make our voices heard by GSM companies.

Fulya Öztürk:

There is the case of your rescue of a child alive; I will get to that in a moment. Now, of course, communication in Türkiye is developing very fast, but one of the most fundamental centres of this is radio. Mehmet Akbay, also known as Gezegen Mehmet, has made significant contributions to the development of radio broadcasting in Türkiye. My friend Mehmet is here with us today. It is indeed a pleasure to be here with him. Mehmet, you launched very important campaigns on the radio during the '99 earthquake. Actually, it was very useful to have walkie-talkies in taxis at that time. You always emphasize this issue, in case of a possible disaster; the possibility of communication breakdown is very high. Therefore, walkie-talkies are of great importance. You still make your announcements today. Comparing the '99 earthquake with the current earthquake centred in Kahramanmaraş, how is the progress from Gezegen Mehmet's point of view?

Mehmet Akbay



Firstly, I am honoured to be present at this meeting. I would like to express my gratitude to the Directorate of Communications and our guests who are currently in attendance, as well as my colleagues working in the field. I was directing the broadcast and I couldn't help but feel envious of those in the field. I am deeply appreciative of their incredible efforts and perseverance as human beings. I think the most important difference between the '99 earthquake and the February 6 earthquake is that in the '99 earthquake we were shouting, "Can anyone hear my voice?" from above the rubble. The slogan "Can anyone hear my voice?" is still in our memories. We were walking over the rubble, saying, "Can anyone hear my voice?"

On February 6, the successive earthquakes we experienced affected 11 provinces and 10,000,000 people. This time we experienced something very different. Really, this is not a pain one can bear, not a pain one can imagine.

"Can anyone hear my voice?" people shouted from under the rubble this time. For days, for hours, they screamed out from under the rubble, "Can anyone hear my voice?" Of course, we were always expecting such a disaster in Marmara. We were always praying. "God, this will happen, but let's not be caught unprepared." That was our prayer. It was not centred in Marmara but in Hatay, and affected Adiyaman and Kahramanmaraş. It affected these three provinces very much. The fact that it happened here and 11 provinces were affected by this earthquake is really unbelievable. I mean, I don't know if such a thing has ever happened in the world. I have never heard of an earthquake that affected so many people. Of course, it has always been discussed, people screamed "Can anyone hear my voice?" from under the rubble. They died under the rubble, crying out. From time to time, we wondered, "Are there any shortcomings? Are there faults, are there mistakes?" There were also moments when we got angry while listening, hearing and crying. But the affected area is so big. When an earthquake occurs in a province, neighbouring provinces typically provide support. Support is provided by nearby neighbours. Drills are conducted accordingly. When there is an earthquake in all the surrounding provinces, transportation becomes a very serious problem, you cannot reach them. I will say this about February 6, about that night, I was in a deep sleep and my phone rang. Who could call me at that hour? I looked at the phone and it was my assistant, Kağan from the radio. I answered the phone and he said "Mr Mehmet". I thought one of our friends was dead. I mean, why was he calling me at this hour? Why was my assistant waking me up at this hour, what could have happened? I answered the phone sleepily and he said, "Mr Mehmet, there has been a huge

disaster, there has been an earthquake.” I got up immediately. You know my house. I have a studio on my balcony for emergencies. Immediately they got ready and I was ready to broadcast in 15-20 minutes. We have another friend, Şener. . He is also ready in a caravan in the Izmir region. We prepared him too and we started broadcasting in 15-20 minutes. Because I know for sure that during disasters, communication often fails, leaving people without internet or phone access. What is left? Only two things: walkie-talkies and radio. Hollywood movies often depict this scenario, such as a meteor or alien invasion, or a tsunami approaching. Apocalyptic movies often feature two lead actors in the background. The characters are typically portrayed as helpless, with communication devices such as radios or walkie-talkies being their only means of contact with the outside world. Now I will say this about the '99 earthquake, I was living in Halkalı in '99. Everyone tells something miraculous about the '99 earthquake, they talk about an event they experienced, but it always sounds like a fantasy. “I felt it, this happened, that happened, I saw this, the lights came on.” I sent a friend of mine to Izmir on the evening of August 16th. After I sent her to Izmir, I said “Ali,” -you know “Ali” from our program called “Afrikalı Ali”- “I’m feeling very depressed, let’s go to Adapazarı.” This is something I’ve never done in my life. He said, “What are we going to do in Adapazarı?” I said, “We’ll stay in Adapazarı. We’ll come back in the morning.” We filled the car with gasoline. We set off for Adapazarı, to make a long story short. There is an overpass there. You know, there was a McDonald’s back then. We stopped there, took a break, had a cup of tea or something. Orhan Gencebay called. “What are you doing Mehmet?” he said from Bodrum, “Brother,” I said, “I’m very bored, I’m depressed, my psychology is not well, I’m on my way to Adapazarı.” He said, “Mehmet, are you crazy? What are you doing in Adapazarı at this time of night?” I mean, I didn’t feel comfortable because I didn’t have enough money on me, so I said, “Should we go back halfway?” I called the waiter and said, “Can we cross the highway from here?” He said, “Brother, please don’t tell anybody that I told you that but there is a passage between two gas stations, a canal. Your car could go through.” We thanked him and we went through it. I dropped Ali off at his house, I went home and I went to bed. When I got up, turned on the TV, and that big earthquake hit. It was unbelievable. I’m in Halkalı, the building where the radio station is located is very close to İkitelli. I’ll never forget that reflex, I went outside in my underwear. I remember the first thing I did, I turned on the radio. I wondered if our radio was still broadcasting? I turned on the radio, there was a broadcast, I immediately got in the car and drove to the Star building within 15 minutes. The building was completely evacuated. All the employees were outside. I was running inside and security grabbed me. He said, “Mr Mehmet, where are you going?” I said, “I’m going inside, I’m going to broadcast.”

But I had this thought in my head, I should warn people, I should take them outside, in fact, other earthquakes may hit after this one. I had this reflex. I entered the Star building and

found it completely empty. It was connected to our automation system. I was left wondering how I would be able to broadcast without any information or resources. There was an earthquake. I turned on the broadcast and said, "Yes, a big earthquake has hit us. I don't know what has happened. Please, I beg of you, leave your houses in a safe manner, wherever you are." Meanwhile, I was set in the car, ready to leave just in case anything happened. That's when it came to my mind. We have a unique line for receiving traffic information and communicating with taxis via radio. Only our radio had that line. I wondered if I could contact the taxi communication centre. All taxis in Istanbul are connected to that radio. During such incidents, GSM operators may experience downtime, but the landlines remain operational. This is because people are not making calls from house to house when they are away. I called the centre and the phone was picked up. I can't describe my joy at that moment, I cried. The person on the other end said, "Yes, Mr Mehmet." I said, "Are you there?" "Yes, I'm here," he said. I said, "Can we contact the taxis right now?" He said, "Yes." I said, "How can I reach them? Make an announcement." I said, "You make the announcement and I'll put you through to their walkie-talkies" he said. At 3 o'clock in the morning, there were 4,000 taxis on the road. I said, 'Friends, we had a big earthquake. Please let me know the situation wherever you are.' Then, information arrived: "That building has collapsed in Bakırköy," "A building has collapsed in Avcılar," "Nothing in Kadıköy." That went on throughout the night. The coverage was so intense that even Star TV interrupted its own broadcast to connect to the live reports. To provide the information, I want to mention that there is currently no walkie-talkie system in taxis. Instead, they use a 'push-to-talk' communication method, although this can be unreliable in certain situations. The importance of walkie-talkies and radios extends beyond just taxis.

In the event of a disaster, having a disaster kit is crucial. A disaster kit should include a whistle, water, dry food, important medicines, flashlight, and a radio. A radio is essential for staying informed during a disaster.

After February 6, we learned that radio broadcasts were cut off in 11 provinces. National and local radio stations have collapsed, leaving the region without any broadcasts. Although our friends are making news, the people in the region do not have access to phones or the internet. Being part of the Doğuş Group has many advantages. One of them is the speed at which

we operate. We installed transmitters in 11 provinces and broadcasted from two of our radios. We collaborated with NTV for joint broadcasts. We requested permission from the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) and they granted it promptly. I am grateful to RTÜK for their cooperation. Currently, we are broadcasting in 11 provinces. In these broadcasts, we mainly feature psychologists. Previously, we focused on aid campaigns, but now our goal is to provide comfort to people. We have also discovered that there are no radios available in containers and tent cities. I have discussed this issue with the Red Crescent, AFAD, and Haluk Levent and said, "We should provide radios to them so that people could at least listen." Some people do not have phones. Most people's phones were already under the rubble. Additionally, as a nation, we excel at collecting aid, but unfortunately, we struggle with distributing it. It is evident that the region is overwhelmed with piles of aid, resembling garbage. The aid we prepared has rotted under the rain and turned into piles of garbage. Adem, you must have also witnessed this. We apologize for this unfortunate situation. Although we coordinate the aid collection well, we have a problem with its distribution. When we receive aid, we often discard it without proper care. My condolences to those who lost their lives and my wishes for a speedy recovery to those who were injured. I acknowledge the hard work of those in the region, as I myself could not work there and was limited to radio broadcasting. You became the moderator due to the absence of Ahmet Hakan. Then, let me be the moderator and ask you instead. Can you please share your experiences with us?

Adem Metan:

Now, maybe this is a comment that a journalist or a person who produces digital content should not make, when we first landed in Adıyaman, I told Fulya, 'We are ruined as Türkiye.' The destruction was immense. Buildings burned on one side, while a heavy rain poured on the other. People worked to rescue citizens from the rubble. For the first two days, I wondered what would become of Türkiye and what would happen. There was always a big question mark about the day after. At 8 or 9 p.m. on the first day, I witnessed a crowded passage of helicopters, including twin-propeller, 17s, 16s, and 24s, as well as gendarmerie helicopters. The morning of the second day brought thousands of aid trucks, which were moving so quickly that I thought,

“we are truly a great nation. No matter our differences, we can unite in times like these.”

This event was incredibly motivating, Mehmet. The first video I shared went viral. The fact that the trucks were able to maintain high speeds despite the rain, and that people covered their odometers and continued on their way hell bent, was a defining characteristic that set us apart from other nations. This earthquake made me realize the true greatness and strength of Türkiye. This aspect may be a subject to criticism but I often express this on social media. I believe there is not any other country in the world that could overcome such a significant disaster with such fast recovery. Of course, we are not fully recovered; some people are still living in tents or containers. Let me address Fulya first and then Deniz. Do you have a memorable story or memory? For instance, I think you can tell this story: Fulya was walking with her cameraman when she noticed a citizen’s hand through a window. Later, she had a phone conversation with the Minister of Interior.

Fulya Öztürk:

Every moment was memorable but that 14-year-old child, Can, was the most memorable. The evening when we reached Kahramanmaraş from Adıyaman, we coincidentally stopped on a road. I told my friends that would like to walk down the street and take a look, despite the darkness. While walking, I noticed a hand moving behind a curtain. It was completely coincidence, someone was there. Despite the cold and wind, the hand was moving deliberately. Someone there said, ‘Sister, that is a child.’ Indeed, there was a child. What is his name? Can. I called out to the child, saying ‘Can’. The child’s voice sounded weak and pained as he responded with a ‘Yes?’ We silenced everyone in an attempt to hear, and although someone responded, we could not see his face as he only moved his hand. Then, because I had experienced it in previous earthquakes, from my experience, I said, “OK, don’t tire yourself, I’m just going to ask you this, move your hand.” I asked him a few questions, he answered yes, no with his hand. Then I said “Okay, I need to save him.” There was no one with me, here or there. Where should I go? Who should I go to? I don’t know. There was a single contact office. I went there and found out where the Minister of Interior was. They told me, “In front of Kahramanmaraş Provincial Police Headquarters.”

So where is the provincial police headquarters? Is there a location? I don't have one. Okay. We tried to find it. We tried to go and I told my cameraman, "You always look to the left. I'll look to the right," and because we would go back, we tried to memorize that road and there was no electricity. There was a bridge, we were going to walk under the bridge, I was in charge of the right side and my friend was in charge of the left side. Somehow, we got to the Provincial Police Headquarters and Mr Süleyman was there with the AFAD team. "There is a 14-year-old boy, we need to rescue him, we need a team. We need to go together." "Do you know the address; will you be able to find it?" he asked me. I said, "I will." Actually, I wasn't sure I would ever find it again. But I had somehow memorized the roads. Anyway, we did find the place. They rescued the boy safely after 6 hours. He was 14 years old; he only had a black eye. His foot was stuck, it was a very difficult wreck. AFAD tried very hard. The Gendarmerie came, too. I'll never forget, one of our commanders from the gendarmerie said, "It's a big risk, but I'll take it." I mean, I couldn't hold myself there, I cried so much. I mean, the man did this, he said "I", he took out a lot of equipment and said, "I'm putting myself at risk". There was a tiny place where they could get the child out. So, he crawled into that tiny place. They pulled that child out of that tiny space with all their equipment and a digger. He cut something, moved something, because the debris could have fallen on him, but they got that boy out of there. The 14-year-old boy is now studying in Konya.

Adem Metan:

So, you're in contact.

Fulya Öztürk:

Yes, we are in contact, Can and I. There are so many memories. Which one should I share? Pain was everywhere. Sometimes there was hope, but sometimes there was only pain. The smell of the corpse still lingers on us. I had a coat, but I don't want to see it anymore. I don't know where it is now. The place had a distinct odour of both hope and death. Every moment was unforgettable, and it is important for Türkiye to remember as well. Rather than simply discussing it in panels and conferences, we must actively work to ensure that it is not forgotten. Türkiye, like Japan, is a country that is prone to earthquakes. Earthquakes above seven are common occurrences. In our region, we experience earthquakes every year, typically with a magnitude of 5 or 6. I have broadcasted in front of the rubble many times. Although it is not my field, I have memorized and learned about the technical aspects, including the machines and the actions

that AFAD will take. I wish the pain and destruction caused by collapsed buildings did not occur and I did not get to have this knowledge. I hope that we can learn from these experiences. We all share the responsibility for the administration, from local to national level. While we focus on rebuilding the affected buildings, we must also consider the risks in other regions such as Hatay, Adana, Marmara, and Aegean, where earthquakes are also a concern. It is crucial that we address the issue of urban transformation and tackle any moral problems. Additionally, there are still contractors who have fled and cannot be reached. You remember Alev in Hatay, she pulled her child out of the rubble. She wanted the contractor of that building to be caught. It is crucial to teach morality and conscience as lessons in every field. I am fulfilling my duty and am surprised that people often thank me, and I wonder why. I simply do my broadcasting in a conscientious and moral way, as it should be. Do you remember the mysterious building in Kahramanmaraş? There was a glassware shop underneath, and not even a plate was moved. We spoke about that contractor. But he had just done his job and erected a solid building. The dishes in the shop did not move at all. We were impressed and wondered, 'How did he do that?' God bless him, let's talk about him okay, he was a good example. Let's say, "Look, friends, the man did his job properly, the building didn't collapse, not even the fork below moved." But he merely did his job. Everyone should do his or her job in this manner. That's all I have to say. I want us to learn lessons. I don't want to go in front of a wreckage and broadcast anymore, I don't want people to die. Let's learn from this, let's learn lessons, it's up to all of us.

Adem Metan:

Deniz, you have undoubtedly witnessed tremendous pain, as have we all in the region. Sometimes, when you pick up the microphone to speak, it can feel like your message is incomplete. The words can be open to interpretation, making it easy for people to misunderstand. Many of our friends may not have been to the region or seen the situation first-hand. People who haven't been to the region may not fully comprehend our descriptions. What have you encountered?

Deniz Tüysüz:

I agree with you because before I went to the region, for example, I could not have imagined that there would be so much destruction. Fulya told me about Adiyaman and so on.

Seeing it with the naked eye is very different from watching it on TV. Of course, there were moments when we were very affected. There were moments when we cried a lot. For example, I was crying all the time when we were not broadcasting. Those children and so on. Also, after I became a mother, there were some changes in my feelings on this subject. For example, Hatay,

I saw how hospitable the people of Hatay were when they were struggling with those sufferings. I mean, they don't call it the city of indulgence for nothing.

We were waiting by a wreckage, there was work going on, the teams had heard a sound. Hours passed, 4 hours, 5 hours, 6 hours, they were working in detail. It was about 3 a.m., of course, it was very cold in Hatay. Everyone lit a fire and tried to keep warm. One uncle called at one of the moments when I took a break from the broadcast. "My daughter," he said, "Please come over here." He said, "My daughter," he was sitting in a sofa that had fallen from a collapsed house, a sofa had fallen, a chair had fallen, etc., people were sitting there, people were trying to warm up, they were waiting by the rubble, they were waiting for someone to be rescued. "Come here," he said. "You are very tired; can you please sit down?" "Uncle," I said, "please don't bother, you have been miserable here for days, and you are thinking about us?" I was frankly surprised. He said, "No, no." I cannot tell you how much he insisted, he said "please". "Sit down and rest for a while," he said, "I'll give you some water and so on." Then I could not refuse, I sat down, of course, because I did not want to be misunderstood. Then there was a 112 health worker next to me, he said, "There's a body over there. Do you see it on the ground?" "Yes," I said. "It's wrapped in a blanket; it's just been pulled out. That Uncle is the owner of the body. He's waiting by the deceased's body," he said. I mean, I felt so bad, even now, I have goosebumps. I mean, even in that situation, we met people there who thought about the other person and acted accordingly. Then they started to recover a little, they settled in container cities. No matter whose door we knocked on, whose news we covered, whomever we handed a microphone to, when we finished our work, we were always offered coffee, please, please, here is a treat. I mean, they did not have a stove to cook coffee, but they did not let us go without that coffee. These were examples that I experienced with great emotion and learned some lessons about.

Adem Metan:

Yes, thank you very much for listening. Let's have the final words. We are a little short on time.

Mehmet Akbay:

Now, of course, we are talking about the problems, but I would like to put forward my proposal, what can be done? Today, when buying a vehicle, we do not buy the vehicle without an expertise report. I have this proposal; since we are here at the Presidency's Directorate of Communications, they must be taking notes here, please forward this note to the relevant authorities. Just as we get an expertise report when buying a car, we buy the car, we take it, we have it serviced, we wonder if there is a changed part, if there is damage to the paint, if there is this or that. We do not show the care to our home that we show to a car. A house is a home, so the place where we feel the safest becomes our grave. My proposal is this; in these house sales and rentals, an expertise report should be made compulsory. Let them say to the citizen, you cannot rent this house without getting this report, without getting the safe paper. What will happen automatically then? The good news announced by our President is very important. "We will give half, you give half." What will everyone do then? They will not be able to rent out or sell their house; they will have to repair it. This is my first proposal. My second proposal is that in the developed countries in the world, we always talk about contractors, about architects. I claim, look, I know this from personal experience, I experience it. I would claim that this is something I have personally experienced.

Adem Metan:

This is very important, we talked about it.

Mehmet Akbay:

I personally experience this You make a renovation in a small house. You replace three different foremen; one ruins it, and one is unable to do anything else. They do not know because we call them labourers here. In other words, we call people who work in construction "labourers". We live in houses built by those people. So, if a contractor says to a foreman, for example, "Build me the best house. Determine the costs, I'll pay you twice as much, I'll pay you three times as much for the labour." If the man is immoral and uneducated, he will continue to commit fraud. I have researched in Europe and the United States, no one who does not have two years of training is allowed into construction. They will have two years of training and every 3-4 years this training is revised. For goodness sake, do these workers, moulders, concrete workers, and

cement pourers from our currently demolished buildings know anything about this? I'm saying this officially: let it be investigated; the majority of the collapsed structures are unrelated to the contractors. It has something to do with masters and workers. It is worth investigating that the majority of the collapsed structures do not have any connection to the contractors involved. They are related to the work done by foremen and labourers. There is also this kind of hatred: "We are building it, but they will live here, they will enjoy it". With hatred, not with love. With hatred because these people are paid very low salaries, they do very heavy work. They are uneducated. What can you expect?

Adem Metan:

I think this is a very important proposal. We definitely need to express this more. We all need to do this.

Mehmet Akbay:

Finally, the use of radio-sets, the use of radios, and the coordination of radios in Türkiye must be done by the Directorate of Communications. Radios are very important in such a disaster. How will we broadcast? Not everyone should broadcast on their own. We should be aware of what to do within a certain logic. We should make joint broadcasts because people cannot watch television. They cannot follow it from the phone or the internet because there is none. What is there? There are radio-sets, radios and nothing else. Yes, thank you.

Adem Metan:

Thank you very much. Fulya, what final words do you wish to say?

Fulya Öztürk:

We are a wonderful nation. As Deniz has just said, from Hatay to Adıyaman to Maraş, people in every part of my country are wonderful.

I hope that this unity and solidarity will last, that we will always be united in conscience and sound mind, free of segregation, discrimination, and inciting events, even in the most difficult circumstances. Because when we want, we come together magnificently. I wish this to be permanent and as I just said, if necessary, let us all stay in tents and containers for 2 years,

but let us renovate all buildings and act and live with this earthquake awareness. Everyone should do their part, we should all be more conscious. Let us not go through this pain again. Thank you.

Adem Metan:

Thank you.

Deniz Tüysüz:

I completely agree. I sincerely hope that such a disaster, such suffering, will never happen again, and it is currently in progress, with work beginning as soon as possible, but there are disagreements, and the homeowners are becoming aware of something...

Adem Metan:

Put one, get three...

Deniz Tüysüz:

Without thinking about that or protesting, "But they give you 90 square metres when you have a 100 square metre house," because in the end when they collapse and you die. Nothing remains.

Fulya Öztürk:

The things we saw... The columns were cut. Twin apartment blocks. Block A collapsed in front of my eyes; block B stood still. There was an auto gallery in the other block; the car dealer cut the columns. The things we saw! None of these are stories, they are actual events. Türkiye is an earthquake prone country, since we cannot change the location of the country, we will change the buildings, and we will change our mentality. That is it.

Deniz Tüysüz:

I mean, regardless of the cost... Really, because it has to be done for life, for the continuation of life. It was already an issue that I was concerned about long ago. Especially in the Marmara Region, it has come to the agenda even more after these earthquakes, inshallah; I hope it will be resolved eventually.

Adem Metan:

Thank you very much for listening and watching. I am Adem Metan, I do not know how successful I have been among so many of my esteemed colleagues, but I have tried to moderate this session for you. Mr. Mehmet is very successful in the field of radio. Fulya is doing incredible work at CNN Türk. Deniz Tüysüz has already been maintaining her quality level at NTV for years. As someone who produces digital content, I am here today representing YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and I am also happy to be here.

As someone who produces digital content, I am here today representing YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and I am also happy to be here. There are very valuable speakers in the next panel as well. I would just like to end with this; we have seen in this disaster that disinformation is as destructive as the destruction of the disaster and unfortunately, we cannot prevent it. If there are people with no moral values, if there are people without a sense of responsibility, we cannot prevent it and it causes much greater destruction than the destruction of the disaster. I would like to tell you about an incident that I witnessed first-hand. A call arrives to 112. Citizens see this call on social media. In a village in Antakya, 32 children were freezing to death, about to die. Being a bit hyperactive and mischievous, I immediately hid in the trunk of the UMKE vehicle and we went to that village with three UMKE teams. I was so worried and scared. I mean, there is nothing as frightening as 32 children freezing to death in this century. We were already experiencing a lot of pain and when we went to the village, only one child had a problem with his upper respiratory tract and his treatment was planned. Tomorrow a helicopter was to come and pick him up. When we asked, "Why did you do such a thing?" they said, "We wanted more aid to come to this village." So, someone from a family tweeted. And one of the things we've seen most recently is that in this earthquake, in terms of mobilizing people, the so-called "confirmed information"... And the three teams of UMKE, the AFAD team and other ATT people who were driving ambulances could have rushed to the aid of other people. It should not be forgotten that in Türkiye, 50,000 citizens were evacuated from the region within 14 days of this disaster. Approximately 16,000 of them were evacuated by air, and our President assigned his planes, the Ministry of National Defence assigned its helicopters, the Gendarmerie, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Health. Therefore, morals are perhaps the issue that should be at the forefront in such times. We need to build this issue at least as much as we take care in our constructions. Because we may reach a point where we will not be able to cope with this moral problem in the years to come. Maybe we can rebuild our buildings, but if we lose our morals, I think it is very difficult to regain them. Thank you very much for listening. There will be very valuable speakers in the following panel. All the best to them in advance.

P A N E L

02

**Moderator:**

Göktuğ Kırca, Presenter, TRT

Panelists:

Prof. Orhan Tatar, Director General of Earthquake and Risk Reduction, AFAD

Fatma Varank, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change

Dr. Şuayıp Birinci, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health

Serdar Karagöz, Director General, Anadolu Agency



Building Resilient and Interdisciplinary Disaster Communication Approach

**Stratcom Panel - 2 : Acil Durumlara Karşı
Dirençli İletişim Ekosisteminin İnşası**
*Stratcom Panel - 2 : Building Resilient &
Interdisciplinary Disaster Communication Approach*

Moderatör
Moderator



Göktaş Kırca

Panelistler
Panelists



Fatma Varank



Dr. Şuayip Birinci



Serdar Karagöz



**Prof. Dr. Orhan
Tatar**



Göktuğ Kırca



Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests,

The second panel of the Stratcom Disaster Communication Forum starts. We will discuss “Building Resilient and Interdisciplinary Disaster Communication Approach.” I have really valuable guests, and our time is limited. First, I would like to give you a brief introduction. As you know, on February 6, our country was struck by two earthquakes centred in Kahramanmaraş, which we refer to as “the disaster of the century.” Many things have changed since then. Today, our respected institutional directors are here to discuss resilience, response and recovery in light of the February 6 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes. Coordination and technology will be our greatest parameters. I will first give the floor to Orhan Tatar, Director General of Earthquake and Risk Reduction at AFAD. Dear Director General, in light of the two earthquakes that occurred in Kahramanmaraş, I would like you to share what AFAD did before, during, and after the earthquakes, as well as explain the mechanism that Türkiye’s Disaster Response Plan, also known as TAMP, provides in these areas.

Orhan Tatar



“Citizens need accurate and reliable information in times of disaster.”

First of all, thank you. Of course, before I begin, I would like to convey my condolences to our nation once again. We were confronted with a genuinely major disaster. During this disaster, unfortunately, 8 of our AFAD personnel were martyred. May Allah have mercy on them, and I extend my condolences to their loved ones. I honestly don't know where to start. So I am the first person to arrive at the AFAD coordination centre following the 7.7-magnitude earthquake at 04.17 a.m. Because I reside there, I spend all of my time in AFAD. When the earthquake struck at 04.17 a.m., the scene I witnessed when I arrived at the Earthquake Monitoring and Assessment Centre at 04.18 a.m. was scary. The signals from 1,145 earthquake recording sites were intricately intertwined and mixed together. And it was telling us that we were really facing a huge catastrophe. Of course, the most important thing is to remain calm. I am not sure how calm you can remain there, but the first things we did were very clear. We went to the Disaster Management Centre nearby, on the upper floor. Under Türkiye's Disaster Response Plan, all state components arrived at their respective posts within half an hour. As a matter of fact, these two earthquakes, with magnitudes of 7.7 and 7.6, occurred in geological processes that are quite rare in the world.

Two earthquakes occurred nine hours apart... These earthquakes caused a surface rupture that was roughly 450 kilometres long. It impacted an area of around 120,000 square kilometres. The affected population is around 15 million. In addition, we are talking about an earthquake that destroyed approximately 18 provinces and 175 districts outside this area. When you look at the area affected by this earthquake, as described in the first panel, you can see that it destroyed an area considerably larger than the surface area of many European countries. We are talking about devastation three times the size of Switzerland, Denmark, and the Netherlands and the same size as Poland and Bulgaria. There has been significant destruction in such a large area. Certainly, our country is prone to earthquakes. We are the country with the most active faultlines in the world. There are approximately 500 active faultlines. Their total length is around 15,000 kilometres, and each of them has the potential to cause an earthquake of magnitude 5.5 or higher anywhere in our country. So, what did we do? Well, Türkiye's Disaster Response Plan is truly an exemplary plan. We have professors and directors from many public institutions here; we have stakeholders. Indeed, we are talking about a management system where great solidarity was demonstrated within the first half hour after the earthquake, meeting at the AFAD Coordination Centre, and over the following days. Esteemed deputy ministers and the Director General of Anadolu Agency are here. Everyone should recognise the demonstration of solidarity that occurred there. It is critical for a Turkish citizen to understand and observe what is happening at the Disaster Management Coordination Centre.

What has been done so far as AFAD, or more precisely, as the state? A lot.

I would like to summarise briefly before delivering a few key messages. First and foremost, we are witnessing a sequence of earthquakes, with the greatest number of aftershocks occurring after the two major shocks so far in the world. The latest information we received this morning is that there have been around 31,000 aftershocks so far. Even the number of aftershocks of magnitude 5 and greater (between 5 and 6) was approximately 55. In other words, there were 55 aftershocks that were of a similar magnitude to the 5.9-magnitude earthquake that struck Düzce on November 23rd, about 3–4 months ago. We are confronted with an immense and overwhelming catastrophe. As a matter of fact, it has been over 70 days since the earthquake occurred. To be honest, I cannot think of another country in the world that has progressed this far in crisis management in such a short period of time. This is an example of solidarity. Our colleagues clearly stated it in the first panel, but what happened when we took a glance at it? As you are aware, it has been decided that 18 provinces have been identified as affecting the life of the general public so far. As the director stated in his speech, 35,256 professional search and rescue teams responded immediately following the quakes. 11,488 of these are international search and rescue teams within INSARAG. They were accompanied by 60,000 support staff. This is a very serious figure. Again, 275,000 workers worked in the field during the acute period, encompassing the first two, three, and four days.

Approximately 650,000 personnel from different ministries and institutions have worked in the region so far. Search and rescue teams worked simultaneously in 12 provinces, 171 districts, and 8076 villages spanning from Sivas Gürün to Şanlıurfa, Adana, and Elazığ, dealing with about 38,000 pieces of wrecked debris. While all of this was going on, we conducted one of the world's largest evacuations. During the first week following the earthquake, more than 3 million people were evacuated from the area using various methods.

Of course, I would like to summarise briefly; significant actions have been undertaken throughout the entire process. When you look at it, there were 20,000 vehicles, construction equipment, 141 helicopters, 182 aeroplanes, and 23 ships deployed around the region. The arrival of those helicopters that Adem mentioned in the first panel is really remarkable. So far, 17,500 sorties have been conducted, with only 360 flights from Adana Airport on the first day. It is possible to say that the response was swift. Daily meals are currently provided to an average of four million people by the Turkish Red Crescent, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and public institutions, particularly under the coordination of AFAD. Food services are provided to four million people daily, and a total of 290 million meals have been served so far. During the month of Ramadan, 2 million people were served iftar dinners (fastbreaking) daily at 1,700 iftar centres. In response to the need for shelter, prompt action was taken to establish temporary shelter areas; tent cities were built on day one. After that, there was a rapid construction of container cities starting in the second week. Currently, people are striving to sustain life in tent cities across 321 different locations. So far, 781,411 tents and 77,000 containers have been built. Infrastructure on an area of 10 million square metres was completed while these container cities were being constructed. These figures are quite significant. Currently, 2.7 million people are residing in container cities and tent cities. At present, 11,188 workplaces are undergoing construction in the area. Once more, our Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation, and Climate Change has assessed a total of 2,193,209 buildings for damage as part of damage assessment studies. This is a very serious figure. In other words, the damage assessment of approximately 2 million 200 buildings in such a short period of time is unprecedented in the world. Unfortunately, however, nearly half of these buildings were damaged in some way. On the one hand, debris removal efforts were ongoing in this earthquake zone. The scene was, of course, very tragic and distressing. Upon closer inspection, it becomes evident that eight out of every ten buildings in Hatay, Antakya, are in a state of rubble. Upon the removal of this rubble, eighty per cent of Hatay will be devoid of any structure, transforming into an arid plain. Obviously, these are the distressing repercussions of this earthquake. However, 50 thousand of the 57 thousand buildings of debris have been removed so far, and this was accomplished in one million and two hundred thousand truck tours. Thus far, 14 million cubic metres of debris have been transported by these trucks. These are really quite serious, substantial figures.

Another aspect is psychosocial support. It is probably one of the most critical concerns that requires the utmost attention. Disaster sociology and psychology are among the most significant lessons we have learned in the wake of these disasters. After these major earthquakes, we have learned two different concepts that we should never disregard. 2.5 million people have been provided with psychosocial support thus far. These figures serve as indicators of the power of our country. However, we need to keep this in mind: Our country is a country of earthquakes, and its geography can be constantly exposed to various disasters. We also have cities in different parts of our country that are currently at risk. However, we have two main tasks to do; it is very clear. Numerous scientific studies are currently being carried out in our country. It is indeed possible to discuss each of these within its framework; it's a different context; however, there are two fundamental aspects that we will never forget: One is that we have to make our cities resilient against disasters. When an earthquake hits, we have to ensure that our buildings can remain standing before it escalates into a disaster. We must always keep that in mind. The only step that is needed for this is transformation. We have to transform buildings. We do not lose anyone in the event of an earthquake so long as the buildings remain standing. It's very clear. The second is a fact that we have clearly witnessed during this earthquake: Despite the fact that we believe we have informed millions of individuals by conducting numerous drills, delivering disaster awareness training, and reaching a large audience, we regrettably observe that these efforts do not yield a tangible transformation in behaviour. In other words, when there is an earthquake or a disaster, it is necessary to internalise how our citizens should act and what they should do. It's very important. In other words, even from the first moment of the earthquake, it was not easy to reach our city centres within the initial six to eight hours following the earthquake. On the one hand, search and rescue teams and construction vehicles are trying to reach the city centres, but on the other hand, hundreds of thousands of people are trying to leave the city, and they want to get in their cars and leave. What does it mean? It's a very serious chaos. Therefore, we need to focus on these two main issues in the upcoming period. On the one hand, we must provide our citizens with practical information regarding how to respond seriously and intensively to a disaster in its aftermath. Our citizens need to internalise this. On the other hand, our most crucial duty is to make these cities resilient. Undoubtedly, volunteering plays a crucial role in this process. Prior to these disasters, approximately 600–620 thousand people were enrolled in AFAD's volunteer system. However, in the aftermath of these disasters, we see that this figure has increased to 1,035,000. Over twofold, it has increased. But of course, as you pointed out, the concept of volunteerism must be thoroughly adopted. It is of the utmost importance that it transform into an action that will genuinely support and contribute to us in times of disaster. Last but not least, disinformation has been one of the most challenging and distressing issues in this regard for us.

There were instances of deep feelings. There were many moments when we cried, both in public and in private. However, it really hurts and upsets us to see how things we have lived and felt are reflected in a different way. It's very important. The second issue is information pollution. This was one of the processes that was very challenging for us. Because what citizens need most in times of such disasters is reliable and accurate information. If people can access this information, they feel relieved. We were able to observe this very clearly, yet unfortunately, we had to deal with many issues, ranging from volcano eruptions to dam collapses. We had to provide the public with accurate information regarding these issues. In this sense, communication is really of great importance. In particular, I would like to express my gratitude to the Directorate of Communications, which is one of the most important partners of the Türkiye's Disaster Response Plan (TAMP), and to the esteemed personnel of the Directorate of Communications. During that time period, they undertook extraordinary missions and informed us of the following: In the midst of disaster preparedness and response, the communication aspect of the effort is of the utmost importance. This is probably one of the most important lessons for us as well, because we need to improve in many fields. We see them, we know them, we are working on them, we will work on them. We have no problems. Also, we learned once again about the importance of communication during disasters. Thank you.

Göktuğ Kırca:

Yes, as citizens of the Republic of Türkiye, we would like to thank you and your teammates before you. In fact, Mr Tatar was the face of that team on the screen, informing the people correctly about the earthquakes centred in Kahramanmaraş on February 6th. He also mentioned that the news contained a lot of disinformation and information pollution. To give a basic example, Mr Tatar said the state completed the damage assessment of over 2 million buildings quickly. There were scientists from a variety of universities here. However, there was an image that we will all remember: a 5-second clip in which we saw that damage assessment work was carried out by pounding the wall with a hammer, which was insufficient, and that this was circulated through social media channels, resulting in information pollution and disinformation. Of course, that is what hurts you; as a reward for your efforts, this is what you receive, and you are correct in that regard. Thank you very much.

Orhan Tatar:

In the meantime, I would like to offer my apologies and ask your permission. Today also marks a medal ceremony for AFAD, our search and rescue teams, who are our hidden heroes during earthquakes. We have to be there by 14:00. Indeed, these are all very valuable individuals to us. Many unsung heroes served in this process. I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to every one of them. If you allow me, I would like to go there right away.

Göktuğ Kırca:

Thank you so much, Mr Tatar. Thank you for your contribution. Then let's do it this way: we have search and rescue teams among us. Let's give a big round of applause to everyone who has assumed responsibility for these earthquakes and other disasters. We are grateful! Thank you. This job is at the heart of being truly human... Conscience is vital, regardless of religion or opinion. Being human and engaging with people is incredibly important. I think many people, including myself, would agree. I will now give the floor to our second valuable speaker, the Deputy Minister of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change, Fatma Varank. I would like to ask you to talk about Türkiye National Risk Shield Model. What types of activities are available for restoration, construction, and improvement within the purview of this model? Of course, one of our characteristics here is what and where the function of communication is. Of course, we are now living in the age of technology. Technology is absolutely essential. Also, how did your Ministry participate in this process?

Fatma Varank

“Implementing and operating the Türkiye Risk Shield Model is one of the most significant processes”

Thank you. First and foremost, I wish Allah's mercy upon our fellow citizens who died as a result of this terrible earthquake, and I wish for patience for their families. We went through this process together as a country. However, since we live in that region, I was on duty in Kahramanmaraş from the first day. I returned on the evening of the second day of Eid. I would like to tell you about my experiences there during this process, what we did as a ministry, and the work done in the Risk Shield Model. Of course, we are talking about an enormous disaster that hit 11 provinces. With the addition of 7 more, there are now 18 provinces officially affected. The Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation, and Climate Change is responsible for damage assessment and construction as part of the Türkiye's Emergency Response Plan. On the first day, we went to the field with our entire team, which included our Minister and deputy ministers, all director generals and deputy director generals, heads of departments, and teams that conducted damage assessments on both the first and second days. We were all in the field and assigned to various provinces. We had a director general in each province, and our deputy minister or minister was in charge. We each coordinated in a separate city. Of course, we operated within the AFAD.

Here, I would like to discuss the damage assessment process that we have recently addressed. Our Ministry's primary duty is damage assessment. What makes damage assessment important? Damage assessment is crucial to see where the damage is concentrated and to launch initial interventions there. People may have the impression that "You began assessing the damage even before the wreckage was cleared away." But that is not the case. Damage assessment is a crucial process. Following the first destruction, we flew drones shortly after the earthquake to determine the location of the destruction using new maps. We determined how many buildings were demolished in 11 provinces and where they were located... We are now talking about a fairly large area. In other words, as Prof Orhan Tatar suggested, imagine a country the size of Poland being entirely destroyed. We are talking about such massive destruction in terms of area. Initial assessments are critical. Because you need to know how many people you are going to intervene with. How are you going to carry out search and rescue in this wreckage? You also need to dispose of the wreckage somewhere when searching and rescuing. You need to keep the roads open. That is why initial assessments are critical. After we completed these assessments, we planned how many people we could coordinate, how many people we could bring here, and how we could shelter them. We had all of this planned out because there is nowhere to stay in many parts of the city. The physical condition of the buildings was yet to be assessed. Most of the hotels were closed. There was no electricity, water, or natural gas during the first moments of the earthquake. You will introduce damage assessment personnel into such a setting. At the same time, there was an intense struggle on the field. There is an immense struggle underway in terms of search and rescue

and health, and you must provide technical support. The process must be very well organised. At AFAD, we tracked this process day by day, with each province operating inside its own organisation and the centre providing general coordination in Ankara. At the conclusion of the second day, we determined where significant damage was and where buildings needed to be demolished immediately because demolitions were concentrated in a particular city centre. We assessed such areas in the first two days, then moved on to less damaged areas and continued damage assessments. We conducted damage assessments with over 7,000 people, engineers, and architects. I'm talking about 11 provinces, and Mr Orhan provided the numbers for us. We assessed the damage on 2,193,209 buildings, and 311,196 of them were classified as "heavily damaged for immediate demolition." Now, why is this process essential? You have to assess the buildings that are to be demolished immediately because they must be demolished right away. The aftershocks continued, and there was a great risk of these buildings collapsing during the process. There were other buildings that needed to be demolished urgently in areas where search and rescue teams were operating. This was often the case. We have genuinely tracked these buildings. Does the building next to it seem to be slipping or not? How much does the highly damaged building next to it, or the building to be demolished, move? Because people are working under those buildings. Hundreds of people are doing search and rescue operations there.

One of our responsibilities is to provide this assistance to search and rescue teams in the field. As I said, buildings that need to be demolished must be demolished as quickly as possible. You must organise the demolition of these structures and the disposal of their waste as soon as possible. While this process was ongoing, we began sharing damage assessments with residents via the hasar-tespit.gov.tr website and e-government in the first week, beginning on the second and third days of the disaster. This is a crucial communication; citizens can discover the extent of damage to their home by viewing it on e-government, which makes us more comfortable in the field. Because citizens can see from the damage assessment website that their house has been checked, that the damage status has been determined, that they should not enter their house if it is heavily damaged; if it is not, they may want to leave, and that if they have a slightly damaged building and belongings, they may go and get them. These are crucial communication channels that we use as the Ministry.

On the other hand, we began to identify reserve zones in the field during the first week. Yes, search and rescue operations are currently ongoing, but they will conclude within 15 days, and the next step will be to identify the locations. Specifically, determining the sites where tent cities, container cities, and permanent dwellings will be developed and conducting ground assessments is an essential process that we carried out concurrently in 11 provinces. To determine the ground conditions of the selected areas, particularly those to be selected for per-

manent dwellings—together with local NGOs because this would be shared later—we initiated micro-documentation studies in all cities where there has been demolition in the field, as well as ground surveys of residences to be built in reserve areas.

All these processes continued simultaneously, and while these processes were going on, our Ministry put forward the first national risk shield model under the coordination and leadership of the President. With this model, a huge group of academicians, historians, sociologists, geoscientists, architects, engineers, and many other professionals who do excellent work in Türkiye was formed, and a model was proposed. Thirteen committees were formed, consisting of our very valuable bureaucrats and scholars, to serve this model. We set out to carry out these processes with our professors by forming several committees ranging from the reconstruction of wrecked areas in 11 provinces to modelling, damage assessment, waste management, and historical site restoration. We are continuing this process with the help of the relevant ministry personnel, and they have started to bear their first fruits. There have been three committee meetings so far, one of which the President of the Republic presided over. We are continuing the process by sharing with the public the outcomes of the ongoing initiatives we undertake together with our professors, as well as the decisions we have made for next weekend. Meanwhile, we continue the planning and project design process for the reconstruction of all city centres with the assistance of our committee members, who are supported by our professors and include renowned architects, engineers, urban planners, and professors from across Türkiye. After making site selections in a short amount of time, the project design procedures were accelerated, and the first groundbreaking was held. Presently, the foundations have been laid in 113 structures, and our construction operations are ongoing. By the end of next month, we will have laid the groundwork and begun construction on 319 thousand houses, which we will complete this year. Fifty thousand of these are village houses. Maybe you saw it on TV: on the second day of Eid, we held the delivery ceremony for our first village houses. We have relocated our residents into their homes. We have completed twenty village houses. Others' construction is ongoing. Maybe we will have completed many of the houses we began during this time by the forthcoming Eid al-Adha. Construction of 14,000 village houses is currently underway in the field.

Implementing and operating the Türkiye Risk Shield Model is one of the most significant processes in this context.

These committees' function is not limited to the restoration and reconstruction of the earthquake zone. One of the most fundamental reasons for forming these committees is Türkiye's huge number of earthquake and disaster-prone areas... Because earthquakes are not the only risk in Türkiye. We have experienced countless disasters in the past, but if we consider floods, fires, and climate change, Türkiye may be a country that confronts such disasters more frequently in the future. In order to become more resilient to these disasters, we are collaborat-

ing with these committees to adopt specific decisions and legislation. We quickly implemented the decisions to start reserve housing for İstanbul's earthquake preparedness, particularly following the last committee meeting we held in the working office in Dolmabahçe, and we began a great transformation, a historical transformation for İstanbul, with the President's "Half is on Us" campaign.

We intend to transform 200,000 buildings in İstanbul with this initiative. In the "Half is on Us" campaign, the state will cover half of the costs of the building that will undergo an urban transformation, and citizens will be able to pay the other half by borrowing for 10 years and paying it in instalments proportional to the increase in their salary, or in 10-year fixed instalments at a very low-interest rate of 0.79 per cent. We will start accepting applications tomorrow. We are progressing extremely quickly. We sincerely hope to make İstanbul earthquake-ready within the next five years. According to prior studies, up to 1.5 million houses need to be transformed. We know which locations are more risky and which structures are more prone to earthquakes, and we want to prioritise them and manage this process collaboratively, citizen and state. The recently revealed campaign has sparked a lot of attention. Our Minister is currently in İstanbul, serving as a candidate for parliament from the first district. He is frequently on the campaign trail. Citizens are assembled and informed about the urban transformation. Citizens have a high level of interest in this area, and they frequently seek meetings to learn more. We can already tell that there will be a large number of applications when they open tomorrow. This makes us glad because İstanbul currently has 93,000 dwelling units for urban transformation. Our works continue, but this is a different initiative. This is a plot-scale transformation model that will be implemented by the state. We previously gave 1 million 250 thousand TL in loan support for transformation, half of which was interest support from the state, with the intention of targeting the private sector. This time, the state is solely responsible for the implementation. The transformation will involve TOKİ and the Ministry. We promise our citizens urban transformation and the renewal of buildings on a block scale rather than a plot scale. We will give our citizens relocation and rental assistance as soon as we receive the necessary requests, and we will deliver their houses within two years. We have prepared all infrastructure and efforts for this. While construction works in the earthquake zone are ongoing, we have swiftly and without delay taken the necessary steps to prepare İstanbul for an earthquake. This is the first and crucial outcome of the operation of the Risk Shield Model. It is a significant consequence for İstanbul, and it is a project that will begin in İstanbul and spread to other cities with a high risk of earthquakes. I would like to express that we will be successful in this and that we will fulfil all our duties to be prepared for the earthquake in İstanbul. Our entire team is putting in a lot of effort in the field to achieve this. The entire team working on urban transformation is deployed in İstanbul. Indeed, our colleagues who operated in the earthquake zone continue to work there.

You said something about the hammer; I would like to answer that, too. In fact, the hammer is the only tool used to assess earthquake damage, and this method is used in the national literature to determine earthquake damage. This hammer is not a tool for hitting the wall to make a sound. You know, there are different types of earthquake damage. In other words, it provides an assessment of where and how a crack in a beam-column joint is located and the extent of the damage, and the hammer in the hands of our friends is used to remove the plaster. Or a tool they use to remove the siding. Because they can't do it with their hands, because they cannot constantly carry a significantly larger tool with them... This is a simple hammer used all over the world, yet it functions. The extent and location of the crack in the column or beam can be ascertained by removing or ripping off the plaster or siding. The extent of the crack serves as an indicator of the severity of the building's damage, which can be classified as slight, moderate, or severe. It has a scientific basis. So the engineer there is already aware of this. Upon his arrival, he detects and photographs them using a tablet. I would like to elaborate on this further. Our two engineers conduct all damage assessments in the field with their tablets and, if necessary, a hammer; if not, many buildings become evident through mere observation that they have sustained severe damage. They photograph them, record location data, and upload the information to the system that evening. We monitor the full extent of the damage when this data is transferred to the system that evening. Where is the severe damage, where is the moderate damage, which buildings require immediate demolition, and which buildings have been demolished? We monitor this in a fully digital setting and use it as the basis for our decisions. I would like to express that I am very happy to be here to share this information with you. I would like to express my gratitude to the Directorate of Communications for providing us with such an opportunity. Have a nice day.

Göktuğ Kırca:

Thank you very much. We have listened to Fatma Varank, the Deputy Minister of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change. Considering the earthquakes that struck Kahramanmaraş on February 6, health is unquestionably one of the most important factors. We will now hear about the efforts of the Ministry of Health. What has been done and will be done for patients and earthquake victims? What are the breakthroughs in disaster health technologies? What will be done in the upcoming stage of the process; what kinds of activities are involved? Deputy Minister of Health Şuayıp Birinci will address them. The floor is yours.

Şuayıp Birinci



“We immediately deployed 10 thousand healthcare personnel in the first moments of the earthquake. Emergency response units were set up using our resources. We immediately called for urgent support.”

Thank you. I would like to extend my gratitude to all the participants and the Directorate of Communications for organising this event. We have learned a lot from this disaster; however, we need to share these lessons with everyone, and everyone needs to reinforce their reflexes when facing these situations. First of all, we will explain it in three phases. In such disasters, our prior preparations are typically much more solid, and we undertake extremely serious preparations in advance. It is not easy to catch up afterwards. If one lacks adequate preparation, they will encounter serious problems. Two earthquakes have brought about extremely severe problems for everyone; this is a wound that affects us all, you know.

Our Ministry has a Health Emergency Coordination Unit. We develop a distinct structure for each operation falling under this unit, which is earthquake-specific or disaster-specific in nature. First of all, we swiftly initiated the process of structuring. The information obtained is subsequently cross-referenced with information from other institutions. Following consultations, the final report is submitted to the relevant unit; accordingly, we expedite our ongoing operations. During the first phase, one of the first things that we did was to immediately redirect vehicles and personnel from provinces that were not in the earthquake zone. This is due to the fact that the healthcare personnel who will provide the service were themselves affected by the earthquake. One of our provincial directors was pulled from the rubble. Some of them have mothers, families, or relatives under rubble, and yet you expect them to provide very diligent healthcare services.

Earthquake injuries are very serious. I will talk about them too. We immediately dispatched 1,267 ambulances and 345 National Medical Rescue Team (UMKE) vehicles. Ten thousand personnel were deployed immediately. Emergency response units were immediately set up using our resources. Emergency call services were immediately transferred electronically to other provinces due to the inaccessibility of numerous buildings and personnel, preventing their operation. Because our infrastructure was capable of this. We immediately called for urgent support. Even if our buildings are strong, people would not be able to work there due to the frequent tremors. Therefore, we asked for a field hospital. That was our urgent call at the initial moment. Secondly, we loaded up on anaesthesia, orthopaedic, and orthotic supplies in case we ran out later. We did this even though we had ample stock. Due to our intention to avoid any problems and the fact that a significant number of our healthcare personnel were earthquake victims, we quickly planned to perform surgeries in other provinces. We started transferring all the patients outside the earthquake zone. I will show you the figures; we transferred nearly 52 thousand patients out of the region. We utilised all the aircraft and sea vehicles in Türkiye for this transfer.

The people of Türkiye are incredibly supportive; they displayed very serious solidarity in the disaster, and everyone mobilised for that region. You also know about the rush on the roads. For example, in Hatay, we transported our patients by military ship. We transferred them to Taşucu and Mersin City Hospitals. In fact, in the first place, we focused on taking patients out of the disaster zone and ensuring that everyone was treated in major centres away from the stress of the earthquake. Then, we began to set up field hospitals next to all hospitals in the earthquake zone. I would like to thank the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation for doing the damage assessment in the first place. We already know the addresses of all health institutions in Türkiye. Whether they were public or private, we promptly shared their locations. We ensured that they were checked swiftly. We tried to determine which buildings were struc-

turally sound and accessible. This also included pharmacies. Since you will administer the medication and treat the patients, you cannot administer their medication if you are unable to plan. Thankfully, they provided it to us quickly. Even though we informed our staff about this, they worked in those buildings with anxiety because of the aftershocks. As a result, we prioritised relocating patients outside to provide better-qualified healthcare services. Of course, pharmacies in the region faced challenges. We swiftly built pharmaceutical warehouses. We began moving our primary warehouse logistics from the centre to the earthquake zone. Chlorination was immediately implemented in the region's networks due to concerns about an epidemic. We immediately started screening in the field using the National Medical Rescue Team (UMKE) and 112 vehicles. I will talk about it later; we already knew the addresses of our patients. We knew the number of dialysis patients. We identified all pregnant women within three months of their delivery date. The system was already actively monitoring them. We shared this information with relevant healthcare professionals, whom we promptly deployed to the field. We provided on-site examinations and monitored the condition of our patients. Many patients lost their medical devices, hearing aids, glasses, orthotics, and other life-saving equipment under the rubble during the earthquake. The pharmacies were closed at the time, so they were unable to pick up some of their everyday prescriptions at the pharmacy. Some were on follow-up medication for chemotherapy. Since we knew each of these electronically, we quickly directed medical teams to them to ensure that no one had any problems following the earthquake. We provide support through the SABİM line, the Ministry of Health's Communication Centre. On SABİM, we established a communication line just for earthquakes so that if there were people we are unable to reach or contact in any other way, we could provide them with immediate assistance through this line. Field and mobile pharmacies were established. We also invited the Turkish Pharmacists' Association to collaborate on the establishment of mobile pharmacies, starting with container pharmacies. We made all of these facilities available in places where pharmacies were closed, buildings were damaged, people were afraid to enter or open facilities, or employees could not be found due to earthquakes. We accelerated the process and began to develop decision-support systems for the earthquake. We created a surveillance system. We immediately began monitoring all infectious disease notifications based on questions such as "Are infectious disease notifications on the rise?" "How do they compare to the same period last year?" and "How were they the previous week, and how are they today?" Thus, we endeavoured to prevent the region from suffering an epidemic and new emergencies. In the third phase, our dialysis capacity was expanded. We took pregnant women nearing delivery dates closer to healthcare facilities where they could give birth. We relocated them or provided suitable environments. In fact, we prioritized emergency interventions. Then, we made our assessment and ensured that healthcare ser-

vices could be provided there under the current circumstances. For those who stayed in the area, we developed health plans that reduced the risk of an epidemic.

I will go over the other processes, one by one, later. You can see the access hours of our teams dispatched from outside each province. Yes, this is a critical image. As you can see, we made full use of our resources. Our helicopters, ambulance helicopters and military cargo aircraft...

We strapped 50 or 60 stretchers to each of them and converted them into ambulance planes. Even the Presidency's planes were heavily utilised to transfer patients and their relatives. In Hatay, we transported patients primarily by sea. Again, our military ships served as hospitals in the harbour. We even deployed Chinooks to transfer patients to nearby sites. We also encountered such issues at first: yes, we relocated patients to Adana City Hospital and Mersin City Hospital, but we soon realised that the patient volume exceeded their capacity, so we started moving patients to large city hospitals in Ankara and Istanbul instead. We designed these facilities so that the top doctors and the most qualified professors in Türkiye could operate on patients. Of course, there are more problems to address. You will operate on all of these fractures and earthquake damage, but you must also report them at the same time. It is not possible to have all the radiologists present. We have an excellent digital teleradiology infrastructure. In three days, our doctors created reports for 16,000 radiological images, preparing the patients for surgery quickly, day and night. 600 orthopaedic surgeries were completed in one hospital alone in a very short period of time. With tremendous effort, all volunteer radiologists in Türkiye, about 500 in total, read reports until the morning. Some of them read the reports in tears. They also assisted the entire team in the process.

In fact, the entire medical army played an active role within the system. We dispatched nearly 10% of Türkiye's personnel there. There were 112 thousand personnel in the earthquake zone. We had 30 to 35 thousand personnel available at all times. In other words, in such a disaster, there are also a lot of earthquake victims inside. Senior officials visited the earthquake zone and, as you know, our President sympathised the most profoundly with the sorrow of our people. In Kahramanmaraş, he could not find earthquake victims to visit in the hospital because we had transported all of them very quickly. As you can see, we transported nearly 51,600 patients. We established 34 field hospitals. Of these, 23 were field hospitals that foreigners supplied to us. We declined to accept minor hospitals, for instance. We specifically said, "We want two or more," because we already had others available in our resources. So, we would like to thank our friendly countries for their assistance. As I previously stated, we received numerous requests for orthotics and prosthetics. Earthquake victims lost their own devices and glasses. We ensured that every one of these devices was promptly provided and made available to them in their houses and villages because we already had all of them in our system.

The most unexpected things also occurred. Medications prescribed for a set period of time were one of them. Under normal circumstances, the Social Security Institution (SGK) will not refill your prescription before it expires. We immediately made this possible electronically. We made sure that everyone had access to refilling their prescription. In other words, we reset their entire prescription in total, and I want to emphasise that. In the earthquake zone, 21% of our beds were unusable. Moreover, we could not use 43% of them for psychological reasons. Even though the building was solid, cracks, minor debris, and even cracks in the plaster made our healthcare personnel nervous during the aftershocks. Both private and public. However, 21% of our beds are currently unusable, with moderate to severe damage. Meanwhile, we administered two and a half million medical examinations for natural disaster victims. We visited 89 thousand patients at their homes in villages alone. 39 thousand of them are over the age of 75, and we called all of our people over the age of 75, as well as all of our chronically ill patients, to locate them and examine their health status on the spot.

Yes, you can see the number of babies born. We have administered one and a half million vaccinations alone. I will inform you about other critical stages later. Our field-based mobile laboratory units were dispatched. We needed severe controls, such as water and epidemic control. We were concerned about a second disaster, so we collected 70 thousand samples. Our residual chlorine measurement was 88% accurate. We dispatched mobile dental units to the fields and facilitated on-site dental treatment. In the meantime, as you may have noticed, everyone began to worry about their relatives. We demonstrated which hospitals their first and second degree relatives were in. At one point, they lose track of their relatives and are unable to contact them. TÜBİTAK provided us with artificial intelligence matching tools, which we used to match their pictures. With pictures from the hospital, if they are hospitalized in our institutions. We had to match the images of our patients, who were usually unconscious and unable to communicate in any way, and show them where they were. We tried to satisfy people's curiosity. As you can see, we performed 28,000 surgeries during this period. 19,600 of them were severe group surgeries, and most of them were performed in city hospitals outside the earthquake zone. Very qualified teams were involved in this process. By the way, as you may have noticed during COVID-19, we had telepsychiatry applications to address severe psychological distress, particularly among health professionals. Like RUHSAD, ÖZDES. We have made each of these remotely accessible for all citizens in the earthquake zone. Our psychologists and psychiatrists worked with the Ministry of Family Affairs to electronically reach out to and support everyone in the earthquake region. All our health personnel get on a plane, go, stay there for a week, and then return to their own place. Another team is assigned to their position. One of our most sensitive points here was this: You realise right away that sending personnel you do not need causes logistical issues for you. As a result, you should avoid sending unnecessary people. Maybe you have heard it before; we did: "We want to go, but the ministry

refuses to give us permission or send us.” Yes, we meticulously planned everything to ensure that no one went there unnecessarily. We wanted the teams, particularly the surgical teams, to go there as a team, so we made the necessary arrangements. So that they can maintain the team harmony they have in their current institution, do successful work, and not have any adaptation problems with anyone. We created an application called “SAĞLIK TIM” and managed them with it. In fact, our goal was to ensure that if a person required anything other than a medical procedure, such as logistics or something similar—going to the airport and going back to their province—they could do so electronically.

This is critical; I want you to understand that since 2015, we have had qualified infrastructure to measure provincial performance. How many patients go to other provinces? How many patients in a district go to the province? Because you are planning a facility for the province. We improve the building, we provide staff. If the patient goes elsewhere for treatment, there is a problem in the administration of that province. We realised that until the earthquake, 93.46% of the patients in the earthquake zone were always treated in the earthquake zone. Because people do not always live where they are registered. But the trend is always the same. If it increases for a year, know that the health care there is not good. If it decreases, then the planning was really effective, and you have done good things. You can send an obstetrician there, but if the ultrasound machine is out of commission or the capacity is inadequate, the patient goes elsewhere. We already had a very solid infrastructure to follow them. While 6.54% of this region’s residents were receiving treatment outside of the earthquake zone, 30% began to travel elsewhere following the earthquake. We actually saw an increase of about 23%. So, people have left the earthquake zone. This does not imply that the entire family has abandoned the city, but people can do such things in order to closely monitor their patients. We saw that there was serious activity. Then we decided to call these patients. We prioritised families with chronic illnesses, children under the age of five, and pregnant women, and we contacted one person per household. The number of people we called was 372,000. We called in a very short time. So, when we calculate the total population in the household, it amounts to 1 million 426 thousand people. We actually called nearly a million and a half people. Here you see the people we called from every province. As you can see, we realised that a very significant amount of the population was living elsewhere. Is it all of them? No, of course some of them are patients. As you can see, 15% of the people we called were in Ankara and 14.83% were in Istanbul. Of course, we reasoned that because there were sick people in the family, we could not make a valid statistical assessment of the arithmetic average in the earthquake zone. Then we identified a sample from Turkish Statistical Institute, again from the group we treated. When we looked at it this way, we discovered that 16% of those who left the earthquake zone were in Istanbul, 13% in Ankara, 10% in Mersin, and finally in Antalya. Because our aim was to make their health service plan and ensure that they receive health services on

the spot. Here, the rate of at least one member of the household living in the earthquake zone is 25%. At least one person in 25 households lived in the earthquake zone. However, at least 70% of those who remained in the earthquake zone were at home, and at least one member of the household prior to the earthquake had left the zone. In other words, we have seen that people always stay there, but at least one member of their household leaves for various reasons, such as health or education. Of course, this is one of the critical points: "When are you coming back?" Because we have planning to do, health care planning. In general, we see people who have not registered there saying, "I will not return." Now let me show you the other rates. 82% said, "I will return to where I live," and as you can see, there is a group of 28% who could not make a decision in the first place when asked, "When will you return?". "I will be back in a month", 27%. We see people saying, "when my house is delivered"; "I will return when the education and schools are over". But more than 95% of those who say they will return plan to do so within a year. This was critical, but I missed it: How many of the homes of the people we called have children under the age of 5? More than 50% of them have children under the age of 5, are pregnant or have a population that needs to be monitored for health.

Thank you for your patience. What will we do in terms of health technologies in the future?

Let me tell you two things: 82% of Türkiye is e-Nabız user. So everyone over the age of 15 uses e-Nabız. Even over 90 years old, 33% of them use e-Nabız; they are active. We will extend the disaster button there. Chatbot, for example, we will activate mechanisms that will direct a special person to the group that requires health care during a disaster. Because one of the most common challenges we face in this process is ensuring that people are easily guided before they contact us. In fact, we are moving towards a model that will enable automatic management of this system. The same thing is valid for personnel movements. Because this process cannot go any other way. Secondly, we digitalised everything. We are the most digitalised health ministry in the world. This is also evident on a global scale, but our issue is that during the earthquake, there was a serious problem with the internet in several hospitals. Yes, we enabled access remotely from other provinces, but we encountered difficulties for the first day and a half. We want to back up all of our hospitals with satellite internet if necessary, so that they are always accessible and can communicate effectively with other institutions. We will continue digitalization in the future. Thank you for your patience.

Göktuğ Kırca:

We would like to thank our Deputy Minister of Health, Mr. Şuayıp Birinci. The Turkish people are a nation that has always been engaged in a total struggle for existence. On April 6, 1920, our distinguished institution, Anadolu Agency, was established on the orders of Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of our Republic during the War of Independence, in order to an-

nounce Anatolia's rightful voice to the entire world. Today, we are talking about a global agency that publishes in 13 languages and operates in 14 countries. Last month, on April 6, 2023, Anadolu Agency celebrated its 103rd anniversary. Mr. Serdar Karagöz, Chairman of the Board and Director General, said this very nice sentence: "Our destiny cannot be separated from either the Turkish Nation or the Republic of Türkiye." Indeed, on February 6, the earthquakes centred in Kahramanmaraş brought us together once more in a shared feeling. Anadolu Agency, along with my own organisation, TRT, is the driving force behind Turkish public broadcasting. It has a mission that involves very important tasks. I will now turn to Mr. Serdar Karagöz, Anadolu Agency Chairman of the Board and Director General. First of all, welcome. As the title of our panel suggests, Mr. Director General, public broadcasting is critical to building a resilient society, as you would agree. Especially in times of disaster, vulnerability arises. Society is vulnerable to disinformation and information pollution. Undoubtedly, Anadolu Agency plays a very important role here. Considering these earthquakes, natural disasters and emergencies, what does Anadolu Agency do and what activities does it undertake? What role does technology play in meeting information needs?

Serdar Karagöz



“Especially in times of crisis, the importance of communication organs and institutions with norms, standards and procedures such as Anadolu Agency become more pronounced.”

Thank you very much. Of course, as you mentioned, Anadolu Agency is a 103-year-old institution whose founding story revolves around the fight against disinformation. Before the Republic of Türkiye was established in 1920, and even before the Turkish Grand National Assembly was formed, a delegation was formed to fight for independence. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of our republic, first orders the establishment of the Anadolu Agency, which will produce and distribute accurate information quickly and effectively both within and outside the country. For the past 103 years, this institution has been distributing accurate information quickly and effectively. We now call it communication, and it appears to be the easiest job in the world by 2023. What is communication? The transmission of a message from point A to point B through a medium; the transmission of an idea; the transmission of an emotion; the transmission of a phenomenon; the transmission of a situation. Everyone can do this. Today, everyone who holds a cell phone is essentially a communicator. So, what distinguishes Anadolu Agency from people with cell phones and communicators? Doing it in accordance with a specific procedure, a specific norm, in a disciplined manner, accepting responsibility... Especially in times of crisis, the importance of communication organs and institutions like Anadolu Agency that have norms, standards and procedures becomes more pronounced. When the February 6 earthquake occurred, Orhan Tatar was sleeping at AFAD, staying there. I was the first one here to learn about the situation. Of course, we were informed via our phones at around 04.45. So it is a time when people normally sleep. Journalists and media members were also sleeping. Our phone rang at 04.45. First of all, we learned this: we cannot keep our phones in silent mode. No journalist's or media member's phone can remain in silent mode. Because you never know what time an event, a situation, or a disaster will happen. At around 04.45, we received a personal phone call from the Director of Communications informing us of the situation, and we immediately took appropriate action. In other words, before 5:00 a.m., our colleagues at Anadolu Agency's Ankara and Istanbul offices began preparing to be dispatched to the region.

Of course, there were two issues for us. 11 provinces... 112 of Anadolu Agency employees already work in this region. We immediately divided our responsibilities at the crisis table into two. One: the situation of journalists in the region, and two: the situation in the region. You cannot get news about the situation in the region from the journalists in the region. Because, unfortunately, one of our friends died with his family beneath the rubble in Antakya. From here we remem-

ber him. We lost Anadolu Agency Antakya correspondent Burak Milli. We lost our İskenderun correspondent Burak Milli along with his family. We are faced with such a reality. Many of our friends' houses were destroyed. It was not possible to get information from them. As a result, we immediately dispatched employees from other regions who could receive information from the region, and approximately 400 of our colleagues were deployed to the region. Eleven provinces... There are debris everywhere, and as an institution, we are responsible for providing the most accurate information about these debris to Türkiye and the rest of the world. In this atmosphere, we created approximately 90 thousand pieces of content, which were used all over the world. In Japan, in China... You may remember, this earthquake was the main agenda of the international media. At that point, all of the world's media, including those in America, Africa, and Argentina, began to distribute Anadolu Agency content. We knew that we had to act within a certain framework of responsibility while doing all this. As I previously stated, communication has become extremely simple, thanks to the widespread availability of mass media. It used to be extremely difficult for you to have a means of communication, or medium. If it is a newspaper, you will need a printing press, paper to print the newspaper, a building, and a management centre. If you run a television, you will need satellite transmitters, lights, and cameras. If you run a radio, you will need a transmitter and a powerful antenna. But access to them is very easy today. With a cell phone, everyone is a normless, standardless, irresponsible communicator. So this is called "Citizen Journalism".

While citizen journalism is extremely useful and meaningful in normal circumstances, it can cause more harm than good during such sensitive periods. We witnessed this during the earthquakes that struck on February 6. Because of the panic atmosphere, the distortion and alteration of facts, the fabrication of lies, and the rapid mobilisation of people with malicious intentions, the situation rapidly escalated into a state of panic. While our institutions, AFAD, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, and the Ministry of Health, work hard to clear the rubble, an irresponsible, normless, standardless, undisciplined communicator can quickly change the perception of the environment for the worse. With the February 6 earthquakes, we saw this. According to a crisis communicator, when there is a major crisis, the most important issue in crisis communication is not to immediately highlight the positive, but to keep the crisis from worsening. If the crisis worsens hour by hour, day by day, it means you will be unable to cope with that crisis. But, on a perceptual level, if it is getting better by the day... There are thousands of wrecks here; we are looking at them, and things are getting worse... People are hungry; it is winter; they are reaching the point where they are unable to meet their shelter needs... In other words, if Monday is better than Tuesday, but Tuesday is worse, Wednesday is worse, Thursday is worse, and the following week is worse, we will be unable to deal with the problem in terms of communication and management. But what happened in Türkiye? Every day, with all of its

institutions, has been better than the previous one. Now, on the 44th day, Türkiye has reached the point of delivering the permanent houses. Tomorrow will be a better day in the region where the February 6 earthquakes occurred. Next week will be even better. The foundations are being laid. Our Deputy Minister of Environment and Urbanization is here. Delivery of permanent houses to their owners has begun. Our hospitals are being repaired. Healthcare services are better than yesterday. In such an atmosphere, what needs to be done in terms of media and communication is to prevent things from getting worse at the perceptual level. We are conveying reality and the facts while also promoting hope. Anadolu Agency reported live rescue stories from the rubble at 17 different locations at the same time. Why did we do it? Was it important? It was important. At the perceptual level, we have demonstrated that the state is present on the ground with all of its institutions, strengthening its ability to deal with the crisis with each passing minute, hour, and day. Every life saved from the rubble does not only concern that person but also their loved ones. What that person symbolises is the all-out struggle against the crisis. Televisions were constantly connecting to the Anadolu Agency's camera from 17 different locations, and as the Anadolu Agency, we were trying to deliver the story of that person at that moment. We have broadcast dozens of such stories. These stories boosted the morale of the medical teams. They were also morale boosters for the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation teams. They boosted the morale of AFAD teams. They also lifted the spirit of people from around the world who wanted to be a part of these efforts. So we faced the crisis together and tried to manage it. We have actively activated an editorial department to combat disinformation, which is critical under such circumstances. It is the Fact-Check Line. As I previously stated, in an atmosphere where mass media is widely accessible to everyone, dozens of lies, distortions of the truth, and disinformative news have also been produced. Our Fact-Check Line and the Directorate of Communications' Centre for Combating Disinformation handled these. And they told the truth and facts to the society. We had to make a distinction. There were tens of thousands of officials struggling on the one hand. It was important to support these people who were working hard to save lives under rubble, attempting to bring another person back to life in the Ministry of Health ambulance, and we did so. After a short time, this earthquake and crisis demonstrated that popular social media accounts with a high level of interaction can never, ever be a reliable source of news during a crisis. Some of them have millions of followers, but are spreading disinformation and lies. Very simple. And they get millions of interactions. It's very simple too. Then, when the truth comes out, they say "Sorry."

Göktuğ Kırca:

Some do not even apologise. They bury their heads in the sand.

Serdar Karagöz:

There were those who said it and those who didn't, but it's all being dismissed with a "sorry." However, the chaos and panic they created at that time may have cost dozens of lives. Maybe they cost millions of lira in damage. Do they care? No. Because they are irresponsible. We believe that in such situations, corporate news sources that do their jobs properly should be followed, as we saw with the February 6th earthquakes.

There was a very strong coordination of communication on February 6. Under the coordination of the Directorate of Communications, Anadolu Agency, TRT, and the very distinguished members of our media, our colleagues, who also functioned as analysts here, worked extremely hard; they did not do so to create chaos or increase interaction. They did journalism for two reasons: first, to explain the region to Türkiye and the rest of the world, and second, to help save lives in the region. We must ensure the formation of a crisis communication culture not only in institutions like TRT, Anadolu Agency, and the Directorate of Communications but also in private media institutions and organisations by conducting a communication workshop on the February 6th earthquakes. This culture of communication in crisis situations should be adopted not only by these organisations but also by those known as social media influencers. I am telling you here: if there are many interactive accounts that act only on gossip as a news source, unfollow them in times of crisis. Do not like their posts. Do not disseminate them. Do not encourage them or promote them, because it is literally leading to a communication disaster. Who should you follow? Follow serious news sources that have a procedure, a workflow chart, discipline, and a confirmation mechanism; Anadolu Agency and TRT can both provide news, but stick to those that have a correction mechanism and do so within a discipline framework. During times of crisis, if you continue to follow those you follow for fun, you will become a part of the communication disaster. I would also like to thank all media members for their professionalism, discipline, and concern. Once again, I pray for Allah's mercy on our Hatay correspondent, Burak Milli, who lost his life in the February 6th earthquake, and his family. May Allah protect us from the recurrence of such disasters. But right now, Türkiye has developed an unparalleled capability in every field with these crises, these disasters, and these catastrophes. It has developed a capacity. Not only the Anadolu Agency and institutions specialising in communication, but all of our institutions have attained the most formidable capabilities to combat crises in the world at present. Our people, our citizens, have also taken significant notes, particularly on communication during times of crisis. A crisis will happen again in the future, it is inevitable. Türkiye is now prepared for this, but I can say that all of our country's institutions, media, and people are much better prepared than previously to deal with such a crisis the next time it occurs. I would like to thank you for your participation. I would also like to thank the Directorate of Communication for organising this event.

Göktuğ Kırca:

We would like to thank Mr. Serdar Karagöz, Chairman of the Board and Director General of Anadolu Agency. This brings us to the end of the “Building Resilient and Interdisciplinary Disaster Communication Approach” panel of the STRATCOM Disaster Communication Forum. We would like to thank the Deputy Minister of Environment, Urban Planning and Climate Change, Fatma Varank, Deputy Minister of Health, Şuayıp Birinci, Director General and Chairman of the Board of Anadolu Agency, Serdar Karagöz, and the Director General of AFAD Earthquake Risk Reduction, Orhan Tatar. I would also like to thank the Presidency’s Directorate of Communications for hosting such a nice and fruitful event, and you, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, for attending. Thank you; goodbye.

S P E E C H

Using AI&Massive Media Analysis to Understand How the World Told the Story of the Earthquake

Kalev Hannes Leetaru**GDELT - Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone**

“We can take all the news about the earthquake and determine what percentage of this news is really about the earthquake and what percentage is about people”

It is an honor to be here with all of you today. Thank you so much. It is truly an honor to be here with all of you today at this amazing event. So, what I'm going to talk about today is the GDELT Project and this idea of how we can use massive amounts of data computing power and AI to try to understand the world around us. This is a real image. This is an actual photograph of something called the Sphere. There is a giant acrylic sphere. They hang it, and they project from around it. And this is one of my data sets on it, showing the world going by. But it's really a metaphor for the work that I do, which is this idea of “How do we essentially try to take this fire host this deluge of information that comes out each day, and make it accessible and understandable, just like you need in a natural disaster?” It is really about taking news and converting it to data. And we think about, you know, the news is designed for human consumption, whether it is television, radio, imagery or text, intended for people. So how do we have machines try to understand all this? It is really about, you think about if we take all the news in a given day, this is rewinding the clock a bit and we extract out all the people, the places, the organizations, be able to see the connections that tie them all together. And that allows us to begin understanding what's happening around the world.

And most importantly we have to look across languages. So historically, GDELT has looked at over 150 languages, which will soon be over 400 languages. This becomes very important as we try to understand the world around us. In fact, the very first COVID alert actually came from our data. 10:00 PM Eastern Time, December 30, 2019, we detected in the local Chinese language press in Wuhan, China, a SARS-like virus of unknown origin. At this point, it was not something that anyone thought anything of. It was not a major pandemic; it was a minor story. But by looking at local media and local languages, we're able to see those earliest glimmers. And then follow them as they become bigger and bigger stories. What is interesting as we look across the world is the way in which the stories that are told reflect each country's internalization of the world. If you look here, this was the 2014 Ebola outbreak. We can see the media tone at the bottom here. The top is total mentions in American media. We can see that that has been going on for quite some time. It is not top the first Americans get it that suddenly it matters, and America cares about this story. But the more interesting graph is the one below. You can see it is very negative down there. In fact, I think the first CNN article was if it comes to America, everyone will be dead within a month. You know, very uplifting things. What we are facing there is once Americans get it, the tone becomes more and more positive. This is something that we observe

across the world. Especially in the US, there is this idea of America to the rescue. If it affects America, do not worry; we will fix everything. It is all your problems. And you know, this is something they teach in journalism and school, but we can actually see that. We can visualize that at scale. I will come back to this graph. This graph is going to be very important a little bit with the earthquake.

Let us set the stage here. How much does American media cover countries around the world? This is the major American television network from 2009 to 2016. Darker colors and darker red mean more intense coverage. Lighter means less intense coverage. And this is, again, America is American media. We look across the world and get a sense of the things that American media covers the most. But what's interesting is this graph. This was generated for me in 2016 by the Google Trends team, and this was in that year; all US web searches on Google showed how often people searched about every other country on Earth. What is interesting about this is that it is almost perfectly correlated with the graph and the map we just saw. In other words, what the media talks about is also what people search for. Now, we do not know which drives which. We do not know if media coverage drives interest or interest drives media coverage. However, the two are perfectly correlated with each other, which basically means that in order to generate interest in major stories, we have to get media coverage about them. We have to get the media talking about these stories, which does not necessarily come naturally. Now, if we look at mentions of "Türkiye" over time... The top graph is worldwide Google searches for it. We see that the earthquake has received the most attention in almost the last 20 years. But the US graph is very interesting here. We can see the big spike here with the earthquake, but we can see a spike constantly every November. That is Thanksgiving in the United States, where turkey, the bird, is consumed. What is interesting here is that this is not a search for the phrase "turkey". This is a search for Google topic for the country "Türkiye". And what that's telling us is that you know, this is one of the challenges, and this is one of the ideas behind using Türkiye as the requested country name. We can see here worldwide searches for it in red compared to blue, if we look across the two terms. We can see it still... But we can see in the US, it's really not being used. The US is still using Turkey, you know, T-U-R-K-E-Y. This has really interesting implications for us when we try to gather information about events around the world and to really use the phrases and the names that are being used and this all comes back to it a little bit.

Now, let us look at earthquakes. Let us look at earthquake searches in general. So how often are people searching about earthquakes across any country? We see that in the last 20 years, the Türkiye earthquake has received more coverage than almost anything else. We can see Japan; we can see China. And Japan, of course, because there was a big implication for a new killer power, which, in turn, had a huge impact on the US. But this tells a very different story. This is a US-based search about earthquakes. If we look here, we can see in the end the Türkiye earthquake... Look at Los Angeles; look at LA. They are in the middle. Los Angeles... The LA earthquake...

Only 70 people were temporarily displaced; not even a day before, they were back at their homes.

That got almost as much attention in the United States as an earthquake that displaced, killed and injured a huge number of people. This again tells us that even the biggest events that have an enormous impact do not get even attention or interest across the world. This is where strategic communication plays a crucial role: to get people interested, to fire them up, and to let them know. This is something you should really care about. And here's what's happening: Now, if you look at worldwide news coverage of it, we can see that earthquakes have gotten more attention than anything else. But if you look there, you can see how fast attention dropped off. Now, this is something that we actually call the disaster curve. Anytime a natural disaster occurs anywhere across the world, we actually observe a standard curve, which is about 72 hours of intense coverage, and then it rapidly falls off over the next two weeks. This holds across the world, across countries, and regions. No matter where it occurs, no matter what country you look at, the coverage follows the same curve. Now, if we look here at the top, the top Google searches about the Türkiye earthquake, we see that it follows the curve that we would expect. There is this very brief surge, and then it goes straight down. But we can see media coverage does not. There is something different about media coverage of this earthquake that we have seen in most other natural disasters recently. We see it lasts a lot longer there. We can see this also on television. If we look at different television channels in terms of spoken mentions, we can see the same thing. We can also see in America, this got very little coverage. Fox News has only mentioned it about 200 times in the last three months. We can see, though, that in some countries, some media systems have kept it going a lot longer than others. Now, if we look at the total seconds of airtime by day in which it was mentioned on the screen, somewhere on the screen was covering the earthquake, we can also see a similar pattern here. We can see, though, you know, look at the difference in BBC News and Fox News. If you look at the difference here, when you look at CNN vs. Fox News there, if you are a CNN viewer, you saw a lot about the earthquake. If you are a Fox News viewer, you saw a lot less about the quake. So, let us zoom in here to the first week and a half of the earthquake, and we can see where it peaks. It should start dropping down, but it does not.

What explains this well? One thing that demonstrates this is this graph. Rescues. If we look at the coverage that talks about someone being rescued, we can see it looks almost identical. There is something unique about this earthquake. It is that in most earthquakes, you see stories of rescues, but they sort of pan out after the first few days. Sometimes, that is because they cannot rescue people; other times, it is because there is just no media, kind of the media consuming newness. They need novelty. Therefore, what is interesting here is that what you see here is this huge continued coverage of miraculous stories of people being recovered from the rubble. There is something very distinct about this. It really helps; it really explains that long trajectory there. We could also see children. Many of these rescues were children. These were really miracle rescues. What is interesting here, though, is that you see the media tone getting more and more positive over time. And going back to the other graph, this is actually a graph that we also see a lot in disasters. Initially, you know a lot of coverage of how many

people were killed and how many people were injured. You know the impacts on people. But then you start seeing the global press start switching to again coverage of people being rescued, coverage of hope for the future.

If we expand to the first three months of this, then we look at aid, and we can see again this mentioned here: aid pouring in from across the world. But then you can see this does follow this downward trend, and you can see again another drop, most recently with a lot of stories in the news. This is again a very important graph in that, you know, to keep the story alive, to keep people outside of Türkiye, outside of the region, to keep them alive, to keep them remembering what has happened here, the need for support, the need for help. This is a very important graph to interact with and understand. Again, the media moves on. It needs those new stories, needs things. Now again, though, we can also see the tone of coverage, and the tone of coverage is becoming more and more positive as coverage tends to cover things like some of the rescues, hope and so on. And so, it's really interesting. This is very distinct in that regard, but it is one of the most interesting things as we look at it. What I have shown here is looking at media coverage, searching for information, and the intersection between those two. That is a very important intersection between media coverage and search because the media can talk about something. The trick is how much people interact with that, so production vs. consumption. But one of the interesting things is, in a natural disaster. Obviously, you're confronted with this deluge of information that you have to be able to process very rapidly. Every second counts. There is so much information, and it is so conflicting. One of the things that occurred was that, as the earthquake occurred, we were actually testing out the use of a lot of these new tools for understanding media at scale. We have a bunch of fascinating examples here in terms of what the future might hold for how we perform strategic communication during disasters. So back in the day, one of the things that we created was this idea that if you extract, if you take all the media coverage of carbon capture sequestration, it is a clean energy approach. One of the things we did here is we took all the coverage. We extracted every person named there, and we looked at how often those people co-occur with each other. If you make that into a map, you take a ton of media coverage on a topic of interest, extract all the people and look at how often they co-occur with each other. What you get is a map of influence. And this becomes very important for communications. Because when something occurs, you can turn to a map like this. So, you can go to a database and say, well, "Who's the reporter in this news outlet who covers this topic?" But it's just going to tell you who that person is. This will actually tell you how influential they are in that discourse, how much they are really driving the conversation in that, and this becomes very powerful because when a disaster occurs, you can turn to something like this to ask who the biggest drivers are, the biggest influencers are by country of interest and by topic of interest. You can do really interesting things. Once a disaster occurs, you start looking at the media coverage across the world. This is fascinating. This is actually by a postdoc or graduate student. She was actually looking at refugees, but the same approach could hold for any topic of interest. What she did was she wanted to understand how refugees were being portrayed in the world press. She starts with the word 'refugee' in the center and she says, "What's the word that follows that?" If I take

a sentence, this is “refugees are” the next word would be “are”. But she, you know just looking at now. So, if it says refugees are mostly children, you’d see refugee and then children. “Refugee, women”, “refugee, community”, “refugee protection”. So, the next ring of the word that follows that, and then the word that follows that and the word that follows that. What is so interesting about something like this is it allows you to immediately understand how they are being contextualized. And so, if you dig in, she has some other amazing graphs here, so you can see the places in the world that say “refugees are a problem”, “refugees are criminals” vs. the places that say “refugees need our help,” “Refugees are part of our community”. So, it gives you the ability to understand the narratives because this allows you. Think about it, when you are messaging, you never message in a vacuum. You’re always messaging in a narrative environment. And it’s a narrative environment that’s an ever-changing river. It’s a roaring river and you’re trying to message into that. So, to understand in real-time, how is this contextualized? How is this story being told? This was actually done for the COVID-19 vaccine. This was during COVID-19, a very similar environment to a national disaster. A requirement that came to us was: We know a lot of the falsehoods that are spreading right now about COVID-19 vaccines. So, this was at a particular moment as the vaccines were being rolled out. And the mandate said, look, we know most of the major falsehoods that are spreading right now. What are the emerging ones each day that we do not know about and that we need to keep an eye on and develop messaging strategies for? What we did here is we took a day of coverage about COVID-19 vaccines, in this case across 65 different languages, and we used a tool that clusters those together. Now, what is interesting is it knows that, say, an article about nano chips. We are actually able to use this graph then and overlay known fact checks on top of that. So, if we have a fact check, for example, that says one of the major faults right now was the idea that there are microchips in the vaccine that are going to do mind control. So, you can overlay those on top of this. And then say, “Oh! These clusters here, we already have fact checks for these”. But they’re the ones that we don’t know about. Here are the ones that are emerging that we need to keep an eye on. And the best part is, because this is multilingual, we can see that “Oh! This is spreading in this language; now, it is spreading in the following languages. It allows us to target how we think about and message into those. Television, of course, plays a crucial role across the world. In collaboration with the internet archives and TV news archives, we have selected over 100 channels from 50 countries over the last 20 years. We’ve been exploring, “How can we use these to understand what the world’s saying?” This could involve keyword searching of closed captioning and spoken words. You can generate timelines and graphs of things. One thing that we are doing right now for Ukrainian, Belarusian, Russian, and Iranian television is actually performing speech recognition in real-time, near real-time, within about an hour’s delay, and then translating that. We translate through Google Translate, and then you can actually play back the clips with the English translations overlaid on top of them. This makes it very powerful because, again. However, machine translation is far from perfect; it is good enough that it allows volunteers and journalists and others to say, “Wow! That’s really interesting. What are they saying there?” And then a language expert can confirm what is said. Still, it suddenly makes it accessible to study, and we can now search for what

used to be unsearchable. We can also do really interesting things. During COVID, we were interested in “Who’s telling the COVID story?”, “Who are the doctors that are being interviewed on television news?” On most television channels, at the bottom, it says who the person being interviewed is. Now, what is interesting is that in a crisis like an earthquake, you could actually triage this in real-time and say, “Well, who are the folks that are being interviewed on television about this across the world?” Are there experts that we might suggest that people talk to that maybe have greater expertise in a certain area? So, this is something we looked at. Where is the footage coming from? In the case of COVID-19 in the United States, television crews can’t just walk into a hospital and film. One of the questions we asked was, “Where’s all this footage coming from?” Because, you know, for the most part, you cannot film in hospitals. What we found is that a lot of the footage that we saw on television was actually stock footage. And what we did is we took a broadcast, we started taking broadcasts, chopping them up every second, extracted the frame and then searched across the open web for that image and then actually found where they came from. We could actually triage and compute the provenance of this. Now, where this becomes very interesting is that we can take all this footage. So, one of the things we did recently is we took a year of 60 minutes of a show on Russian television, and we took a year of it. We basically took every frame, and we compared it to every other frame over a year of television. You can actually see what clips are being reused and where. Now imagine, say, a natural disaster. You could triage all the footage that’s coming out, and you could see what is new footage. Think about any natural disaster that iconic image that has been played again and again. And what you might be interested in is cataloguing those. What are all these clips? So, imagine applying this to, say, American television. You’re watching American television. You can say, “Oh! Look, they’re playing the same clips.” Here are the major clips. So, imagine producing a report; what are the main clips being played on American television? “Oh! Look, today there’s a new clip. What is this? Where did this come from?” And if you play it across many different channels, you can actually track it down to its source. It allows you to triage even in the visual world. Where is all this information coming from? Applying this to the earthquake, we can do really interesting things. We can find clips, for example, that got a certain amount of airtime. We can scan the bottom, and we can see who is being interviewed and who is kind of the journalists who are being interviewed. This can also be useful to understand which journalists are where right now around it. So, for example, if you want to provide additional support or additional aid or you want to reach out with additional information to know who’s where essentially, and also again to understand what the clips circulating there are. Now and then, we are looking at AI, so we are using AI tools to understand whether that’s the text on the screen or whether that’s identifying the object so we can do very interesting things. We can take all that coverage of that earthquake, and we can tell you what percentage of that coverage is actually of the earthquake itself, of building damage, and what percentage of that is people being interviewed. What percentage of that is a newscaster somewhere else, like in the US, just commenting about it? You can understand the visual world because, in a disaster, you don’t have enough people to sit, just watching television all across the world and pro-

ducing these reports. Machines are really, really good at this now. We can also do fascinating things like visual search. You can type in literally something like a soldier in front of a Russian flag, and the machine understands that and actually generates it for you. These are examples from Russian television, but the same holds true for an earthquake. You say, "Find me aerial imagery; find me imagery of buildings being destroyed". And this doesn't have to be television. You can feed in all those images pouring out to Twitter. Imagine taking all that Twitter footage and saying, "Is this video just posted to Twitter? Is this a video we've already seen before? So, okay, this is just another repost of a video. Maybe it's been edited a little bit, but we've already seen this vs. this is new footage; this is something we need to think about or look into. We build a search across that, wherever that thing comes from. Now, the real power comes in using large language models, such as chatGPT Bard or any of these new tools out here. This is really the future of crisis communication, especially in natural disasters. Here's an example of what we did during the earthquake. What you see at the top was literally what we had chatGPT, and the input was all the media that we were monitoring. The original coverage for this was all the French government statements at that point, which were in French, and the summaries were in English. And so, this ability to look at all the coverage, everything the French government put out today and summarize in a concise paragraph for me. And the same thing for the US. Summarize all the stuff the US put out today in a single concise summary. But this is where things get really interesting. So, we said make a table. So literally, that was what we typed into chatGPT and fed it all the news covers that we monitored that day, and what you get back is a table. So, imagine thousands upon thousands of articles in a brief moment that have all kinds of information. Maybe this one had a lot of repetition. You might have a hundred articles that all say, you know, Israel has dispatched some search and rescue dogs. And so again, like, that's 100 articles. But what I need to do is see that once in a table. And it is able to do that. And this is real, you know, this is not a mockup. And this is actually done during the earthquake itself. Again, there are still issues. These AI tools still hallucinate. They make things up. So, you still have to take things like this with a grain of salt. But it's rapidly evolving. The best part is being able to do Q&A. Imagine doing it in real-time; you can say, "Summarize the aid from the USA in this particular month". This is one moment in time, and you think it is giving me a table, and it is summarizing this in text for me. So, the ability to interactively ask these questions. So, a query comes along. What are the US aid commitments so far? Then we can look at things like... So "Summarize from the UN", so again a similar query, and you can go so you can interactively query this; you can have anyone in your team, again with all the different responsibilities, be able to query this in real-time. Specialty things. Summarize medical search and rescue aid, and you can do different levels of detail. So, what's interesting about this is that it gives me a high level of detail. I say a single policymaker. I want to know the general gist vs. an analyst who wants to know really, really nitty gritty details here. The ability to do this in real time and to summarize all that coverage is really interesting. These are examples that we start looking at, such as how the tools can be used to do even more actionable querying. What are the biggest needs for assistance? Now, you could do this. We've done this with news, but you can imagine

this with field reports. You know, asking about things like even additional medical aid, triage, all of this, and tell me the summary statements that are here. Now, this is a really interesting one. We actually have done a real demo of this top one here, not about the earthquake, but actually about COVID. What we did is we fed tweets in, and we said here is a list of fact checks. Here is a known set of 100 plus falsehoods. Tell me, does this tweet reference any of these falsehoods? If so, generate a response tweet in the language of the original tweet and refute it using the factual details below. And what's interesting is if somebody tweets and says, "Oh, COVID vaccines will control your mind." it's not just saying, "Oh, here's a link to a fact check that refuted that". It is actually writing something that refutes that specifically. It says "No", actually, "There are no mind control vaccines in here, etc..." You can do really interesting things as well. You can even do things like requests for medical assistance. You could say any tweet that's out there, and you can triage it basically. You can imagine that in real life, you want humans to do this, but seconds count. So, imagine a machine that's just monitoring. We have actually done some early prototypes of this. We are just monitoring any tweet that falls within those criteria in real-time. If it says I have a broken leg, you will basically give it a list, and you say here are the different contacts for these different severities. So, with a broken leg, it will respond in the original language and say, "Oh, contact this phone number" It's someone who has a crushing injury. Well, that goes to this number. What's interesting here is you can also have this summarize that into Turkish for your first responders because if this is a major disaster, it's an area where you have a lot of people. There are tourists and others. People may be tweeting in hundreds of different languages that you don't necessarily have immediate support for. It is interesting because 15 years ago when I first started working with some of the disaster community on things like this, it was amazing. Teams of humans were brought on to do this type of trash. For example, in Haiti, there was a lack of volunteers who spoke Haitian Creole, and there were a lot of tweets out there. There were just no volunteers who were able to translate that. You had sort of these volunteers, but they could not do anything about that. So, they built machines for that in real-time. I also built a triage to say, "Oh, this tweet, this is an image, it's a new image, this has never been seen before, so this is probably real". A lot of times, in a disaster, someone will find some image, and they'll tweet it out and say, "Oh, look, someone's been injured here". Sometimes, it has meaning. They grab some random image to fight back on that and say, "Oh, well, actually, no. This image has been seen before." This is a really interesting example that I will end within a second. This was a demo that we did early on. We did a demo earlier this year where we had chatGPT monitor Iranian television and look for any reference to the nuclear record. We said, "If you see a criticism of nuclear record, write a response to that in Persian. This is the translation. What is interesting about this is every bit of text you see here was generated by a machine. No human was involved in this. This is where things are today, and again, this is stilted. It is not the best of language, but you look at this; you look at that prompt that was literally what the machine was asked to do. What is interesting is that we were also asked to make imagery for each of these responses. What is fascinating about this is every image you see up there was generated by a machine. Now you can see

there are some oddities to it. But now imagine that natural disaster; instead of photographs, you say, "Make infographics..." What you can do with these tools now is you say, "Make an infographic in the following 5 different languages, maybe a diagram that starts here and does this and sort of like a Venn diagram." You need graphic designers to do that. The tools can do this in real-time. You could actually generate a custom diagram, potentially in response to each tweet. Now, imagine you are one month out from the earthquake; coverage has fallen in the US. This, again, was chatGPT. We literally asked it to write a persuasive op-ed for an American newspaper on why Americans should help those affected by Türkiye's earthquake. What you see here is that ChatGPT wrote every bit of that. Now you can see because it does not know anything about the earthquake, and because it hallucinates, you can see it only says 100 people, although thousands are injured. That is why this is the first draft of the machine. Imagine that your staff are basically overwhelmed. This is a great first draft to start with. And you can see it even said it's been a reliable ally; there are American troops stationed here. But it even adds in all this contextual detail, which is interesting. We tried this for different countries. It was fascinating. For each country, a connection between the two countries was actually identified. And what's best is you can say, write this in a hundred different languages, and you'll get it in each language. You can say write a version for Twitter and you actually get a tweet thread. Write this for LinkedIn, and it actually adapts that more businessy post tone for LinkedIn. Write an op-ed, write a news article... This is really the future of machines being able to respond in real-time and assist us in real time in responding to that. You are never going to hand the keys over to a machine. But imagine this ability to really lift that initial load of those first drafts of things, that triage, that information... In conclusion, think about the state where we are today, this ability to take that deluge of information that's coming in and have machines swift through it all and summarize it for us, and then ultimately, even counter falsehoods in real time, to counter falsehoods in real-time, to be able to generate narratives in real-time, to be able to respond, to be able to assist in real-time, and ultimately to allow us as human beings to focus on the more strategic elements and allow machines to respond when every second counts. Thank you so much.

S P E E C H

Optimising Resilient Disaster Communication Beyond SOPs

Dante Manuel Licona Estevez
Social Media Strategist



“What we refer to as “disaster communication” often means “human life” during critical hours”

My name is Dante and I am from Mexico and we are here to talk about strategic communication, right? How many of you actually come up and think about? What is a strategy? What's this strategy means? Do you ever get that question? And I'm sharing it because my mom once asked me; "Hey son, what do you do?" And I told her "Mom, I work on social media and I do some strategies about it." And she told me; "How would you explain a strategy?" And one of the most interesting definitions that I've seen about strategies is the one that Lawrence Friedman suggests in his book. And what is the strategy? I like to think about it. As one thing that has three elements. Strategy; It's about balancing and Ways and Means. What do we mean by that? Ends. Goals. What do we want to achieve? Ways; how do we want to do it? And means; that's about the resources that we have. That's about the capacities that we can get. So, I will try to unpack that for you today. Taking you over a journey of stories taking place in different places around the world. We will start in Adiyaman. Last month I had the privilege to join teams from the World Health Organization. And we were visiting different affected areas around Türkiye. And when we made ourselves into Adiyaman. We listened and we spent time listening to the health professionals, listening to the health heroes, listening to the people that were devoting their lives; saving people. In that Regional Hospital in Adiyaman we share directly from the head of the hospital. His name is Doctor Oz. And Doctor Oz shared with us his experience, just as every one of you in Türkiye. He also had a story to share, and that story was about the very first minute of how this earthquake response started. Doctor Oz told us that literally, he had to get out of the rubble and continue going on. During those first hours, they have to keep moving. And why is that so important? Why is that important in the sense when we are talking about strategy? Because, as I mentioned, when we talk about strategy, we need to know where we are going. What do we need to do? Doctor Oz knew perfectly what he needed to do, and they were continuing every single hour for the next weeks and months responding to the earthquake. They knew what to do. You can have very very robust and well thought and research strategies. But if the people that implement them do not understand them. You get nowhere. That is why it is so important that people understand every single task that they are supposed to do. Doctor Oz knew that he needed to go to the hospital and then he needed to meet with his colleagues. And that is how they can actually

start to save lives. Now how can we reflect that and bring it back to communications? When we are talking about strategic communications, everybody needs to know what the role is. Everybody needs to know how to do what they are supposed to do and which resources they have at hand. When we talk about international disaster response or disaster communications. Everything is about context. I have the honor to be part of different responses at different levels from the headquarters in Geneva or the National Coordination Centers, or at the regional level. Every single one is different. And the context matters a lot. For example, Kalev mentioned the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014. That was my first experience working in a global organization. I was part of the WHO social media team. We were monitoring, tracking what people were saying. Strategic communications was about understanding what we want it to do. The strategy for WHO social media back then could be summarized in two words, shareability for health. Why is that? We wanted to make information shareable, understandable, to have impact ultimately in people's health. That was the idea and everybody knew what was the objective. That means people that take photos, they knew what they were doing. Epidemiologists that help us understand the situational reports. They knew what they were doing. It is important that every single one of the team members understands what the role is, so you can actually have that impact. In other responses, you can also get to see the limits of that. When I was working for the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, one of the biggest disasters that hit Mozambique in its history was Cyclone Idai, you may remember it. The images were devastating. It was quite powerful and it really put the people of Mozambique facing a terrible disaster. And how do people actually get to know about that disaster? Because my colleagues they were sent to support as an international support team. They knew what to do, forecast weather you know that a cyclone will hit in this specific area. Your search and your response colleagues go get deployed, get their moves on the ground. So, what do you do? They literally had to jump into a helicopter to make an assessment. What is the assessment of the damages that are happening here in Mozambique? Nobody else is doing this. We are the very first ones to do it. They record a shaky video with their mobile phones. So what? It is the first time that you get to tell the story of a cyclone in Mozambique to the whole world. And how did that little video that was tweeted literally in the air from a helicopter had some impact? Because we knew what to do. Because as soon as my colleague tweeted that video. We were able to amplify it and bring that local action to global impact. We were able to share it with the people that have a massive amplifier, a microphone that could do it, BBC was embedding it and all the other major players that were looking forward to seeing what was going on in that specific disaster area immediately came and say "we're showing this to the world". And that is the power of strategic communications, that you actually have the opportunity to tell the story in the middle of a disaster area to the rest of the world. Why is that important? Because you can actually mobilize resources, you can mobilize teams. You

need solidarity. You need a response to keep going, not only during the first 48 hours. Three weeks, three months, but long term, that is the biggest challenge that we are facing. That is why strategic communications become even more important as we continue in the different stages of the response. Now in my experience, there is also a lot of work to be done when it comes to SOPs. Do you know what our SOPs? That is what I thought. Nobody knows that acronyms are really bad for effective communication. SOPs should always be unpacked. That means the Standard Operation Procedures. What do we mean by that? Helping people understand what we need to do. It means that for some, in some context, it can take the form of a checklist. Who is great at this, for example, the German Red Cross? They have a great checklist and you can take a little step by step what is what needs to happen at this specific level on these specific activations. That is really important. What other SOPs can be there? What other standard operation procedures? They are critically important because they help responders not to forget key elements when they are responding in a very crisis, in a very stressful situation. The challenge is when those are standard operation procedures, when that road map hits a severe block, or when that road map actually faces the challenge of a lifetime. When you face the biggest disaster in a century, when you face the biggest tsunami, the biggest earthquake, the biggest cyclone, depending on where you are. Another critically important aspect is again balancing those means that you have. If you are in an international organization, if you are in a government, if you are in a big NGO, you can have access to discussions with platforms and partners to help you amplify your work, to help you showcase what you do. That is not the case for everybody. Also, you should never over rely on partners. Take a look at what is going on right now on Twitter. A lot of the disaster response, emergency communications SOPs are based on Twitter first. Because they understand that some of those key strategic audiences are there, journalists, governments, embassies, ministries, international responders, they are there. So, do you go there, right? Like the National Weather Service in the US... Just a couple of weeks ago they could not use their tweeting SOP, because Mr. Musk is now changing the rules of how it goes. Or take a look at what happened to NGOs in Australia. When Facebook made the changes that suddenly you could not use your Facebook page anymore, what happened to those SOPs? That is why it is so important to go back to resilience. We need to be resilient. What does it mean to be resilient? Many of you are working on this area. For you the word tells you a lot, from your experience, from your context. As your resilience as being adaptive, as being able to get back to be creative, to be imaginative, do we able to change course if needed? When it comes to all of these stories that I am sharing with you today, we can also start talking about optimizing. What does that mean? It means that ideally, if everything I told you is going according to plan, you then can aim to optimize it. It is difficult but we already saw some of the great advantages that AI will bring us today. Thank you for that. We know that there will be a lot of work to do. But it is really hard to do it unless every single one

of your team members understand what their role is and understand the direction of where you're going. My colleagues from the Danish Red Cross, they encourage every single one of their members to be a spokesperson for their organization. There are different approaches. In some context, once designated spokesperson works perfectly. In others, you can have a variety of spokespersons so they can tell the story from their perspective, from their expertise, from what they are seeing happening in real time, so they can adjust. So, colleagues going back to Adiyaman. Doctor Oz and this story that he showed. What is about resilience? Because even when he did not know during those first hours that it was the biggest disaster of the century to hit Türkiye, he and his colleagues were back on track, getting ready. And even with the challenges of infrastructure, roads, whatever you name it, all the different resources that were not there at that time, they managed to overcome it. They managed to continue responding because of those critical hours. Because when we are talking about disaster communication, it is about people's lives. Every single second, every single minute, every single hour counts. And that is why it is so important that we always remember; what is our role in this specific operation? What can we do? What are our resources? What are our ways to do it? Colleagues, thank you very much for listening, and it will be my pleasure to continue our conversation with all of you during coffee.



P A N E L

03

**Moderator:**

Dr. R. Erdem Erkul, Cerebrum Tech Founder

Panelists:

Prof. Hidenori Watanave, Tokyo University

Alim Küçükpehlivan, Başarsoft Co-Founder

Nihan Karacameydan Incemehmetođlu, Deputy
Head of the Department of Information Systems and
Communication, AFAD

Mustafa Yavuz Torun, Deputy Director General
of Geographic Information Systems, Ministry of
Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change



Innovative Approaches to Crisis and Risk Management



Erdem Erkul



Thank you. First of all, welcome. I would like to thank our Directorate of Communications. They are addressing a really important issue throughout the day and the fact that this international forum is taking place in Ankara, the capital of the Republic of Türkiye, is very valuable for us. We are in the evening hours, I hope it will be a nice panel. We have important guests with us on this panel. Professor Hidenori Watana from Japan is with us, we welcome him. We welcome Alim Küçükpehlivan, the founder of Başarsoft. Nihan Karacameydan İncemehmetoğlu from AFAD is also with us. We know her especially for her efforts during the recent earthquake, and our final panellist is Mustafa Yavuz Torun of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change. Our esteemed Director General is with us, and we wish it to be a good panel. Technology is an important part of our lives, especially in disaster management. In preventing disaster, during the disaster, and after the disaster, technology has become a lifesaver. Of course, it is very valuable to use the good aspects, the advanced aspects of technology. Especially in times when we are racing against time, we see and experience how the use of

technology touches our lives and how it contributes to our lives, particularly during times of disaster. How nice it is to be together on such a panel today. We will listen to the experiences of the academia, the state and the private sector, which we define as the “Golden Triangle,” and we will share our experiences, especially the ones we had in the Kahramanmaraş-centred earthquake... We will also hear our speakers’ experiences and forecasts on what to do before, during, and after disasters in the future. We have many questions, but I believe we can find the answers to the questions in our minds in the presentations of our speakers. Without further ado, I would like to leave the floor for our first speaker, Professor Hidenori Watanave.

Hidenori Watanave



Hello, my name is Hidenori Watanave. I am a professor at the University of Tokyo. I would like to thank you for inviting me to this beautiful event because this is my first time in Türkiye, thank you very much. Today I am going to share with you the satellite imagery map I created for the Türkiye-Syria earthquake. Maybe you’ve seen this video on Twitter before. Here you can see a small version of the satellite images. As you move around like this, you see the images around

the fault line. I have prepared an interactive map so that we can see the damage in this region. I want to show you Antakya, Hatay on a 3D map. This is a map that you can access on your computer, tablet or smartphone. It is an interactive map. It is a map of public data and it shows a very large area and shares images of the disaster area. What did we do here? First of all, we made the open-source satellite imagery accessible to everyone, and then we made a visualization using a no-code platform. Then we made it better understood with a visualization that tells a story, and we provided access to it on Twitter for people who needed access to it and shared it from there. It was quickly used in terms of earthquake response and information sharing. If we look at the archives of our team, Geo visualization studies developed as follows, here we evaluated the data in open source by taking more data from disasters experienced around the world. The first one is the Hiroshima atomic bomb archive, and here we benefited from the statements and images from in the region. 3D information about the effects of the atomic bomb was integrated here. Our next example is an example of an earthquake in Japan with a magnitude of 8 and we tried to see the effect of the tsunami afterwards. We can say that it actually teaches us a lesson about disaster. In the event of a tsunami, it is necessary to seek higher ground. Last year, I created a new geovisualization using a special program. The program was featured on Japanese television and aimed to provide three-dimensional images to explain the situation in Ukraine to the world. The location of the visualization is 400 kilometers from Kiev. Russia claimed that Ukraine attacked the power plant in this area, but there is no evidence to support this claim. Upon closer inspection of the images, it is clear that the Russian army is present and positioned in the area. A map of Ukraine was created using satellite imagery. The method used for the earthquake in Türkiye was applied here. I applied it two days later. The published data was open to access, and remediation work had started. However, the data used was public data. First of all, each download needed authorization and the data was published separately, the connection between them was not clear and the big Geotiffs could not be opened without GIS software. I used a web service and tried to make it so that people could make use of the data. The service I used is called Cesium Ion. and it provided us with support in terms of Geotiffs and photography. We could visualize satellite imagery through a web browser and it provided a code-free digital mapping. We could produce content in a code-free way and we could produce it quickly and use it for disaster response. So we produced content quickly, we did that for the Türkiye-Syria earthquake and I was able to publish the map on the third day after the earthquake and I published it using open data. And you can see the tweet I posted on this date, February 10, 2023, 6:28 a.m. It is Japan time, of course. This was created one day after the open-source data was shared. Let

me show you the visual information, the visuality provided by our maps. We can see images from Kahramanmaraş over a wide area and we were able to see how far the fault line extends by traveling over this map. The next example is a hybrid analysis of satellite imagery. Here you can see the data that comes out after analysis with Maxar and Blacksky and other tools. In other words, information from a single data source is not enough in this sense. Therefore, we made a hybrid analysis. For example, here is a video image from Hatay, Antakya, taken by a drone. We transferred this data and it was published on help.ngo and in a very detailed way, we can see details that are not visible in the satellite image, we can see people and we can see other details. Another example is that we were able to see images from Türkiye and Ukraine in 3D. 3D documentation is actually useful for us in this sense. We think that we will be able to access more 3D data in the future. In the last period, we did time lapse, before and after on the disaster area and satellite images contained very important information. Because the situation was changing day by day and so we were able to follow the recovery process. I tweeted these visuals, these images, I think it was important to tweet these short images in terms of content. I tried to share them in Turkish as much as possible. We have very good automatic translation tools now, like "DeepL", and it translates really well. With these efforts, influencers sharing in Turkish retweeted and shared my posts and this great impact in Japan reached people in Türkiye. Thank you very much. This is our reach records in the first week. In other words, our reach records in the first week after we shared our content and 90% of the reaches were from Türkiye. 90% of the reaches were from Türkiye, really impressive. Actually, the content of what I shared is mostly in Japanese, but the Turks really benefited from it. There was 90% access from Türkiye. This is actually a result of the methodology of my work. This map was also covered by TRT and Anadolu Agency and this is actually one of the most important moments of my life. I was featured and mentioned in Türkiye's television agency. I also have very good Turkish friends, and I would like to thank them. If I need to summarize my presentation here quickly, we are trying to make open-source data accessible to everyone, and we are making visualizations using a code-free platform, and we are visualizing with storytelling for better understanding, and we are sharing on Twitter, especially to reach people who need it. These methods enable rapid disaster response and facilitate information sharing. We are also launching a joint research project with Middle East Technical University. I hope we will come together again soon. Thank you very much.

Erdem Erkul:

We would like to thank Professor Hidonori for his very nice and informative presentation. I would like to give the floor to Mr. Alim. The floor is yours, Mr. Alim.

Alim Küçükpehlivan



Hello, I am Alim Küçükpehlivan. I am the co-founder of Başarsoft. To put Başarsoft in a nutshell, we can say that it is the company that provides the production of the raw materials for the directions in the navigations you used to get here today. For years, we have been mapping Türkiye street by street, building by building and making it available to the private sector and some public institutions. Thanks to these efforts, we are laying the foundation for many works. Briefly,

I can say that Başarsoft directs where 9 out of the 10 packages coming to your house today will go. I think four out of the five meals you order for the house are handled by our services. While we were doing this kind of work, we suddenly woke up on February 6th, but in fact it was much before that. As you are aware, earthquakes and disasters are preceded by a preparation phase, followed by a process during and after them. We experienced the August 17 earthquake 2-3 years after establishing the company, and we were involved in numerous initiatives at the Governorship of Sakarya, ranging from the site selection of permanent housing to the geological formations of the land. We even offered GIS support for aid distribution. From that point on, disasters and emergencies have been an issue that we have been working on continuously. So, we have actually been providing map support within the IDES project for a long time, as Nihan will explain in a moment, so I don't want to delve into her topic. But I want to tell you about a project we are working on that is unique to us and completely free, without any expectations. Actually, I think most of the people here don't know, but we have developed an application called "Deprem Riskim (My Earthquake Risk)." When? In 2019. AFAD and MTA (General Directorate of Mineral Research and Exploration) completed a study, including several universities. They produced a seismicity map of all of Türkiye and this was published as open data. Following this, we developed an earthquake damage estimation application with a professor from Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University, using American FEMA-154 standards. So this is an app that estimates the damage to your building in the event of an earthquake after you take a coordinate photo and answer a few questions. We released this application; however, it was not widely used. For example, three months before the earthquake, the application had 186 users, but starting from the day after the earthquake, the number of users increased and there are currently approximately 18 thousand users, although it is still very, very insufficient. As I said, this application does not require any physical analysis. The answers you give to a few questions about the structural architecture of your building—in fact, the answers to these questions are available in municipalities, some on paper, some in digital archives; since we cannot find them and access them on your behalf, we create a report for you by confirming this information with you. This is again from our pre-earthquake studies... When you call 112, you know there was a project called "New Generation 112," and now we do not call 110 or 155 anymore; we just call 112. The map technology that works in centres in all provinces of Türkiye is also Başarsoft's map technology. In this way, we offer a much more up-to-date, much more dynamic map than existing commercial products, and we quickly make it available to police, security and other emergency units. These days, my friends are busy updating the navigation systems of all the ambulances. But what happened in the earthquake? On the morning of the earthquake, our colleagues saw that our citizens, who were trapped under the rubble in the earthquake zone, shared tweets saying, "I am under the rubble of the apartment opposite

Kardeşler BakeryHelp me.” Our colleagues then began determining the coordinates of the locations mentioned in the tweets. What does this mean? Since it tells us which district, which centre, and wherever it is in Antakya, we also addressed it manually and geotagged it. Why is there a need for such a thing? That information does not mean anything to the people who go there to help. Since that bakery is no longer there, and that pharmacy has already collapsed. There is no sign left on that street that they can read the name. Only when you create a coordinate can they go there as if they had placed it directly with their hand. Therefore, when you are working on a reality based on a scenario where people who do not know the place go for help, having hundreds, dozens, or thousands of addresses in your hand means nothing, unless there is someone who knows the area, and those who do know are either under the cave-in or in their own troubles, you have to coordinate it. So, we did what we knew best and mapped 15,000 requests for help in a few days. It was initially about creating coordinates for messages that said “I am under the rubble” and later we started coordinating other messages like “We need food, clothes, and tents.” We have operated this system along with ID checks. This time there was a need for accessible service points alongside the request for assistance. So you open Google Maps, but you are about to run out of gas, and when you look for “Where is the closest gas station?” if that gas station is either out of gas or not working, you cannot get gas from there. And getting there will be an extremely nerve-wracking experience. Therefore, we have included stations on the real-time map that offer fuel supply from fuel companies and suppliers with whom we have established strong partnerships. Then, we had an initiative with the Pharmacists’ Association, which we offered free of charge. We shared the information regarding the pharmacies on duty. Once more, they swiftly informed us of the pharmacies that were still standing, those that were operational, and field pharmacies. We were then able to swiftly make other relief locations, such as food distribution centres, available. There were some very interesting requests, given that it is indeed cold, raining, and snowing in the morning, and you need to access information. Asking so many questions is not an option for you. In a very simple way, you have to obtain that data and deliver that information to the person in need or to the appropriate unit that can provide assistance. Although you may not be aware of it, we collaborate closely with the Directorate General of Geographic Information Systems in the background. We routinely provide the relevant ministry with the most comprehensive map we possess of the entirety of Türkiye well in advance of any disaster, so they may utilise it in the event of an emergency without charging any fee. In this case, we also began and continued to share this data in order to use it rapidly in case the Ministry needed it. These are some basic figures regarding what we included. It was completely improvised. In other words, it was not planned at the time, and we noticed that it met critical needs in the first few weeks. Likewise, we worked in coordination with our Ministry. As you know, Vatan also told us that im-

ages are obtained from satellites positioned beyond a specific altitude, specifically above the clouds. Satellite companies were unable to obtain clear images in the aftermath of the earthquake for two to three days due to snow and rain clouds in that region. The Ministry divided the areas among the organisations that operate in this field and assigned us. Our teams worked swiftly on the third day to obtain drone footage of Hatay and Iskenderun, which we then provided to the Ministry and any non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or civil society organisations that wanted to use it. We did maintain such support later. This was how we operated during the disaster. As told by the Deputy Minister in the morning, as a result of the Ministry's identification of the damaged structures following the disaster, we were able to compile a report titled "Where, for how long, and what types of businesses have ceased operations?" by utilising the aforementioned information, visual destruction data, and satellite company images. I believe it will be of particular interest to you to find out that the number of buildings demolished on the main streets was significantly higher than that on the back streets. The primary issue here is not the removal of the columns—the buildings where the columns were removed inevitably collapsed right away—rather, it is the "soft soil," or soft storey, which needs to be distinguished from the impact of the earthquake. A soft storey refers to a structure that is comprised of three stories, with each apartment spanning three metres. However, a 5-meter store was constructed on the ground floor. We observed that these buildings were demolished in an extremely short period of time. For this reason, we have observed that more lives are lost, as well as more labour and economic losses, in more expensive and luxurious places on the main street. We can say that new urban plans are being developed and continue in accordance with the lessons that have already been learned from these experiences. We tried to prepare these maps for all our cities in the earthquake zone. These are the initiatives we take, and hopefully, there will be no need for them in the future. Yet, we are constantly updating and developing maps of Türkiye, even though we are currently present here. Thank you so much for listening.

Erdem Erkul:

We would like to thank Alim. Professor Hidenori addressed virtualisation, open source data, digitalisation, three-dimensional data modelling, platforms, and satellites in particular. Furthermore, Mr Alim discussed the significance of mapping, the value of visualising it, and the necessity of simultaneously processing the data locally and instantly sharing it with the appropriate institutions through visualisation. AFAD, which was in charge of coordinating this effort, is here. That coordination was very important. I would like to give the floor to Nihan since she will deliver an important presentation.

Nihan Karacameydan İncemehmetođlu



Dear participants, welcome. My name is Nihan Karacameydan İncemehmetođlu. I have been the Head of the Department of Information Systems and Communication for about a year and a half. As our esteemed moderator mentioned, I will discuss how we used information technologies for our operations during the disaster. As Mr Alim and Professor Hidenori discussed, we are, in fact, partners with AFAD as the end users of both satellite imagery and various maps developed by Alim. My teammates and I prepared a very long presentation. However, if we look at information technologies, there are actually both software projects that we carry out within our own organisation and integrations with different institutions. After the earthquake, we were able to run forecasting systems quickly and developed algorithms for them. Early warning systems are actually not for earthquakes but for other disasters, and I would like to talk about this in detail during the presentation. We make extensive use of geographic information systems. In nearly every one of our projects, geographical frameworks are present.

Each one of us has geolocation data, and every device we employ has a specific location.

We heavily rely on technologies for remote sensing and image processing. Of course, our certain responsibilities regarding communication are one of the primary reasons I emphasise information systems and communication. How did we maintain communication after the disaster? What communication projects do we intend to undertake? What are the ones we are implementing? I will talk about them briefly. AYDES is our software project, a system, a platform, and a programme. It consists of different modules. It stands for “Disaster Management and Decision Support System,” and various public institutions, organisations, and NGOs use it through user-based authentication. In other words, it is not an application available to citizens. I would like to point this out in particular. It is an application available to public institutions and organisations in charge of disaster management, and authorities are assigned according to their duties, mandates, and responsibilities. Its objective is to equip users with the capacity to rapidly acquire decision support expertise, thereby preventing chaos, effectively managing a disaster, and accelerating decision-making. The Disaster Management Decision Support System includes modules related to three different processes in the disaster management cycle. Now, we will delve into these details. What are the different modules? Which data did we use, which modules did we use more actively, which modules did we use effectively, and in what areas did AYDES support us, especially during the recent earthquake? We will talk about them. There is a disaster management cycle. This is a screenshot of the AYDES interface. Within these, there are dozens of different modules. The response, preparedness, planning and recovery phases are still very actively used. Although the response in the field may have decreased to some extent, relief distributions and other activities continue, and the recovery effort continues at an exceptionally rapid rate. It is a heavily used module, which we intend to continue in the upcoming months. AYDES contains 32 main modules and 78 sub-modules. There is a map infrastructure with a geographic information system. The majority of the modules we see on the screen represent different sectors of Türkiye’s Disaster Response Plan. Our several ministries are tasked with a variety of disaster management tasks. For example, the Ministry of Health is in charge of healthcare services, the Gendarmerie General Command of the Ministry of Interior is in charge of the evacuation and resettlement of earthquake victims, and the Ministry of Energy is involved in the energy disaster management group. There are

modules for these, and Disaster Management and Decision Support System (AYDES) now provides integration with over 50 public institutions and organisations, as well as data that we can refer to as layers. There are over 90 types of incidents, disasters, and emergencies; I believe there are 97 types of incidents. AYDES currently has 129 thousand users. Over 103 thousand incidents have been identified in Türkiye by various state institutions and organisations, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs). We are discussing a system that we commissioned in 2015 and developed and introduced version 2 in 2019. Through AYDES, we maintain data for over one million disaster victims. AYDES allows us to manage all disaster and emergency incidents in real-time. AYDES runs a resource management system. These are only a few of the most prominent ones based on location... AYDES manages hundreds of resource inventories and information in real-time. AYDES provides access to information on which resources are in the warehouses, where they are located, and how to reach them. This module was used very effectively during the disaster. We realised the importance of collaboration with various institutions and organisations throughout this disaster. Of course, I will discuss satellite images, drone images, and so on individually in the context of remote sensing projects, but I will not go through each institution on the screen one by one. We are integrated with all of them through web services. We continue to integrate with institutions that lack a suitable web service infrastructure through data sharing using various means. Our integration with the Directorate General of Citizenship Affairs, the General Directorate of Land Registry and Cadastre, and the Ministry of Health's Disability Information System allows us to track location-based information on the immediate identity, age, and disability status of disaster victims living in the disaster zone. We also interact immediately with the 112 Emergency Call Centre. The Disaster Management Decision Support System instantaneously receives incoming reports from 112. At the same time, reports sent via social media platforms are promptly displayed on AYDES screens, and AYDES routes them to the appropriate teams through an automation system. I will elaborate on that shortly. This is how I designed the modules that stand out in AYDES in light of the Kahramanmaraş earthquake. These will attract your attention. It was critical to reach the disaster victims. The answer to the question "What is the analysis of the disaster? Who is a disaster victim?" was critical. A massive population has been affected. The affected population is between 14 and 15 million. "Who are the disaster victims, whose family members have died, and who are the disabled disaster victims? Where are they, and how can we reach them?" We have been searching for answers to these questions throughout the disaster. In the early days, damage assessment integration was crucial. Of course, the information we obtained using remote sensing methods was extremely valuable after the first five days, particularly in terms of integrating field work, geographically coordinating damage assessment data in the field,

and then directing teams to those regions and delivering aid. Of course, some location information collected from the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA) is confidential data, which is likewise confidential under the Personal Data Protection Law and the regulation. We, however, made extensive use of them. It was extremely helpful throughout the disaster, particularly in finding missing people. Emergency aid support payments were once again made through AYDES' recovery module. I have already mentioned the reports. We now have an Earthquake Preliminary Damage Estimation System. Our Director General of Earthquake and Risk Reduction may have addressed the AFAD-RED application during the morning session. This application tells us about the potential damage within 10 minutes of an earthquake's occurrence. The screen shows the İzmir earthquake scenario. As you can see on the screen, it also generates an isoseismic map. It, in fact, indicates the severity of the affected regions. We see that as the colour lightens from red, the rate of effect diminishes. This produces a result for us. The result you see on this screen is the result of the damage estimation algorithm of the Kahramanmaraş Pazarcık earthquake, the first earthquake of magnitude 7.7, within the first 10 minutes. He has now estimated "17 thousand deaths." Of course, we experienced a second earthquake, 7.6. Following that, we faced the Hatay earthquake, and so on. There are issues that exacerbate destruction. It is also obvious that precise building stock research is necessary to support this algorithm. We have such a strong desire throughout Türkiye. The project has been launched. I believe that once this is finalised, more realistic conclusions may be drawn. We are talking about tracking vulnerable groups during a disaster, that is, tracking our disabled individuals with their locations and addresses. This is a significant integration. We also used it during the disaster. They showed an example of Istanbul on the screen, but we can instantly get information about all vulnerable groups in Türkiye. These are the ones who must receive first aid. Tracking can be done on location-based map screens. We have developed a wristband application for disaster victims integrated with the Disaster Management Decision Support System. We can identify a disaster victim by their wristband number if they are wearing one in the field. We also introduce this issue throughout the disaster. Through their Turkish ID numbers, we can access them using the information we see on the screen. This platform allows us to rapidly get answers to questions like "Who is the disaster victim?" as well as information like the services and aids received by the disaster victim, their follow-up, hotels and dormitories where the disaster victim is staying, and so on. Currently, this module has 10 thousand users across Türkiye. Disaster victims are swiftly analysed from here, and assistance is delivered and distributed. We have made this module available to various institutions and organisations via a web service that does not contain personal data. In other words, when a Turkish ID number is used to inquire whether a person is a disaster victim, our Disaster

Management Decision Support System responds “Yes” or “No.” They can make inquiries like, “Has his/her house collapsed?” or “Has there been a death in his/her family?” and receive answers via a web service. Again, incredibly simple maps designed for ease of use have been prepared for the distribution of aid to our disaster victims in the neighbourhoods; in the background, we map the locations of our mukhtars’ offices or information arriving at the warehouses, where we keep the aid information and where the aid is delivered to the disaster victims by our mukhtars. This was also employed extensively in this disaster. I mentioned the 112 Emergency Aid interaction; AYDES immediately receives any reports received through 112. Again, one of the modules we used extensively throughout the disaster was heavy equipment tracking. We instantly integrated the heavy equipment in the field with the vehicle tracking system. Başarsoft has also contributed significantly, and I would like to thank Mr Alim in particular for this. We have linked 86,628 construction equipment into AYDES across Türkiye through five separate vehicle tracking companies. While the work was being done in the field, particularly during the debris clearance, we were able to see on the map which province and location the heavy equipment was operating in, as well as the debris locations, and we guaranteed that they were directed using the Decision Support System. This situation was continuously watched by our Disaster Management Crisis Centre at all times. We think this system is really very useful. We have set up a system that allows us to see whose institution it belongs to, as well as the sort of construction equipment, such as a digger or a fire vehicle. This system was also used very actively. In addition, there is the reporting infrastructure, which, as with any application, includes enhanced reporting and business intelligence application infrastructure. Reports were used to monitor various catastrophe victim information, shelter information, and evacuation information in real-time. The figures were immediately conveyed to the President and senior administration via these reports. AYDES also contains some pre-disaster data. This data includes assembly areas. As many of you are aware, citizens of the Republic of Türkiye can learn the nearest assembly areas through e-Government. This assembly area information is also provided by the Disaster Management and Decision Support System. Assembly areas are updated on AYDES by a number of authorized users. Let us move a little faster; I may be running out of time. Now, I would like to discuss an application that we used for the first time during this disaster. You know, there is a very intense reporting process going on after the disaster. In the first five days, we got almost 80,000 calls from our Disaster Management Crisis Centre phones, except 112 calls. Citizens call to report their problems. The initial three, five, and seven-day reports are frequently “I am under the rubble.” Later, these evolved into demands for tents, shelter, and assistance. An operator might already record these audio recordings to AYDES. An operator might listen to you, locate your address, and record it. For the first time during this

disaster, these audio recordings were automatically integrated to AYDES using an artificial intelligence algorithm in the background, which takes this audio recording, transcribes it into text, and even recognises specific areas from the text, coordinating the notification point, as shown in the example below. If the phrase “debris” was used, such as “I am under debris, I am under a wreckage,” AYDES immediately sent and directed them to search and rescue crews. When I say automatically sent, I mean a notification is sent to a search and rescue team. A notification like “There is a call, with these coordinates” is sent or if there is a shelter request, the notifications are directed to the relevant shelter disaster group. We may state that this process was managed in this manner using the Disaster Management and Decision Support System. We also have the “AFAD acil” application, developed by our Ministry and the Directorate General of Information Technologies, which our citizens can use before and during disasters. Instead of calling 112, our citizens can report instantly. There is an option to just push a button and say “I am under debris” or initiate a voice call. Our goal here is to reduce internet traffic and ensure that citizens can report. We have a mobile application that we will launch very soon, within a day or two. This is an application we developed in response to the disaster, and it is open to citizens. It is a platform we call the “Afetzedede Bilgilendirme Platformu” [Platform for Informing Disaster Victim]. There are many disaster victims all around Türkiye, and they all have questions. This is an application we developed to inform them about this issue. At the same time, it features a module that security will utilise to safeguard the safety of catastrophe victims living in container cities and tent cities as they enter and exit those container cities. Disaster victims will be able to get information regarding payments made to them, aid delivered, and future support. In addition to AYDES, which we covered, another software project is Early Warning Systems. Now, in terms of the Early Warning System, which is a news gathering and dissemination system that we developed together with Başarsoft, Mr. Alim did not mention it, but I would like to mention that we are cooperating with them again. As the contractor, they worked extremely hard. We recently included a television and radio. As you are aware, it is impossible to warn civilians in advance of an earthquake; we have only seconds to do so. The concept of seconds differs depending on the epicentre of the earthquake. However, for other types of calamities, including as floods and meteorological disasters, we have established a method to alert our residents, which we have implemented throughout Türkiye. This Commercial Mobile Alarm System (CMAS) can also transmit vital alert notifications. Currently, we have just integrated TRT, but we intend to integrate with all national radio and television outlets. It is capable of transmitting a warning via TRT’s television and radio broadcasts. We built a mobile application named “e-AFAD Mobil.” This mobile application may inform citizens via SMS using the siren systems we have built and continue to install in various areas across Türkiye. It can alert indi-

viduals with messages like “There is a hazard in your region.” There is a risk of flooding. Of course, this fluctuates depending on the level of alarm. The types of warnings we give in case of red alarms and orange alarms are different from each other. We see several different types of notifications. Let’s get through these parts fast. Here are the notifications we send through social media... With CMAS, you can receive this message regardless of what you are doing on your phone, whether you are conducting a voice call, browsing the internet, or using aeroplane mode. This is a qualification. If your phone’s settings are enabled, you can receive a radio frequency signal broadcast over GSM base stations, and we, the AFAD, are sending you this warning notice. We only do this regionally in red alert situations. It was used extensively during the June and July floods. We believe that it has saved a significant amount of damage, particularly to vehicles in the flood zone. Because we urged our residents, “Get your automobiles out of the river beds.” Our Directorate General of Geographic Information Systems built a flood simulation tool that we frequently utilise... We indicated we were integrating with many agencies. This is another flood simulation module with a high-precision three-dimensional model in the backdrop that we use to evaluate difficult and high-risk areas. We integrated DS with flood monitoring sensors. They have completed their installations in the entire Black Sea Region. We are instantly informed about the high water levels in the river beds. We collaborate with DSI and Meteorology to determine the appropriate alarm level and deliver a warning based on water level information and the information delivered through the Directorate General of Meteorology data integration. Let me also mention this. There was a lot of talk about image transmission systems. The previous speakers also talked about that. We have the ability to transfer instant images from any platform in the event of a disaster. We have instant access to the images of every different platform, including aerial, satellite-based, international and national platforms. We received a variety of free images of the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes from international platforms. Including Maxar and Planet footage. We took instant satellite images from the drones of AFAD, planes of the military, the gendarmerie, the police force and the General Directorate of Mapping, as well as Göktürk 1, Göktürk 2 and Rasat Satellite. We have the opportunity to publish these images that we receive instantly via a platform we developed called “video.afad.gov.tr,” which can include streaming video, tower images, and vehicle camera images. Of course, we are securely monitoring these images in all our crisis centres. We use a variety of remote sensing technologies, algorithms, as well as image processing algorithms. To mention different examples of different types of disasters; here is an image from the AYDES screen in the Kastamonu Bozkurt flood, again in the Sinop Ayancık flood, an example of remote sensing analysis of a dam water level rise. We use Synthetic Aperture Radar images that we ran previously. Some scientific studies on these are also being carried out by our General

Directorate of Risk Mitigation. An analysis of the fault rupture after the Manisa Saruhanlı earthquake based on a SAR image. Identification of burned areas before and after forest fires. Again, result of the damage detection algorithms we developed over satellite images of Kahramanmaraş earthquakes in 2023. Since the region is large, it was an intense work. Here, they are expressed in different representations with different points. Again, a screenshot from Hatay, a much more detailed analysis before and after was also made by the operators at this point. Automated analysis was also used. It was used in analyses by different institutions. Let me talk very briefly about our communication systems. As AFAD, we are responsible for establishing or having established a reliable and secure communication infrastructure. Again, we are working here as the coordinating institution. In fact, we have incorporated cable, GSM, satellite, and radio infrastructure, as well as all kinds of communication facilities. In terms of radios, we are implementing a digital radio system that is integrated into the Gendarmerie's JEMUS (Gendarmerie Integrated Communications and Information System). We have installed them in 34 provinces in total, and we have a shared disaster relay project that allows each province to make calls within itself. This digital radio infrastructure was actively used in this disaster. There were very brief interruptions in communication as a result of the damage and destruction of the buildings that housed the base stations. Therefore, the radio played a very active role in our internal communication. We received a lot of calls on the radio, dispatched teams, and so on. We see provinces with ongoing and completed installations. Again, we used satellite communication infrastructure very intensively in this disaster. In cooperation with Türksat, KA Band, KU Band. Satellite modems, the internet, and telephones were used very actively. We provided services in the region with a total of three coordination types and 14 communication vehicles. We have a number of projects in mind to improve citizen communication, including the AFAD tower. We have a project to install a communication tower in the gathering areas to provide communication for citizens through satellite infrastructure. We have a project to enable our citizens to make voice calls with their relatives via cable, fibre, optical or GSM satellite in case of a disaster, even if all kinds of infrastructure are cut. We are about to implement this. We are working very hard on it. The Green Line Project and the Common Disaster Radio Channel to be offered for the use of all public institutions. We use the radio channel internally, but this disaster taught us that all public institutions should actively use the radio infrastructure, specifically the digital radio infrastructure. For this purpose, we have two new projects that we hope will enable all institutions to communicate via satellite and radio channels. Thank you very much for listening patiently.

Erdem Erkul:

Thank you very much, Ms. Nihan. It was a very informative and very satisfying presentation. We wish there was no need to use these technologies, but it is a fact of life. As we saw in the presentation, there have been numerous disasters in our country over the last two and a half to three years. We remembered them again. There are so many applications, thank you. I would like to give the floor to our last speaker, Mr. Mustafa Yavuz Torun. We know that many different technologies are used in this Ministry, so you have the floor.

Mustafa Yavuz Torun

As the General Director of Geographical Information Systems, our Ministry's responsibilities include buildings. When the subject of the meeting is disaster, the most recent agenda item for all of us is the earthquake disaster that has occurred in 11 provinces. Our duties as the Ministry in these regions include conducting damage assessments and carrying out damage assessment-related activities.

In this context, our ministry used satellite imagery to determine which buildings had collapsed, were heavily damaged, moderately damaged, or were undamaged. These were also shared on the Ministry's website, 'atlas.gov.tr.' Meanwhile, relevant images were obtained using the UAV, and images of the ruins of buildings in this area were detected. Satellite imagery was used to make the same detections, and these satellite images were used to detect collapses and locate their areas. Images were also taken with the AKSUNGUR UAV. These snapshots allowed us to identify the buildings in the disaster area as well as the people under the rubble. We have also identified these collapsed buildings, which have been marked as heavily damaged. These were represented on maps, and these representations were used in the field. Yes, these damage assessments... Additionally, a panoramic atlas study was undertaken. The severely damaged, moderately damaged, and demolished buildings in the field were identified using the instant damage analytical application, and their locations were displayed on a map. Three-dimensional mapping studies were carried out. In addition, during damage detection efforts for data collection, the General Directorate of Structural Works provided us information by determining the location of buildings on tablets in the field. As a web application, we showed our citizens the damage conditions of their buildings. The damage assessments of all our provinces were made available to our citizens. Their mapping, the fault status on the map, whether they are moderately damaged or not, whether they are undamaged or not, the status of the fault in the province and district... All of these were shown on the atlas. These data were also shared with government agencies as well as electricity, gas, and telecommunications companies. They have also created designs for their own invoicing or infrastructure in response to the conditions of these demolished or severely damaged buildings. Similarly, comparisons were made between the buildings' old, new, and most recent conditions. Thank you.

Erdem Erkul:

Thank you very much. We had four valuable speakers with us today. There is one more panel after us. So I don't want to take too much time, but if you have questions for our panellists, you can ask them one-on-one during the break. Of course the world keeps on turning. We will always experience and see disasters at some point in our lives. Taking precautions and preventive measures, combined with technology, is also extremely beneficial. Today, we listened to what we call the "Golden Triangle," which we mentioned at the start of our speech: the work of the state, civil society, and the private sector, as well as the work of academia. I would like to thank all our speakers again. I would also like to thank you. Thank you.

P A N E L

04

**Moderatör:**

Abdülkadir Tezcan, Head of Civil Society Relations
and Accreditation Department

Panelists:

Zeynep Demir, Secretary General, KADEM

Taha Zeren, Head of Operations, Doctors Worldwide
Türkiye

Ertan Akar, Miner, Turkish Hard Coal Enterprises

Vahe Kılıçarslan, Author & TV Presenter



Civil Society and Volunteering in Times of Disaster



Abdülkadir Tezcan



I'm Abdülkadir Tezcan. I've been with AFAD for 5 years. I have served as the Head of the Response Department, the Head of the Planning and Risk Reduction Department, and now the Head of the Civil Society Relations and Accreditation Department. This will be a very valuable panel today. We have very valuable participants. First of all, I would like to thank you all for coming here to listen to us. This panel is especially valuable for us today. As a brother who was involved in search and rescue activities from the third to fourth hours for about 50 days following the great earthquakes we experienced in February, it is extremely valuable for us to see the current point we have reached and to be sitting here with you. During a previous event in this hall, I expressed my hope that no disasters would occur and promised to keep discussing the importance of risk reduction. Faster, more practical solutions to these problems were discussed, as were ways to protect ourselves from disasters and what we can do to be ready for them. Our provincial risk reduction plans have been meticulously prepared for this purpose. We have also prepared a Türkiye-wide disaster risk reduction plan. However, we encountered an earthquake of this magnitude, which simultaneously affected eleven provinces.

During today's programme at the Presidency, it was stressed that a region significantly bigger than the Netherlands was impacted, meaning that it affected more than just one country. May Allah have mercy on those who lost their lives. We offer our condolences to the survivors and wish a quick recovery to the wounded. I pray to Allah that we will never face such disasters again. Since we are in the final hours, I would like to swiftly address my guests; Mrs. Zeynep Demir is our guest here today. She kindly accepted our invitation. She is the Secretary General of KADEM, a non-governmental organisation that has long performed significant tasks on behalf of civil society. I will leave the floor to her. What did KADEM do in the context of this disaster, what is it dealing with in general, and what lessons has it learned from this? I would like you to answer these three questions together. If there is time, perhaps one last sentence: We estimated each to take ten minutes. It would be beneficial both for us and for our listeners if you follow suit. Thank you very much. The floor is yours, Mrs. Zeynep Demir.

Zeynep Demir



Thank you; I think you can hear me. Thank you for the kind words. Yes, KADEM is a non-governmental organisation working in the field of women's rights. Although it was not our field of expertise, the earthquake unavoidably brought humanitarian aid into it. Our non-governmental organisation implements a range of initiatives and strives to create a safe environment in which women may live with dignity, have equal access to opportunities, raise social awareness, and change unfavourable attitudes, beliefs, and actions about the roles that women play in society and how those roles are perceived. Our main field of activity is women, but on the morning of the earthquake, we woke up to a different agenda. Yes, we had some crisis plans, but they were crisis plans centred on ourselves. Like many civil society organisations, we quickly considered what we could do. We began quickly by establishing a crisis centre and deciding to shift 30% to 40%

of our efforts for 2023 to this field. So, what have we done until now? We worked with AFAD and the Red Crescent in the first few days to deliver aid, including in-kind aid like everyone else, but by the fifth day, we were in the earthquake zone. Following that, I spent 15 to 20 days there, and then we worked in the region on several occasions, though only briefly. I want to focus on the region in particular. We have seen in the field that, while disaster planning is comprehensive, we need to take it a step further in gender-sensitive disaster planning. So we first evaluated what we could do and what we could not do. So we asked, "What can we do?" And we carried out efforts to address women's basic needs. On the one hand, in the first few days, we sent a tanker of fuel, stoves, and tents, but our focus was on women's underwear, hygiene products. We are in Anatolia. Friends, a woman-sensitive and culturally sensitive approach is needed here. I mean, we went through things like this. For example, during the process, as part of the lessons we learned, we took thermal underwear as well as clothes, tracksuits and blankets there. But on the 15th day, the women we contacted asked us for elastic skirts. Those who live in Türkiye know that women in Anatolia wear elastic skirts on a regular basis. None of us had thought about this as white-collar living in Istanbul. As a result, we discovered a need for both a culturally sensitive and a woman-sensitive approach. Now, we had an advantage. We had a Women's Support Centre Project that we had been running for 2-3 years. The Women's Support Centre is a civil society structure in Istanbul that works to empower women. What are we doing for women there? For women who come to us, we first analyse their needs, and for that, we have a comprehensive programme that addresses questions such as how we can accompany women, how we can support them through social workers and psychologists towards their desired goals, what resources we can utilise, how we can establish connections with the public, how we can engage with education, and how we can provide psychological and legal support for women with traumatic backgrounds that may hinder their education

or employment. We took this programme, quickly miniaturised it, and went to the earthquake zone to offer psychological and social rehabilitation, which is our primary aim. We established 3 Women Support Centers, first in Maraş, then in Hatay, and then in Adıyaman. In these “Women Support Centers,” we employed a psychologist and a social worker from the region, from the tents. We cooperated with the Ministry of National Education. We worked with various ministries and public institutions to create an environment in which women could feel normal. An incredible story was written in two tents, which included a tea room, 100 knitting needles, 500 balls of wool, and a few handicraft courses. The women gathered; it was similar to group work in that, upon their arrival, conversing with one another rather than producing a piece of work became their primary concern. Our psychologist accompanied them there, and the women who had never spoken in the beginning gradually opened up and normalised themselves. They left the gloom of their own tents for an environment of socialisation and normalisation, and we spent 40 of 50 days there. What we saw in those 40 days was a sweet rehabilitation. What have we done later? By expanding the scope a little further, we are rapidly moving towards establishing permanent Women Support Centres in the region. We are also establishing these centers in container cities. Following the container city, we will leave our permanent Women Support Centres there to continue their work until permanent residences are established. Now, what have we learned? I want to go into that a little bit. I mean, there are many things; I could talk for an hour here. I can talk for an hour about the relevant activities that we have carried out.

Abdülkadir Tezcan:

The visuals are on the sides; our friends can see them.

Zeynep Demir:

Is that so? That’s very good. I mean, many stories can come out of this, but what have I learned from it and how will it reflect on our activities? This is what we have focused on. As I said, we had a crisis communication plan, but not a disaster communication plan. We are moving towards disaster communication. Because a woman-sensitive intervention programme is essential, we seek to help in every area where we can, in collaboration with all public institutions. When we say “woman-sensitive,” we are not referring to a gentle form of communication. It means knowing the needs of women. I saw it there: the children at AFAD and other young volunteers there learned in a very short time how to talk to a woman about her need for a menstrual pad. We need to be aware of and plan for such situations ahead of time, and the presence of women in these areas will help to facilitate communication. This is what we saw. When we first arrived, as we walked towards a woman, I noticed her eyes glitter when she saw me among 20

males. It is not simply conservatism; it is not about being more or less conservative. I take two steps towards a woman, and the moment I hold her hand, she begins to speak. She says, "We need this, we need that," or she doesn't just say what she needs; she says other things too. So we noticed that she communicated better and more effortlessly. As a result, we believe that women must be included on these teams. I am stating this for both the prevention and response teams. We believe that women should play an active role during disasters. Also, following such disasters, vulnerable groups become even more vulnerable, particularly in tent cities. In other words, violence gets more easily ignited, which is how the societal structure evolves. Violence prevention and response procedures must be swiftly established there. Imagine a tent city with 500 tents, with the gendarmerie, AFAD, police and security measures in place, but at 2 a.m., a woman will get up and need to use the lavatory, which is probably 500 metres away. So this becomes a security issue. Security problems are also an issue for children. So we need to reflect on this issue. It is critical for disaster plans to incorporate violence prevention measures, and I am not just referring to physical violence here; psychological and sexual violence are also vital. Well, I think we should have ideas and plans for these. What we have noticed and encountered in our work is that, following a disaster, earthquake victims do not just live in tent cities but also in provinces. As a representative of civil society, I believe that we need more structured programmes to work with earthquake victims who are currently residing in Istanbul or Ankara to help them with their social rehabilitation. What are we doing about it? With our 53 representatives, we work in every province to help families, offer aid to them through our donors, and, most importantly, secure their social rehabilitation. I hope I haven't forgotten anything, in terms of using time efficiently. Thank you.

Abdülkadir Tezcan:

You used the time efficiently. It took exactly 10 minutes. Thank you very much to Zeynep Demir for her contribution. There are two important points I have noted. Especially in response and recovery processes. Disaster consists of three most important processes: preparedness, response and recovery. She said that especially women should be included in the response and recovery processes, women should be included in these plans, and at the same time, vulnerable groups should be included in the planning in the process we call preparation and planning; in other words, what can be done separately for them should be clearly stated. Thank you very much for these contributions. Now Doctors Worldwide Türkiye (YYD)... I have always heard about them a lot, and it is great to meet them here as well. Mr. Taha Zeren, we have just come out of a disaster operation; he is also the operations manager. As the name implies, there was

an operation. What did the Doctors Worldwide Türkiye do? What tasks have they completed, and what are their activities in general? What lessons have you learned from this disaster? Particularly in terms of communication, since our topic is actually disaster communication, by the way, what Zeynep Demir said before was also very valuable. We don't call it communication, but it is all part of communication. So what will YYD say about this? It's your turn, Mr. Taha.

Taha Zeren



Thank you very much. We have listened to many valuable people today, and I appreciate them all. I am Muhammed Taha Zeren from YYD. First, I would like to talk about YYD very briefly. YYD is a non-governmental organisation formed in early 2000 by volunteer doctors and health staff. It was founded in 2000. We now have a volunteer health army of almost 40,000 people. We have about 500 professional employees. We have been active in 50 countries to date. Last year, we operated in 22 countries. What are our fields of activity? In particular, we work on crisis and emergency initiatives. We have voluntary health projects. We have initiatives focusing on maternal and child health, health education, including psychological support, eye health, and access to clean water. We provide this continuously in eight countries. We are doing this in Yemen, Afghanistan, Arakan, Somalia, Chad, Bangladesh, Palestine and in our country. We have been in the field as YYD in the crisis and emergency situations in our country, especially in Elazığ earthquake, İzmir earthquake, flood disasters, and fire disasters. On the first day, just two hours after the earthquake struck, we prepared and headed off with our equipment; yet we were able to arrive the next day due to the weather circumstances. When we initially arrived in Kahramanmaraş, we witnessed a tragedy beyond any we had ever seen. There was a dire need. We have immediately begun communications with the Ministries of Interior, Health, Family and Social Services and AFAD about what we can do in a coordinated manner. We began providing services there shortly with our volunteer doctors. We started working in Adiyaman and Hatay. We currently offer primary healthcare and psychosocial support in six locations throughout four provinces (Kahramanmaraş, Adiyaman, Malatya, and Hatay). We are aiming to reduce the psychological problems that occur as a result of the tragedy, to promptly reintegrate our people into society, particularly our children, mothers, and fathers, and to overcome the psychological suffering caused by the earthquake. Currently, we can reach an average of one thousand earthquake victims per day. As we can see, after the emergency response, we continue to provide primary health care services and free medications in the second phase. Our psychological support services are primarily aimed at children, followed by adults, and include both one-on-one and group meetings. As of today, we have contacted almost 90,000 earthquake victims. In the beginning, we were able to do procedures in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, particularly in facilities that remained intact. Our medical and material help continues. As I said, we currently have 42 staff actively operating in the field. I am intending to travel immediately to the field from here. So, what kind of systematic approach do we take as YYD? As we said, we talked about many crisis emergencies that we responded to and provided support for, and the studies conducted both globally and in our country actually show the following: when we look at the last 60 years,

when you divide it into a 30-year period, the number of natural disasters in the last 30 years has doubled compared to the previous 30 years. As YYD, we strive for sustainable crisis management to ensure timely and effective action. We are establishing our standards and detecting difficulties. In particular, we are distinguishing who will be authorised on what subject, in which field, considering the possibility of unavailability in the event of a crisis and emergency, who will reach them later, which of our volunteer doctors will reach them in the first stage, which of our nurses, which of our health personnel, which of our chemists, and what their areas of expertise will be. We use a flexible and agile approach on the ground. Particularly due to the fact that we collaborate with our ministries, we make every effort to provide a solution as soon as possible. We are also trying to ensure the sustainability of this endeavour and to develop a remedy that effectively stops further bleeding after the wounds are healed. We particularly try to recruit employees from the earthquake zone. My colleagues regularly report on the services provided on a daily basis. We maintain their quality, and we get feedback so that, Allah forbid, in the next disaster, we know what to do better, what we have learned, and what we could improve. So, suppose we were building a wall; what kind of bricks could we use? We are constantly working on these. To date, as Doctors Worldwide (Yeryüzü Doktorları), we have provided healthcare services to more than 3 million people who do not have access to healthcare. We are very glad to be able to provide that in our country. We hope that we will not experience such challenges again, and we will continue to spread kindness in some way through our voluntary doctors, nurses and pharmacists. Thank you so much for listening.

Abdülkadir Tezcan:

Thank you very much. Additionally, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation for your impeccable adherence to time. We, the Anatolian people, have a habit of not asking what a doctor's expertise is when we meet them; we simply tell them where it hurts. I mean, maybe he is an ophthalmologist; however, when we experience knee pain, we simply say, "My knee hurts." Many of our volunteers are on the ground while search and rescue operations are ongoing. In fact, I always say that eighty million people in this country—every single one—are volunteers. They all rushed in and one doctor said, "What can I do?" I said, "Just go and tell them you are a doctor. It will be more than enough. You can just go to one of our disaster-struck families and say, 'I am a doctor'. Even if you only have a sphygmomanometer, you can examine their blood pressure, hold their hand, and check their pulse.

Your presence will be incredibly valuable to us, as it will provide them with the psychological support they need. On my own behalf, I express my heartfelt gratitude. Our doctors' presence is extremely important to all of us. Regarding the volunteering system... Please ask your questions today instead of asking me that day. Ask the question, "What can I do if a disaster strikes today?" and take your position accordingly. If you assume that position now, when a disaster strikes, you will be in the right location. That is why we have already established a partnership with our non-governmental organizations. KADEM convenes for women; our doctors come together regarding medical professionals; vulnerable groups, especially miners, work with us in search and rescue operations; and Mr Vahe as a TV presenter. What should be done and said, particularly given the power of the media? Every single one of these issues could actually be discussed today, and on the day of the disaster, everyone will just go to their place of duty. He or she will only perform his or her duty at the place of duty. I think it is of great importance in this regard. We had around 600,000 applicants registered in the volunteering system before February, but as of now, we have 1,393,370 volunteer applications. This is a significant number, and we are promptly offering our volunteers online training. If they have not yet completed training, we want our volunteers to do so without delay. In the meantime, we have foreign guests and international guests who have come to our country from abroad. I would like to welcome them once again. When I see them, I want to express it to them personally. I began my career in search and rescue as the Head of the Response Department. The miners and the rescue teams are familiar faces to us. We typically do not directly intervene in mine accidents. We only check the general organisation from the outside, but we want our rescue teams to go inside the mine, and the miners are special to us. Those who say, "I am engaged in search and rescue operations," cannot enter the mine directly. They have their own special teams there. Those rescue teams, as well as each of our search and rescue teams in the mines, responded to the rubble on the ground with the same promptness that they do in the mines; in fact, they became a source of our country. In other words, your swift movements and immediate entry have caused our friends to be very proud of you. It was a source of pride for our country. How did you collaborate with our teams, and what did you observe and experience on the ground? We would like to hear from you. Ertan Akar from Turkish Hard Coal Enterprises. Please introduce yourself and let us hear from you. The floor is yours.

Ertan Akar



I want to begin by apologizing; this is my first time attending such a meeting.

Abdülkadir Tezcan:

Then we're pleased, and we're especially happy that it's the first time.

Ertan Akar:

I mean, this is my first time speaking at such a meeting. I am Ertan Akar from Zonguldak Turkish Hard Coal Enterprises. I am here on behalf of the 7,100 miners in Zonguldak. I came to speak on their behalf. First of all, I wish Allah's mercy upon all the earthquake victims who lost their lives during the earthquake. I extend my condolences to their loved ones. It was extremely difficult to be there, in the earthquake region. We were not spending as much time outside with people one-on-one. Don't get me wrong, when I say "outside," I mean we were completely involved in the rescue operation and work under the rubble. The rescue team conducts underground searches and rescues. As the rescue team, we provided our equipment in coordination with a

12-person team and departed for the earthquake zone. After approximately 12 hours, we arrived in Hatay's Kırkhan district. Indeed, the teams were coordinating behind us in the meantime. We were not aware how severe the disaster was. I mean, we saw nothing on social media, either. We saw them say, "There are 3-5 wounded," and "There is this and that," and we got in the car, but the weather was extremely bad on the way. On the first day, the Niğde highway was roughly 50% icy. I have never seen such a severe traffic jam or a major car accident. It was extremely difficult for us even to get there, and we went there on the first day. We arrived after approximately 12 hours. We also have footage from the scene, which friends can share. This is my 12-person team. We went together. This is not the first day; for example, this video shows Ibrahim and his wife, a husband and wife, whom you rescued after 80 hours. Can we stop it right there? Now I would like to tell the story of this. There were friends who came from Istanbul. The municipality's volunteer Search and Rescue Association (AKUT) teams were working on the building's top floor. The upper part of the building was removed with an excavator, but the lower floor remains standing. We were coming from another wreck there. We were just passing by. Our team leader said, "Let's take a look here; I cannot forgive myself if I don't check." He said, "The others are not as experienced as us, let's take a look." We said, "Okay, let's check." We are exhausted, by the way. We were very tired. Anyway, the excavator was working on it. The team leader said, "Stop the excavator. Even if it's a dead body, we are going to take it out of here; we will respect it." We always respect people, whether they are alive or dead. In other words, they said, "Even if they are dead, let's take them without dismembering them, and deliver them to their families that way." We said, "Okay." Thanks to them, they accepted what we said because they believed we had more experience than them. Anyway, we walked around the building and commented, "This is the living room, we must not enter from this side. If we can bring equipment from the kitchen, we can enter from this location as soon as possible." Of course, the people there tell us, "They were not here, they were in the bedroom over there." And we said, "We will take their bodies." I mean, our aim here was to find their bodies after 80 hours intact. Can we play the video from there? A voice comes from there, "Sir." After 80 hours, we rescued Ibrahim out of the rubble alive, and then we rescued his wife. I mean, we have always worked in places like this. The fact is we are used to these kinds of situations. We are used to working in narrow spaces, literally underground. For us, the weight of the debris is not excessive. We also work under the sea. We work 560 metres underground and beneath the sea. It is really hard work. This is why we are fearless. We descend 560 metres underground in a cage in two minutes. Indeed, it is hard; not everyone can dare to get into that cage. That is where we overcome our initial fear, so we never had any difficulties here. Therefore, the only challenge we faced here was emotional. Miners are truly sentimental. I mean, these are beautiful images here. I do not have much to tell about them, but we also had some upsetting images. Those were the ones that wore us down and caused us the most pain.

The children made me the happiest. On the first day, they handed over a building to us, and we were walking around with our teammates, surrounded by the relatives of those lived there. There were actually 12 of us, but 6 were in charge of another building. And we were standing there in a group of six. Again, as a group, we are not all working in the same place. Anyway, our friends approached us. I am talking about the first day, by the way, and it was cold. A father came and said, 'Brother, I have my children and my wife inside. Please help me, please. Let me help you too.'" I said, "Son, there is no help you can give us. You just keep calm and wait." The three-decker building had literally been reduced in size to just 40 centimetres, resembling a staircase. I mean, the structure had transformed into a staircase that was folded in three. I said, "Son, this is the balcony." He replied, "Brother, this is the living room; the children were sleeping in the living room next to the heater. They may be there." Anyway, I tried to get in through a 40-centimetre opening. I went inside, proceeded 2 to 3 metres, and saw that the couches were empty. The upper beam and the bottom had overlapped, leaving me no way to enter the hallway. The building had already turned into a staircase. Even at that point, I was inside the building but did not know where to go. I told my teammates, "You guys keep working here. I moved to the building's rear. I also took the father with me and told him, "Come with me." Then we went to the back. It must have been 04:30 a.m. at that moment, if I am not wrong. I said, "Draw the plan of the house on the car here for me." "Brother, how should I draw on the car?" he said. It was already damp on top of the car. You know, glass can produce steam, and children often draw hearts, and so on. Anyway, "Look, draw me a plan of the house here," I said. He said, "Brother, this is the balcony, this is the living room, that is the hallway, and that is the kitchen over there." "If they managed to escape," I said to myself, "they must have escaped from the hallway at best; they had no other choice." Now, can we pause the video, Alperen? Anyway, I thought they would run into the hallway. The building's back entrance had also collapsed, leaving a two-metre opening. There was some space, similar to the one between here and this screen. "Oh my God, how on earth am I going to get here?" I told myself. Iron rods had come out of the wall's side, and since the wall had collapsed, the rods remained there. I crossed the other side, holding on to them. Of course, I was not alone; another teammate was with me. I went inside; there were two doors, and it was so agonising that, having gone there for the first time, I said, "Oh God, please do not let me have them dead." He said there were two children. One is three, the other is five. So I said, "God, do not let me have them dead. Let me find them alive." There were two doors next to each other. They were like entrance doors. Of course, we had no one with us and had no idea what the house looked like. That was actually the entrance gate. All I had was a pickaxe. I do not know if you know it, but I had a pickaxe. You should know. There was a guy called Adem with me. I said, "Brother, can I break down this door with this pickaxe, the outer door?" He said, "We can." I said, "All right." I hit it with the pickaxe. Anyway, may we, as Türkiye, never have to say

this phrase again, Allah willing. We shouted, "Can anybody hear me?" Her husband had also told me the woman's name.

He had said, "Brother, my wife's name is Tuğçe. If you call her "Tuğçe", she will respond to you," and so forth. Then we called, "Can anyone hear me?" "Can anyone hear me?" we repeated. She said, "Brother, I am here." After we broke down the door, she said, "Brother, I'm here." I said, "Girl, can you hear me? Are your children okay?" "I have got them all with me," she replied. I asked, "Where are you?" She said, "Under the washing machine, brother." I shattered the door to see the floor down in the basement. There was no floor below; the entire bottom plate had completely fallen into the basement, together with the upper floor. I mean, you enter in the second floor but you are actually in the third one. That was how the entrance was, with the other side at the bottom. Anyway, I went in. I stared upside down and saw debris over there. I swear to Allah, I removed such an amount of debris that I cannot handle it right now. I mean it; I really cannot. I somehow created an opening by talking to her. I was even asking questions to her, like, "Tuğçe, how much do you weigh? When did you get married? You and Veli, where did you meet each other?" I tried to motivate her through conversation. We created an aperture there, 20 centimetres in diameter. When I say we opened an aperture, I mean that Allah allowed us to do that. That's the truth of the matter. I found that hole there; the washing machine was on my left side, the beam of the third floor was above me, the old ruins were on the side, and below was the base plate. We turned it in to a 20-centimeter hole. Then Tuğçe said to me, "Brother, we are very thirsty. Could you give us some water?" As miners, we also receive first aid training. "Look, I will give you water, but you just take a sip each; you just wet your mouths," I said. Otherwise, it can lead to organ failure. The professor knows better than I do; giving water to people who have experienced an earthquake can be dangerous due to muscle contusions. Anyway, they each took a sip of water. Can we start the video over, Alperen? Thereafter, I next said, "Girl, give me one of the children first."

Abdülkadir Tezcan:

By the way, the footage could give you the impression that everything was ready; the team seems to have gone inside, yet the aftershocks were still happening. I mean, there were hundreds of aftershocks. At any time, that broken structure might have fallen on our colleagues. In other words, the colleagues on the job at the time were all at risk. Yes, I mean, they might have been trapped in that wreckage because they had no support. Notice that they were solely focused on the target; their goal was to get the victims out of there without support.

Ertan Akar:

First, I took out Eylül. I was upside down there. After that, I took out the second child, Ecem. Then I took out the mom. We had a hard time rescuing the mom, by the way. She initially protruded

her head through that hole and said, "Brother, I cannot fit in here." I had talked to her and also learned that she weighed 68 kilos. I said, "Tuğçe, you will not fit in." Removing a bit more of what was on the side, I enlarged the hole. Then I said to Tuğçe, "Put one of your arms up in a sideways position. I will draw you higher while one of them stays under you for support." I had pulled her halfway when she said, "Brother, I cannot fit in here." I said, "Tuğçe, I'm sorry." You may be sure I had no fear that there would be an aftershock, I swear, and that we would be harmed. My colleagues were not afraid either. Our sole concern was that we might not be able to extract them out of there. Anyway, I pulled Tuğçe up a little further. Then I told her, "This is how you will move on. You have no other option. There is no way out of there; you will move." She said, "I do not fit, brother." I said, "Girl, come here." I next said, "Now, come on, take out your other arm under you." I am concluding my remarks. I mean, two of us tugged and pulled her. We are still in touch with Tuğçe, by the way. She contacted us. No one we have released has checked about us, and we do not expect them to; nonetheless, as a token of loyalty, she found us, and we visited her. She currently resides in Ankara. We paid her a visit, and she reciprocated. I have an adoptive daughter and two grandchildren, and I communicate with them regularly. Thank you.

Abdülkadir Tezcan:

Mashallah, Mr Ertan, thank you so much. I apologise for interrupting. If you recall, Mr Ertan mentioned that this was his first speech when he began speaking. If you ask him, he will respond, "I am a miner," but he also has training in psychology, medicine, architecture (he has drawings made), civil engineering, business administration, and management. The fact that a search and rescue worker possesses each of these qualities is actually a very good example. When I work with my AFAD colleagues, I say, "Being an employee of AFAD means being well-versed in all disciplines and various branches of science, possessing some knowledge, and being willing to learn new things." As he mentioned before, sketching the house and having it drawn is useful for us. How and where do we go in, and which method do we use? We pick up a lot of information. It was therefore extremely valuable. I am able to count not just these professions but many more.

Ertan Akar:

I currently work as a mining supervisor, by the way.

Abdülkadir Tezcan:

You see, I could go on and on about this. I would like to thank all search and rescue teams, civil society organisations, international participants, and AFAD employees. Yes, since they all genuinely risked their lives to do search and rescue operations there. They took such action in order to save a life. I would like to thank each and every one of them. Thank you very much.

Ertan Akar:

I also would like to thank everyone.

Abdülkadir Tezcan:

Yes, it looks like Mr Vahe is the final speaker at this point. Indeed, we established a team for the search and rescue of animals in İzmir. Also, Ms Sibel, a volunteer who is now attending the event at the Presidency, is leading the team. She will be the final speaker, if she makes it. It was during the disaster that I met Mr Vahe. He is very sensitive. Put differently, he and his family members will lend a hand if they hear even the smallest mention of someone in need... We came across through a mutual friend that “you are also an official at AFAD.” He is a volunteer in these matters. Of course, he is an established name who has long been featured on television and in the media. I would like to thank them for their time. Since we are now talking about disaster communication, which topics have we yet to cover, or which ones, from the perspective of a TV personality, would you like to add? You have been renovating people’s houses for years, but we have also witnessed their demolition. You have been in that area, you have been there. We would like to hear your opinions as well. The floor is yours.

Vahe Kılıçarslan



Hello everyone, undoubtedly, we underwent a really challenging process and we still do. I haven't truly recovered from that trauma; I still cry a lot. I was in the earthquake region for sixteen days. I made one more visit. Next week—not even next week—I'll be returning to the area on Thursday morning. Could you please stand up, Remzi Güngör, before I speak? Indeed, the most influential family in Hatay, the Remzi Güngör family, lost 120 members. He lost every family member. He is the Ottoman Hotel's owner as well. The person who inspired me to love Hatay currently lives in Ankara. He experienced the earthquakes himself. They went through a very difficult process. I call it where words fail. We have been renovating houses for the past 25 years. We have repaired hundreds of houses in the earthquake zone and had dozens of friends, but you can only comprehend when it happens to you. I spent some truly unbelievable days there. I still can't get over it, and I relive it every time I visit; we live it here as well. Here's what I want to say. My brother just told me that there was a great effort. Thus, in our eyes, my brother, his colleagues, and his friends are all heroes. People who don't know themselves are now criticising, saying, "If it were like this or like that." It is unknown what is going on there. The earthquakes struck 11 cities eight hours apart, with magnitudes of 7.7 and 7.6, respectively. Following that, another earthquake with a magnitude of 6.4 struck Defne, the Hatay epicentre. The earthquake in Malatya, with a magnitude of 5.7, followed the earthquake in Samandağ, with a magnitude of 5.8. The biggest earthquake to ever strike the world is this one. I'm speaking openly; people are making stuff up. There is no such world. This earthquake has affected 11 cities, 60 districts, and 14 million people. As part of the television programme "Vahe ile Evdeki Mutluluk Programı", we transferred as many earthquake victims as possible to other places. We are renovating the houses where they are currently staying. In addition to this, the President of AFAD and the Director General of Disaster Response, Mr Abdülkadir, really made a tremendous effort. They managed to reach everywhere, and I witnessed it. They did everything they could because we are a charity programme, and many people contacted me. We had enormous support from people in the region who contacted the President and reached out to me. AFAD worked really hard. No one can say anything against AFAD; I will not allow it. They made an incredible effort. Could things have been better? That is why we are here today. Why this forum? Thank you for that. We live in an earthquake zone, so this is an extremely important forum. Türkiye's geographical structure is a 30-, 35-, or even 50-year problem. Unfortunately, we have 10- and 15-story buildings. The regulation has already been reduced to four stories from now on throughout Türkiye. Hopefully, we will not experience these disasters. First and foremost, we must prevent the construction of these high-rise buildings. We shouldn't live in these buildings for extended periods of time or demand those buildings. First of all, this should be our responsibility as citizens; because of the issue of supply and demand, contractors, of course, allow 10- and 15-story buildings, and the regulations permit

it, and houses are built. Then we regret. These buildings should not be permitted. There are currently 1 million 400 thousand AFAD members. This is quite essential; as previously stated, it is nearly 1 million, 400 thousand members. They are now alleging that "AFAD was unable to get there". The weather already made it difficult to reach the region on the first day. After all, Remzi, with whom I have been talking the whole day, now tells me that 66 thousand buildings in Hatay alone have sustained heavy damage. So they have to be demolished. Can you envision the extent of the earthquake's damage? I believe the number is 600,000. Am I correct, Mr. President? 600,000 are currently being demolished, or half of them have already been demolished. We are not talking about 600,000 houses; we are talking about buildings. Yes, it is a shocking number. Look, friends, 600 thousand...How many people are there when ten people work in each building? Six million people?

Abdülkadir Tezcan:

Let me tell you the exact number: 2 thousand 600 buildings were demolished in that earthquake, and the figure you provided represents the first heavy damage. Work is underway in 2 thousand 600 buildings. If only ten people work, that is 26 thousand people.

Vahe Kılıçarslan:

How many buildings were demolished in the earthquake with a magnitude of 7.6, more or less in eight or nine hours?

Abdülkadir Tezcan:

In that process, that was it. After that, they were heavily damaged. Heavy damage does not imply demolition but rather that the building is inaccessible or uninhabitable.

Vahe Kılıçarslan:

In 11 cities?

Abdülkadir Tezcan:

There are 2 thousand 600 demolished buildings.

Vahe Kılıçarslan:

Okay, if one person works, there are 2 thousand 600 people, and if ten people work, there are 26 thousand people, correct?

Abdülkadir Tezcan:

Yes, I'll simply give you an example, and you can figure out how many people need to work there. A building collapsed in Kartal. Remember Kartal, İstanbul? One thousand 100 people worked. Think about it. Eight buildings collapsed in Elazığ. 4 thousand 400 people worked. In Izmir, 13 buildings were reduced to rubble. 11 thousand 200 people worked.

Vahe Kılıçarslan:

In other words, if 100 people work in 2,660 structures, it equals around 266,000 people. So, 1 million 400 thousand members are of utmost importance right now. Why? If 1 million 400 thousand volunteer members are trained, we will be more powerful in the next earthquake. In other words, we have 1 million 400 thousand members, yet we have never had such a figure until today. And it was impossible to have. Since this earthquake affected 11 provinces, I consider it the greatest earthquake in the world, not the disaster of the century, but the most significant and severe earthquake in the world, possibly in the previous millennium. Because it originated at a depth of 7 km. The Gölcük earthquake occurred even further down. This one occurred at a depth of 7 kilometres nine hours or eight hours after each other. The first earthquake struck at 4:17 am, the second one at around 2:00 pm and in the same region at 1:45 pm. This is terrible; here is Remzi Güngör, who lived through the earthquake. They know very well. Even when we experienced the magnitude of 6.4 in Defne, it was unbelievable—a terrible tremor. I mean, that was a dreadful experience at magnitude 6.4; imagine magnitude 7. The AFAD did a really good job. People talk and criticise on social media, but I don't agree. The earthquake was a really major one. What needs to be done now? First of all, volunteers need to be trained thoroughly. AFAD needs to train them very well for the upcoming earthquakes and deploy them in the field. By the way, we need to enlist construction workers as volunteer members of AFAD. Because an average person who goes to the affected area can only provide health care if he or she is a doctor. We, famous people, can coordinate there, but here are essential people, like my brother, who know what they're doing. Because you need a construction machine to remove a really heavy block, and you must use it. I mean, I don't believe it's appropriate for that many people to go there since traffic becomes congested. The traffic was heavy for the first two or three days. In Iskenderun, no one could drive more than 10 kilometres. The roads were damaged anyway. Bridges and roads were in terrible condition. People need to be considerate; those who are handy and know their jobs should go to earthquake and disaster areas. Everyone goes there: one goes there for a photo shoot, one goes there to help, and one goes there for something different. In other words, construction workers who know the job and are important should become members of AFAD, get training there, and combine this with their profession. Now, if my brother didn't know mining, if he didn't work underground, how would he

do it? We have just watched the footage; he is doing incredible work. In other words, he digs a 40-centimeter hole like digging a well with a needle, and aftershocks occur in the meantime. Of course, everyone is trying to survive at that moment because it's like a matter of life and death. I will use Remzi again as an example. Right after the earthquake, he tried to save his relatives in his own way. He always speaks about his experiences. What exactly do I want as someone who appears on TV? We live in an earthquake zone, and there are a lot of rumours about metropolises. Then, there should be one hour of earthquake training on television every day. I think experts in this field can provide training there. At least one hour every day for people. After the earthquake in Gölcük on August 17, 1990, these trainings were held. Then, suddenly, they stopped. And then it was completely forgotten. Then, tower houses began to be constructed; tower residences were built. I would like to point out that 97%, 98% of the houses that were destroyed were built before 2000, which is what I witnessed. There are new houses in Maraş, old Maraş and Antakya, but there are only a few. It appears that the earthquake measures have actually worked. I don't know, Mr Tezcan, are the statistics accurate?

Abdülkadir Tezcan:

There is no clear information on this yet. These kinds of statistics are accurate. Especially after the earthquake building regulations were amended after 2000, and buildings were made more resilient and durable, especially according to the ratio of acceleration values of that region and disaster potential. Still, I don't know if the figures correspond exactly to this. However, it is highly likely that this rate has been achieved.

Vahe Kılıçarslan:

As much as possible, televisions should provide earthquake training to our people. Because we need to be conscious in case of an earthquake. For example, I was on duty after the earthquake in Gölcük; I was also at the site of the rubble. At that time, there were plasterboards, for example. We have a friend named Şeref; I had him change it to stropier material. Şeref founded a factory and began to manufacture those plasterboards out of Styrofoam. Why did I do that? Because I saw in the earthquake in Gölcük that the neighbourhoods of Yüzbaşılar and Kurtuluş are next to each other in Gölcük, as those who go to Gölcük know. The reason most of the people died was either the beam under the beam coming down or it was plasterboard. I mean, those old plasterboards would be very large and empty, and the centre would be very thick. It fell on people's heads and children's heads. I briefly describe my task as follows: I found my friend Şeref, who was working with styrofoam. They began using lightweight styrofoam as stropiers, and now there is no more plasterboard in houses. Thanks to our efforts, those stropiers were used after the earthquake in 1999. So, there are lightweight materials

called styrofoam. In fact, in houses, contractors can use these; they can use lighter materials. Those who make substructures in buffer zones can use it instead of Ytong and bricks. Larger materials can mitigate this in case of an earthquake. At the very least, they will help to reduce destruction. My time is up. Thank you very much.

Abdülkadir Tezcan:

Thank you for your participation, and a round of applause for Mr Vahe. I think it was a very beneficial session. We also found out that there are different disciplines in the field. Mr Vahe, indeed, construction workers are invaluable to us, especially when it comes to search and rescue; nevertheless, Türkiye's Disaster Response Plan only includes search and rescue efforts and rescue from rubble. Then we need a paramedic. We need a National Medical Rescue Team (UMKE) to take the disaster victim to the hospital. We need a security and traffic team to clear the way for them, a psychosocial team, and a good driver. We need people who know the local area. The bottom line is that we need each and every one of our 1 million 400 thousand volunteers, and we need more of them in their own fields. It was of great importance for us to raise awareness of disaster volunteerism, particularly through online training. As Mr. Vahe said before, raising people who are aware of disasters is invaluable for us. If we can raise our level of awareness, if we can enhance our perspective on disasters... He gave a very simple example: the suspended ceiling was heavy before, but when he changed it to styrofoam, it became very simple, that is, lightweight, and people were saved from head injuries and various kinds of injuries. So, yes, we need many transformations like these. The important point is to take lessons from these disasters. We grieve for our losses, but what can we do to prevent further losses? It is very valuable for us to learn the lessons of this. Therefore, we would like to thank the Presidency's Directorate of Communications for organising this programme, as well as Mr. Gökhan and his team for being with us until the end. I would like to thank each and every one of the participants. By the way, Ms Sibel is on her way. She just called and is trying to catch up, but of course, I don't want to take your time. Inshallah, we will host Ms Sibel again tomorrow or in another programme. There, we will also hear from her because we really want to cover all areas of disaster. We value all lives, whether they are human or animal. Therefore, let us thank Ms. Sibel here. She could not make it, but she is working on animal search and rescue. I would like to extend my gratitude to all our participants, including those from international countries. Thank you very much. I wish you to have disaster-free days.



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Juan Rama, Head of Communications, USAR Light Team, Spain

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P A N E L

05



Moderator:

Hakki Emre Yunt, Ambassador

Panelists:

Kazuhiro Suzuki, Ambassador of Japan

Viktor Matis, Ambassador of Hungary

Christodoulos Lazaris, Ambassador of Greece

Saeed Thani Hareb Al Dhaheeri, Ambassador of the
United Arab Emirates



We are with you Türkiye: International Solidarity in Disasters

Stratcom Panel - 5 : Seninleyiz Türkiye: Afetlerde Uluslararası Dayanışma

Stratcom Panel - 5 : International Solidarity and Disaster Response :
"We Stand with Türkiye"

Moderatör
Moderator



Halda Emre Yunt

Panelistler
Panelists



Kazuhiko Suzuki



Viktor Matiš



Christodoulos
Lazaris



Saeed Thani Hariri
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Hakkı Emre Yunt



Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you very much for being here today. Approximately 3 months ago, we woke up with very bad news. And 11 cities were very badly affected in Türkiye. From this highly strong earthquake, we faced a very big disaster, maybe unseen before in the world. But we knew that we had friends in the international community, and we just immediately called them for help. We received a very big response from our friends all over the world in a very short period. Approximately 120 countries helped Türkiye in one way or another. 91 countries sent search and rescue teams in a very short time. We accommodated about 12,400 search and rescue team members and health professionals from all over the world, and in maybe two or three days, everybody arrived in Türkiye. We faced difficulties in the beginning because, the first day especially, we had very bad weather in the area. But Türkiye is a strong country, and with the help of our friends, some of whom are represented here. We managed to overcome this big disaster in a very short time. Of course, it will still take time for us to recover fully, but we are on the right track, so we

gathered here in this panel thanks to a very few of our friends who helped us. When we talk about it, I mean inviting certain ambassadors who helped us in the beginning very quickly. On the first day, we couldn't find them, and we couldn't make a selection because everybody responded in a very short time. But we talked about some very good friends. Of course, they are already being introduced to you, but let me introduce them again and thank them one by one. Ambassador Mr. Kazuhiro Suzuki, Ambassador of Japan. Ambassador Mr. Viktor Matis, Ambassador of Hungary. Ambassador Christodoulos Lazaris, Ambassador of Greece. Ambassador Mr. Saeed Thani Hareb Al Dhaheri, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates. If I start talking about what kind of help is provided by all these friends, ambassadors, and countries sent to us, we cannot finish them in one hour; it will take us a day. So, I really thank them one by one for their good friendship and very humanitarian response in a very short time. But I just wanted to briefly inform you about what we have done in the Forum ministry, and then I will leave the floor to our guests. You know the area affected was about 100,000 square kilometres, and it affected 13 million people. Of course, Türkiye was known as the most generous country before because it was one of the three countries delivering the biggest amount of development aid for its national income in the world. But this time, we really needed help because the disaster was enormous. So, the solidarity demonstrated after the earthquake is extraordinary and sincere, ranging from the poorest to the richest countries. There are countless emotional examples, such as Afghan brothers and sisters sending their jewellery items and a Turkmen woman who wanted to donate her only asset, cattle. Children were selling tea in the streets of Sarajevo for donations. A kid was collecting returnable bottles, which was a bicycle in the northern Netherlands. A woman from Rohingya was donating her savings for dark days. Muslim-Christian women were wearing gloves and scarves for the earthquake-affected people. It was a highly emotional process, and we would like to learn from, of course, our distinguished guests today about their emotions, experiences, and observations. Adjust some brief statistics for your information. More than 70 million U.S. dollars have been collected as donations by our Türkiye missions abroad. The US pledged more than 303 million U.S. dollars, and non-governmental organizations pledged more than 206 million U.S. dollars. As I told you, around two 12,400 search - rescue teams and also some health progressions came to our rescue. There were 34 field health hospitals, and two of them are still active in the United Arab Emirates and Germany. 470,000 tents and 2000 tents from the United Arab Emirates, and 50,000 tents donated by Pakistan. And there are about 18 or around 9000 container houses donated, about two and a half million blankets, 40,000 electrical power units and more than 170,000 heaters, just briefly because the aid is still coming in and enormous. So, I just wanted to give the floor to our guests for their brief opening remarks. Then, we can have some issues, and I could have some questions for them to talk about Ambassador Suzuki. The floor is yours.

Kazuhiro Suzuki



Thank you very much for this opportunity to express my views about this earthquake. First of all, I would like to extend my sincere condolences. Those people in the disaster region lost their loved ones, and also Türkiye as a country that has faced this unprecedented challenge in the Republic's history. Well, I would probably like to first say how I felt about this earthquake. Initially, when I heard about this event, it was a personal event. Coincidentally, as a government of Japan, on February 6th, when the earthquake hit, we sent our field submission to the Hatay region for the purpose of checking out cross-border operations. So, from our embassy, seven people and all the staff, as well as from the acting Japanese Ambassador to Syria and his assistant, nine people stayed at the museum hotels in Hatay. And then, at 04:17, this earthquake hit. So, there were the victims of this earthquake at 5:00 in the morning. I just received a phone call from there, and I've been told that one Turkish personnel from our embassy was injured in his leg. One of our cars, the SUV, crashed completely under the debris, but all the rest were quite safe. So, from the beginning of this earthquake, I really had a very personal,

emotional experience. And then I probably would throughout the little bit longer when asked further questions, but from the beginning that I saw this is a really huge earthquake, I've been reported by the people there, the victims, the Japanese Embassy people there told me that it's a huge earthquake and unprecedented event even the Japanese people have never seen it something like this. So, from the beginning, we've been really mobilised, and they have been having good contact with the Japanese government. Maybe I will dwell on that later. Thank you very much for your kind introduction.

Hakkı Emre Yunt:

Thank you, Ambassador. Ambassador Mattis, please.

Viktor Matis



Thank you. I would also like to thank the Directorate of Communication for being invited to this very important and meaningful programme. I want to tell you that on Monday, I gave a presentation in Istanbul for the Istanbul Security Conference on Disaster Diplomacy. I was criticized for talking about disaster diplomacy, and I explained that I believe that there are two

parts of disaster diplomacy. Hungary is very clear in one part of that. That is, you have good relations, and when disaster strikes, you show solidarity and support, because this earthquake affected a bigger area in Türkiye than the area of Hungary itself. Our country is 97,000 square kilometres, which is around 115,000 square kilometres. The population of Hungary is just under 10 million, and more than 10 million people are affected in Türkiye. So, this is a little bit difficult to imagine because Hungary knows nothing about earthquakes. The biggest earthquake in my life in Hungary was in 1986. And it was 3.6. So, we absolutely have no idea about what an earthquake is, but I have to tell you that our special search and rescue teams are extremely good. They are very, very successful. Some of them are well known in Türkiye as well. I witnessed that two of the more senior, I don't want to say old, but the more senior, the more experienced search and rescue guys were recognized in Hatay. They were in 1999 in Kocaeli and in 1998 in Adana. So, there were Turkish search and rescue personnel, and somebody came to one of our guys and said, "I know you" and the Hungarian said, "Oh no, no", he was afraid. "You don't know me. I'm from Hungary, and I have never been to Hatay." He said, "No, I know you, I know you from Kocaeli. You were there, and you saved the four-year-old child." Then the guy said "yes" and the same Hungarian search and rescue person saved them after 120 hours of five years old child as well. So, these are fantastic stories, very strong stories. With the ambassadors we talked about that we have just inaugurated the statue for a search and rescue dog in Kocaeli who saved this child in 1999. This is a very important story because it directly connects the Turkish and the Hungarian people through a dog. It's not state relations. I'm responsible mostly for state relations, but this is directly between the people. The people of Kocaeli knew this story. It was between 1999 and 2000. Very well known. And now there are new stories, a lot of stories that give us hope. And I intentionally used the word "hope", because yesterday, a Hungarian search and rescue dog called "Hope" was decorated by the President of the Republic of Türkiye. A search and rescue dog called "Hope" was decorated, and this is again such a touching story. This is something extremely strong. I took a lot of time at the beginning, but maybe two more sentences. So, I woke up at 5:30 that morning because my elder child had kicked me in the kidneys and kicked me out of bed practically. And this was the moment when I saw the news that something big happened. Of course, I saw a number of how strong that earthquake was, and I just understood it was strong, but I did not know how devastating it was. I had the chance to talk with the Deputy Director General of the Hungarian AFAD because he was in Ankara in December at an Organization of Turkic States meeting about disaster management. So, this was a very important contact, and we could speed up the decision-making that the Hungarian state and NGO's search and rescue teams could come. So, even though we are a small country with lim-

ited economic possibilities, we have good experience in search and rescue operations, and it was interesting to see. It made me very proud of how the Hungarian state and the NGOs have reacted to this question. Maybe we can talk about that later as well.

Hakkı Emre Yunt:

Thank you, Ambassador, Ambassador Lazaris.

Christodoulos Lazaris



Thank you, Ambassador, for the invitation to this important meeting. I would like to reiterate our sincerest condolences to the victims of this horrible event. I understand this is perhaps the worst earthquake ever to strike anybody anywhere in the world, and to their families and loved ones who have been left behind. We really feel for them. What to say about us? First of all, our response was defined by two criteria first. We are part of this same geographical area; therefore, we also are among the earthquake's favourites. We are getting struck regularly, although, thank God,

not on such a scale. But we have experienced quite a large number of seismic events, even in very recent years. The second thing is that exactly we are next door. To respond, we followed the protocols. So, what we know and what we applied was that, at first, we had to react fast to get there immediately with perhaps fewer material means. But get there first and foremost. Second, being next door, it was much easier for us to follow up in other ways, including through the sending of relief materials, especially perishables such as drugs. So, we said, OK, we go there, start digging from day one and everything else will follow. It worked well when our first team arrived on the spot about 10 hours from the moment the first earthquake struck. Actually, we learned about it from Athens because it is understandable that all the seismic equipment in our labs went wild from the moment the escalation struck, as it had struck in Greece. There was a huge seismic event that was activated. So, people went there in about 10 hours. Actually, when they arrived, the infrastructure was still being set up because the place was totally devastated. The first reports we got were that it has nothing to do with what we have so far experienced. So, we sent the first team on the first day, and on the third day, there was a second team, and by that time also, volunteer teams were getting activated and coming in. As we saw that the need, especially in medicine, was very high, we set up an air bridge. On the 8th, 9th and 10th of February, a number of aeroplanes were deployed to unload medicines. Our Minister accompanied the first consignment for the Climate Crisis and Civil Protection, Mr. Stylianides. 36 hours later, 4 minutes later, he had a meeting with his counterpart, Mr. Çavuşoğlu. We had about 3 to 4 truck convoys crossing the border on the average river. We also had ships delivering voluminous materials and later at the Iskenderun. So, it was a big effort on our part. The teams sent by the Greek state, by the Ministry of Relief from Natural Disasters, were about 50 persons, all specialized. Our teams are specialized in the stations on the ground. People were going into holes in the ground and trying to reach people by hand where they went, where the machines could not enter. So, they were quite successful. They got the first five people. I'm afraid this is common to all the rescue teams, both Turkish and foreign. We were right here, and our volunteer teams saved many people. In total, we had a huge number of wells, mainly medical equipment, medical drugs, and second-stage tents and blankets, among others. All the material either came out of our emergency warehouses, public property, or was donated by Greek citizens. At some point, I was talking to my friend, my counter partner Çağatay Erciyes, and he said, "I went to the Pero Stadium, which is a huge area. I found it filled to the brim with packages and boxes", and frankly, I don't know how we're going to manage these kinds of quantities. We are quite satisfied with the hard work on our side. Our protocols worked well, and we believe that we brought some real help, although the scale of the disaster dwarfed anything that anybody could throw at it. There was an upswell of support from the Greek people. Was there a Turkish neighbour? People don't realize it very often because

we're used to all kinds of news. But in reality, the people-to-people interface between our two nations is well. Many friendly countries, including our friends would envy it. So, in that respect, we were forcing the already-open door. The main challenge was to canalize what was coming in rather than telling people to please help. It wasn't that people came to help already when the opening their TV's and saw what had happened. Donations started pouring in immediately by noon; people were calling everywhere, asking where I can leave this or that or where I can put money. The embassy was the middle of the whole thing. We had to coordinate the initial arrivals because as I told you, infrastructure was being still being set up because the earthquake had levelled also many of the structures that were necessary for disaster relief. So, we managed to send the buses and trucks full of materials again. Mainly gas and all that. But of course, this was infinitesimal part of the whole effort on our part; the real applause must go to the rescue teams, both state and the volunteer, and also, to our Turkish partners, with whom we had next excellent cooperation. And with whom we shared of the danger and the grief for the losses, but also the satisfaction for the successes we managed to obtain together.

Saeed Thani Hareb Al Dhaheri



Good morning, everybody. I offer my condolences to the families who lost their beloved one and the Turkish Republic. First of all, if you want to hear my experience, I think you are not going to find it in the news. So, in my experience, I was there that day in the United Arab Emirates because we had a gathering of the ambassadors—all ambassadors. So, we read the news and then after that, I already contacted the Ambassador of Türkiye and there in Abu Dhabi, we opened an operation room with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I joined those operation rooms. We had instructions from the President that in 12 hours, the rescue team has to reach Türkiye. So, all the rescue teams were prepared and on the same night of the earthquake, the first three planes arrived with the rescue teams. This is one thing; the other thing is that the lives of people are very precious and very important to save. Instructions already came as quickly as possible in the first hours. The second thing is that we provided moral support. Our president called the Excellency Mr. President, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs called the Minister of Foreign Affairs, supporting and giving this solidarity to Türkiye and this response. At that time, I felt I had to cut my program anyway, so I had to cut the program anyway. I came back to Türkiye and I visited the area there. Our minister came in on the sixth day of that earthquake, because the first 3–4 days, you know, were a little bit closed and I've seen it. I think this is the biggest and largest earthquake I have ever seen in my life. Of course we don't have it anyway, but I've seen it on TV. But this one I've seen isn't real. For you, being a human and helping brothers and friends, is a very important and one of the 10 principles we have for the coming 50 years is to help brothers and friends and other countries that need it. And we don't link it to politics, and we don't link it to race; we link it to humanity. Humanity and human. The human soul is very important to us anyway. We respect humanity and we respect people. This is in short and after that, I think all materials scheme as a field hospital, we have two field hospitals here in Türkiye; one is still operational and the other is already handed to the Ministry of Health and also our people. We have now 84 people still here. They spent Ramadan. They spend Eid with Türkiye and with Turkish people. Alhamdulillah, this is how we saw it how we see it and how we stand with our brothers here and Türkiye. The other thing is, I think, as I said before, Inshallah Türkiye will be stronger with the brothers and friends and inshallah Türkiye is coming back and recovering inshallah soon. And this is, in short, my experience regarding this disaster or tragedy. Thank you very much.

Hakkı Emre Yunt:

Thank you, Ambassador. Yes, I cannot make any comparison but since day one I've been the head of the crisis center at the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye and I can just shortly say that the response from United Arab Emirates is remarkable. It's really large and we really

appreciate that. Of course, nobody can be ready for this kind of disasters and we know that Türkiye is an earthquake country. There are certain areas which are very risky. But nobody expected a big Earthquake at this scale. So, it was a real surprise for most of the Turkish people as well, but as I said in the beginning, both domestic resources and external help, we did very well in my personal opinion in responding this disaster. But we should take some lessons or learn from certain issues. Just in case something like this happens again, we should prevent certain obstacles from reoccurring. I want to ask my guests here if there are any specific steps they should take and provide us with advice to better prepare for the next disaster, should it occur again. Therefore, I would like to begin once more with you, Ambassador Suzuki.

Kazuhiro Suzuki:

From my experience, Türkiye is an earthquake-prone country, just as Japan is. We both reside on fault lines, so earthquakes are a constant presence in our lives. Perhaps you are aware that this is the largest earthquake we have experienced in the past 100 years; it's possible that we will experience another one in the next 10 years, 20 years, or 30 years. We experienced a significant earthquake in Hanshin Awaji in 1995, which resulted in the deaths of 6500 people, and another major earthquake in Tohoku, known as the Great East Japan earthquake, in 2011, which claimed the lives of 22,000 people. So, the earthquakes happen. So, we really have to prepare and then improve our systems and mechanisms, which are very, very important things. For example, when we had our first earthquake in Hanshin Awaji, I think all those building standards and etc. were not really earthquake-resilient. So, there's a lot of damage to buildings and etc. that happened and then the Japanese government very seriously realized that it was very important to implement all those standards and rules, which are actually on the paper and then how to implement this very, very important factor. So that was what we did, but again, in 2011, a huge earthquake of magnitude 9 occurred outside of coastal Tohoku in the Pacific Ocean. And this time, I mean that we are prepared for the earthquake. So, there was not much death because of the earthquake. But a tsunami came. A huge tsunami came. A massive tsunami struck, resulting in the deaths of 90% of the 22,000 people we lost. Why? We were not prepared for the tsunami at that time. We didn't expect the earthquake to be so powerful, with a magnitude of 9. We will never expect that to happen. This explains why the tsunami claimed the lives of 22,000 people. We've also implemented a large number of regulations and rules. We asked the people to relocate and move to the other higher ground to build the houses and then we also established a huge, high sea wall so that we could prevent the tsunamis from coming. And then those are the new rules that the Japanese government has implemented and we also created a reconstruction agency. The mechanism to create

those mechanisms is a very important. I think Türkiye and Japan are both earthquake countries, so we should teach each other. One good example that I can give you now is that in order to implement all those rules under etc., we really need to have both countries' experts, academics to have a dialogue together. It is very important to share the experience and how to cope with it. One really good development between our two countries is that in the future we are going to open Türkiye and Japan Science and Technology University in Istanbul. We have already created board members and board of the council. Last month we had formally decided because of this earthquake we were confronted. We included earthquake and the disaster prevention as a one major pillar of this new university. Such a mechanism will contribute for Türkiye's policy making. Thank you.

Thank you, Ambassador. Yes, everybody in Türkiye is aware that Japan is also an earthquake country, but also very well prepared for earthquakes. We know that we should learn from you and I know that you've been very active in your response. There is a new cooperation going on between the relevant agencies. I agree with you on the issue of cooperation. We should make it further. Word becomes very small when this kind of disaster happens. Even from the farther, farthest countries, response and aid is still coming, still arriving. We really appreciate the international communities and coordination in helping us. Ambassador Matis, you may have some advices for us or commendations.

Viktor Matis:

Thank you very much. I think advice is maybe a little bit of a strong word in case of a country that hardly ever has any earthquakes. But what is very important is to be able to respond properly just as Ambassador said. You have to be prepared; you have to make your preparations. What we realized in summer 2021 is that Turkish-Hungarian Disaster Management Agreement is pretty much outdated. So, we started to work on little bit repairing that and, at the end of 2021, we realized it's not enough to just repair it. We have to make it completely new agreement. We worked on that hard, but we did not think that it is urgent. As of yesterday, it is ready for signature, so we are going to make an international agreement between Türkiye and Hungary to how to cooperate on the disaster management. But as we are ready, the professionals know the content. They actually will start the cooperation even earlier, before it becomes a law. This is very important. I have already mentioned that in December there was a meeting at the ministerial level and they were very important initiatives mainly by AFAD. These countries are going to put together a common response center or response mechanism. This is actually very important for the future, not only talking about earthquakes but other disasters. So, you have to be prepared. You have to make your bilateral and multilateral contacts as well. I believe that this is very important. Perhaps another aspect to consider is how we can

share our experiences with the next generation or future decision-makers, explaining what we did, what worked and what didn't, as even we as ambassadors have made mistakes. We could have probably been more effective in certain questions; we could have done things more correctly. Communication is one very important topic. Especially if we are here in this building, we have to mention that as well. How does a representative from a foreign country communicate? You don't say anything or do you say too much? What is the primary message conveyed by your country or its representation to the local community, local decision makers, and most importantly, the local people? We made a concerted effort to maintain active communication during the earthquakes, even though I made some moral mistakes myself. I have published videos where people were taken out of the rubble, you could see their faces. And in normal circumstances this is wrong. And I stopped there for a second and they thought about it, is that a good thing to do? I decided to do it because people at that time needed it, and once again, my key word is hope—hope that their friends or relatives could come out alive. They needed hope. Someone can come out alive after three days, five days, and still one week. But communication is very important. Do you do this in an active way or a little bit more passive? You let the local media to do what they have to do in a country. So actually, this is also a very interesting topic that could be picked up internationally. How do you run that? And I believe we all could learn a lot from it.

Hakki Emre Yunt:

Thank you, Ambassador. Ambassador Lazaris.

Christodoulos Lazaris:

Thank you. As Viktor said, advice is strong word. I'm not a specialist, but one thing that struck me was that there's a common fallacy about which kind of building is more resistant to earthquake. Usually, people think that older buildings are more resistant because modern buildings are made of lighter materials and in the popular mind these are frailer. In fact, our team reported their work in Hatay, and the new construction proved more resilient. The buildings were built during the 60s, 70s, and 80s. The majority of those that fell with catastrophic results may kill the people who were inside. What is the difference between the two? I think that the difference was that from the 90s onwards, new building regulations were introduced. The obvious conclusion that I can offer is that building regulations should incorporate regularly. The lessons learned from such unfortunate events show that we cannot be satisfied with regulations that have been adopted in 2010 and then 2015. Something happens and we wait for the next five years to update the regulation. This is important for sharing information, as previous speakers have already mentioned. I think that this is already done by the scientific

community. During the international conferences, conclusions are presented. The question is whether all these conclusions and all these scientific reports are being incorporated into actual legislation and practice by the relevant agencies. This is what I can contribute. But as I said, it was quite impressive to see the difference between pre-building regulations material and the post regression materials. We can only work safely. Keep up the good work and let's update as often as possible.

Hakkı Emre Yunt:

Thank you, Ambassador, Ambassador Al Dhaheri.

Saeed Thani Hareb Al Dhaheri:

Thank you very much. I think you finished all the ideas, but I have one more idea here. If you go back to the cause of earthquakes, is everywhere in this area. I think if we go back to the cause of earthquake, it sometimes is bad construction and bad engineering. My suggestion is to have a sample from an earthquake city, from the rubble. Each engineer from universities and each contractor can see with their own eyes what bad contracting and some bad engineering did to people. And I think this will continue because you know we are humans. People, we forget after five years, six years. If we think about the next generation, we have to leave a trace back for them to see what happened exactly. Therefore, I believe it could be either an earthquake city or a museum for those studying engineering and contracting. Thank you very much.

Hakkı Emre Yunt:

Thank you, Ambassadors. I think we still have a few minutes. I wanted to thank you. Aid is still coming from your countries and from all over the world. As I mentioned international cooperation is important for disaster response. Almost half of the tents were brought from foreign countries, from abroad. Containers are still coming, and being produced in Türkiye. But almost half of them are coming from outside. The international cooperation and international readiness is very important and I also appreciate your contribution to this campaign called "We Stand with You Türkiye" from your people. Please, send our best regards to your people from Türkiye. But we realized once more that we have a lot of friends in the world, our closest neighbours. Even the farthest countries helped us without considering the cost and the effort. We really appreciate it and thank you very much for being here ambassadors. Before concluding, I just learned that Ambassador Suzuki is going to leave Türkiye soon. We are sorry for that. We wish all the best in his new assignment, I think in Australia. But before leaving Türkiye we want to present him a small token to remind us. Thank you.

S P E E C H

Earthquake in our Subconscious

Korzay Koçak
Mentalism Expert



First and foremost, I wish everyone a swift recovery. With this earthquake, we can see that the damage is not only physical but also in our minds and subconscious. Unfortunately, we have been through this before. But I believe we are more aware of it now. I would like to tell you about the destruction in our subconscious so I may offer you two things. First, how does this devastation affect our subconscious and psychology? Second, what is your equipment in this position, or, in other words, in the current situation? I mean, what can you do, both for those around you and for yourself? We call this "recovery." Sometimes changes occur in our subconscious without our knowledge. We cannot know this, but our actions, emotions, and ideas reveal them. I can say that when we are exposed to specific events, our minds begin to function differently than

we have anticipated. In fact, after this destruction, our minds began to function differently. If you live in İstanbul or any other earthquake-prone area, you begin to feel anxious, even if you do not want to. Unfortunately, these fears will influence your thoughts and behaviours as well. How can we end the anxiety and worry? I want to raise awareness about this. Let me introduce myself. My name is Korzay Koçak. I am both a hypnotist and a lawyer, and I have worked with hypnosis for many years. We have a very interesting mind. We split the notion of the mind into three categories: thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. Unfortunately, we do not have much control over these thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. But in this brief talk, I would like to show you how we may instantly direct our thoughts, emotions, and even our behaviours. I am extremely interested in discussing how our dreams become reality. You must have experienced it; you have a dream, and the effect of that dream lasts for maybe a few hours more after you wake up. Why, for example, does the influence of this dream bring us pain, or why do we feel nervous for no apparent reason after a dream? Because our brain perceives it as real. Our dreams are actually reflections of our subconscious, and a very realistic dream can influence us. Even if you did not personally experience the earthquake on February 6 or in the days that followed, your brain began to generate anxiety as if you had. However, there is a solution to relieve this anxiety. Like trying to calm down or doing breathing exercises. Yes, they are effective, but we must also understand how to direct our thoughts. I will use the earthquake as an example today, but I want you to use it in every situation for the rest of your life. So you can become a calmer person. As previously said, the concept of "mind" is comprised of thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, and these feelings, known as "emotions," influence our thoughts and behaviours. So we can compare emotions to a power plant. This power plant occasionally generates too much electricity, which begins to impact thoughts and behaviours. For example, you may wish to leave İstanbul and not stay there, or you may start looking for and researching whether your home is earthquake-resistant. Well, the opposite of this may also happen, right? I mean, some people may be inclined to ignore these measures due to their anxiety. This is called "ignoring." As anxiety sets in, some people try to avoid it. So, is this a solution? No, not at all. The solution is to recognise anxiety and make good changes in response. I will show you how to temporarily rest your mind. While you are doing that, try to follow my voice as closely as possible. I prefer using a hypnotic discourse. This allows your mind to be more easily steered, and you can be confident that it will be in a positive direction. So, listen to my voice; it will make you feel more at ease. You can be sure of this. If there is a volunteer, I will conduct a brief exercise with you. I mean, has anyone experienced hypnosis before? Any hypnosis experience? You will go through a brief hypnosis here. Please, welcome. You have no experience. All right. You will go through a brief hypnosis here, is that okay? Do not worry, do not be nervous; I only want to soothe your mind. By the way, I would like to express my gratitude to all who participated in the search and rescue activities, including you. You can do this exercise

very quickly, both to feel better in the future and to support the person you are assisting during search and rescue. I hope it makes you feel good. First and foremost, I want you to sit back so that I can communicate with your subconscious. Try to get out of this closed mode. Because this is a closed mode. Now, gather as much of your words and anxieties as you can within yourself. If you are experiencing any anxiety, particularly over the earthquake or in everyday life, you can think about it right now. Because we're going to get rid of this soon. What I want you to do is, of course, if you want to, just stretch your arms forward. I want to show you how powerful your subconscious is. Turn your right hand over so it is facing upwards. Very good. Now close your eyes. Just a little while and follow my voice. Imagine that you are holding a very heavy book in your right hand and a flying balloon is tied to your left wrist. Your right hand will get heavier, while your left hand will get lighter and rise. Just like this. With your eyes closed, imagine what I told you, your right hand is heavy, and your left hand is getting lighter, just like that. As your right hand grows heavier, your left hand becomes lighter, and everything I say to you begins to come true. As your right hand gets heavier, your left hand rises, getting lighter. Just like that, your right hand gets heavier and your left hand gets lighter and rises. Your right hand is heavy, and your left hand is lighter. Very well, very good. Just like this. Now one, two, three, open your eyes, great. Some of you move your hands too much. This demonstrates that your subconscious is working very hard. Now what was your name again? Yes, yours.

Participant:

Mustafa.

Korzay Koçak:

Mr. Mustafa, just you, can you do this? Put it together like this. Do exactly like that. Bend your wrist, like this. Do this: spread your index fingers towards you like this, look at the space between your index fingers. You have magnets on your fingertips and they attract each other. It has started, they will get closer and closer to each other. Just like this, press your hands tightly together. Very good. Stay focused. Very good. Mr. Mustafa's mind is working well right now, and everything I am saying is automatically coming true. Now press your hands together, press your fingers together. Just like that. Press your index fingers together. Put your fingers together, your index fingers. Like that, press them together, imagine they are sticking.

Imagine that your fingers are sticking to each other. This way, they will inseparably, strongly be locked together, and they are locked. You can feel your hands tightening, can't you? Your subconscious is doing this. Now you can release them. It becomes almost impossible to separate them. Now I would like to show this to you; it is called "catalepsy," and it frequently occurs after being subjected to trauma. During the earthquake, some of our friends and earthquake survivors

went into a cataleptic state. Relax your mind to get out of this cataleptic state. You may release your hands, thank you. This experiment demonstrated how powerfully the subconscious functions. I am going to do this with all of you; sit back again, and this time you will experience something new. Take a deep breath, close your eyes as you slowly exhale. Close your eyes and focus. Relax, follow my words. Allow every word I say to you to sink into your subconscious and feel as comfortable as possible. You will feel fantastic as you relax. Beginning from today, your mentality is changing, and you are feeling a lot better. Your mind is healing. You are calm, relaxed and peaceful. Just like that, every word I say to you automatically comes true. Whatever I say, you approve and accept without inquiry. Relax, focus, and concentrate. With every word I say to you, you go deeper and deeper. Relax. Relax, unwind, deepen. Just like this. Feel calm, relaxed and peaceful. From today onwards, you no longer have to be concerned about the problems that are currently bothering you because your rib cage is relaxing. You breathe freely and the knot in your throat dissolves. Feel relaxed, you're completely at ease. Relax and unwind. Just like this. Relax and unwind. Feel completely at ease. From now on, every word I say to you automatically becomes true. Now open your eyes, quickly make your hands like this. Just like that, very good. Imagine you have two magnets in your palms that repel each other. Close your eyes; there are two magnets in your palms that repel each other. They strongly push each other. Imagine it as your eyes remain closed. Imagine that there is a very strong spring, for example, that pushes on another. I am currently producing a hallucination in your mind. Through this hallucination, you will start to feel a magnetic current in the palm of your hand. Your hands are pushing each other now. Now very gently bring your hands closer and further apart. Those who feel this can say it. From now on, you have a magnetic current in the palm of your hand and this current is healing you. You are being called out of your concerns. From now on, whenever you keep your hands parallel to each other, you will feel this current, which makes you feel wonderful, relax, and unwind. Feel the magnetic current flowing through your hand just like this. Try to draw them closer together; you will feel pressure as you do so. You will feel the tense spring in the palm of your hand. From now on, this current heals you; merge your worries and anxieties in your hands. Collect your worries and anxieties in this magnetic current and when I snap my finger, I want you to open your eyes and relax completely. You can open your eyes. Yes, has anyone felt it? You can raise your hands. Very good; the bulk of the hall's thoughts are functioning properly. From now on, whenever you hold your hands parallel to each other, you will feel this magnetic pressure without needing my word because we opened a door in your mind. We opened a door in your subconscious. You can now enter through this door very easily. I mean, you can heal yourself. Finally, I would like to say a few words to thank all of our friends of all nationalities who are present. You have made a significant contribution, and it will not be forgotten. Certainly, some sociological awareness is developing around this. Such awareness improves us, our nation, and our



homeland significantly. I believe we will get even better. I wish you feel good at all times in the future. I wanted to raise awareness about the subconscious. I hope I was able to raise awareness. Take very, very good care of yourselves. Thank you so much for listening.

P A N E L

06



Moderator:

İbrahim Özer, General Manager of Disaster Management and Climate Change, Turkish Red Crescent

Panelists:

Paul-Philipp Braun, ISAR Germany Spokesperson

Kim Jin Man, Chief Executive Officer of S&RT South Korea

Grzegorz Borowiec, USAR Poland Deputy Head of Department

Alesker Aliyev, Deputy Head of the Main Operations Department of the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Azerbaijan

Juan Manuel Gómez Rama, USAR Spain & Bomberos GIRECAN Communications Director



Heroes Without Borders

Stratcom Panel - 6 : Sınır Tanımayan Kahramanlar Stratcom Panel - 6 : Heroes Without Borders

Moderatör
Moderator



İbrahim Özer

Panelistler
Panelists



Paul-Philippe Brossat



Kim Jik Man



Gregory Baronevic



Alexander Altyov



Juan Manuel Gómez Romo

er
unication

Response. Recovery.



İbrahim Özer



Ladies and gentlemen and esteemed panelists, distinguished guests, I'm honored to welcome you to the Heroes Without Borders panel. Now today, we will share our search and rescue role players and actors of their effective time that they spend in in the field. Well, as we all know, natural and manmade disasters can strike anytime at anywhere and with devastating consequences. In this moment of crisis, search and rescue teams play a vital role in locating and rescuing those people who are trapped or injured or missing. Their bravery and dedication have been a beacon of hope for countless people in their darkest hours. As we have seen in the wake of almost all events disasters can have far-reaching impacts that they require immediate action. Search and rescue teams not only save lives, but they provide much needed support for affected communities and for restoring hopes, instilling confidence and helping to rebuild devastated areas. Now today's panel presents a unique opportunity to hear from some of the most experienced and passionate search and rescue professionals as we delve into the emotional and physical demands of this critical work. Now, I would like to start by introducing our panelists, but before doing so, because of their effort in the field in the search and rescue, I would like to invite you to give him a big applause, please. OK, let me start with a field. Let me just give you a quick introduction and then I'll just leave the

floor to our panelists. I'll start with Phillipp. Phillipp works as a field photographer as well as a moderator and lecturer for media topics on law. He's been on some international missions, including Haiti earthquake in 2021. And the most recent one in Kahramanmaraş in 2023, he graduated from the University of Erfurt in Religious Studies and Political Science. He added a master's degree in General studies of religion in the same university. Now Phil, can you please tell us? Have you first about the Kahramanmaraş earthquake and have you reacted and also can you please tell us about the communication that's been always affecting the disaster areas as we all know. So, can you tell us more about the communication channel with locals and partners also some of us may know and some may not but I'm just going to raise that that point we've seen in the channels about Zeynep's story. So, I think we know your face and on the on the TV channels about you and Zeynep and you you're talking specially in Turkish to Zeynep if you can tell us just a little bit more about, I know it says that sad story that would be great for us. Floor is yours.

Paul-Philipp Braun



Well, thank you very much, Mr. Ibrahim for this short introduction and thank you for your hospitality. Thank you for having me, having asked us questions here today and give us the opportunity to talk about all the things we faced with and doing this one week and during these weeks after the earthquake, till today. To be honest, when I got the alert of the Kahramanmaraş earthquake, it was 4:45 in the morning in Germany and I got a phone alert and to be honest, I'm also part of a local firefighter station so I expected kind of a little car crash, something like that. When I looked at my phone and then I saw OK, this is a preliminary alert for an earthquake in Türkiye and I immediately checked the media. I googled it, and I think this time it was 3 hours after the quake, and the official number of people who got injured and went to death was, at this moment, over dozens. And whoever is familiar with the earthquake situations, know that normally you have 5 to 10 people within their first five hours. But when I realized there were so many people who are affected by this quake, I immediately set up started to pack my stuff and I got a call from our headquarter and you spoke and they decided OK we have to go to Türkiye tonight. So, we left on the 6th of February and Germany, it was a little complicated because we chartered airplane but there was not enough space for all the equipment we had with us, so the female captain and she is one of many, many brave females I met during this earthquake. She decided, "OK, take your staff, also your equipment into the cabin and so we can go very fast to the affected area" and that's what we did. And then we arrived in Türkiye, our Turkish partner organization ISAR Türkiye prepared everything for us. They did a very good job. And so, we have been to located to Kırıkhan. According to the local authorities, they said "please go there." We've been the first team in the province of Hatay, one of the most affected provinces here in Türkiye and the people who were there who were waiting for us, they were really, really happy to see us. Some local teams have been there, AFAD was coordinating there of course, but we as an international team and I think you see the pictures in the background already, we came there to support the people and there was a huge you also asked about the media information and the media impact it had. There was a huge impact this earthquake had also to Germany, to all over Europe, and for us as one of the four, as the first German team, I got so many also communication officer of our team. And I got so many calls from my hometown airport to the airport in Cologne. I was, you know, I was driving and I just got call, call, call. So, I'm happy that I had a Bluetooth connection all the time because don't talk and drive whether you're mobile. And so, I did this all the time and then when we arrived here, I also grabbed so many calls of media, of social media influencers who asked me, especially you know, there's a big German, Turkish community, many, many people are interested also in Germany about the earthquake till today. And so that was what we did and we had 14 embedded journalists with us. All of them were from Germany, over from the Netherlands, and they came with us to report about our work, to report about the earthquake as such. We never ever had such a number of journalists who were with us and who were also interested in this. So, I got my mobile invoice one month ago and it I think it was 20 pages of calls I got in during this one week we have been here.

And but one of the most famous rescues we did probably is the one with the Zeynep. And I talked to many Turkish people about it and they some of them they don't know Zeynep but when I say it was a rescue of Daniel who said, "Zeynep Hanım, Korkma" (Mrs. Zeynep, don't be afraid). everybody is from Türkiye, and I see, yeah, I see your hands and everybody knows about this. He did a very good job and also our team did a very good job there. So, we saved Zeynep around 100 hours after the quake from the rubble it took us probably 60 hours to bring her out of the rubble because we dug a hole and then there was an issue with the elevator, so it was not possible for us to get her out. And the story of Zeynep is, is a heartbreaking story because we got her out. And we were talking to her all the time. There's also a very important fact about the communication. You need to communicate. Of course, with the German audience we are an NGO, so it's very important to ask to get donations and to get the support in Germany. Also, it's important fact to talk about or to talk with the Turkish community and the Turkish authorities and to talk with the victims and with the relatives of the victims. And so, we did it with Zeynep, and that is something very, very special. One of our doctors was in the hole and he asked her "how do you feel? How are you?" And she said "I'm OK." And then she responded, "And how are you?" And that was I got a goosebump when I'm talking about it right now because it was so strange. There was a woman under the rubble. She is close to the corpse of her family. Both of her children were death next to her. Her husband was death next to her. But she was asking "how do you feel?" And that was very, very strange part of communication. Also, probably we can take the next photo. You can see the rescue dog. Yeah, you can see the whole now you have this on screen. OK, there was a hole we dug and we talked to her and we gave her some water, some juice and then we need the 2nd hole to bring her out. That was why it was very uncomfortable and you know about the temperatures this time. So, it was quite cold. Not under the rubble because. The energy was kind of closed under the rubble so they had heat at night time and it would have been probably 20° there. But outside it was very cold. So, you always have to change your clothes when you came out of the hole. And this is one part I want to talk about, about talking to victims. That's very, very important to talk to them. We always had a translator with us. Very, very brave man. Ahmed is the head of a logistics company from Gaziantep, and he speaks German. So, he was with us under the rubble all the time. He is not used to it, to be honest. And he survived the earthquake on herself in his flat and that was quite job he also did. But there was another brave woman I want to talk about. Maybe you can show the next picture. They're saying that we brought her out. She was so proud. She had so much hope it was so good to for us to stay in contact with her, to talk to her. And the next one, probably. Yeah, this is a rescue. I think it's one of the most famous pictures. It was also part of the welcome center of Istanbul airport when Istanbul said thank you to the international people who supported us. And the next one, I hope, that's Zübeyde. And I want to introduce Zübeyde because when we talk about communication to victims, we also have to talk about communications with their relatives and Zübeyde is her

sister. She survived as one just of a few of their family and she sat in front of the destroyed house of her all the time. So more than 100 hours she was sitting there in front of the house and waiting that we got Zeynep out. And once it was very complicated and Zeynep struggled a lot under the rubble. And we asked Zübeyde, "OK, is it possible, do you feel comfortable to go under the rubble with us? You get helmet, you get safety clothes and all that stuff. Do you come with us under the rubble to talk to your sister and to give her hope?" And she "of course, I want to do this." And that was amazing. Because she was there, she talked to her sister, just a few words, but it gave her so much hope, so much power for this hard hour to be there under the rubble, in this bad, very, very bad situation. And until today, we are in contact with her, with Zübeyde. Even when Zeynep passed away in the night after the earthquake, we are still in contact with Zübeyde, with her family. And I think one of the next photos, yeah, there's one of our rescue dogs as well and I think the next photo, I hope. I'm sorry, but this morning I saw a poem on Zübeyde's Facebook page and she is still really, really affected, really traumatized by this earthquake and by all the things that happened to her and to her family. But what we did as an International Rescue team. We gave her hope and she is so thankful for us, to us and we are so thankful to her. Because Zübeyde and Zeynep and all the other people in Türkiye who are direct and also the one who are indirect affected by the earthquake gave us the opportunity to support them, to do what we like to do, to rescue them and to give them hope. And I think that's one of the most important facts we as international teams give the people hope and the people who share their hospitality with us, who share their support with us, gave us the knowledge to do the right and I'm really thankful therefore and I'm happy to be here. Thank you very much.

İbrahim Özer:

Well, Phillipp, on behalf of Turkish public, I'm really thankful for your actions and trying to give hope to the people that trying to, you know, you're trying to save their lives, that's quite important as you also mentioned that you're getting gratitude from the people who are also devastated waiting for their relatives and loved ones to be saved the life. Now the next speaker is Kim. Kim. Is from South Korea. He currently serves as an advisor to the National Policy Advisory Committee. He also works as Chief Executive Chairman of 9/11 Search and Rescue. He graduated from the University of Sungkyunkwan in Korea with Bachelor of Art in English Literature and English Literature in Portuguese at the CSUB University in Brazil. Kim worked as a diplomat for about more than 33 years. Well, I would like to start with, I mean, when I start with you, Phillipp, I'm just going to start with the same, almost the same question with Kim, how you first reacted when you heard about the earthquake and how you found yourself in the field trying to help saving people under the rubbles, but also based on your experience as a diplomat, we know that there's a protocol in terms of communicating with the victims and with the relatives of the victims, so can you please tell us a little bit about that too?

Kim Jin Man



Herkese Merhaba, ben kardeş ülke Kore'den gelen Kim Jin Man. Tanıştığımıza çok memnun oldum. (Hello everyone, I'm Kim Jin Man from brother country Korea. Very nice to meet you.) Thank you very much. Good to see you. I'm Kim Jin Man from Korea. Well, two months, just two months ago, I was in Hatay to do cooperation and now I'm here to talk about that. It's very great honor to be here today to greet you. Well, first of all I would like to say that the Türkiye and Korea the nations of brothers. Historically turns out that the Türkiye and Korean people have been interacting with each other for 1500 years ago. It's also Blood alliance that fought together in Korean War in 1950. So, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, thank you from bottom my heart. So, I'm learning the Turkish language. Anyway, the scene of the earthquake, which I saw with my own eyes and experienced with my whole body, was truly hurtful. I really couldn't help but be impressed by the magnitude of the earthquake. It's already been two months, but I still feel like at side of the disaster. And for your reference my team was here for Van earthquake in 2011. But at that time, I didn't retire from my job so I couldn't join them but already past the 10 years? Yeah, 10/12 years old before. Where now it's time to give an answer to the moderator's

question. This picture says the last Friday, just before I came here, I got them a seminar with the officers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and related organizations, so I didn't have time to edit in English or Turkish language. So, anyway, I will show you quickly. The seminar was on the Program and Improvement in Overseas Disaster Emergency Rescue. These photos are part of the material used in the seminar. I edited some and the selected necessary scenes from the PPT. The time when I first became aware of the earthquake of February 6 was as you see this record it was 8 in the morning, 8:50 local time here. No, the first time was at 04:17 in the early morning. Because it was a Monday morning, I was very busy preparing for a new week work, so it's a little bit late to check it out. I got the news through the CNN reports. Anyway, as soon as I read this article, I immediately reached to my colleagues through messenger. The time was a 14:41 KST. As you know, the first earthquake occurred at the 10:17 in Korean time, very early morning. And we came to Hatay February 11th and February 23rd we came back to my country. Anyway, as a chief office of my team I always concerned in getting to know what disaster of outbreak information as quick as possible. I mainly check Twitter and the foreign reporters from time to time. I also frequently monitor several disaster related sites. In the event of a disaster, members are notified immediately and matters regarding dispatched to the disaster site. Because in the emergency situation, it's very important to respond as quickly as possible, you know. Even we try to head to disaster site immediately at that time but the dispatching takes little time also due to the difficulty in preparing rescue equipment. Anyway, after decided to on site dispatch, I notified the fact to the Türkiye embassy in in Seoul. And then, the embassy expressed his gratitude and gave us a big favor to upgrade the seat from economic class to the business of the Seoul-Istanbul round trip. They also provided the much convenience to reduce the transportation cost of less few. So, after arriving in Adana, we headed to Hatay by gendarme helicopters and we set up at the base camp in the empty lot next to the Hatay stadium. And I reported my situation to my embassy in Ankara too. The search and rescue operation carried out under the direction of AFAD. Since here I would like to express my gratitude to the Türkiye Embassy officers, gendarme and AFAD officers and interpreters who actively assisted us in this operation. As a result, when we are faced with the emergency disaster information, my team usually act as below: First the quick spread of the news to members and let them know the event. After that we check the situation of the disaster site, then check equipment and budgets. Next is identifying the number of people who can be dispatched. After that, the fifth final meeting preliminary group members, the sixth find out and book flight schedule. And the cooperation with the related organizations such as embassies back there. After that finally the departure to the site, that's all.

İbrahim Özer:

Well, thank you so much, Kim. There's a great bond between the two countries. I also personally witness those Korean brothers and sister in the field. But the first thing that I realized

when I've seen Korean people in there, there is tears in their eyes. It was really heartfelt thing. Well, thanks so much again for being here. Our next panelist is Grzegorz. Grzegorz started his professional career in 2009 and, after being promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in the State Fire Service for eight years, leading Fire and Rescue operations in Sosnowiec. He has 14 years of national and international experience where he served in Sweden, Lebanon, France and lately Türkiye as team leader of USAR, Poland. Since 2018 he's been working as an expert at the I-Health Institute a nongovernmental organization. Established to carry out scientific research and socially useful activities in the field of civil protection and humanitarian aid for developing countries around the world. Now Grzegorz, I know you have an extensive experience in especially fire search and rescue operations. And I'm sure that you face quite a big challenge. Would you mind sharing with us some obstacles that you faced? Also, we know that search and rescue teams they always try to save lives, but sometimes we fail. You may have some examples that you were unable to find missing persons. So, can you tell us a bit about that?

Grzegorz Borowiec



Of course, yes. First of all, let me express my deepest condolences to all people who lost their beloved. We know that this is suffering that we can't even describe. So, coming back to the questions you asked me from my experience, I can say that we have three factors that will

impact on the effectiveness and how much we are able to cooperate during the huge disaster like this in Türkiye. So first very important factor is time. We don't have much time, we have very short time slot. Four or five days where we can help people effectively because after that every single person that we extricate from the debris is a miracle because you know, the human body, it's not projected to stay for days without food and without water. So those people trapped in the buildings they are running out of time. The next thing is logistic capacity. We are always facing this. Once we arrive, we arrive with plane. We land somewhere, we have tons of equipment like we take almost 20 tons of equipment. So, we have to bring this equipment somewhere from point A to point B and it's impossible to take it in your hand and just move and just go. So, you depend on the logistic capacities on site. And those logistic capacities, especially after the really huge events like earthquakes are stretched to their limits. You can't just multiply the number of trucks that will bring the equipment somewhere. You can't just multiply the number of buses. You have some limited resources on that and that's all. So, once we arrived in Türkiye, we had to spend several hours at the airport waiting in the queue for transport. We used this as resting, preparing ourselves for really extensive work that would finally happen after a few hours. And the last one is effective communication itself. Right now, we are really addicted to the Internet. Without Internet we are not able to cooperate. And this picture you can see dashboard of one of the tools we are using for coordination. And without Internet connection we are not able to coordinate ourselves, we are not able to coordinate the efforts. So it gives us space, a lot of space for the application to create some kind of gaps that you know some areas are not covered by certain rescue operations and we don't know that because we don't have Internet and we can't communicate with others and we don't know what others are doing right now. So, it's really a matter and you know we were trying to use right now a new sort of technology like the starting terminal, it helps us a lot because I remember my deployment to Lebanon, it was 3 years ago, and I was using a bigger terminal like the old one. For one hour I was trying to send one e-mail and it was almost impossible to send anything. And you know thinking about coordination, about the platform, which is standing on the online base is impossible. So right now, we have some new tools that will allow us in the future for more advanced coordination. We will know exactly what is going on, we will be able to share information and data we have collected, and we will be much, much more effective in our operation.

And talking about some kind of failures, because I can say this as a failure. Sometimes, we can't save everyone. This is true. This is reality. We are racing against time. And sometimes people trapped in the rubbles, they will never get this help from us because I don't know by some mistake or by whatever factor, we will be not able to find this person, to locate that that person and to extricate that person. You can see the conditions where we were working. So those buildings were extremely smashed. This was like a bucket of, you know, building, try to imagine you are taking the building, putting into some kind of bag. You're shaking and you're

putting out everything on the ground and you have to find someone in the pile of everything, like concrete, steel beams, everything. It's really challenging. You can see one of our rescuers crawling into the void, which was created, and it was 30 centimeters and there were still after-shocks and everything, well, it was a huge problem for us. We have to dig. And I will show you one picture. Here this is the dashboard we prepared at the first day we arrived. We started to establish our base of operation. We did it like this; someone just took a pen, a whiteboard and started to draw randomly. We didn't expect to have so many people rescued so, so we said OK, randomly we started to one by one put some names or some identification of the work sites where we extricated some people. At the very end, we realized that there is still one gap. It was victim #13. After victim #12. We identified 3 work sites where dogs indicated some kind of smell. It was on two of them we were not really sure if that was correct. However, in one of those work sites, we even had contact, by using Geophone, we were able to establish some contact with the victim. We said, "Knock three times, if you can hear us.", "Now scratch." There was scratching. We said, yes, there is someone. We said to that person, "OK, we have you and now we will get to you, just wait for us. We just need to identify where in this 3D dimension you are," and after four hours, we lost communication with this person. We were trying for more than 20 hours. We were trying to search, localize the position of this person and I remember when my operational person came to me and told me "Chief, we checked everything. Every single corner, every single void. It is nowhere. There is no one alive." I had to make a decision. The building is almost re-collapsing because now every single brick you remove might create another collapse and you can trap your rescuers inside. Therefore, after more than 30 hours of searching this person, I decided just to stop it. It is a huge emotional burden that you have to take with you, because you know that there was a chance to rescue someone, but sometimes you have to say stop, because otherwise you will hurt more people, you will hurt your own people as well. A dead rescuer is not a rescuer anymore. That is the problem with search and rescue operations. We have a type of psychological mental check after we go back to Poland, after we go back to our country. Where psychologists they analyze what is going on and they can help us if this burden is too much for us and that is the only reason that we can keep our mental health. That is the story. I would like to thank you, Sedat. He is sitting right now with us. He was the person who stopped us in Besni and without him; we would just miss this place. We were on the on our way to Adiyaman and he was the one who came to us and asked us to stay. For me, it was one of the most difficult decision in my life. Should I stay in Besni, the city of 70,000 people or go to Adiyaman, 1,000,000 people. Who am I supposed to rescue right now, which of those people deserve to be rescued? Finally, we decided to stay in Besni, because we were the only professional rescue team there for two days. We are really happy that we made this decision. So, thank you once again. That is all from my side. Thanks.

İbrahim Özer:

Well, it is not surprising that we called you “heroes.” You put yourself, your life at risk. You are trying to save someone, but at the same time, your own life is really at a high risk. I really appreciate your time and your effort. Well, now the next panelist is Alesker Aliyev. He is the Deputy Director of the Main Operations as well as leading Azerbaijan International Search and Rescue team. He completed his bachelor’s degree at Civil Defense at High Military School in Azerbaijan. He has been at some international search and rescue missions, including Ukraine and Muğla and the most recent one of Kahramanmaraş in Türkiye. Alesker Aliyev has the National Nomination Medal for his service as well. He is a steering committee member of PPRD East. Welcome Alesker. I would like to ask a couple of questions from where Greg left off. I have always wondered when you try to save lives, there is a mental situation that you go through. How do you really keep your mental status as healthy as possible and what is the biggest challenge that you are faced with when you try to save lives and spend so much effort under the rubble?

Alesker Aliyev

Thank you, Mr. Ibrahim. Good morning, dear ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, “Merhaba” (Hello). First of all, I would like to thank you for inviting me to this important event. It is a great opportunity for exchange of experience and to learn from each other.

First, I would like to briefly inform you about the Azerbaijan Search and Rescue Team activities during the humanitarian operations in Kahramanmaraş. Remembering the recent earthquake, I pray to God for mercy towards those who perished as a result of this disaster. As we observed during the recent earthquake, dozens of search and rescue teams as well as medical brigades joined in and coordinated well during the humanitarian operations. We observed that the strategic communication and joint efforts gave invaluable results to save more lives. As we received information about earthquake centered in Kahramanmaraş, according to the instruction, Mr. President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Search and Rescue teams as well as medical brigades of the Ministry of Emergency Situations were mobilized and sent to the disaster area immediately. For your information, humanitarian teams consisting of 760 personnel were sent to Türkiye for humanitarian relief efforts. The Azerbaijan rescue teams worked in areas of Kahramanmaraş and Hatay. In addition to delivering humanitarian aid the rescuers saved 53 people from the rubble. 17 of the rescued were children. Azerbaijan medical teams activated two field hospitals and provided medical assistance to more than 3000 people in Kahramanmaraş City. You can see the video presentation on the screen related to our activities during the humanitarian mission in Kahramanmaraş. During the humanitarian operations interaction with AFAD as well as urban search and coordination USAR of the UN as well as search and rescue teams from different countries were organised. Turning back to your question, I want to mention that in a disaster zone, rescuers and volunteers may face different risks and difficulties like anti-sanitary contamination of drinkable water, earthquake, aftershocks etc. These facts directly impact not only humanitarian operations, search and rescue operations, as well as health risks towards the rescuers and volunteers. It is important to underline that we provide a quick assessment in the area before sending our rescuers for the search and rescue operations. And we conduct sufficient measures to minimize the risks or prevent them. Medical Group of search and rescue team take care of rescuers’ health and conduct relevant procedures to prevent the spread of any diseases during the humanitarian mission. To protect our rescuers’ health in disasters zone we fulfil several initial procedures. One of them is an obligatory vaccination, like tetanus vaccination, yellow fever etc. We plan to and conduct relevant courses and trainings according to the annual program in order to prepare search and rescue teams for humanitarian missions. Sometimes inattentive behaviour may cause risks to the rescuer’s health. I can share with you one story from my experience that happened during one of my operations several years ago. I have one of the rescuers bought an energy drink from the shop and when he opened the bottle, he realized that it is

not energy drink, it was vinegar. That is one of the examples. When our rescuer was attentive and prevented further risk to his own health. This is the reason why we instruct our rescuers and volunteers to follow instructions of their managers and to be always attentive, even of the smallest things. It is also very important to provide psychological support, as you said, to rescuers when it is needed. For instance, during earthquakes centred in Kahramanmaraş, physiological group of the ministry were also involved in the humanitarian operations. They have provided psychological support not only to the disaster victims but also to our rescuers. Talking about volunteers, I think untrained volunteers should not be involved in rescue operations in rescuing area. They may be involved in provisional activities in my opinion, activities like food distribution and tent camp building. During the mission in Kahramanmaraş, we got countless phone calls from Azerbaijan with offers to join voluntarily as rescuers. And more than 200 volunteers from Azerbaijan joined humanitarian operations in Kahramanmaraş. In my opinion, Türkiye's experience in the field of preparation of volunteers for search and rescue operation would be beneficial for every one of us.

Talking about the challenges, I would like to mention that the biggest challenge was aftershocks, which we faced in recent earthquake in Kahramanmaraş. It was a big challenge to conduct continuous search and rescue operations despite difficulties due to aftershocks, as it is our main task to rescue victims in any dangerous condition. Thankfully, our rescuers are professionals and follow all the instructions related to security procedures, as aftershocks create moral risks to rescuers during the mission. We interacted with the local population both during the search and rescue operations as well as during the delivery of humanitarian aid. I remember it was not so easy to communicate with the population in the disaster area as their first needs were increasing in initial hours. When humanitarian aid had been distributed in Kahramanmaraş area, a resident from one of the houses asked for help in extracting the body of a deceased person from under the rubble. In such situations it is important to quickly respond to requests because people expect such behaviour from us. We went with them to the specified address, assessed the situation and reported to the coordination centre. Sufficient aid was provided immediately. Being there with them and sharing their pain helps to stabilise the psychological situation of the victims.

The other challenge we face are difficulties during the interviews with the media representatives. Representatives of the media may ask you any question during an interview as it is their job. But our answers should be objective and impartial. It is also important to be independent in this matter. And you should consider the audience that will be listening to you and to avoid any unpleasant situations. It should also be noted that during interviews it is not only the information provided to the audience by your side, but also who the speaker is. Media trainings are also a part of our program for the search and rescue team. Let me introduce one of the

questions that I was asked during an interview. The TV journalist asked me “Which country’s team performed better during the humanitarian operations, your team or other teams?” Such questions create more difficulties during live broadcasting. Of course, I answered these questions in a way that nobody would be offended.

In my response I mentioned that the disaster zone was not a racetrack and I believe that every team did their best here.

Teams joined their efforts to quickly rescue dozens of people from under the rubble.” In a disaster zone, everyone tries to help and consider it as a duty to humanity. This feeling is given to us by God. Thank you very much for your attention. “Sonda depremden dolayı hayatını kaybeden kardeşlerimize Allah’tan rahmet diliyorum. İki devlet, bir millet olarak, hepimizin başı sağ olsun. Allah bir daha acı yaşatmasın. Herkese iyi günler dilerim. Teşekkürler.” (Lastly, we extend our condolences to our brothers and sisters who lost their lives in the earthquake. As two states and one nation, we mourn our loss. May God spare us from such suffering in the future. Have a good day. Thank you.)

İbrahim Özer:

Alesker, thank you so much. As you mentioned we are two countries, one nation, so welcome. And I also would like to underline your response that the disaster zone, disaster areas are not a racetrack. Everyone is doing the same job over there. Also in your video, there’s a scene that when you saved the person you were cheering up. So, I think it gives a common psychological understanding that there’s a humanity there. You all are feeling the same way and I’m hoping that we can all keep the same feelings for the future as well. Thank you so much again. Now the last speaker is Juan Manuel Gomez Rama. Juan is in charge of communication of the Spanish USAR rescue team Bomberos GIRECAN. Although his professional career is a nurse in the Public Health Service, he has always been in the emergencies and corporate communication, including social media. Juan was one of the rescue team members in the affected areas. Well, Juan, there’s something I always wonder about search and rescue teams, especially for the ones who are not local. You come from abroad. How did you first react when you heard the news? What did you feel and how you really made yourself ready to move to the area? And there was one question I wanted to ask one of the panellists about to be unable to save lives, so there was a sad story, but now let’s just go on a positive response in your experience. So how did you feel? How did you react when you saved lives? What happened, similar to Alesker’s example, in the in the field. So, can you tell us more about that?

Juan Manuel Gomez Rama



Thank you very much, Mr Ibrahim. First of all, I want to express my gratitude to be here invited to this "Disaster Communication Forum."

So, in the beginning our rescue team, we were very clear that we needed to be working with the public communication, they say it is a useful tool not only to respect our jobs, but to make a clear honest communication with the people in emergency times. So, the first reaction I had when I acknowledged the big earthquake was that we knew there was a big challenge in front of us. So, it was a big challenge for us. But let me explain. My presentation is all about that question and I will tell you many stories about that powerful feeling. We were clear that the communication is a challenge for us because we think we must be on the Internet, we must be on the social media, so if we don't tell, someone else will do it for us. This is very important. We had a web site, we have a Twitter account, an Instagram account, a YouTube channel, and Facebook account over there. So, this is basically our strategy about communication. We had a news agency. We had the official source of information on the ground for our team. Our contents were free to distribute. No problem about that. We published frequently. Most of the time in real time. No media were attended to during in our mission here in Türkiye. It's because time is precious. And our goal is for you because you are in need. But when

we finished our mission, we practiced serving all media that requested. Well, from 2010 onwards, we wrote about this; that communication is a powerful tool. So, we wrote about training, training, and more training. We have a book, I say the right book, about communication protocols. Our communication strategy is more than one task, not only considering saving lives. Communication is another task in rescue teams. We don't improvise. We have a prior training, and we adapt and improve the protocols. Our aim is to lead the information and offer it openly to the media, through our social networks. The media are great allies, but we have to distinguish between what they want and the public utility that our information can have. From here to here, it's a long way. We are team of 15 people and two dogs. But only one of us, that is me, is a representative about communication. I have many tasks in our mission. For example, we have to communicate with United Nation platform to communicate all our tasks about the Virtual OSOCC and ICMS platform. So, we share on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp to inform our family. This important goal about our strategy of communication. You have to be faithful to the reality. We preferably use the local language to communicate without alarming or generating fear, that's very important. We must be honest. That's some examples about that. I would like to share with you some emotional story. This is a very good example of the power of an emotion. This was a tweet what we shared on the first day. A man stopped us in the middle of the highway when we go to centre area. He came inside the bus opening a red bag and send this food for us. It was shocking for us. Maybe, perhaps that man lost his house, his job, I don't know. but it is a very good example, a powerful one. This was an unexpected task for hope. We shared that with more than 10 million people. It is very big impact, international impact. He literally stopped us; this was our tweet. In a few hours, many people shared this tweet around the world. And this is a message received on Easter about the hope and we were very emotional. Right here. "When I was feeling hopeless and helpless, reading your warm and empathetic tweets on your Twitter account made me both emotional and hopeful." That's really a big thing for us. There were two translators that were with us in all the mission. Mr. Baboush and Mr. Beitullah. Baboush is medicine student, Beitullah is journalism student. They became one of us, in all the mission with us. They were the bridge between the population and us. This is the code of conduct our team. Rescuing people is something else. We had to be there for people in need. We had to be empathetic. We had to inform with the truth. We accompany to the end. We care for them.

The story of hope. In this area, we offered our capabilities. In this case, they needed our dogs because they were searching for people under the rubble. So, our dogs find a site with the probability of life under the rubble, but then we had to go to another place. We were requested. Many hours later, we had a very, very good news for us. They said to us, "Hey people, hey, Spanish. We saved two lives, two people over there, two women." In that moment we started crying, all our team. It's a very, very nice story. At the end of my presentation, I want to share with you a little video, about four minutes. Thank you very much. (Video is playing.)

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Türkiye. You have given us more than we take with us. Thank you very much.

İbrahim Özer:

Thank you, Juan. Thank you so much for the video, as well. We had very unique opportunity to hear from some of the most experienced and passionate search and rescue professionals as we delve into the emotional and physical demands of critical search and rescue missions. Now, Philip, Kim, Greg, Alesker and Juan, I personally like to thank you for your efforts. You are, as the panel already pointed out, that you are the “Heroes Without Borders”. Thank you so much.

S P E E C H

Broadcasting on the Ground: The Need for Promptness in Disaster Journalism

Trent Murray

Berlin Correspondent at Feature Story News



Well, thank you very much, everyone. It is extremely humbling to be here with you all. I am very, very happy to be back in Türkiye under much brighter circumstances. Thank you to my Turkish media colleagues from TRT and Anadolu in the room. It is very good to be with you. On February 6, I suppose for me, it is, like many of you, very vivid memories. I got that phone call in Berlin from my boss in Washington, who had seen the news starting to filter out from Türkiye, and he said we need you to get there immediately. And so, we scrambled, and we came here. Before I get into the nuts and bolts of what I want to say, of course, like others, I just want to say, first and foremost, my deepest condolences to the families and the victims of those caught up in this tragedy. It was certainly one of the most emotional experiences of my life getting to meet them, and I continue to think about them every day. I also just want to make a special mention if I could have my colleague Bünyamin Kasap. He is one of your brothers. He is my colleague. He joined me in Türkiye. He is originally from Trabzon. He is my cameraman, my producer, my psychiatrist, my health and safety expert, my translator, you name it, he does it, and I could not have done this deployment without him. If you think about an earthquake and what it is, its fault lines and tectonic plates grinding against each other, pushing up against each other, dividing the landscape and breaking everything you see in its path.

There is physical damage, of course, but the effect on the Turkish people was the opposite. In fact, the effect was to unite the Turkish people, not to destroy them, not to raze them to the ground.

Yes, there was immense physical damage here, but the impact it had on the Turkish people and the Turkish nation was the opposite. It brought everyone together, and it showed just how strong the foundations of this nation are, and that is what I saw when I was there. These are some quite random photos you might think, but they were memories for me. The first is a pair of socks or two actually that I had to fight a man about because he insisted that I take them even though I told him I did not need socks. He would not let me leave that conversation without them. There is a coffee cup there, I think. If I had a lira for every coffee or tea I was offered while I was here, I could probably retire right now. A small keychain from Malatya Football Club, which is the city where I was, and a young boy insisted I take it before I left so that I did not forget Malatya, and I still have it at my house. These are the four lessons I want to talk about from my perspective, and I will go through them quickly because I know you are all hungry. But it is just the rapid response that is needed in journalism, the respect that is needed for people on the ground, using local sources, speaking to local people, and also

just acknowledging that things will not always go to plan. So rapid response, like many of the emergency personnel here will tell you, is about putting safety first. In our business, there is always a tsunami of interest and pressure to deliver. Because I knew for every life that I shoot, for every TV broadcast that I do, that is more people learning about what has happened here. But it cannot always be perfect. It took me time to get to the earthquake zone because of the logistics. I had to begin broadcasting from a place called Elazığ. It was not that affected by the earthquake. I had two options: to wait longer or just go from there. I just went from there on that first day that I arrived in order to make sure people could hear it. This was one of the first broadcasts I did for the United States.

Video:

Search and rescue efforts continuing now across that big stretch of southern Türkiye. A number of cities have been affected and despite those frigidly cold temperatures, it is going to hit around 25 in some parts tonight. Though search and rescue crews say they are not going to give up hope. They are continuing to comb through the rubble of many of those 6000 buildings, a lot of those were apartment blocks that people were sleeping in when the first quake hit. But we are seeing some, I suppose, miracles in those mountains of rubble, if you will, children and the elderly being pulled out despite being trapped under there for over 24 hours in many cases. We know the Turkish government as well has mobilized around 50,000 people to help with this effort. Many of them are volunteers that are flying in from all parts of the country to try and do what they can to assist and that international aid, well, it is also coming. Of course, the Europeans were very much the first ones here, just given how close they are, the proximity if you will, but we are now siding to see the Americans and the Canadians arrived. Many of them are specialists with acoustic equipment that can be used to listen in on that rubble. It is, of course, just a very desperately sad situation right now for the country. This is undoubtedly the worst natural disaster to hit this region in living memory, but right now it does still remain a search and rescue operation. All focus right now is just trying to see if there is anyone else left trapped in that rubble. All right. Hopefully some more good stories coming out of there. Thank you, Trent.

Trent James Murray:

Respect is paramount. So we will continue. No media organizations represented in this room are people I am talking about, but certainly when I was here, I saw international news crews, in my opinion, being disrespectful to the situation. Climbing over rubble in live operations, often intruding with cameras when emergency personnel were trying to do their job. I do not think that is what audiences want. We are not here for disaster tourism. I think audiences watching at home are smart enough to understand when that is happening and they do not like it. I will play you another clip if I could, doing what is called a walk and talk in the business down the street. But towards the end, you might notice, I make a deliberate decision not to go near

the police and that is because just before going on air I had been told that one of the police officers searching the apartment building was actually looking for his lost daughter. He was still working. So, I think this was for me an important point that I think respect is extremely important.

Video:

I am speaking to you from the city of Malatya, in fact, one of the busiest streets of this city. Now, this was one of the worst-hit areas. Normally, this street would be filled with people out shopping or going to restaurants and cafes, but really, now is kind of Ground Zero for the rescue operation. I am going to step out of frame for a little bit. I want to show you just sort of how much of a lottery this is in terms of how many buildings came down, which one stood, which ones remained. This is an apartment building, which just came crashing down on Monday when the earthquake hit. There are now no signs of survivors left. That building has basically been condemned, but you can still see the signs of life that the people once lived in there. There is a wardrobe there that has been flung open with somebody's clothes all out on the street. There is also a television set, believe it or not, that is still standing upright on a bar fridge. It was not knocked over somehow, despite the building collapsing. We are going to take a bit of a walk down the street because I just want to show you that while that one has collapsed right next door, they're still standing. But it comes with a big warning, which is structural engineers are saying many of these buildings now are not safe. That is why you'll see police tape and the like blocking the entranceway. Some soldiers are going in there now to take a look. But we are basically being told be very careful and do not remain around those buildings too long because if there is another violent aftershock then it could quite easily come crashing down just given how knocked around it has been. And then basically what you will find then at the end of this just short walk that we are going to take is the remains of a much bigger apartment complex where the recovery operation is still underway. It is a huge pile of rubble. I am going to keep this a little bit of distance because the military there have just told us that they have found the body of an elderly resident that they had been looking for, and they just do not really want TV crews too close, which is quite understandable. This is a picture playing out right across southern Türkiye right now. Again, they understand that as each hour passes it is going to probably move from a rescue phase to a recovery phase, but they are still using the daylight that is available to try really hard to search for any more survivors here and across the region.

Trent James Murray:

Local sources are so important, to talk to local people, to ask them what is happening, to not just rely on what you read online to exchange telephone numbers, to get Instagram accounts, to ask for video. I think some of the strongest news lines that I got was through speaking to people. We still stay in touch with many of them, including Besim, who is a retired firefighter.

Now his last operation was the earthquake. He lives in Van. He would tell us where rescue moments were happening. Also of course, just speaking to people and allowing them to get their voice on air. So, it is not just me all the time. I tried to do that. I would like to introduce you just briefly if I could, to Sena and Muhammed. Just two of many people that I met while I was here.

(Video) Sena:

I'm a pharmacist. I work there as an assistant professor. I am here with the Turkish Mountaineering Federation team. Some of the team members are drilling through the cement and some of them are trying to break down the blocks. So, it is more physical and we are breaking. We are listening. It is like in shifts. For like one hour we work, then we listen for the voice, and then we keep going.

(Video) Muhammed:

We used to spend the nights here until 4 to 5 in the morning. On the night of the earthquake, we thought, "Let's go home earlier today," and we left earlier than usual and that night the earthquake hit. I mean, if we had not gone home, we would have been under that rubble now. I do not know what to call this... maybe just a chance or coincidence. My brother used to stay here right next door all the time. He also went home early that night. I do not know what to call this... mystery of God? I am not sure. The earthquake hit and this is it. So, we have nothing left.

Trent James Murray:

And then I suppose one of the final points I want to make is just things do not go to plan and you should not overplan because you will just line yourself up for disappointment. We largely stayed in Malatya because of the transport logistics, but one day, we tried to drive to Adiyaman, and there was an aftershock, which meant the road got closed, so we could no longer go to Adiyaman. So, we quickly adapted and actually I found in some ways a stronger story because I then was able to talk to people in a very small Mountain Community who maybe were not getting as much attention as people in Hatay or Malatya or Gaziantep. Of course, it is not a competition, but for many of those rural communities, they probably were not seeing many international news crews. So, I did my best to try and incorporate that into some of my reporting. I will just show you short snippet.

Video:

We are high up in the mountains of Anatolia in a village called Ekenek, and we were not actually planning to stop here, we were on our way to Adiyaman, which is one of the the worst-hit cities down the road. But there was an aftershock which caused the landslide and the road is now blocked. But I think it has been an important opportunity actually to pay a visit here because we are seeing up close how many smaller rural and farming towns have also been hit by these monster earthquakes. This town is around 5000 people, and we have been told by

locals that many of the buildings came down in that first earthquake that hit, but then there were some aftershocks, and that was what brought down many of the others crashing down, just like this one. Of course, it is a picture of how many rural communities are struggling. Of course, the big cities are getting a lot of the attention and a lot of the rescue effort. But in small villages like this one, the need is also very great.

Trent James Murray:

I think really, in summing up, it of course was the worst disaster that any country could imagine. But as we were saying before, it really did bring out the best in humanity and I tried my best to explain that on air, there were emotional moments. I will just leave you with the final two clips if I could, one for Israel's I-24 and another one for China CGTN.

Video:

-I mean over 135 hours since this quake. I almost cannot believe I am about to tell you this, but they think they may have found two more survivors that they are trying to reach up on that pile of rubble. We understand that it is a woman with her adult daughter. There are two crews working up there, one from Türkiye and one from Blue Sky Rescue in China. They actually have come from Sichuan province, which suffered a major earthquake in 2008. They have some experience. They know what they are doing. They are working out there with translators now, trying to reach those two people. We do not know what their condition is. We just had a call for silence a few moments before coming on air, and I should mention that the woman's husband is here keeping a vigil, I imagine, praying right now that maybe he will just get a miracle out of that mountain of rubble.

-Wow, wow, wow. A glimmer of hope.

-I suppose it is probably worth mentioning as well, just the moment. I mean, I can barely do a live position on air to you right now without somebody wanting to come up offer me something to eat or a hot drink to trying to pull me towards the fire to keep warm. There is just such a spirit of generosity and kindness here, which really is very inspiring given the absolutely awful circumstances that so many of these people have experienced.

-Trent, thank you very much.

Trent James Murray:

And one last video. It is not of me, you will be happy to know that this was the tweet that I posted from the quake, which went viral. I think in many ways it just shows that the bonds of humanity are often connected via our love of moments of joy. This was a moment of a person's cat being rescued by the Turkish military and it seemed to have touched a nerve with a lot of people. So, I thought I would leave you with that one and teşekkürler (thank you). Thank you very much.

P A N E L

07



Moderator:

Prof. Timothy Sellnow, University of Central Florida

Panelists:

Prof. Deanna Sellnow, University of Central Florida

Prof. Martin Löffelholz, Ilmenau Technical University

Prof. Amiso George, Texas Christian University

Dr. Sjirk Meijer, Director of The Resilience Advisors Network



New Trends in Disaster, Crisis and Risk Communication

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onse. Recovery.

Afet, Kriz ve Risk İletişim
Stratcom Panel - 7: New Trends in Disaster, Crisis and Risk Communication

Moderatör
Moderator



Prof. Dr. Timothy Sellnow

Panelistler
Panelists



Prof. Dr. Deanna Sellnow



Prof. Dr. Martin Löffelholz



Afet İletişim Forumu
Değerli Müdahale, İyileştirme.



Timothy Selinow



Thank you. We are grateful for the invitation to be here today. Today we are here because we believe that the right words at the right time save lives. We share a passion together as panelists for identifying the right words for today's disasters and compassion for all of those in need. The right words guide people to protective action, and, equally important, they return hope to those whose lives are changed forever. As scholars, we stand with you, Türkiye, in a tireless effort to learn from tragedy and to share these lessons with the world. Today, our panellists reflect on new trends in disaster, risk and crisis communication. I will introduce briefly our panelists. To my left, Deanna has a long line of internationally recognised research for transforming technical information into comprehensible actions of self-protection for those whose lives are in danger. Martin is a foremost authority in crisis communication, who has organised multiple international projects inspiring European scholars, agencies, and leaders to speak with one voice in crisis situations. Amiso has conducted research that has made strides in guiding crisis communication scholars and practitioners to embrace cultural sensitivity and the study and practice of crisis communication. Sjirik leads the Resilience Advisors Network. He is an international leader in the essential effort to enhance resilience in crisis planning, response and recovery worldwide. Let us start with our first question for our panellists. Given your experience in research, what recommendations do you have for emergency and disaster planning, specifically addressing coordination among multiple authorities, media, and perhaps multiple countries?

Deanna Selinow



Thank you, Tim. I just want to begin by saying thank you to all of the planners for inviting me to be a part of this summit this week. It has been humbling to be here and informative, and I feel truly honoured to be a part of this situation. My heart goes out to all of the victims, their families, their loved ones, and everyone who is involved in this particular devastation that Türkiye is facing right now. I am going to focus specifically on the coordination piece of the question and I am going to focus on it from the perspective that I take as an instructional communication researcher. I am really going to talk quickly about what I believe we need to do, why we need to do it, and then how we need to do it. I think we need to be strategic and intentional about building and nurturing global communities of practice as we have here, where there is mutual engagement, where we are making connections with each other, who are like-minded people creating a shared repertoire across our experiences, our cultures, our expertise to co-construct meaning and decisions to mitigate harms and save lives. Why do we need to do this? Because we now live clearly in a global risk society, and by that, I mean we have we do not have crises that are limited by time and space. Those boundaries do not exist. There are mega risks and mega crises that transcend the boundaries of both time and space. Our old ways will not suffice. We need to develop solutions for complex and interrelated issues

via solutionaries and solutionary thinking. How are we going to do that? We need to shift our focus from information sharing, from a stand-centred perspective to learning outcomes, a receiver perspective. For example, there are three major kinds of learning. Affective learning; we need to motivate people. How can we use strategic communication to motivate people to attend to the topic and the situation? We have to figure out how to overcome barriers of apathy via relevance, scepticism via trust building, and cognitive dissonance from these cosmology episodes of chaos that we experience through a means by which to articulate uncertainty. Cognitive learning; we need to achieve accurate mutual understanding about what is happening, why, what is being done by whom, what is known and what is unknown at the time, and what is being done to find out. We have to overcome barriers to access channels of communication and preference for information-seeking channels. We need to overcome barriers to intelligibility in terms of literacy levels and language translation, and we need to overcome competing narratives based on misinformation, disinformation and malformation by using multiple channels and sources, visual storytelling, as we heard about yesterday, AI as we learned about yesterday, and transparency about what we know and what we do not know and in use influencers to our benefit. The third and final is behavioural learning; gaining compliance to recommended actions to manage risk and protect ourselves and others. So behavioural compliance, behavioural learning, those barriers that we have to overcome are learned helplessness and fatalism, that hopelessness we have talked about throughout the summit. Efficacy constraints for self-efficacy and collective efficacy are based on different cultural norms and values, different lived experiences, and whether we can even be efficacious with what the recommended actions are better being suggested to us. We can do so by strategic communication around rhetorical sensitivity, participatory co-construction of action steps and modelling through actual modelling of behaviours and simulations using technology for simulations of modelling behaviour. That is where I believe we need to be in terms of going to our next steps in terms of coordinating our efforts.

Timothy Selinow:

Very good. Martin.

Martin Löffelholz



Thank you, Deanna. I think that was a very long, but also more or less complete. I think it was a very good overview of the objectives of risk and crisis communication. So, this is a very long list. As crisis communication researchers, we used to describe crisis communication as a cycle starting from anticipating and preparing for crisis situations and handling crises. We heard a lot this morning about the needs of acting in times of crisis and then and that I think is often forgotten or not really taken seriously. There is a forced step in this cycle of crisis communication, which is evaluation. I think I would like to emphasise this because when we are talking about communication planning, the main question is, "What is our basis?" Particularly in a country prone to earthquakes, there is already a lot of experience in how to deal with it and also how to deal with communication. The question is, and that's the question we also ask and have asked in several empirical studies, "Are organisations taking evaluation seriously?" Taking it seriously is a very important step in order to prepare for the next crisis, and our empirical studies and also other empirical studies in other countries show that many organisations do not really follow up sufficiently after a crisis has more or less ended, which is a pity, because there are a lot of things we can learn from our experiences, and that is why I would like to ask here, "What are hindering factors? What are the obstacles for organisations to take into consideration and to evaluate their experiences?" In a current study, we are looking at these organisational factors, and we are distinguishing between three different groups of factors: the extra-organisational, which are not really influenced by the organisation itself; the intra-organisational like

the hierarchies, the resources, the qualification of the personnel and many more; and what we call the inter-organisational, so the collaboration between different organisations, for instance, different government institutions. These factors contribute, on the one hand, to successful crisis communication, but if they do not work well together, then of course, we will face a lot of problems, including lack of evaluation. So, my point here is that I think when we are talking about new trends, we first should talk about something which has been identified by research years ago, but which is still not really taken seriously. That is the idea of a learning organisation. So, we need to have a culture within an organisation to be self-critical, to be open, and to take our experiences within a certain crisis not as granted, but discuss it with each other. I think this conference is a good example for a first reaction. However, in addition to a conference, I think we need also systematic formative evaluations and I think that could be also a contribution of us in the academia. It does not have to take 3 years like classical research projects. But a systematic evaluation is usually one of the most important factors for future successful crisis communication. Ampirik çalışmalarımızda ve ampirik olmayan çalışmalarımızda pek çok ülkede görüyoruz ki pek çok kurum, kuruluş aslında bir kriz yaşandıktan sonra hatta daha tam olarak bitmeden bile, süreci iyi bir şekilde takip etmiyor. Bu nedenle de birbirimizin deneyimlerinden pek çok şey öğrenebiliriz diye düşünüyorum. İşte bu yüzden de bizim önümüze çıkan bariyerler, engeller, kısıtlayıcı faktörler neler acaba? Özellikle de yaşadığımız deneyimi değerlendirme noktasında önümüze neler çıkıyor engel olarak, buna bakmamız gerekiyor. Bu kurumsal faktörlerin yanı sıra bir de üç farklı faktör grubu var. Kurum dışı faktörler var. Bunu biliyoruz. Bunlar kurumun kendisinin elinde olan faktörler değil. Kurum içi faktörler var. Bunlar arasında da hiyerarşi olsun, kaynaklar olsun ya da yeterlilikler, personel yeterlikleri olsun devreye girebiliyor. Kurumlar arası boyutu var bir de bunun. Farklı kurum ve kuruluşlar arasında mesela farklı hükümet, devlet kuruluşları arasındaki sürece etki eden faktörler var. İşte bütün bu faktörler kriz iletişimini etkileyen faktörler ve bu faktörler, bu unsurlar birbiriyle iyi bir şekilde çalışmazsa, etkili bir şekilde çalışmazsa o zaman değerlendirmede de sıkıntılı noktalara gidebiliyoruz. Buna da belirtmek istediğim şey şu, yeni eğilimlerden yeni yönelimlerden bahsederken aslında araştırmaların yıllar öncesinde tespit ettiği ama hâlen çok ciddiye alınmayan bir noktaya değinmemiz gerekiyor. Bu da aslında öğrenen bir kurum, kuruluşun olması gerekiyor. Yani kurumumuzda bir kültür olması gerekiyor. Eleştiriye açık olması, kendini eleştirir nitelikte olması önemli. Deneyimlerimizi de yaşadığımız krizden elde ettiğimiz deneyimleri birbirimizle görüşmemiz, tartışmamız, konuşmamız gerekiyor. Bu konferans da bence bu anlamda önem taşımakta ve bu şekilde sistematik, formatif değerlendirmelere ihtiyacımız var. Böylelikle bunlar akademi açısından da bize katkı sağlayacaktır. Çünkü klasik olarak yapılan ve yıllarca süren araştırmaların yanında bu tarz katkılara da ihtiyacımız var. Gelecek için en önemli olan şeylerden biri, bu. Özellikle gelecekte kriz iletişiminin başarılı olması bakımından bu, önemli bir faktör.

Timothy Sellnow:

Very good. Amiso. Your thoughts.

Amiso George



Thank you, and I want to thank the people of Türkiye for inviting me to the Directorate of Strategic Communication. I also want to express my heartfelt condolence to the victims, their families and all the rescue teams from Türkiye and from all around the world, who came together to ensure that what we are now talking about the very successful rescue efforts. We can acknowledge now. I thank you all, and I joined the rest of the world in consoling you and also reminding you of what you already know that Türkiye is stronger than ever. Again, thank you for welcoming me here. As my colleagues have already mentioned to you, I would just come to this from the perspective of someone who is very much interested in cultural sensitivities. But we will start first with this: in any kind of crisis, it is very important to gauge the crisis. What kind of crisis is it? I use a very simple acronym GMER: gauge, mitigate, execute and review. All of these are aspects that those who have the same crisis communication are very much aware of: what does our research tell us, what is the crisis about, and what is the extent of it? As I listened to our presenters yesterday and today, we saw that in action because one can simply jump into a crisis situation without knowing exactly what the extent of that crisis is, and therefore, ensuring what

they would prepare and take with them to that crisis location. And then, of course, is to mitigate once there is an understanding of what the crisis is, what the actions, communication actions and other ways that have to be taken in order to minimise the impact of the crisis, to contain the crisis, which is of course the first thing one wants to do. What are those actions? Of course, one must not forget that this is a team effort. I heard my colleague Deanna talk about collaboration, and we have seen that in action with international collaboration, very effective international collaboration. Something else to mention is that these are relationships that were developed before the crisis, which is, again, a very important aspect of effective crisis communication. Do these relationships exist? Have they cultivated them before a crisis actually occurs? We saw that. When it comes time for execution, people, collaborators and partners all come together, as we have seen with this particular earthquake. They have worked collaboratively together. I heard one of the presenters say, "It is that we are not on a race track." Absolutely correct. It is not about who did it best, but working together regardless of where they came from to ensure that they execute the primary goal, which is rescuing and saving people as much as possible. And I want to also talk about this: After execution, how do we know what we have done and how well we have done? Evaluation is very important, and that is an aspect. As my colleague Martin has just mentioned, people tend to forget to say "Crisis is over. A great job. Let us pat ourselves on the back and move on." That is good. However, we also need to assess: What other things did we do well? Let me go back to the issue of collaborators and partners. What was it? What are the specific steps that we took and that our partners took to ensure that this was as seamless an operation as possible? Let us evaluate that. What are some things that did not go well? I heard one of the presenters talk about it because everything is not always perfect and will not go perfectly. We have our best plans. As we all know, in crisis communication, we have our crisis plans and then things just go alright. What are those things that went on alright and how do we plan to ensure that those things do not occur again? So, evaluation is very important at the end of a crisis because we look at the lessons we have learned and then use that in our future teaching. Dianna mentioned that. What is learning, how can we learn, and how can we prepare others who may find themselves in our situation? How can we help them to prepare better? So, we need to gauge, mitigate, execute and review. Another aspect that I want to mention is that my particular area of interest is cultural sensitivity. I am from Fort Worth, Texas. I am in Türkiye. It is very important that anyone going into a different culture to do any kind of work must be sensitive to the culture of the persons or the population that they are working with. That means making an effort to learn about them. You may or may not be able to speak their language, and that is all right; you have a translator, but learn about the important aspects of their culture or their religion. So, when you are communicating with them at such a time when they are

very vulnerable, it is important to show respect and understand their culture because that also builds trust. As we heard some of the speakers talk about that, even though they were the ones working to rescue the victims, the victims were kind to them. You might wonder, "How did that happen?" The building of trust does not have to be something that happens over a long period of time. It could be a very short period, simply by showing some cultural sensitivity about the persons that you are walking with. It takes so little, but it has such a profound impact. As we have heard, our research tells us that if we make just a little extra effort to learn about the persons whom we are working with in times of vulnerability, in times of crisis, and if we are sensitive to their culture and religion, then it goes a long way in how they would respond to us, and it goes a long way in building that trust that we all wish to have with the persons that we work with.

Timothy Selinow:

Thank you, Sjirk.

Sjirk Meijer



Thank you. My background is a little bit different. Someday, I don't know why, I got a PhD and then I diverted into crisis management. And well, disasters have been a big part of my life. Still, I am seeing what's happened in Türkiye is such an enormous that I can really feel the impact, also personally. And I want to wish the people of Türkiye a lot of strength. The nice thing about sitting in a painless lost is that you don't have to say a lot anymore because everything is already said and most probably, they are far wiser than I am. But I want to look further on what Amiso, my neighbour said. And that is about relationships and trust building. What happened now in Türkiye is such enormous. In scale, it is unprecedented. But even when we look at the people who are coming to help the heroes who sat here before. In their normal life, they already work in crisis and normally they are a firefighter. They are in that kind of jobs already and they come to help. So, it is a matter of skill that they are used to work in crisis and just scale up to this big crisis. And that is also in my perception how communication should work in crisis communication. It is not about preparing for this big one. It is about using the right way of communicating in everyday life. In the normal disaster... I don't know if a normal disaster exists but even a car crash is a disaster for a family. And it is all scale. If there are families killed in the car crash, it is devastating. In those times, you also need to have the right communication and do the right thing. So, it is not about, "Oh, have a deep breath, let us prepare for the big thing". No, prepare for the small ones that grow into the big things. Another one I want to build further on is this relationship trust-building. I am a big fan. Well, it is maybe a wrong wording but I'm not an English native speaker, you know. I am quite fond of the concept of community resilience. Building, preparing for disasters is also building communities to be prepared for disasters. So, it is working on the local level and disaster, even a disaster like this scale is not a national disaster. It is also at every village, neighbourhood. That scale is also a disaster. Disasters are real with real people. It is very local. Even if it is widespread, it is local. And well, maybe not the cyber aspect of it, but it is quite local. And if you can already build in preparation, strong communities who are prepared for big events who are knowing each other better. Because knowing each other is helping each other. And that can build during an event or a disaster. But you can also emphasise it in working to it. I know that in the Istanbul area, the Turkish government has already acknowledged that when a big earthquake hits Istanbul, which has a big chance of happening in the next 20 years, the communication message is not to rely on the government for the first 27 hours. Because we don't know if we can come to you, so prepare yourself. But also, and that is their second programme. Prepare your community around you. And then it's getting really strong. Because you are prepared and then the people are well-aligned. I want to stop now for this because I think that clock is my total speaking time.

Timothy Selinow:

Yes, it's time, to move on. Let's shift now to focus on learning from disasters. So, a real emphasis that we have at this meeting, I would like each of you moving a little more quickly, if you could give me one example of what you would say a successful lesson learned from organizations that performed well or countries that performed well. You could just share one lesson each. We will start with Deanna.

Deanna Selinow:

Thank you, Tim. But I'm going to talk about something, a lesson that I want to take from this conference, so, I'm going to twist it a little bit there. We have been doing a really good job with those three R's. Resilience, response and recovery during the short term. And I think that those are critical and we need to keep doing them. But I was thinking about this concept about going forward and what we need to do next or do more of. And what I would argue is those short-term responses are critical for saving lives and we need to keep doing them. But in some sense, they are like a bandage because they are not enough to heal those deeper wounds of trauma to that will help restore hope. And so, I would argue that going forward we need to add one more R to that list and that is 'renewal'. And by renewal, I mean effective communication for renewal is characterised by learning from the event or events after the event or events to transform people in ways that help them regain their agency and empowerment going forward, which requires a paradigm shift. Renewal begins not with the senders who share information, but rather with the receivers, those stakeholders, those victims and their relatives, and the people that are involved in the crisis events to share their stories. They need to be seen. We need to make the invisible, visible and heard and valued. Those shared stories become the foundation upon which renewal can take place. Strategic communications for long term sustainable solutions in crisis and disaster contexts must begin with making sure everyone has a seat at the table to be seen and heard and valued. Through these stories, we can go beyond resilience, response and recovery to renewal that transforms people and societies, not by putting back into place what was before the catastrophic event, but instead to transform people and processes into what will be better going forward. It is like the caterpillar who has to go in through the struggling of the cocoon, the event to ultimately be transformed into that butterfly that comes out of the cocoon.

Timothy Selinow:

Very good. Thank you, Martin.

Martin Löffelholz:

I think there are several examples we can look at and I would like to bring up the example of New Zealand. New Zealand has been studied by researchers, different types of crises regarding earthquakes. There was this 2010/2011 earthquakes near Christchurch. And after that the New Zealand government set up a dedicated crisis team and from then onwards, they have been working quite well in order to prepare for future crisis. And this paid off during the pandemic. I think it is one of the reasons why New Zealand did quite well during the pandemic, so the crisis response to the pandemic in New Zealand was also praised for being quite successful. There are numerous other examples when we look at the pandemic, for instance in Taiwan and some others. However, I would like to bring up a topic which Amiso has already mentioned, cultural sensitivity. Unfortunately, we have only been discussing this topic for a few years. Many of the theoretical approaches and empirical studies we have been conducting on risk and crisis communication originate from the so-called West, especially from North America and some European countries. And that turns out to be a problem, let's say, for the rest, for all the other countries. I have been working and living many years of my life in different Asian countries. For instance, in Indonesia, I was president of a private university in Jakarta and as you probably know, Indonesia is at the Ring of Fire, so it is also earthquake-prone. And we need to prepare, all of us and even me as president, we have to be alert, we have to prepare, we need to establish a crisis team. And when I as a crisis communication researcher, tried to utilise all the knowledge we had, and there is a lot of knowledge, I found out that we can use it partly. However, we have to be careful generalising it. We have to localise and we have to adapt it to the local community. So that is I think one of my major practical messages. Finally, I think another aspect which we observed in our recent studies is everyone knows that in a situation of crisis, there is an information overload which is a challenge for organisations, media and first responders, which I think has been mentioned also this morning. What we are underestimating is that in protected multiple crises like pandemics or, let's say, the aftermath of earthquakes and natural disasters, people are also experiencing what I would like to call information fatigue. People are getting tired of listening to messages and media reports on crises and their consequences. And I think that is also one of the reasons because media attention is getting lower. People don't like to talk about it anymore. They are happy that the crisis is over. The pandemic is a very good example for that because we have been dealing with it for two or three years. And now, no one really wants to deal with it anymore. But I think that is one of the major reasons to connect it with what I said before, why there is a lack of evaluation in the system, and that is one of the major problems.

Timothy Selinow:

Very good. It makes good sense. Amiso?

Amiso George:

You would notice that responses sort of build on each other because there is a connect, connectivity and connectedness aspect of it. What I have learned in my research in crisis communication, like we all know, is that clear and timely communication is essential. People want to know, for instance, in the case of the earthquake recently here in Türkiye, people want to know where is it happening or do I have relatives and friends there? They want to know so they would know what action to take. So, it is not enough to just share the information with them. But it is very important to basically tell them what is being done about it. It is what one of the presenters said yesterday and I am looking at you there. Tell us. Basically, do and show us how you are going to do it and this also shows that you care. So timely information is very important and clarity of the information is very important. Whatever the local language is, ensuring that information is provided in that local language is so important. And why is that so important? To minimise fear because people are in a very vulnerable situation. They do not know what to do and also to prevent the spread of disinformation. We live in a social media age where people can use pictures, images from something completely different and pass that off as an image from that particular area of the crisis. So, it is important that information is clear, consistent, and timely. Now, how do we make all of this happen? And what research has taught us that community involvement is very important in sharing this information? Again, these are relationships that we should have established prior to the crisis. So, when the crisis does occur and we are sharing this information, the community leaders are partners in helping to disseminate that information. And another thing that is very important that Martin just alluded to is that we can't just use a Western approach, a linear approach, and assume that social media will do all the work for us. Certainly, use it. But are there other means of communicating to the target audience that we are trying to reach? Then take advantage of it. So, there isn't one set rule, but what works for one particular community or one particular audience may not work for another. So, identify what works: clear and timely information involving the community in the dissemination of this information using both what is considered normal media, the traditional media, social media, and other channels of communication to get to an audience because, at times like this, information is king. And we have seen that with the COVID experience or rather the pandemic that we all experienced, that there were a multiplicity of dubious information and people acted on it. Because in some cases, certain

governments now use ours as an example didn't give out consistent, accurate information. So, people were inundated with all kinds of information that was detrimental to their health.

Timothy Sellnow:

We are running out of time.

Sjirk Meijer:

I will make it short. Yes, you are right. Thanks. I had something in my head. You said it all and more. One example, I have already mentioned the example of Istanbul of course, which is a great way of communicating, I think. Just telling you upfront what can happen and what to expect and how to act. And also train people on that one. I think they trained about 300,000 people in that program in Istanbul. Istanbul is 11 million. Not a big portion, but still, it is very considerable. I had something in my mind and now I have lost it. I was thinking about what you said about misinformation. There are also things that can be learned about how to deal with it. The human mind is very capable, and we are all individuals working together in this world. And if we have the right tools, we can deal with a lot of misinformation. We can deal with a lot of fake news if we are trained in it. That is also part of preparing for disaster but also preparing for life, nowadays, I think. To know what is not real. In resilience-building, schools are so important that we learn and we give people the tools to act in the right way. You do not have to learn how to act because they will act anyway. But people always act on the basis of what they can and what information they have. And if you can teach them to feel the right information, that would be very helpful for them to act in the right way.

Timothy Selinow:

Very good. Our final question. What is the responsibility of researchers in general and academia specifically in increasing public awareness of disasters and disaster response? Deanna.

Deanna Selinow:

This one is really, really near and dear to my heart and I will provide some context for my answer. During the pandemic, the portion when we were all locked down at home, I became addicted to watching CNN News. And as a crisis communication expert, what I was doing was getting frustrated when I would hear people saying exactly the wrong thing for public awareness in terms of the issues that we were dealing with the pandemic, COVID-19. And I thought, "Oh, this is wrong, this is wrong, this is wrong. Pretty soon, I started to realise this was my fault.

Because, that means we, as academic researchers, are not getting the word out to the people who need to find useful on the ground in the work that they are doing. I was implicated at that point. And since then, I have been committed to these two things that I would like to mention right now. One of them is that we need to be strategic about our research. And by that, I mean we need to make our generalisable conclusions and implications from our research accessible and useful to those doing the work on the ground and in the fields. We need to do so by situating our research in applied contexts rather than in hypothetical situations. We need to conduct our research together with the people who are living and working in those contexts. And we need to share our research widely beyond academic, esoteric, academic journal publications. One example I can talk about very quickly is that Tim and I have done a lot of work developing, testing, and measuring an idea, the idea model for effective crisis and risk communication. The point of the idea model is to create a theoretically grounded, data-driven, experimentally, empirically tested model for effective instructional communication in a context that can be easily understood and employed by practitioners when time is of the essence. We are very pleased with the work that we have been doing over the last almost two decades with that. But it is not enough to have it in the Journal of Applied Communication and Research or the Journal of Communication or whatever journal it might be. Since my conviction, we have been submitting it to government agency newsletters where it can go out to the Journal of Emergency Management, where the managers can read and write not just the academic research article but at the same time write something for practising professionals that can get the usefulness out of the work that we are doing. So, there's that piece. The second one is to be strategic about our global relationship-building. Thank you for inviting us here; this is what I am talking about. We need to find opportunities to visit like-minded people where they are and start seizing these opportunities to make connections with others. Because together, we can do so much more synergistically than any of us can do alone in our silos. It is by relationship building, attending conferences and summits, and doing these kinds of networking. I would like to put a plug-in for something that we have just developed. We have developed an International Crisis and Risk Communication Association, and one of the things that the Association will be doing is hosting a conference in Orlando, FL, USA. Consider yourself invited. It is in March of every year, and it is to put practising professionals and academic researchers together in the same room for two and a half days, similar to this wonderful work you're doing here, to talk about these issues to make better what we are doing going forward. The International Crisis and Risk Communication Conference is held in March of each year. That is one thing that we have been doing since my conviction. Another thing that we are doing is we have just created a LinkedIn page called the Sellnow Group. Please find us and follow us. This is an opportunity to have ongoing exchanges together in quiet times. Before and after, when there is not a horrible, devastating tragedy like

what Türkiye is going through right now, we are connecting and building our relationships with one another all year long. We need to be strategic about our research and strategic about our relationships with one another. That's the responsibility of researchers in the academy, in my opinion.

Timothy Selinow:

Very good, Martin, some of the relationships that you have established.

Martin Löffelholz:

Diana has given a great overview of how academia could also contribute to practice. In fact, when we are looking at our discipline, our field, which is communication studies, compared to other areas of research, risk and crisis communication, is very practical and much applied. Many of our research projects are funded by organisations that have a certain interest in dealing with and mitigating the impact of the crisis. Secondly, I myself, for instance, was a journalist in my first career, and I still remember one of my first jobs covering the war in Sri Lanka in 1983. And that gave me a lifetime experience. It also raised my interest in this field of research. And I never forget that we as researchers also have an obligation to society. That is what Diana also meant. Secondly, connected to what we have already discussed, cultural sensitivity, etc. All larger countries also need a centre for risk and crisis communication research. I have looked at the state of research on Türkiye and risk and crisis communication. A number of colleagues are conducting empirical studies in this field. For instance, when we look at natural disasters and earthquakes, there are some studies analysing the communication after the quakes in İzmir in 2020, and they came to some very important results. And the question is, in terms of learning organisation, are we dealing with that? Are we also taking these experiences and findings seriously in practice? So, we need conferences like that. Deanna has mentioned it, but we also need a forum, probably a regular forum for researchers and practitioners interested in working together. I myself am also involved in the Turkish German University in İstanbul in Beykoz, and we have implemented it. We have been implementing a new MA communication study program for two years. One of the concentration areas is risk and crisis communication, as well as digital communication. In preparation for this conference, I also looked at what my colleagues at the campus of the Turkish German University are doing, and I found the Allianz Technique, Earthquake and Fire Testing and Training Centre, which was established in 2019 on the campus of Turkish German University. One of my next steps is to visit my colleagues here because the technical perspective of engineering is very

important in preparing for future quakes. Still, it would be better if we could align it and connect it with the social sciences, especially communication. We should discuss this in different forums. We should discuss where and when we could develop such a centre here in Türkiye to deal with risk and crisis communication on a regular basis because that is a prerequisite for many things. For instance, educating qualified staff to be prepared to know how to deal with risk and crisis communication is one of the major problems organisations face. They have a few qualified communication specialists, but the majority of people have never even been going through formal training, and I think that is much worse. I think a large country like Türkiye should also have a centre like that wherever it will be organised later, as a network of different universities. But that could also be a very productive and constructive outcome of this conference. So, I am really happy that I was invited to this conference so that I can also help think about these matters and probably bring them up later in different contexts.

Timothy Selinow:

Very good progress. Thank you, Martin. Amiso?

Amiso George:

I should say my colleagues have aptly captured exactly what I have in my notes. To summarise the importance of conducting research, of course, and disseminating the research in not just academic journals but also business journals. In this case, the Emergency Communication Journal is very important, and other notes that I have here are in collaboration with stakeholders, as Martin has just shared with us about working with the German Turkish University. And providing education and training is very important. It is not just about doing that at universities but also at conferences such as this, where perhaps the last part of the conference would be devoted to training or just carving out some time for education and training in disaster and risk management. And providing our research, educational materials, and training manuals. And of course, these days everything is electronic, so it does not matter where in the world we are, we can continue to provide that kind of training. The last point that I have here is to have risk and crisis communication experts—perhaps, working as advocates with various governments to help them understand. Perhaps not every government is as fortunate as the one here in Türkiye, but perhaps smaller governments are working with them to recognise the importance of planning ahead for crisis and risk management and preparing them so they can better handle such situations when they do arise. Because it will arise today, we all know that the crisis is really transboundary. While it may happen in one country, the consequences

and impact are broadly felt. So again, our job as researchers is to help people see beyond what is happening at that particular time to prepare them for it. We also aim to prepare them by providing our research in very practical terms to enable them to do a much better job. It is not going to be perfect, but they do a much better job than they could have done without the data to support their work.

Timothy Selinow:

Very good advice. Thank you. Sjirk?

Sjirk Meijer:

Thank you. Can I ask the audience a question? Who of you is an academic researcher? Okay, I see you. Not many hands. So, I will only offend my fellow panellists. And that is good. One of the things I want to say about research is getting away from the thought that there is a research community. And that there exists something like a closed entity called science. And I have been a big fan of citizen science. And I think citizen science can be very helpful in crisis communications science. Citizen science takes you to communities where you use or teach citizens to do science. And then they can do their own science. You can also use all the standards that apply to science. You can apply it, but give them the tools again and let them work from their perspective and their community base. I have done such a project in Ukraine, and it was amazing what kind of research you can do if you really go into the community and teach them about science and what kind of research you do. But also how that whole process will help the community build further on its resilience. The second thing is that now I'm going from the low community level to the European level. I am happy that I am also running the Crisis Management Interface Network, CMINE. In that network, we cluster Horizon Europe projects on disaster reduction on the board of management all kinds of projects. Those big Horizon projects of Europe are for which Türkiye is eligible. So, Türkiye can participate in that kind of project. We clustered those projects and are helping them disseminate the results of those big research and innovation projects because what you see in this project is that they are loose from the ground and hovering somewhere in the air. Maybe they are joining the iCloud or something. But they need to touch base again and disseminate the results in a practical manner. That is where clustering projects, where they can interact with each other, can also help disseminate the results in a more useful manner. So that is for closing. Thank you.

Timothy Selinow:

Very good, Sjirk. Thank you. I would like to thank our panellists and the planners for inviting us. I would like to leave you with a thought. And that is our shared hope. Our shared hope is that in crisis situations, we all listen, learn, and honour the lives of those we mourn by seeking and finding the right words that can indeed save lives. Thank you for having us. Thank you.

S P E E C H

Crisis Communications During Disaster in the Context of the Grief Cycle

Nordin Abdullah**Founder of Malaysia Crisis Management Center**

Thank you. Thank you very much. As-salamu alaykum and a very good afternoon to everybody. Like all speakers, I also want to express my condolences to the Turkish people as well as the Syrian people. And we thank everyone who has contributed to the disaster response. Today, I want to add to some of the things that a lot of the presenters have talked about. Maybe I can help consolidate some of those ideas, distil some of them and also introduce some new ideas to the discussion in terms of what I have seen that probably is a gap that we can address, which is the grief cycle and how do we now start to communicate to people who are grieving? How are we looking at the planning that goes into it? How do we look at the ideas that we will come up with? And what kind of impact will the way we deliver communications at the strategic or crisis level have? What I wanted to discuss first is that – I know the professor on the first day mentioned that he has already come up with a definition of crisis management and that it has already been written about, but this is, in a sense, our definition of crisis – why we want to look at this is to avoid the loss of life, property, reputation, position or power. A lot of the issues that we have been discussing lately are really about a very egalitarian idea. But in a lot of cases, we have to think about people who want to consolidate and maintain power. Why? Because the other part is the disruption of a functioning society or a way of life for a group of people. That group of people could be a small community somewhere in the mountains. It could also be a board of directors who want to maintain their position of power, or it could be a group of politicians. There is a whole range of understanding when it comes to this idea of a group of people. What is Crisis Communications? It would be the type of effective communication in terms of developing those communications to help maintain that status quo. It is developing communication strategies, policies, and plans, and what my friend and I keep continually talking about is the allocation of resources. Without sufficient resources, even the most well-intentioned plans to prevent loss of property, life, and reputation will falter. It comes down to what is the objective of your crisis management. What is the objective of your organisation? What is the objective of your country? One of the issues that has not been talked about here is the development of regulations or the law. At the directorate, you, at this top level, also have to think about what laws need to be changed to help manage a crisis. That is something that I think needs to be further developed. You need lawyers who are educated in communication and crisis management and this kind of approach. One thing that we have developed is what is called the reputation revenue dynamic. This is very much for the private sector. Regarding the final point, revenue, in the context of politics, you could substitute the term “revenue” with “votes.” There is a political element to it, but we will use the polite one first, so we always start with data. Our data master is over here, and this is where we have to start. And this does not just mean social media data but all these other kinds of data. It is a consolidated approach in terms of understanding data. That data will then inform

the content. That content will then go into a specific community. I believe the previous panel repeatedly used the term “community,” but identifying the specific community you are referring to now becomes extremely challenging. We may think that we need to communicate

It is one thing to say they are performing their job. This is truly an exercise of global showcase.

with everyone in Türkiye, but this task is almost impossible. What about communicating with women above the age of 30 in a suburb of Istanbul? This may be the area that you need to deal with the most. So, defining communities as a target with which you need to communicate now becomes incredibly important. That communication will turn into a reputation output. If we think of it as an output or a desired objective, it becomes a very different reality. Then, you get the revenue or the votes that you are after. It comes to the point of the idea of the grief cycle. Why is this important? One reason is that the entire country is grieving. Yesterday, when I sat here listening to the conversations and listening to all the presentations, it was incredibly emotional to hear those journalists talk about the time when they took a one-year-old baby's body and put it in the back of a car. This was an amazing thing. And you can see the tears in these people's eyes. So, they are still in the grievance cycle. They are still dealing with this problem. We take this understanding and apply it to how we communicate. We ask ourselves, “How are the people within this specific community we are dealing with?” Knowing they are experiencing grievance, how do we design our communication for them? On the first day, I was fortunate to meet a wonderful woman from the Red Crescent. I ex-

In many cases, I believe that the individual who is particularly good at speaking is the one who can communicate with the media. But I think when it comes to disaster response, it is crucial to ensure the accurate delivery of the message. We need to revisit the process of mourning and make sure it is handled effectively. This is one of the issues we need to address.

pressed my focus on understanding the emotional state of the community and how we could communicate with them effectively. Throughout the conversation, I kept asking, “How do we communicate with them?” However, that phrasing, “How do we communicate with them,” turned out to be the wrong approach. The conversation itself proved far more valuable because it shifted the focus to listening. It became clear that the crucial question was, “How do we listen to them?” And that is going to be a very difficult reality for people in positions of power. Communicators like myself like to wear a suit and a tie. We have a nice haircut. We behave ourselves. We have certain ideas or a certain bias in our heads. We know what is best. And we believe it. It is a belief. We believe that we know what is best and what should be communicated. But did we listen? And how do we listen? Data points gleaned from communities directly affected by disasters can be crucial. By understanding this community-sourced data, we can then situate it within the context of the grief cycle. The Kübler-Ross model, established for years, provides a valuable framework. The first stage, denial, is a natural human response to overwhelming events. Denial allows for initial emotional processing. However, anger quickly follows, presenting a significant challenge for communication efforts. I have this problem as well when my wife is angry with me, and when I try to communicate with her, I fail. You know you travel all around the world talking about communication, but when I am angry, you cannot talk to me. Why could she be so angry? In my mind, she is not listening. In her mind, I am not listening. We need to learn about the emotional state of the person we are trying to communicate with, even though we are right. Even though she is right, I cannot get my message across. It is quite literally impossible. Even if I have empirical evidence to prove it. It is still wrong. Why? Because I did not take into consideration her anger. Another thing, and we saw a lot of this content come out in the media coverage, is that I really appreciate some of the ethics shown by some of the earlier journalists and my friend from Australia who restrained himself. At that point, you could have taken that step and got that extra bit of information or that extra bit of context, but I can tell you some of the media did not. And they quite literally filmed the grief process. The bargaining processes. And I still remember it because I was doing these slides before coming over. A Turkish woman, she must have been in her 50s or 60s. Begging and bargaining on international TV to bring back her daughter. It was quite literally the bargaining process. It was filmed. Filming such a moment is akin to filming an execution. But the reality is, how do we now communicate with her when she is going through the bargaining process? If you ask people from the Red Cross or the Red Crescent, it is not just about what you say; it is also about what you do not say. When we start to design communications, we need to start designing a set of communications that work within this context, and at the same time, we need to design a set of communications that should not be used. Now we get to the next part, which, again, I quite literally copied the research. Telling one story is actually

part of the process, and they use the word depression. I do not think it is the right word, but I am not going to argue with the professors about this. I do think depression is the right word, but I think the interesting part for me as a communicator is this part: telling one story. Yesterday, we saw some amazing stories that no one had seen before. I was not here during the earthquake. I arrived a couple of days ago. Actually, I represent 99% of the world's population in terms of how they consumed your earthquake. For me, some amazing stories I heard yesterday are reality. You all remember the negative reaction that arose from the concern that the disaster response was not proceeding quickly enough. Yesterday, I thought many good stories could have been talked about. For example, how you collected data, how you tracked excavation machines, and how you kept track of everything regarding the disaster were beautiful communications just waiting to happen. Then I spoke with the deputy director general from AFAD, and I said, "You have to make documentaries." I was so excited in my little communicators world but she just said, "No, it is not time yet." It is like what the Professor said earlier: culturally, we were not there yet. Because we are still in this process, we are not ready. Once we get through this part, we can start to talk about new plans and moving on and getting through that acceptance part. This may be where you start changing and looking at how you are going to move your planning around communications. I once had a very good professor who said, "Nordin, you do not know enough about things to make any kind of comments. Maybe you are good enough to ask some questions." I always argue with my professors. It is fine. Question number one: how can we use the grief cycle to inform us of the emotional state of people in disaster zones? Both victims and first responders. I think when we start to design high-level disaster response plans and high-level communications plans, we need to start thinking of the first responders as well as a key area of concern. We saw some amazing presentations earlier today from the first responders, and it was really good. The other point is how much can we change victims' emotional state through communications, or do we have to ride out the grief cycle? Everyone over the last two days has been talking about

I know that the communications regulations are already fairly impressive, and you have made a lot of reforms to them. But I think more criminalization... I suddenly began to sound very authoritarian. You know that I come from a vibrant Western democracy. However, adopting a potential strategy for the future to take a stronger stance against misinformation should be considered, particularly during times of crisis.

a very positive approach. How to help? How to be egalitarian about this? How do we do the greatest amount of good to the greatest amount of people in the shortest possible time? This is our intention. For instance, in fact, this whole conference, how do we achieve that? What happens when there are many people who do not have the same objective and, in fact, want to do harm? It is an opportunity for the enemies of Türkiye to weaponise information during your earthquake. They are still weaponising it today. If we do not ask this question, and they ask this question and get a really good answer, we are in trouble. Why? We go back to the definition of crisis management, which is to maintain the way of life of a group of people, even if they are a group of people, which is 85 million Turks. Maybe it includes another six million Turkish diaspora around the world or the resident population of Istanbul? What is that definition? Now, another thing. I hope the researchers who are on the panel answered this question. What are the long-term emotional impacts and how can we communicate effectively in the context of national recovery? So, we will talk about it a bit. Also the idea of control and command. But it has to go into detail and you saw it very quickly in the president's actions: the idea of national recovery. But there were also counter-stories around the certain things that were not done. This thing was not done. That thing was not done. Time was too, too short. Everyone in every presentation talks about time. And time has become so important. But how do we understand the emotional, long-term emotional impacts so that we can start to build a more resilient, and, it is in the name, a more resilient response? A resilient response is not a one or two-week or one- or two-year thing. It is going to take quite literally a decade or a generation to respond to this crisis in a resilient manner. You can respond to this crisis in a non-resilient manner and it can be very fast. And, of course, how will this process impact the political landscape? I will leave that to the political people. So, considerations: We want rapid communication, we want rapid response, rapid resolution. We are all in this consumer society, and with where everything is now, we can blame Amazon and we can blame DHL for delivering goods and services in a heartbeat. But this is a megatrend. Because of these megatrends, you now need to think differently. Now, the ability to use social listening tools and AI to distil sentiment needs to be refined further to filter out the noise and misinformation. Now, we do a lot of work around what is called Dragonbridge attacks, which is a whole thing around the US-China trade war, dispute or problem, whatever word you want to use, but there is a whole set of fake communications that take place. And it is done using cybersocial means. Completely fake accounts can do this by using computers to ensure that these entire communications take place. Literally, some press member enters and then the whole thing runs. But how do you respond to that? So, if this is happening in the midst of your crisis, you do not have the tools the team or the understanding if you do not have the proper social listening. If you do not get the proper data, you will be misinformed. You will make poor decisions. And everyone in this

room, in terms of those communicators or part of those communications' strategic teams, your job is to understand what is going on. You will brief the minister; the minister will brief the Prime Minister or the president. Your information is paramount. Gaps in that information, quite literally, will cost lives or cost careers. Anger and fear, we heard that word a lot the last couple of days, are the most dangerous emotions. But they also make for the best images to use. And I think this is something that we have got to balance. And this one is my favourite. If you are not the hero of this story, you are the villain. Again, I think this is when you start to understand the objective of your organisation. What is the objective of people within your organisation, and what is the objective of organisations that are competing with you? Political, military and even criminal organisations, for example. You know we do not have the data on how much criminal activity took place during this disaster. You know, looting is often a big problem. So, we are seeing strategic shifts and we are kind of moving away from the grief cycle here, but I just wanted to share some observations that I made from thousands of miles away. Crisis communications teams are required to be ready and to operate in disaster zones. So unfortunately, we have got to take off our fancy suits and get down and get our hands dirty. And preparedness needs to be measured in minutes, not hours or days. So, this is because of how fast the news operates. And I think it does not mean you have to be there in 5 minutes, but you need to have communications ready. So, it is screenshot time. The AFAD logo is there, which is wonderful. This is something I took from Al Jazeera; I think a couple of days afterwards. President is there and if you see on the left, who knows who that guy is? It is the host of this entire event. He is, in a sense, a communicator-in-chief. He is down there on the ground. I am sure there are 100 people at least, however, many people there. So, tick the box. The Director of Communications was there, informing the president, and also informing that they were informing the president. It is one thing to say that you are doing the job but now you need to show that you are doing the job. This is quite literally a global show-and-tell exercise. So, we are going back to kindergarten. You know, we did not make it out of a primary school yet. So, the fact that this is for me a very good example of getting things done and interagency. Now you see a ton of first responders and I would love to get the data from us from our guy. Imagine. First responders were sought after by everybody. I do not know the voices during that time because they are the ones who are the "experts" of what exactly is happening. So, we need to get the data on this and understand it. Türkiye has to be the prime example of disaster response and we need the data. So, during that crisis, we spoke with the gentleman from Spain just now. Where is he? He is not here right now. But ask him how many of the first responders are media-trained. And it is not a big thing. That is done for first responders, they are like this guy. He is quiet and you saw a whole bunch of heroes this morning as well. There are a bunch

of really tough guys who look really good in their outfits and you can just chuck them out of an airplane, they will land with parachutes and they are going to save you. But are they media-trained? I do not think so. I think this guy is though, because I watch his stuff and it is pretty good. In a lot of cases, what I think is happening is there is a guy who is really good at talking. And they say, "Okay, you go and talk to the media." But I think when it comes to disaster response and ensuring that the messaging is done right, and within the context of ensuring that, we go back to that grief cycle and ensure that it is managed properly. This is one thing that we have to start to deal with. Now, we move on to defining what constitutes control of the communication sphere. So, this, again, is a strategic problem for agencies that need to manage communications. This idea of zero tolerance to misinformation. This is something that we have to put in place at the organisational level, at the ministerial level and at the higher government level all the way through. It cannot be done by one agency alone. So, again, we talk about weaponised information and all this kind of stuff. The other question is how do we manage these communications teams that are on the ground? In some countries, if you put a media person in that country, there is going to be someone from a ministry following that person around everywhere. They may or may not be a democratic country. I will let you work out who it is. But are we in a disaster zone, are we going to manage all the individuals who communicate? The experts who communicate this way may not be able to stop citizen journalism. In fact, we cannot. But we may want to think about managing better the people on the ground. Who are those first responders, who are the media, who are floating around the place, and how do they become embedded? All this needs to be put into policy, put into regulations, put into organisations, put into the plans and given the resources. You cannot have these amazing plans without putting the training in place for people like Mustafa. Where are you, Mustafa? Mustafa has been taking care of me for the last few days. There he is. You know, it could be a prime example, Mustafa knows exactly where I am all the time. I could be going to TRT World tomorrow, which I am, and may give a bad interview. But Mustafa has managed me. Is that how we are going to manage disaster zones? Is it in the plan? You know, I am from Australia. We love our freedom of speech, just like the Americans and the British and everybody else. But imagine, we start to think about controlling the communication sphere when we start to think about controlling the communication sphere. Do we need to shut down Twitter sometimes? You know, it is an important question to ask. Do we need to shut down certain communication platforms? Is there a strategy in place to understand the decision-making process? Or is it an emotional decision? I do not know. We need to know. How do you know? And then we saw some amazing PR done by these guys about how a lot of social media was used to find people. I do not know. I love to tweet about all kinds of stuff. If you guys follow me on Twitter, you can see I have been sitting at the back taking photos and tweeting.

I do not know if I am underneath the building. Will I think to tweet about it? I do not know. But is it a valid question? Are we asking these right questions in the context of command and control? We go back to this idea of command and control at the governmental level, all the way down to the municipal level, and there needs to be levels of control. But at the same time, if you ask the people at the Red Cross and all the NGOs and anyone who is down on the ground, even the first responders, they talk about that empathy and compassion. So, what is the balance? How much research has gone into understanding what the balance is? So, now this is, by far, the biggest thing that I took away from a communicator. And someone who deals a lot with diplomatic services around the world. Türkiye has set a new benchmark at the intersection of public diplomacy and crisis communications. This, for me, is something you should be congratulated about. Because the biggest story during that time, like the night before and for weeks and months before was the Russia-Ukraine War. And I am sure President Zelenski was, of course, heartbroken by the devastation. But I can tell you he is more worried about his communication strategy. Because it took the limelight and for a very long time. You controlled this one through public diplomacy. And the second thing is, through the media, you saw world leaders becoming your advocates. So, this is something I hope the researchers do the research on, so the data comes out about it and we can understand its value. And it is really distilling, unfortunately, it is distilling the value of the disaster. In terms of minutes, hours and days of airtime that delivered the strategic messages of Türkiye. And I think this is what we need to understand, from a strategic communications perspective, when we come back to understanding objectives. One of the objectives has to be understood in terms of that context. One may be the humanitarian and another may be the diplomatic level, but all of these need to be drawn out in the context. And you know that your region is a disaster-prone area, so this is something I think can be very interesting. I think here when we look at really, my last point is, that this critical threat to crisis communication is really the issue of misinformation. And I think we are going to have to continue to manage it and understand it and continue to work towards better solutions. I know how many lunches I had with Mustafa over the last couple of days. I said, look, there are things that you can do to manage misinformation. You have to understand how each platform works. You have to understand how to knock out misinformation. It is not just because it is there. You do not have to deal with it. Strategies and tactics can be put in place to deal with it. This is something that needs to be done, again, at the planning level, policy level, regulatory level, and resource level. This is where we have got to get to and finally, I know that Türkiye's communication laws are pretty impressive already and you have done a lot of reform around these laws. I may sound awfully authoritarian all of a sudden, coming from a vibrant Western democracy, but I think further criminalization of misinformation, especially during a crisis, should be something that is understood as a possible strategy moving forward. So, with that, thank you very much.

P A N E L

08

**Moderator:**

Gökhan Yücel, Head of the Department of Strategic Communication and Crisis Management of the Presidency's Directorate of Communications

Panelists:

Firat Yurdakul, AA Visual News Editor-in-Chief

Abrar Sabbah, Graphic Designer

Mikail Sevinç, TRT Drone Pilot



Visual Language and Expression in Disaster Stories

Stratcom Panel - 8 Afet Hikâyelerinde Görsel Dil ve Anlatım Stratcom Panel - 8 : Storytelling in Times of Emergencies

Moderatör
Moderator



Gökhan Yücel

Panelistler
Panelists



Abrar Sabbah



Mikail Sevinç



Fırat Çağlar
Yurdakul



Gökhan Yücel



Once again, we appreciate everyone for staying with us till the late hours of the second day of the Forum. It is indeed a great pleasure for us. I would also like to thank my team as the head of the department that organised this event on behalf of the Presidency's Directorate of Communications. They made an invaluable effort. Let's give them a round of applause... There were actually going to be five of us. But these seasonal transitions have probably shaken people up a bit. So, there is an increase in flu cases. Mr. Erhan İdiz is suffering from a serious illness. So is Mr. Ersin, who was also going to take part in our disinformation panel. That is why they will not be attending the panel. I wanted to mention that as well. Are you going to start with a video? Let's continue with it then. Yes, Abrar, thank you. In this panel, we are together with valuable artists, journalists, and content creators who tell the stories of the disaster. Of course, when it comes to communication, I don't know if you've ever heard of David Ogilvy, one of the founders of the communication profession. He has a book called "Confessions of an Advertising Man". On the very first page of it, he describes the communicator as "a man who works like a dervish" and I was shocked when I read it because I didn't expect such a description to come from a man like him. "Why associate the communicator with 'a dervish' when there are hundreds of other words in English? Probably because dervish is someone

who does the job with love and heart as much as the mind. A person who not only takes responsibilities and obligations into account but also adds affection to the job. One who deals with the emotional world along with the physical world," I pondered. Of course, if strategic communication between this physical world and the emotional world must be defined, the existing definitions made by academics and many other experts are welcome, but my own definition of strategic communication is: "To establish the relationship, the bond between the coverage area, and the inclusiveness/comprehensiveness of the problem of a thing, a subject, an issue, a situation, or a communication issue." It is, in other words, establishing the relationship between the physical, visible, geographical, concrete layer and emotional layer as well as inclusiveness and comprehensiveness. Talking about the dervish and stories, you must know of Mawlana, known as Rumi in the West. There is a 6-volume work of his called *Masnavi*, which is on the list of best-selling books in the USA every year. You know, its first couplet is like this... I don't speak Persian very well. I will also add the translation:

Bişnev in ney çün hikâyet mîkûned

Ez cüdâyîhâ şikâyet mîkûned

Hearken to the reed-flute, how it complains, lamenting its banishment from its home.

Indeed, Rumi establishes the bond between its visual side, that is, the coverage area, and inclusiveness/comprehensiveness. Because the whole book is about the reed flute. It tells us how a reed flute is harvested from a bamboo plantation, hollowed out, put through a modification process and reaches the final stage of gaining the ability to make sound, which represents the journey to become human. For this reason, storytelling has always been at the centre of communication literature, whether ancient, modern, or postmodern. In the last 20 years, storytelling has advanced a lot, not only in strategic communication or crisis management but also in many other digital instruments, and nowadays, artificial intelligence and generative AI tools and devices. Finally, perhaps the most classic communication... Nordin has just shown it very well; I considered it an addition or derivative of what I am going to say now. But in classical communication formulations, we always talk about processes that start with data, continue with information, evolve into knowledge, and ultimately result in wisdom. As I was talking with my friends, a group of teachers, it occurred to me. The term *pratisyen hekim* (general practitioner)... Why do we solely associate it with being a doctor, surgeon, or cardiologist? Is there any indication? The term *pratisyen hekim* (general practitioner) is coined with the word "hekim" which means "wise person". Therefore, a communicator is also a *pratisyen hekim* (general practitioner). Similarly an architect is a *pratisyen hekim* (general

practitioner) as well. The poet too, because what we ultimately want to achieve is the dignity of humanity, a search for “wisdom” that always uplifts human dignity, which puts the human at the centre. Thus, obtaining an identity that is not rich in the means but poor in the aims, one that is both rich in the means and aims, is like having two wings. I personally believe we have three absolutely valuable guests here today who perfectly fit these descriptions, if you would accept those as descriptions. My dear friend Firat Yurdakul. And Abrar Sabbah, whose graphic designs made during the earthquake process are well known to everyone. They appeared in social media posts, and I saw some avatars were made as well. From the very top to all of the public, she brought that inclusiveness and comprehensiveness beyond the coverage area. Also, Erhan İdiz, I guess you all know him, content creator, he has done a lot during this period. Shall we start with you? Anadolu Agency, Visual News Editor-in-Chief. The importance of the visual side for Anadolu Agency is well known, and the importance of Firat Yurdakul for us is well known. How did you experience the earthquake and the stories? How did you tell these stories? What was your purpose? Was there anything missing? Let’s hear these from you, Mr. Yurdakul.

Firat Yurdakul



“Our colleagues who were supposed to report, take photographs, shoot videos, and broadcast live were also under rubble due to the earthquake.”

Yes, first of all, I would like to thank Mr. Gökhan and his valuable team for organising this panel. A very, very significant panel. Our country experienced the biggest disaster in the history of the Republic of Türkiye. It is truly valuable for me to have the opportunity to discuss what has been done regarding this issue in terms of journalism. I really don't know where to start now. On February 6, at 4:30 a.m., I woke up to a sorrowful phone call. One of our editors covering domestic news, Mr. Anıl, called. I responded, “Yes, Anıl.” He said, “Mr. First there has been a huge earthquake. I wanted to inform you about it.” I asked where it happened. “Around Kahramanmaraş and Hatay,” he replied. How to tell. I've been a journalist for 25 years. I have done a lot of work on the field. I have personally witnessed some of the most powerful earthquakes, not only in Türkiye, but around the world. For instance, during the 9.4-magnitude Great Asian tsunami and earthquake, which killed 200 thousand people, I worked as a reporter on the field for a month and a half. I have followed almost all earthquakes in Türkiye on the ground or at the editor's desk. But for some reason, this time I got out of bed with a broken spirit. I said, “Okay, Anıl, I'll call you.” I got up, washed my face, then called Anıl again. We instructed all of our editors to quickly prepare a graphic that would inform everyone about where the earthquake occurred.

We have a graphics team under the Visual News Editorial Directorate. We have a great photography team along with a great live broadcasting and video team. This is a team of about 1,100 people. We had to mobilise our entire team for this earthquake at 4:30 a.m. in the morning. People attach more importance to what they see than to what they hear or read. That is why conveying these images to them is one of the main duties of our state's agency. Some of you may already be aware that Anadolu Agency creates 70% of the visual content we see in the media. Perhaps we do not even realise it most of the time. It could be an image or a graphic. Similarly, the content we see in the media around the world is created by Anadolu Agency. You may be surprised but that is the reality. The ratio is 70% in the Turkish media. In other words, be it a graphic, a photo or a video, 7 out of 10 belong to Anadolu Agency. Like the one you see on the screen right now. I don't know if you can see it on the screen. I see it, but it

is important that you see it too. That was one of the first graphics we made. We have prepared another one that does not show Elbistan. We can also see Elbistan here. First, we needed to show people where the earthquake occurred. Do you know what I said to Anil, who called me? "Contact Burak Milli in the area immediately." Because our best visual team member in the region is Burak Milli. My voice trembles a little when I say this. Our friends told me, "We cannot reach Burak Milli". With his awards, etc. Burak Milli is truly one of the best photojournalists at Anadolu Agency. He is working in Hatay. I added these photos too, so maybe some people will remember. You can also see our first drone image with the moon behind it, and there are women holding an umbrella for our soldier. These photos belonged to Burak Milli and the moment I heard the response, "We cannot reach Burak Milli" I realised the magnitude of the incident. I mean, I realised that our colleagues who were supposed to report, take photographs, shoot videos, and broadcast live were also under rubble due to the earthquake. At that point, it occurred to me. If I awoke at 4:30 a.m., I comprehended what happened around 4:40 a.m. and felt excruciating anguish.

Upon that, we figured our friends in Hatay, Kahramanmaraş and Malatya would not be able to provide their services.

First of all, we have to try to rescue them. We need to immediately dispatch our live broadcast vehicles, caravans, photojournalists, and cameras there from Ankara and Istanbul. We instantly embarked on this operation. Anadolu Agency has experienced staff and experienced teams in this area. We tried to dispatch them quickly to the region. In the meantime, let me remember Burak Milli once more. His baby, his little daughter, his wife, and himself, all wrapped in a hug, lost their lives in the earthquake. I once again wish Allah's mercy upon them, may they rest in peace.

Now we present visuals to people with 17 criteria; the most important criterion is "impact" when presenting an image to people. I mean, how many people are interested in that particular photo or video? The number of individuals who are interested in a photograph or video determines its strength. So we needed to give people an initial image that demonstrated the power of this. People wonder, we have been to the earthquake zone but there are a lot of people who have not been there. Millions of people have not seen these areas. The first image had to show the magnitude of the earthquake. This was the first photo we presented that displays the intensity of the earthquake. This photo was taken by our friend Erçin Türkoğlu from Hatay. As you indicated before, this was the first image that demonstrated to the entire world media how tremendous the magnitude of the earthquake in Türkiye was.

We quickly realised that the magnitude of the earthquake was accompanied by a significant

struggle against cold and winter. And this photo is from Malatya. We had to share this with people, we had to show people this reality. Again, this photo of tragedy became one of the first documents to display the endeavour against the cold along with the earthquake.

I asked our graphic team to prepare another graphic. We broadcasted this image to all Turkish and foreign media every day from the earthquake zone for a month and a half. With it, we informed them about the temperatures every day. Of course, it was our duty to show under what conditions these people were going to cope with the earthquake. Now I mentioned 17 criteria that make an image influential. The pain is immeasurable! It is truly difficult to share the pain where 50 thousand citizens lost their lives. On what scale, according to which ethical concerns and rules should we share it? One of the criteria is emotion. Sometimes it can be joy, and sometimes it can be great pain. But no matter what, when you present your visuals, you have to keep emotion in mind. You should not hand the microphone to these people while they are in such pain but without offending them and letting them live through their pain, you should somehow show the situation to others. Indeed, our teams have shared with us very painful images that we sometimes find difficult to share and present to our subscribers. Again, this photograph is one of the images that affected me very much. This is actually a moment of rescue, as I said, sometimes the emotion is very painful, and sometimes the emotion is hope. There is a soldier crying, but it is actually a moment of emotion because they rescued the wounded. Let me take this opportunity to say that, this photo received an international award. It was one of the photographs of the earthquake that symbolised hope for us. Because babies were rescued from the rubble. Very little children were being rescued, and in fact, it is such images and photos that connect us to life during such great suffering, enable us to do journalism, and enable people to follow the news about the earthquake in front of the screen with hope. We just had to go after them.

In the first weeks of the earthquake, the issue of security in the earthquake zone was one of the most frequently raised issues. We were with our special operations police officers, our gendarmerie and our soldiers there. It was also our responsibility as cameramen and photo-journalists to broadcast on how security was maintained there and to increase public awareness of the matter.

We continuously tried to encourage our teams: "Please give us more hopeful shots, hopeful images, hopeful broadcasts, and live broadcasts.". This is new, only two days ago, it was selected as one of the photographs of the year by the Alliance of Mediterranean News Agencies. We continued to share these images. Here is a child doing a victory sign, this child was three years old. I believe this is one of the children rescued on the sixth or seventh day in Hatay. There were very important questions in people's minds. Why were we so affected by this earthquake? Why was this earthquake so massive?

Earthquakes with magnitudes of 9.4 and 8.4 have occurred around the world. Here it was 7.7 and 7.6, so why did we suffer so many losses? Why did so many houses break down? We had to explain that, too. This is one of the best explanatory graphs. It's really simple. It is plain, but it is one of the most direct graphs. Unfortunately, our earthquake depth was very low, and people realised it with this graph for the first time. This was one of the most crucial graphs we displayed for enlightening the public. I don't know if the video has started yet. There was a massive slip. There were shifts of 2 meters, 3 meters, and even reaching up to 7 meters at certain points. Our graph team worked day and night. Throughout the earthquake, they showed this to us in motion graphs.

Where was the earthquake? How many aftershocks have we experienced? Which areas did the shifts affect? They showed all of these with one-to-one comparisons. This team has one of the best graphic editors in Türkiye. Mr. Mevlüt. I don't think there is a reason not to tell you about how our partner, Reuters, served the English version of this graphic to the whole world. With this motion graphic, the whole world was able to observe for the first time the details and specifics of the earthquake in Türkiye, what kinds of damages or shifts it caused and how it changed our geography. Yes, you will remember it very well. Again, in the first weeks of the earthquake, the issue of security in the earthquake zone was one of the most frequently raised issues. We were with our special operations police officers, our gendarmerie and our soldiers there. It was also our responsibility as cameramen and photojournalists to broadcast on how security was maintained there and to increase public awareness of the matter.

Aid from all over the world flooded Türkiye. We had to show those as well. Anadolu Agency has a strong network around the world in terms of cameramen and photojournalists. We immediately recorded all the aid coming to Türkiye from all over the world. We even shared these with the Directorate of Communications. If I recall well, the Directorate of Communications organised an exhibition-style event around these. Yes, another video, quite important. Actually, this video was taken by our cameraman, Alican, who is here now. He is one of the longest-serving colleagues. There is Mehmet Kaman right next to him, one of the photojournalists at Anadolu Agency. These friends of ours, our team, worked by putting their souls on the line throughout

the earthquake and prepared a magnificent video. Why magnificent? The term magnificent is not very appropriate for the earthquake, but they have put together great footage that enabled us to analyse and understand the event better. I use this expression in that context. Kahramanmaraş is a very interesting city. There have been numerous losses. The lowland part of Kahramanmaraş was completely destroyed. The mountainside was standing strong, or at the very least, there were no casualties. The buildings were standing. For the first time, this video recording was prepared with footage accelerated by the method we call Time Laps along with drone footage and night footage, which shows how people from Türkiye are working with everything they have. This was one of the best video recordings portraying the earthquake. This was one of the most significant documentary recordings about Kahramanmaraş, demonstrating that work was being done simultaneously at 10-15 places in a single frame. This is a photograph of it, taken by our photojournalist. Look at this incredible document depicting the labour done at night in Kahramanmaraş, as far as I recall, it was during the early stages of the earthquake. By the way, I must say, every photograph and every video is a historical document. We elaborate on them in more academic presentations. I do not want to combine that with the earthquake. It is actually a document, not a written one, but a visual one. This visual document shows that work continues at 16 locations at the same time throughout the night. It is very important. Yes. One of the most important graphs made by Mr. Mevlüt and his team. Who is providing services and where? People were wondering about this, and they didn't know. Again we showed these graphs, and Turkish media widely used them. Here you can see closed roads and alternative routes. Even us, when we were planning to go, we checked this graph first. Mr. Mevlüt and his team prepared the graph and did the research. Which route should we prefer? How can we reach the earthquake zone faster? These types of graphic work have been enlightening in all this. The Republic of Türkiye did not only deal with an earthquake. The earthquake brought us many disasters simultaneously. A massive fire broke out in Iskenderun Port. Our teams were inside the fire until it was extinguished. We kept track of this. Again one of the best images showing the earthquake: Kurtuluş Street in Hatay. Anadolu Agency has a strong FPV drone team. The team we call Speed Drone... We have been regularly using this speed drone to shoot creative works. Unfortunately, we had to use it here. Kurtuluş Street was one of the busiest streets in Hatay, with most people walking about. We wanted to show this with a FPV tour, so that they could see the intensity and the magnitude of the earthquake. This was one of the most important video recordings as well. For the sake of time, I'll also skip this one.

As I mentioned, there are 17 criteria that make the visual powerful. One of them is extraordinariness. We have witnessed unbelievable scenes. The photos and videos of these were very

strange, and it was part of our job to present them. Extraordinariness is the third and most important title. It is, in fact, one of the most important subjects in journalism. Extraordinariness is also very important in print journalism. If you show ordinary things to people, you can't tell the story well enough. You constantly have to chase extraordinary events. Again, you see the rescue work was continuing, from different angled drone recordings. For the first time, we tried to present a rescue story to our subscribers and the Turkish public through a live drone broadcast. We have come across incredible visuals there. You know these, some of them you will remember. This was one of the important images presented by Anadolu Agency to the Turkish public. The same with its photograph... Unfortunately, it was very hard to shoot and broadcast this. However, it was still one of the shots that we had to broadcast. Of course, many different images were shared here.

One of the most important themes for discussing and debating ethical boundaries was burial. Because as we say, it is a journalist's duty to show emotions and people's pain in a measured way, but it is necessary to do this by allowing people to experience their pain. The line between these can only be measured, and broadcasting can only be done with journalistic experience. It was very difficult, but we had to broadcast some shots of that too. Then we went into details. There were strange stories coming out. You know the region. Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, Hatay... There is a lot of pigeon breeding in that region, and their owners had lost their lives. The people were perished, but the pigeons were alive and clinging to life. No food, no water. Again, we brought this to the fore. Alper Tüğdeş, our dear friend, he is one of the most important names in ornitho photography (bird photography/observation). After seeing this photo, Alper called me as Anadolu Agency and said, "I will go to this region. I will gather all ornithologists, my friends. I'll go to this area. I will feed and water as many pigeons, shelters, abandoned pigeons, and pigeon shelters whose owners have died as I can discover. I will deal with this, just so you know." We contributed to this, after all, they are also living beings.

Yes, this was one of our very unusual videos in Kahramanmaraş. A week and a half ago I passed through this road. It is a straight road now, rebuilt. Our state did it. Yet you would remember this image from that time. It was one of the images that was used frequently on television channels and that shocked us a lot. In brief, we broadcasted about 45-50 thousand visuals regarding the earthquake. I have 15 minutes spared to myself here. Our time is limited so we can only show you this much. I tried to select the images that I thought were most important. The state mobilized all its assets in the earthquake. Military aircraft were used. The presidential plane was used. People even designated civilian planes for relief, which were used. We have broadcast numerous visuals about these. As I said before, extraordinariness is one of the most important subjects in journalism. You may also remember this image from

the visual presentation. It was one of the images that surprised us a lot. It's even inconceivable that there is such a thing. You can imagine a single curve, but you wonder how it was possible for this many curves to form. We even interviewed one of our geologists over this image. I just saw this photo at the entrance of the Directorate of Communications. One of the photographs used in the exhibition.

As I said, we had to give people hope. It is one of the main duties of journalism to offer hope and a silver lining as much as we show the suffering. We have broadcast thousands of photos and tens of hundreds of videos like this. This has been the most widely circulated video on the earthquake in the world media. The before and after video. Maybe you remember, you have seen these images on all TV channels. We took the drone footage that Anadolu Agency had previously taken in Kahramanmaraş from the archive and tried to show people the change there from the same angles, and there really was an incredible change. I especially want you to see these scenes; I don't want to go through them quickly. Because comparison is one of the most common approaches in visual journalism, it is one of the criteria that improves our awareness, consciousness, and memory. We created the same comparative pictures in Adiyaman and Malatya. This image, for example, is truly unbelievable. March 18th Women's Day was celebrated all over the world while we were experiencing the earthquake. So we thought, what could we do about it? Hundreds of thousands of women were serving there. Some of them were firefighters, some were policemen, some were soldiers, some were gendarmes, some were nurses, some were doctors... We made very special video recordings about their lives. We prepared the project in that context.

One of the things the earthquake made us wonder is that many houses collapsed; so, what kind of legal processes were carried out about these collapsed houses? I put one of these here. We have prepared 20-30 graphs on this, and we are still presenting the graphs for these cases. Maybe you also remember this graphic. This was also an incentive graph. So the whole of Türkiye rushed to help. Non-governmental organisations, civil society groups rushed to help. As Anadolu Agency, we took it upon ourselves to do something as well. We said, "Whoever is helping, we will add their logo to this graphic." We prepared this graph so many times that we updated it every day. This may not even be a graphic, but it was one of the most resonant visuals in terms of mobilising public opinion and NGOs. We did not limit the work only to the earthquake zone. This reminded us of other things. What we could experience in Istanbul or that Türkiye as a whole is a country located in an earthquake zone... We prepared graphic designs for these. We prepared graphic designs about Istanbul. Finally, it had been about two months. Türkiye, with its public institutions, non-governmental organisations and individual donations, has devoted everything it has to the earthquake region and has done incredible

work. Of course, I cannot provide you with visuals of all these. I couldn't do it but from now on, we are trying to explain to people what is happening here as much as we can with visuals about the aids, improvements, etc. that our state has made there. Thank you very much for listening. Once again, I congratulate my dear friend Gökhan and his very valuable team on this important organisation. Thank you. I hope it will be fruitful.

Gökhan Yücel:

Thank you. We thank you. Thank you. Of course, the thousands of photos, videos, and infographics that you showed us... They are very important. I have to be here all the time due to my job. What do they call it? A Plaza man? We work here. However, a task was assigned by the Ministry of Environment, by the Minister. The Communication and Crisis Management Board is one of the 12-13 boards within the Risk Shield Plan model, which is carried out and coordinated by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change. You can think of it as a science committee. Since academics, bureaucrats, civil society representatives, and others make up the vast majority of the 12-13 board members. I had the opportunity to make a field visit about 2 and a half - 3 weeks ago. In other words, we handed over our duties here to our friends, and I was able to travel to Antep and Hatay for 23 days. So this is what happened in Hatay. Mr. İdris, the coordinator of the Centre for Combating Disinformation, was with me at the time. We asked if they could give us a car. The Ministry of Environment immediately provided us with an all-terrain vehicle. And for about 5 to 6 hours, İdris and I did not leave a stone unturned in Antakya, visiting every street and avenue. Of course, the scene I saw was unimaginable. The Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation, and Climate Change coordinated the Risk Shield Plan throughout the process, which was not a coincidence. They have a significant presentation about it. I strongly encourage you to visit the Risk Shield Plan website. New residential projects, village houses, and roads are being built there. Meaning they are making incredible efforts, so I strongly encourage you to check their work. I would like to thank Mr. Firat. He presented us an incredible scene, a tour d'horizon. Now, according to the notes here, I pronounced Mikail's name as Erhan last time. We are with Mikail Sevinç, a TRT drone pilot. And our friend Mikail is with us. Abrar, now as a graphic designer, you know, we have resilience, response, recovery... Our three-pillar theme. These three universal themes are based on renewal.

In other words, they offer us renewal. After all of these presentations, etc., do not think for a second that after we are done with the meeting, we just pull down the shutters and leave. Videos are watched dozens of times, transcribed, and transformed into a book. We wonder, among these concepts, which ones can be applied to our work and how the concept itself

can be improved. We study them. This is our primary effort. You know, we had a similar incident with Charlie Hebdo. And all of a sudden came the Charlie Hebdo.

They were doing something along these lines again. You produced a video there, associated it with the earthquake, you immediately started the creative process and established an incredible emotional bond with people. How did that happen? Can you please tell us about that process?

Abrar Sabbah



“Charlie Hebdo released a cartoon featuring provocative and incendiary language. It read, “No need to send tanks” in French. And I had a strong urge to remove these words. I erased them, and I sketched them into an image showing a fist holding a flag to convey my message. This fist, of course, is a fist that represents the Turkish people’s strength.”

First of all, I would like to thank you for the invitation. It is certainly a great honour for me to be among such esteemed people. After the earthquake on February 6, I saw the provocative cartoon published by Charlie Hebdo. Of course, just like millions of people, just like you, like all of us, I was actually quite angry, furious even, let me tell you. I could not stay silent so I said, "Something must be done and a response must be given." I thought, "How can I give such a response?" It could not obviously be in writing, but I thought it had to be in a language and a message they could understand. Taking this into consideration, I modified the original cartoon they published and added the message I wanted to get across. As you can see in the video, Charlie Hebdo published this provocative cartoon with inflammatory words. It read, "No need to send tanks" in French. And I had a strong urge to remove these words. I erased them, and I sketched them into an image showing a fist holding a flag to convey my message. This fist, of course, is a fist that represents the Turkish people's strength.

I wanted to send a message to Charlie Hebdo. Sure, you just drew a cartoon. Actually it might not even count as one. Let me put it this way: You should never ridicule other people's pain. A cartoon, by definition, is a type of communication that sends a message meant to make people laugh. But here, unfortunately, Charlie Hebdo produced something making use of other people's pain. And I got angry, so I tried to deliver the message all of us intended to deliver. Inshallah, the message got to them. This is what I wanted to tell Charlie Hebdo here: "Sure, you have your own language, the language of drawing. Through the use of cartoons, just like always, you come up with a provocative message. Likewise, we have our own language. We, too, can tell you what you need to hear through the language of drawing. We, too, can fight against you. We can oppose you by using your strongest weapon, the pen. We, too, can speak." I wanted to tell them how a cartoon should be, the right kind of cartoon. Of course, this cartoon was supposed to give them this message: Turkish people are strong. When they fall down, they stand back up even stronger. So do not mock people so easily and do not ridicule other people's pain. We or the Turkish people... I prefer using we. Because, as a member of this people, I feel like I belong here. I wanted to convey a message saying we are a people who can get back up even stronger than before. But, unfortunately, Charlie Hebdo got us used to it. In other words, just like always, it published a work that contains provocative and inappropriate messages. You may remember that in 2015, it published drawings about our Prophet in the same way. Of course, we will never remain silent, and we will, inshallah, try to give them the necessary response. I mean, we tried. And if they do something like this again, we will try to give them the necessary message in the same way. We should not move forward with the idea that the earthquake has happened and is over. I thought to myself that the message I conveyed might have meant that, but is the earthquake really over? Perhaps you know, but people have a habit of hearing about the news and forgetting it the very next day.

Unfortunately, this is an undeniable truth. That is why I said there has to be a continuation of this. We hear thousands of news stories every day, but since this one is about an earthquake, it cannot be considered an already-over story. That is why I constantly tried to produce messages about the earthquake.

Maybe our friends here can project them onto the screen. Right after the first cartoon, I made a work called *Helmeted Angels*. I wanted to focus on something here. I wanted to shine the spotlight on very important people—on everyone. So I drew the *Helmeted Angels* cartoon, thinking that everyone should know about the real heroes there. Let me explain the helmet here more clearly. The helmet here actually represents the search and rescue teams. During and after the earthquake, be it day or night, cold or dark under the rubble, in order to save a person in very difficult situations, they put themselves in danger. They struggled there day and night. Here, this helmet is cracked and dusty, as you can see. I wanted to show how tired they were and how much effort they put in. Now, you might be wondering, “What about the child here?” The child here may or may not be a child, because the child here actually represents all our dear brothers and sisters who were rescued from the rubble. Here, the search and rescue teams gave these people an opportunity to be reborn, as if they had given them a new life. At least, that is what I felt and tried to reflect in my drawing. Of course, we would certainly like to thank these anonymous heroes very much. And no matter how much we thank them, we may not do them full justice. Because during and after the earthquake, we were only watching or following the news from a distance. But they were experiencing this pain day and night. They were constantly in danger. May Allah be pleased with them and bless the work of their feet and hands.

Just now there was an image—an image of the tents. One I drew during Ramadan... Ramadan had arrived and dear viewers, all of you must be happy. After all, Ramadan is a month of happiness for us. So, is this one of those usual Ramadans, like every other Ramadan? I wanted to remind people here that no, it is not. Sure, we were entering one of the most beautiful months, but let us not forget. We have brothers and sisters here who lost their homes and are living in tents. During this month, for the next 30 days, they will experience Ramadan not at their homes but in tents. Actually, here, I tried to convey this with a sense of happiness. Here, I tried to draw it in a fancy way. Let us remember—in fact, let me remind myself as well—that they are in a difficult situation in the tents. How should I put it? Our brothers and sisters may spend a month in sorrow in these tents, and maybe they will even spend the Eid there. Of course, the purpose here is to empathise with them, to put ourselves in their shoes. I hope this message has reached everyone, including them. Because they are part of this message as well...

I wanted to give them some hope. My purpose is to cheer them up and tell them that they can create a beautiful new place. Despite their suffering, perhaps in the hope that this month of

goodness and happiness might motivate them and give them patience, I made my drawing. I think there is another visual. It would be nice if we could show it to our dear viewers. It was another video from Ramadan. It would be nice if our friends could project it. There was another video. There were tents on both sides. I made it into an animation, like a celebratory card for the Eid. I tried to convey a sense of happiness in this one as well. In the same way, the focus here should be on our earthquake survivors. Because we are sitting in our homes and Ramadan is coming. Ramadan is a beautiful month but they are experiencing a different kind of Ramadan now. I wanted to send such an explanatory message to remind us all. What I wanted to convey in this message is this: Right after something has happened, we should not say it is over. We should not try to explain it by constantly writing it in a more explanatory way, but by drawing it. I say it like this because I am talking about my own field here. I want to send a message that we should do as much as we can in a more expressive language, in a visual language, in a language that people want to see.

Gökhan Yücel:

Thank you very much. Thank you. They all seem very happy and beautiful. Mr. Firat might want to meet with you and include you in his future projects. Let us play such a mediating role.

Firat Yurdakul:

We have already had a talk. We have even signed a freelance contract.

Gökhan Yücel:

Is that so? Then may it be auspicious. I had already thought that you might, but, Mr. Director, in case it was forgotten, I wanted to make a reminder again. Now, Mikail, drones were used a lot during the earthquake. I am not very familiar with that. You know, there are the fast ones, the slow ones, the big ones, the small ones, etc. Over the past decade, I believe, drone captures have seen a highly diversified use across various industries, ranging from cinema, including Hollywood and Yeşilçam movies, to other sectors, advertising, and generation of communications content with which I am rather familiar, as well as competitions. You know, competitions are held where cameras are included. I do not know what you call those competitions, but the use of drones has become incredibly diversified. This, like many other things, has turned a niche field into a mainstream one. I think the earthquake was one of the peaks of this mainstreaming process. And this was necessary because the paths that Mr. Firat showed us from above, which I had walked as well, were not traversable by everyone. Maybe with 360-degree

cameras or with 3D cameras, with different shooting techniques, different things were done. You are also a prominent member of our distinguished sister institution, TRT, which performs such tasks with the best knowledge and experience. We want to hear from you about your impressions, your feelings and how you told this story to others.

Mikail Sevinç



First of all, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to share what I have experienced during this great disaster. This is very valuable for me. Before I begin, I would like to talk about the technical issues you have mentioned before. I would like to start from the very beginning. I have footage on the field. Of course, we are news cameramen. I started my career at a very young age. I have been working as a cameraman for about 20 years and I have been a drone pilot for the last 10 years. For us, emotions are always a bit more in the background. That is also what professionalism calls for.

Gökhan Yücel:

Because you see the situation firsthand on the ground as it is. With zoom and everything. You are one of the people who can see it the closest but also the most distant.

“When I first went to Kahramanmaraş, I could not believe the scene I saw when I flew the drone.”

Certainly, we have worked in many floods, fires and disasters. But this time it was different. I will elaborate on that too, soon. As I said, emotions for us fall in the background, but, for some reason this time, as you have mentioned as the two wings of the same bird, emotions actually served as my second wing while I was working there. No matter how much we tried to control our emotions, we were still deeply affected. I cannot say it was not a struggle. I struggled a lot. It was about 04.45-05.00 a.m. We are always ready because, you know, we are reporters. Our institution has entrusted us with this kind of responsibility. I answered my phone. A chief cameraman told me, “Mikail, there has been an earthquake. One of magnitude 7.4 in Kahramanmaraş.” Of course, as soon as I heard this, I was aware of the seriousness of the situation. I said, “Okay, I am on my way.” I swiftly packed my suitcase. And I was also thinking to myself. This earthquake was a really major one. I mean, I knew more or less what to expect because of İzmir and Elazığ, but this time it was different. What kind of equipment should I take, and what should I wear? In winter conditions, this is very important for us. I mean taking the right equipment, making preparations... I immediately packed my suitcase. You do not think about the length of your stay. None of these are considered at that moment. All you want to do is get to the scene immediately.

When I got there, the entire institution was in complete coordination. Assignments were being made to all regions. The first place I went was Pazarcık, the epicentre. I grabbed the necessary equipment. Then we set off with our friends, our teammates. Of course, the situation needs you to act quickly. Because the roads are long and tough. I have road footage, if it is possible to project it on to the screen. Especially the Niğde highway was almost blocked off with snow. We travelled in difficult conditions and even had to walk. On our way, we witnessed the search and rescue teams on the move with us. Due to the damaged roads in Nurdağı, we used alternative paths to reach Kahramanmaraş.

It was rainy and dark when we got there. There was no electricity, no active cell service. It is difficult for us to take footage in the dark. There must be some light for the camera to shoot. We spent some time observing the surroundings to see what we could do. Teams were dispatched in coordination from Kahramanmaraş. I first went to the Pazarcık district. As soon as

I arrived, I saw AFAD conducting a search and rescue operation. Generators were used for illumination. Here, you can see it in the image. When choosing equipment, drones, in particular, are categorised by size. We have different kinds of drones, big or small. I took more than one drone with me for various reasons. Complete silence is required during search and rescue operations. And drones make a certain level of noise while flying. We were trying to fly them higher so that they would not interfere with the search and rescue teams. As we flew higher, it was necessary to zoom in to capture. The most definite distinction between us and other drone pilots was that we were journalists. News drone operators, meaning pilot cameramen, broadcast live. Using live broadcasting tools, we transmit the image that the remote control receives, moment by moment. However, there are risks to this. After all, the drone in the air is an unmanned aircraft. Controlling the drone from the ground and attempting to capture an aesthetic or a desired shot with consideration to the ethics we talked about... All of these were making it a difficult time for us. Should we broadcast this image? For example, look at this scene. When I first went to Kahramanmaraş and took it off, I couldn't believe the scene I saw.

Gökhan Yücel:

It looks like 3D, doesn't it? It looks like some sort of CGI that was made with graphic animation in a movie.

Mikail Sevinç:

Exactly. This is from the second day, at the moment I arrived in Kahramanmaraş. What we do is fly the drone immediately without much deliberation. As I flew it, I wondered what we were going to see. One typically expects to see a building or two collapses. Yet here is what we witnessed: The footage was captured from the air. But I never thought I would see something like this. It never occurred to me that I would see a shot like this. Of course, the weather was cold as I was shooting these images. Since we drone pilots, and also cameramen, always have our hands outside, I began to lose the feeling in my fingers due to the cold. In fact, even the drone was out of my control. I was thinking to myself, "Why is it drifting like this?" "What happened to it?" My fingers were so numb that they were stuck pushing the joystick, so it was then that I realised I could not feel my fingers. Even though I had gloves on. On the one hand, we were doing aerial captures, but on the other, we were trying to understand the people there. Sure, we were there to capture the debris, debris removal, and collapsed buildings, but what was more precious to us was the hope there. I mean, we always wanted to broadcast the people coming out of those life tunnels during that wait. About our close flights in these images...

I want to get a bit technical. The drone, in reality, when we think about it, is similar to a bird flying high. I mean, it seems a bit contrary to human nature. You know, viewing the city from the top is nice, but you would want to see it up close. So I think the close-ups are more illustrative of the reality there. It gives a better sense of the scale of the incident. In this sense, I prioritised close-by flights. Of course, it was after capturing the general situation of the city first and foremost. After capturing the sheer scale of that disaster, the Disaster of the Century, I lived through and captured the people's struggles, their working hand in hand while risking their lives. Search and rescue teams, especially AFAD, were setting up tents. Initially, they focused on search and rescue, but later they needed to set up shelters as well. As the tents were set up, we captured them too. Here are the tent cities again. The thing to which we paid the utmost attention was this: Shooting without disturbing people...

Gökhan Yücel:

Shooting without violating their privacy. Because when you get into what you call close-up, you have to be more careful.

Mikail Sevinç:

Of course. What we wanted to report there was this: No matter what happens, life goes on there. So people were waiting in hope. Sure, people were still struggling. We also interacted with them from time to time. I was particularly meticulous about the children. I have a small drone—a tiny one. Sometimes I played with the children wherever I went in order to motivate them. I would say, "Look, this is a plane; let us fly it together." Especially when we went to the villages where deep fissures had formed. In the meantime, as you perform a flight, you have to ensure flight safety. We were capturing these images but at the same time, there were multiple points of consideration. We had to pay attention to them. After all, we did not want this airborne object to break down and hurt someone.

We did constant checks, such as the satellite connectivity for the drone to stay stable while it waits for my command, the weather condition and other parameters, to perform safe flights without harming the environment. This image here is very special to me. I was a bit nervous while shooting it because we were coming out of a dwelling. I also want to show here that the ceiling was collapsing down as the debris removal was taking place in that dwelling. As I was recording these, I was also checking the image. Frankly, I was moved, asking myself, "Dear Allah, what is it that I am recording?" My teammates were also around me. Search and rescue operations were still underway. At times, we would encounter reactions, but we kept our understanding and wished people patience.

In this context, there were moments when we struggled. When we got there, weather conditions, wind, and rain were all troublesome, yet our goal was to deliver the footage we had taken reliably and quickly. This was complicated by the lack of internet connection and transportation concerns. Here, you can see the collapsed buildings. Roads were closed on both sides. There was traffic. Problems and chaos everywhere. How could I go from one location to another in this case? I hope my field footage will be projected now. I brought a backpack, a bottle of water, my small and large drones. On foot... I was going around and looking. Look, what I put in my pocket here is my large drone, which I use for live broadcasts. And here you see our mobile devices used for transmitting images. This is the building from which Aleyna was rescued, as we were broadcasting live at night.

Actually, I have a story to tell about that place. There was an aftershock in Adiyaman while I was making that flight. A life-saving corridor was being created. That is to say, a corridor was opened up as a person was rescued. At that moment, we immediately took it off to broadcast it live. Drones are not devices that can stay in the air longer than 20–25 minutes. And since our resources were scarce, we had to use that time carefully. I fly the drone and start the live broadcast only after they tell me over the intercom, “Mikail, we will switch to you, take it off.” Now, a corridor was being created. However, you could see the building right across them, which was one of the buildings that was about to collapse. Perhaps it is no longer present today. There was another building across that one, about to collapse as well. How did we know this?

Because coordination is critical for us. We have to know about other drone pilots in the field. Alican is one of my colleagues that I know well. If we work in the same area, we ask each other, “Is there a flight risk here? Is there a flight hazard there?” We ask each other. At that time, I encountered survey engineers who were using drones equipped with thermal cameras to measure the stresses in the columns of damaged buildings. They told us, “Look! The building right here that I just showed you has its front columns under stress. Their temperatures are high. Stay away.” However, hundreds of search and rescue teams were working diligently under that building, risking their lives. It was really astonishing, but right then and there, an earthquake struck. An aftershock hit Adiyaman. A crackling sound was heard from the columns of that building. I immediately pulled back the drone. Because, to us as public broadcasters, at TRT, broadcasting the chaos is not what matters. The collapse of that building meant everything was going to be covered in dust and smoke that night. Any drone footage from there was just pointless. The important thing for me was to evacuate the area quickly.

Gökhan Yücel:

Safety of one's life. Everyone around us had to get to safety, including us.

Mikail Sevinç:

Exactly, safety of life. Our friends from law enforcement forces, guards, police officers, and AFAD teams were creating a corridor. That was because they carried the earthquake survivors to the ambulance by passing them from hand to hand. We were either broadcasting this live or just recording with a drone. The earthquake and the sound coming from that building caused panic at that moment. The evacuation had to take place in that panicky atmosphere. I thought that the building was about to collapse. We tried to evacuate at once, but fortunately, it did not collapse. The work stopped for a while, then resumed. These, too, are the images I took with my cell phone. Natural images. There were some incidents that I witnessed while I was flying my drone. I wanted to capture them as well. I also want to talk a little bit about shooting aesthetics here. There were search-and-rescue teams from all over the world. Rescue operations were taking place in more than one place at the same time. I use close-up shots and close panning to show this.

And I have another clip, that is five minutes long. If we could show it now, there was another search and rescue operation. Now, when we were capturing from the air with a drone, there were also law enforcement forces there. They secured the area there. After locating a person with a thermal camera, they used tools and their hands to slowly dig and clear away the rubble. And what we did to help them there was that we flew our drone by zooming in from a higher altitude. Of course, we also visited the tent cities in the earthquake zone as well as the neighbouring provinces. There were also other incidents we witnessed while our friends were working in coordination. There were heavily fissured roads and farmlands that stretched for kilometres. Furthermore, the drone's range was limited. I kept flying it over those fissures with no end in sight. So I had to return each time. For instance, you see another one of our fly-bys here. This is the Ebrar Building Complex, where numerous buildings collapsed, as you know. We captured it by flying around this building. You see, this was the situation on the ground. But we also began capturing the people who were rescued and given a new lease on life. On the other side, debris removal began. And we started to capture their aerial images. So it really was a unique and challenging experience for us. In this sense, this is how I would like to report what I lived through in the earthquake zone.

Gökhan Yücel:

Thank you. You played an important role as a team. Both Anadolu Agency and TRT, as well as other journalists, were there, right? We witnessed unimaginable moments and images. I am someone who says “journalist” when asked about my profession. Although I quit journalism in 1999 and did not work as a journalist after that, I worked as a journalist between the years 96 and 99, in my second, third, and fourth years of university, as I studied journalism. However, I have always made every effort to maintain that perspective. Every time Mr. Firat and I meet, we discuss that perspective with Mr. Mevlüt. I seek to learn from them. What are the recent developments? This journalistic perspective has always kept me vigorous. In other words, the most vital, powerful, and solid bridge to maintaining my relationship to digital technology, strategic communication, and other areas of interest has been my profession, which is journalism. I am a journalist, and when I view the media as one, I see incredible storytelling, framing, and a state of haste, or, in other words, a state of great care to convey information. We have seen incredible work. While looking at these visual accounts, or the contents, of the earthquake disaster, which we call the Disaster of the Century, we came across very disheartening pictures. May Allah protect this nation from the recurrence of such disasters. I hope that this will be the last time we broadcast and report such a disaster. If I were to return to what I said in the beginning, everyone here works with their minds, but we see that the heart, or the sentimental side of things, is also important. As long as both the mind and the heart stay together, our thousand-year-old storytelling tradition will endure in the future. I would like to thank you all for your participation. I wish you all the very best in your work. And I would also like to thank you for what you have done. Thank you.

S P E E C H

Türkiye's Risk Taxonomy

Prof. Davut Pehlivanlı
İstanbul University & Türkiye Risk Report Director



We have been working with a team to map the risks in Türkiye for about four years. We have a risk research centre at İstanbul University. We initiated these activities within our Centre. The main source of inspiration for us is the Global Risks Report, which is an annual publication with a global reach, having entered its eighteenth year of publication. In parallel, we have been pursuing this work for about four years, both in Turkish and English. Additionally, we mapped the risks in 11 sectors as part of a project sponsored by the İstanbul Chamber of Commerce, which we finalised last year in parallel with this study. Likewise, we prepared a risk map for the private pension sector in 2022. The relevant risk maps actually include the reports, which must be closely followed by public institutions, private companies, and individuals, and for which

actions are to be taken. These risk reports cover a wide range of issues, from natural disaster risks to economic risks, climate and environmental risks to societal risks. Regarding the currency crisis in 2021, the possible exchange rate increases were predicted to be considerably high, as indicated in the 2021 risk report. We were criticised a lot for that. Indeed, certain segments of society, particularly the perspective of those who support the study, may provide us with certain insightful predictions in advance. We could already see that in the Global Risks Report.

The Syrian crisis had not been broken out yet and Türkiye had not ever received such a large influx of refugees but the Global Risks Report featured involuntary migration movements in the Middle East region. Therefore, these studies conducted in both national and international contexts need to be included as critical items on the agendas of both public institutions and private companies, particularly non-governmental organisations. Are these items always included? This is a question mark that I leave to your discretion. The negative aspects of the cost of living, specifically inflation, were at the top of the list in the 2023 Global Risks Report. In 2023, the Report made a distinction between 2-year and 10-year risks. We, in turn, adopted a similar approach and categorised the risks in a different manner. Indeed, the approach in the report aligned with ours. As you can see here, the risk of natural disasters ranks second, and it ranks third among 10-year risks. According to the visual we have here, 5 of the 2-year risks and 6 of the 10-year risks are related to the environment, natural disasters and other climate change issues. Only one of them is related to the economy, while the rest are mainly composed of societal risks. Here, we unfortunately see Türkiye deviate from global tendencies. As for our top 10 risks, they are entirely economic and societal risks. Sadly, what turned out to be an increase in the cost of living globally has materialised as a deep and widespread risk of poverty in our country. And it still applies, as you know. Therefore, we need to translate these risks into a national strategy document and develop measures, actions and plans for the public sector, private companies and other sectors accordingly.

The earthquake is the most recent example of this. The most needed device in an earthquake is a camera capable of thermal mapping. Cameras that are capable of displaying people trapped beneath the rubble. Do we still have an inventory of them in Türkiye? In fact, the main areas of inquiry in risk management involve critical questions such as, "Has this inventory been actively incorporated into earthquake action plans?" It is not only on earthquake or disaster risks that we resort to this inquiry but also on currency risks. Where an intervention is needed for exchange rate risk, we are supposed to calculate the risk of foreign currency receivables, payables and net position of public institutions, private companies and individuals in Türkiye and take actions accordingly. There too, we have question marks and shortcomings. In brief, we become more effective during earthquakes and can arrange assets and resources in a

way to achieve results more quickly when we take inventories of the background of the risks related to the environment, natural disasters, technology, or economy, translate them into a risk management strategy, and include them in the fields of action within the hierarchy of institutions. We see this on the economic side. We also see this on the environmental and technology sides.

The risks perception in Türkiye differs from the global risks perception, which is actually to the detriment of Türkiye. For example, particularly from a technological standpoint, worldwide corporations are releasing a variety of games in 2023 and beyond, thanks to advancements in the metaverse and other digital technologies. While various plans, strategies and artificial intelligence come into play, we may have lost 2-3 years in this very critical three-year period, together with the impact of the economy and the current earthquake. Therefore, although what is missing here appears to be a topic for discussion, it is not. Because it has repercussions on the first 10 risks of Türkiye. Should we integrate it into all strategy documents, then we can succeed. This is actually what we would like to convey as a message. The labour force typically does not rank highly in these studies, nor does it in the Global Risks Report. If I'm not mistaken, this topic was listed on the agenda with three items: the risk of unemployment, which ranked thirteenth; the risk of qualitative inadequacies in the labour force, which ranked tenth; and brain drain and associated personnel shortages in the qualified labour force, which ranked seventh. It is classified as a single risk item, ranking between 20th and 30th in global studies and national studies in other countries. By the end of 2022 and in 2023, the media, other reports, and academic studies on brain drain had frequently covered this issue, which was already included in the report. So, how would you avoid it?

Please note that the visual includes no earthquake risk. The risk of natural disasters ranks 18th. That is because we live more reactively in Türkiye. Hence, the matter does not occupy a prominent position on our agenda. In the Global Risks Report you have just seen, this issue ranked second in the 2-year projection and third in the 10-year projection. Please note that because of the economy and associated risks, environmental risks are not among the top 10 risks in our country. The preceding Global Risks Report indicated five risks in the 2-year projection and six risks in the 10-year projection among the top ten risks. See, technology-related risks are not among the top 10 risks here. However, technological developments, advancements in the metaverse and other fields, AI-assisted products, and countries' AI-assisted turnovers are reaching significant levels within the general gross domestic product. Türkiye is also lagging behind in this regard, and this is not on our agenda. That is also another point.

Moving on from this point, I would like to discuss the following: The risk of natural disasters, a topic we often overlook or pay less attention to globally, was ranked third in the 2020 risks report but has since dropped to rank twelve, twenty-four, and eighteenth. Behind these reports

is an audience parallel to the audience responding to the global reports. It includes financial experts, board members of companies, academics and practitioners. Actually, the same audience provides a response to the global report, whereas another outcome arises in the national report. This is because the problems in our country, combined with the risk perception in daily life, have brought Turkish society to a different point. It is only so natural for such a difference to arise. We have addressed the 5-year projection. Coincidentally, this condition was featured in the Global Risks Report under the heading of a 10-year projection. Here, too, energy risks and energy crises, as well as other topics, came to the fore. Yet another intriguing finding has surfaced here. It ranked seventh or eighth in the Global Risks Report, if I am not mistaken. Migration movements are anticipated to continue, according to the top ten items in the 2-year projection. However, it ranks 5th in the 10-year projection. In other words, we observe migration movements rising from 10th to 5th place. Türkiye is currently hosting 6-7 million refugees, and according to some figures and assumptions, 10 million. I hope hosting is all that is involved. In Türkiye, where did this risk rank? I cannot remember much now, but I'm checking. Could involuntary migration not be listed? We were unable to measure the risk of involuntary migration, which ranks 9th in the first 5-year projection. This means it was ranked 15th, more or less. In the 10-year projection, will we anticipate a migration of approximately 15 million? What percentage of the population will that reach? In what direction will the demographic shift occur? We must translate these fields into actions that align with a strategy. However, our country ranks this particular danger approximately fifteenth. This risk ranks 10th in the two-year projection and 5th in the 10-year projection among nations without refugee issues. There are details like this, yet I am wrapping up.

We have one last point. We see a notion called "catalytic philanthropy" come into play here. This actually indicates that we are in the midst of major disasters in which you cannot simply write a check for a specific amount of money and leave the rest to the discretion of charitable organisations. The first of these is the pandemic and the second is the earthquake. Therefore, philanthropy does not conclude with monetary donations; action is also required. We need to mobilise networks. From a higher strategic perspective, the first basic problem encountered in the earthquake was access, or the road problem. You need to solve it. While traditional NGOs and earthquake groups may have overlooked this issue or failed to view it from a broader perspective, catalytic philanthropy actually focuses on it and advises, "Don't settle for just financial assistance. Take the easiest way to achieve results by combining strategy, networks and critical elements." To attain these objectives, simply enhancing transport today would not suffice. You receive requests from thousands of points. There are details to consider, such as using a software algorithm to address this problem. There is and will be more in this series. We are also trying to catch up with the items in the National Risks Report. Thank you for listening. Have a nice day at work. See you soon...

P A N E L

09



Moderator:

Nazif Menteş, GZT Chief Editor

Panelists:

Ömer Faruk Görçin, Anadolu Agency Fact Check Line

Assoc. Prof. Ali Burak Darcılı, Bursa Technical University

Response. Recovery



The Struggle for Truth in Times of Disaster



Nazif Menteş



Hello again, I am Nazif Menteş. I am the chief editor of GZT. We were incredibly excited when we first heard about the Disaster Communication Forum. From my perspective as an editor, and Mr. Ömer Faruk will probably agree with me, we have recently seen a very problematic communication process and a surge of disinformation in social media than ever before. And we have all witnessed how harmful and even dangerous that could be. That's why I tried to prepare my questions accordingly because it meant a bigger crisis than you can imagine. As you know, amidst the most destructive disasters in the history of the Republic, we had to face another biggest problem in the history of the Republic. This was disinformation. This term comes out of our mouths readily, as if it were a straightforward concept. But in reality, its meaning is certainly not that simple. I believe this will become clearer as we speak with our guests. I would like to start with Prof. Ali Burak Darıcılı. Because I want you to understand that disinformation actions, particularly when carried out via social media, can have a high degree of reality, and I am quoting, "They are no different from terrorist conduct". I would like to hear the technical aspect of this from you, Mr. Burak. How do terrorist organisations determine their disinformation strategies, and have we experienced anything similar during this earthquake?

Ali Burak Darıcı



“Disinformation, propaganda, manipulation, and perception management are of great importance for terrorist organisations in terms of terrorising the masses. The aim is to create terror and fear in society.”

I would like to express my gratitude to the Directorate of Communications, both to its executives and its distinguished employees, for such a valuable organisation. I think it will be an interesting panel. And it will draw your attention. First of all, before answering your question, we need to define terrorism. Although there are many definitions of terrorism, the universal definition is the use of violence along with the element of propaganda to achieve a political goal. Let's take a concrete example: the PKK terrorist organisation... A four-part Kurdistan, an independent Kurdistan... A Kurdistan covering territories from Türkiye, Iraq, Syria, and Iran that have access to the sea through Hatay... This is actually the most important deadlock in

Kurdish geopolitics. The terrorisation of Hatay which we see during this earthquake, is actually the most important deadlock in separatist Kurdish geopolitics. The political goal is to establish pro-Kurdish movements. The propaganda element is very important here. Because the “weak side”, which I put in quotation marks, is fighting the strong side. This is not the distinction between right and wrong. In other words, it is not possible for the PKK terrorist organisation to engage in a symmetrical struggle with the State of the Republic of Türkiye. It is not possible for any terrorist organisation to engage in a symmetrical struggle with a state. Therefore, it needs to employ an asymmetric tactic.

So they use guerrilla warfare’s armed tactics, such as ambushes, mines, raids, and assassinations. Disinformation, propaganda, manipulation, and perception management play a significant role for terrorist organisations to amplify the impact of these tactics and terrorise the masses. The aim is to instill a sense of terror and fear in society. Let’s take a tangible example: the Taksim attack. We all saw what happened after the bomb exploded in the middle of Taksim. We experienced a mindless posting frenzy in Türkiye. Regular citizens watching the dreadful images of those people are distressed; it is impossible not to. So, for instance, if you think about this in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia, for example, in Diyarbakır. By setting off explosions in the heart of Diyarbakır, specifically in the Ofis neighbourhood, and by consistently carrying out such acts, it is possible to gain the support of those who are opposed to terrorism. Because you also have an impact on them. It is important to consider the role of propaganda and disinformation in relation to terrorism. So where is this action being carried out, and through which channel? One is the classic, conventional channel, the media. The other is digital platforms and social media. You are one of the managers of a significant digital platform.

Nazif Menteş:

Especially Twitter, right?

Ali Burak Darıcı:

That’s right, but Telegram is also an important channel these days. Concerning the classical media... For example, PKK owned Medya TV and Med TV, based in the Netherlands and Denmark, and they still do. And there is Fırat News. I am mentioning their names because they are already banned in Türkiye. They have other websites, too. These are classic media. But nowadays, establishing such a channel is not very useful for a terrorist organisation in terms of cost, personnel, maintaining its broadcasts, and keeping it under control. For this reason, we are facing a new medium, and that is social media. Social media is a very important me-

dium for terrorist organisations to spread this propaganda, manipulation, and disinformation. Why is social media so important? Because you can disseminate information very quickly on social media. You do not pay anything; it is without any cost. It provides you with crypto capability. Thus, you can either create a fake identity on behalf of the user or create a bot account. You can also connect to a VPN. You can connect to Wi-Fi in a public place, post a tweet, and then destroy that smartphone and not get caught. So, how should we understand this? Let's take a concrete example. I'm talking about Fuat Avni. The reason why Fuat Avni did not get caught after a year of spreading disinformation is this: crypto capability. This advantage is remarkable. It is remarkable because if you add visuals, videos, etc. before or after it, the situation becomes much more interesting. One of the most significant points here is that it costs you nothing. You don't spend any money to open an account. Otherwise, you have to establish a big channel. For example, I have over 30 thousand followers on social media. Sometimes, a tweet of mine can get 500,000 interactions, and I do this without spending any money. In other words, I can reach the masses through Twitter and social media. The same scenario applies to terrorists; they have access too.

Regarding the matter of social media users in society, for instance, in Türkiye, it is estimated that there are 10–12 million Twitter users 5–6 million of which are active. Here, you can reach these masses to a very significant extent and convey your perception, that is, the political goal you want to achieve, that issue of fear and terror, very clearly to the target audience. Today, you can also do this with bot accounts in a certain systematic way, for example, in Türkiye, by setting up a specific bot account or a Twitter mechanism, a troll mechanism. Let me tell you frankly, I am able to make myself hashtag every day; I can make myself a trending hashtag. Because that's what happens in Türkiye. The agenda in Türkiye is actually not the real agenda on Twitter most of the time. I mean, they are inflated or controlled agendas. This is indeed of great importance for the terrorist organisation.

Another advantage of social media is that if you utilise it with a decent command of a foreign language, you may implement a disinformation strategy on a global scale across continents. Again, let me use a concrete example: "Ayaklı şık". I don't know if any of you follow me. Approximately every 1.5–2 months, FETO members living overseas tag me in a hashtag. This happens regularly, and it is completely outsourced; that is, the source is outside. These accounts, which I will not mention their names, this internet journalism, their troll accounts in social media, etc. In other words, individuals, man or woman, can place the perception they want on the accounts with a specific system at the same time, from where they sit, and literally put you on Türkiye's agenda. They can put me on the agenda as a person. They can also put a piece of information there. Let me wrap up, we will probably move onto the second round.

Nazif Menteş:

I would like to return to Mr. Görçin. Actually, the issue that Professor Burak talked about is technically about the dissemination of lies. That is what he is talking about. Now, he talked about the issue of FETO members. He talked about how contents, whether foreign-sourced or translated into foreign languages, are shared. In fact, we see how important the work Ömer Faruk Görçin is currently doing on this matter is. Fact-checking mechanism, the issue of fake footage. I would like to ask, technically, why is the issue of fighting against lies important, and what can an ordinary citizen do in order to fight against this? What are you doing as a professional?

Ömer Faruk Görçin

“A 280-character tweet caused the entire city of Hatay to be agitated and people to flood the roads to evacuate the city.”

You asked three major questions, I'll try to answer them briefly. First of all, what is the harm of disinformation? Initially, it can only be interpreted as "something we see on Twitter meant to deceive us" or "an issue of manipulation to send some individuals to specific directions with fake news." However, especially in post-disaster periods, which are the subject of this panel, it can create completely different results. One of the most well-known examples is the assertion that "the dam had burst" made by an account with millions of followers following the Hatay earthquake. It is said to have started in the street, but its exact origin is disputed. As Professor Burak said, a 280-character tweet posted without charge, caused the entire city of Hatay to be agitated and people to flood the roads to evacuate the city. Unfortunately, rescue efforts were also interrupted. As a result, one of the most serious consequences of disinformation to consider in times of disaster is that it can disrupt both rescue efforts and healing wounds in the field.

On the other hand, disinformation on social media can disrupt society's psychology. Especially, again during the earthquake period, incidents of lynchings or beatings occurred. Concerning some of these incidents, we observe that people were agitated, reacted against people who were in fact innocent and sometimes this reaction escalated to the extent of physical violence. Let's not name this motivation for lynching as culture, because culture may not be such a thing.

Nazif Menteş:

I think there might be a group of people in question who pretend to be acculturated or act as if they are acculturated.

Ömer Faruk Görçin:

In other words, people see the phenomenon behind the motivation on Twitter and Facebook, and they get angry. It spreads like a chain of events, like a forest fire. As for the second question, what are we doing? We, as the Anadolu Agency, have launched the "Fact Check Line", which has been active since October. During this period, we have dealt with hundreds of pieces of content. We usually take the content we see in social media and mainstream media and fact-check it. You do it in GZT as well, you have such a service.

Nazif Menteş:

It is less comprehensive than yours. Yours is more professional, we actually create a content in the format of a true or lie. I know yours is much more detailed.

Ömer Faruk Görçin:

As a process, what we do is identical. What are we doing? We are trying to prevent the dissemination of disinformation and lies. Through our Twitter and Instagram accounts, we handle an issue, a claim or a cyber crime. We share with the public if it is “true or false”. To briefly answer the third question, does our work actually prevent the dissemination of lies in society? Normally, we can expect something like this: people see an issue, realise it is a lie, and then stop arguing about it. Unfortunately, this is not the case. According to the studies I have seen, even when people encounter disinformation and realise it is a falsehood, they continue to believe or act as if it is genuine. Of course, at this point, our life experiences, religion, race, favourite sports team, and political preferences all come into play. Sometimes we strive to ignore our favourite politician’s lies or falsehoods; we try to believe despite them. What we can actually do about this matter personally is to be a bit more aware of our prejudices instead of maybe putting out the truth on Twitter and Facebook. We should approach the news with a little more suspicion. That way, we can more easily avoid the effects of disinformation.

Nazif Menteş:

In fact, at this point, I think media literacy is very significant. Actually, that was my intention while asking that question to you. You said, “An ordinary citizen should not create an argument after learning the news is a lie.” However, it does not seem to be such an easy thing to do. In other words, an ordinary citizen cannot easily understand that they are facing a fake news report. Are there any advice or methods to be followed here? This ordinary user came across a news report. How can they be convinced that the chances of this news being a lie are high?

Ömer Faruk Görçin:

Technically, there are. This is also a major question. I will not give you my own answer. Let me give a more powerful answer. There is a journalism module published by the United Nations. It is a thick book with hundreds of pages. There is a fact-checking section with over a hundred pages. There is a fact-check section. Here, eight ways are listed: what should we do so as not to fall for the bait, not to be fooled? We have to take a good look into the background of the person who wrote the content.

Is it coming from a familiar account, or is it from an unknown account? Is it coming from an anonymous account? Let’s say there is a journalist that you have been following for years, and you trust that person. That journalist has never misled you, so your trust in that person’s

tweet will be greater. However, there are accounts with millions of followers whose profile picture or user name is not even their own. When dealing with information obtained from these accounts, we must proceed with extreme caution.

Another thing is the time. They do this quite often. They circulate old videos as if they are new. Like, the minister went there and look what he did. However, the issue may not even be about the region or the area of the earthquake. The economic background of the source of the content is very important. We do not normally think about it, but who pays for the individual that provides us with content? Why did this person write this content? We especially need to think about this while reading. Or what is the editorial perspective of the medium that delivers the content to us? Let's not give an example from our country; for example in America, all television channels announce which presidential candidate they support before the election. Fox News says, "I support Trump". CNN says, "I am on Hilary Clinton's side". They state this openly and clearly. Then you may be facing a biased broadcast. There is also that possibility. Is it a humour-oriented broadcast? We have to look into it. There are numerous criteria like this. We have to look into those.

Of course, within the Anadolu Agency as the Fact Check Line, we also look into them for you. . You do that. There are various organisations and independent fact-checkers in Türkiye. I also recommend following such fact-checkers on Twitter. Because disinformation, this work of lies has progressed to such levels that, despite working 10 years as a journalist and spending 24 hours delving into news everyday, even we can still miss a lot of them. What we call "right" surprises us when it turns out to be "wrong." If someone who devotes hours to this profession can be deceived, an everyday user browsing tweets in their free time as a hobby and without paying the utmost attention can struggle to tell the disinformation in a tweet they saw.

Nazif Menteş:

Absolutely right, thank you. In fact, what Mr. Ömer Faruk said means something more critical than what we think for all of us. So, in addition to identifying lies, we must examine the misdirection that lying might cause. For instance, during the course of the recent earthquake, a report was prepared on the Kahramanmaraş-centred earthquakes that started on February 6. Thankfully, one of the independent research groups brought this to our attention last week. The most viewed video on Twitter is from the Van earthquake. In fourth place was another image from the Van earthquake, which also received a large number of interactions. This is actually very troublesome. I would like to turn to Professor Burak about this. As an editor, I get the impression that there was a disinformation mechanism in place for this earthquake. I

would like to ask you about the technical side of this. Was there truly a mechanism? If so, how did it work? How shouldn't it work? And how could it have been prevented?

Ali Burak Darıcı:

"If you follow the PKK's Telegram accounts – by the way you shouldn't do that, the only reason I am following them is because it is my job – they shoot down a Turkish helicopter every single day. Every day a new helicopter is being shot down, but the Republic of Türkiye doesn't even have that many helicopters in its inventory."

Indeed, about 50 thousand of our citizens lost their lives. Many people lost many relatives. First of all, I wish Allah's mercy upon all our citizens who lost their lives during the earthquake. I wish patience for those left behind. It was a very painful disaster, but we lived through it. Unfortunately, we did. This is an important matter and we need to mention it. There was an alarming amount of systematic disinformation during the earthquake. We cannot deny that there was. These days, in Türkiye, every issue is viewed from a serious political perspective. Stating "There was disinformation in the earthquake in Türkiye" does not constitute an adjacency to the government, nor does saying "There was not" to the opposition. Did it happen? It did. It did, quite evidently. That's a different matter. But how did it happen? Whether shortcomings occurred during or after the chaos of a disaster is another matter altogether. Aside from that, there was definitely systematic disinformation and a mechanism in place.

The disinformation spread by the PKK terrorist organisation can exemplify this. Like the "dam collapsed" allegation you spoke of, right? There were also other allegations; they were not circulated by PKK but used by the PKK terrorist organisation as an advantage to fulfil its political interests, which we have just mentioned, especially in the Hatay region. As per their interests, their aim was to terrorise Hatay and make it dominated by the supporting structures aligned with the terrorist organisation. Because there was a serious internal migration from that region. In other words, a Hatay-centered disinformation strategy was in place. How did they do it? The PKK terrorist organisation initially conducted this on their Telegram channel. My work requires regularly checking on such Telegram groups run by terrorist organisations, like

DAESH. There is a significant amount of disinformation there.

First, these contents were created in the Telegram groups. Let me continue with two examples. For example, "The state kidnaps Kurdish children". So this is the kind of content and, as you say, an obsolete image. The second example would be, "Türkiye is preventing humanitarian aid from reaching Kurdish-majority regions in Syria and only providing aid to regions under the control of its associate faction, Syrian National Army. On top of that, the Syrian National Army elements are taking advantage of the situation and killing Kurdish people." This too was produced in the Telegram groups. Examples like this can be expanded upon, but let me focus on two in particular. This information was subsequently widely disseminated by PKK-controlled or affiliated bots and troll accounts, as well as bogus and low-follower accounts on Facebook and Twitter. This amplified the effect on social media and not a single account was real. This is how terrorist propaganda is conducted. They all have crypto features. I mean, they are anonymous accounts. Unfortunately, some of these contents later spread to a wider audience on social media, particularly on Twitter, by well-known accounts with more followers, creating a disinformation mechanism in favor of the PKK. As I said before, it was mostly Hatay-centred. Even when a person is not a PKK supporter, why would they share such false information from such accounts? There are various motivations behind this. First of all, there is individual outrage. The anguish caused by the earthquake outraged people. They are motivated by anger. Why do people do this? Secondly, there are people with psychological problems who constantly feel the need to draw attention to themselves. Such people actually exist. There is even a name for this disease. It's called pathological lying or attention seeking, which is a troubled mind wanting to become the centre of attention. Another reason stems from politics, such as being in the opposition, ideologically aligned with the PKK or whatever you want to call it. In other words, this was also shared with a political and ideological motivation. The third group consists of individuals who are in close contact with the PKK's organised and systematic political apparatus, as well as executives from associated non-governmental organisations, sympathisers, university groups, and so on. These were propagated to a wider audience by communities aligned with them in certain regions. Perhaps you did not encounter these posts in your social media feed because you are not a sympathiser. The algorithm is at play here. The algorithm determines what you see on social media based on your personal interests. There is an algorithm for this. Elon Musk explained the inner workings of these algorithms, especially the one used by Twitter.

The dictatorship of the algorithm circles back to our conceptual attention. So, this algorithm returns the desired information to the target audience. I will give you a well-known example,

you say, "I'm searching on Google for a new shoe, but Instagram shows me ads for shoes," right? The algorithm is the culprit showing you the ads based on your interests. On Instagram, your stories are determined in accordance with your interests. It is even used as a commercial product. On a platform like Twitter, where "political and social topics are discussed," this information is directed to you based on the algorithm trained on you. The PKK's systematic work here is evident. How did they even learn about this?

DAESH is the first terrorist organisation in the world to use social media very actively for terrorist propaganda and disinformation. While they had a militant structure of 15-20 thousand people in Iraq and Syria, they exponentially increased their influence with images and videos of beheading, torturous murders, as you may remember. People were put in fear and terror. And that was the whole point. A typical example I always give is that DAESH took Mosul without a fight. So, the Iraqi army fled because they were afraid of DAESH. The Iraqi army, which had been trained and equipped by the US for years, did not confront DAESH, and the terrorist group, which had only 5000 members, was able to take over Iraq's second largest city nearly without resistance and control it for four years. They also earned a considerable amount of income from the city. Why is that?

The PKK and other terrorist groups copy each other's actions, this is how it is theorised. Terrorist organisations copy each other too. The PKK also took such actions, but at first their actions were amateurish. I have seen the content of Anadolu Agency on the related issue, as well as the content from the Directorate of Communications. For example, their attempts during the Peace Spring and Olive Branch operations were both amateurish. Such false images and information are shared, like the ones wrongly portraying a helicopter that was downed somewhere else as a helicopter belonging to the Turkish military. More examples can be given.

Nazif Menteş:

If we were to believe the PKK, Türkiye would have 7 million helicopters.

Ali Burak Darıcılı:

I concur. If you follow the PKK's Telegram accounts - by the way, you shouldn't do that; I do because it is my job - they shoot down a Turkish helicopter every single day. Every day, a new helicopter is being shot down. In reality, the Republic of Türkiye doesn't even have that many helicopters in its inventory. They claim to have shot down a new helicopter very day. Sometimes they even come close to shooting down a jet. We witnessed a more systematic and professional version of this mechanism after the earthquake. And this will continue in the future.

Nazif Menteş:

Thank you, professor. By the way, I have known Professor Burak for a long time. Maybe some of you know that together we cast a TV programme and try to make some special content for GZT. Telegram channels that Professor Burak is involved have always startled me. Messages from these channels have always been startling.

Ali Burak Darıcılı:

We obtain information by following its traces.

Nazif Menteş:

Thank you, Professor. Mr. Ömer Faruk, as you know, the vast majority of people in Türkiye and even around the world today get their news from social media. This is a fact. The spread of fake news, such as the one we mentioned and you explained that was spread by an account in Hatay with many followers, could have even led to a “civil war.” It had come to a point where people were so agitated that they were trying to evacuate the city, it had reached a very problematic level. Do you think social media platforms carry a responsibility for such occurrences? I mean, be it Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, whatever you name it. What do you think about this? As an editor working under Anadolu Agency, what do you think? Could platforms be at fault here?

Ömer Faruk Görçin:

Honestly, this is a very controversial topic that is being discussed all over the world and on all social media platforms. This is not just an issue about social media. This is a deeper issue about freedom of expression and thought. When do opinions become insults and turn into crimes? We need to start looking for the answers to such questions and determine whether social media platforms have any responsibility over such matters. Let me try to summarise the current situation a little bit, and I think you can find your own answer.

For example, currently, Twitter is cooperating with various verification and authentication platforms both in Türkiye and abroad. They share the data from these verification platforms directly with the users. Let's say there is a widely spread image that is obviously fake or distorted. If you share this image on Twitter, a warning will appear below your tweet. I am not sure if you, as the sender of the post, can see it too. But those who see your tweet receive a warning that says, “Attention! This image contains disinformation.” or “Attention! This image belongs to a different event or is outdated.” But not every tweet has this warning. This begs the question: Does Twitter issue these warnings only to protect a certain group of people or does it issue them for all content? If you ask me...

Nazif Menteş:

Pardon me for interrupting, but I do not believe Twitter is very objective when it comes to such matters. In fact, as GZT, we have tried to talk about some fact-checking organisations in the past weeks, especially on Twitter, as you may have followed. Actually, I am quite curious about something. You just said, "Twitter and Facebook cooperate with certain verification organisations." Who gives them the authority to access such documents? Is the editing staff competent enough to handle such a task? Should not we be looking for answers to these questions?

Ömer Faruk Görçin:

It is like the one who has the power calls the tune. The reason for this is that there is a Washington-based organisation called the "Pointer Institute." This organisation brings together all the fact-checkers in the world, as if it were the United Nations of fact-checkers. They have an agreement, which is like their constitution, and you cannot enter the international network of fact-checkers without signing it. Twitter, Facebook, and Meta collaborate with the agreement's signatories to provide users with verification based on the information they provided. But not everyone or every organisation is a signatory to this agreement, such as Anadolu Agency. In this situation, we have to ask ourselves, "Is there a double standard here?" If you visit Sputnik, Russia's state television organisation, Russia Today, or China's CGTN on Twitter, there is a statement, "This account is linked to the Russian state" or "This account is linked to the Chinese state," but not for AFP or Deutsche Welle. But why not? One of them is French, while the other is German.

Nazif Menteş:

I think double standard is the right term in this situation.

Ömer Faruk Gökşin:

So now, civilisation has come to mean Western civilisation. In other words, the dominant culture in the world has become Western civilisation, and everyone is trying to be a part of Western civilisation. If we set aside some exceptions or the alternatives to Western civilisation, it is the dominant culture at the moment. And Washington is the place where this culture is strongest. In other words, I do not feel that asserting "these things are managed by Washington" constitutes a conspiracy theory. We can see these things as users of the said platforms; you do not have to be a journalist for that. We do not need to waste time or mental energy on these things. Let us all check our timeline on Twitter or Facebook. Then let's also take a look at the

timelines of our friends next to us, our mom and dad. What are the differences? What was served to them and to us? Could it be that we are being led somewhere with the news we were served? We need to think about questions like these.

Nazif Menteş:

Thank you. I will also ask our guests here, of course I am asking you to do it after the panel ends, frankly, I checked just now, I checked while I was on break before the panel started, I will not name them, but I would like to ask of you to take a look at the last 100 posts of the “independent fact-checking organisations” that Meta or other social media platforms cooperate. I did this check on Instagram. How many of the last 100 posts support one side or the other or whose posts are these? Please take a moment to look into this. Mr. Ömer Faruk, one of the things that bothers me is this: I am technically an editor. When a fact-checking platform marks your news as false, incomplete, or distorted, it lowers your engagement rate on the platform. As a result, you reach fewer people. But who checks the fact-checker, and according to what criteria do they take action? We are talking about disasters. As you are aware, during the Manavgat fires, there was a question about whether pine cones explode. As editors, we do not know if pine cones explode or not. Nor does anyone on our team. In order to answer the question “Can pine cones explode?” we needed to consult with expert professors. We created content based on opinions collected from various universities. This content was then labelled as deceptive, claiming, “Cones don’t explode.” Later, when we asked the addressee about this deception, he provided us with a source whose name I will not identify. Let’s call him Ahmet or Mehmet. He, Ahmet or Mehmet, says it will not explode. That is why he claimed it would not explode. So we said, “Please remove this flag,” and it was withdrawn. We did this based on the articles written by professors from eleven different universities. We were right. However, what was done was done, and there was a halt in the interaction, or people noticed it. People saw that “GZT delivered false news.” This will fall within someone’s area of responsibility, Mr Ömer Faruk, right? Isn’t that a major problem?

Ömer Faruk Görçin:

Millions of people see ‘GZT delivered false news’, whereas only 5-10 thousand see the statement ‘Yes, we released false news; what GZT stated was true’.

Honestly, it's a pretty sad thing. Because the viewing penalties are not limited to that tweet. This means that if your Twitter account has been flagged as such, it will be viewed significantly less frequently from here on. The algorithms will prevent people from seeing it. The most important thing is, as you say, maybe that's how it usually happens: millions of people saw "GZT delivered false news," and only 5–10 thousand people saw "Yes, we released false news; what GZT stated was true."

Nazif Menteş:

And they do not even apologise. They add a quick note and say, "We have put off the flagging." GZT's content is not appropriate for this flagging." Sadly, as you point out, perhaps not even fifteen people notice the note.

Ömer Faruk Gökşin:

So, for the second time, you ask me, "Do they have a responsibility?" or "How can we regulate this responsibility?" However, I always question, "Do they have good intentions?" I mean, are they willing to be held accountable? Are they transparent and completely objective independent organisations, or are they biased like everyone else in the world? I am not claiming that these institutions are malicious, that they govern the world, or that they start wars like this. But, as far as I can tell, they have a point of view that prioritises the liberal lifestyle, the American democratic mindset, which we refer to as the "Biden and Harris mindset," that is in charge in America, and they want the entire world to share that mindset. This is not suitable for everyone around the world.

Something similar happened to me the last time we visited China while I was working for the Sabah newspaper. We are conversing with Chinese diplomats there, and we live in Türkiye. I have travelled to Europe, Iran, and Iraq, among other places. Elections are utilised to govern these countries, but not China. In China, if you want to be the governor of a province, you join the communist party at an early age, work your way up the ranks, and eventually become the governor. That diplomat there took it calmly and told me bluntly, "Democracy is a type of government. We do not use it. We are happy like this. Our system works better this way." Of course, I am not an expert on China, and I'm not arguing that he is correct or incorrect, but China and America are two different places, just as Istanbul and Washington are two different places. We have a different culture, different history. We are a community that bears a 1,000- to 1,500-year load. On the other hand, there is a nation which has emerged during the last 200–250 years with hundreds of incidents of mixing, civil wars, and racism. We don't expect them to be

on the same side. I don't expect them to accept responsibility or be so gracious when dealing with these issues. I believe we should be conscious of their intentions.

Nazif Menteş:

Thank you Mr Ömer Faruk. Now, finally, I would like to return to Mr Burak. In TV series and movies, we see the intelligence agencies of different countries rubbing their hands together, sometimes in times of turmoil, after disasters, or in times of difficulties such as disasters. Actually, I don't think this is particularly theatrical, and I think there is a truth behind it. Does disinformation, particularly during disasters, crises, and problematic periods, fall into the hands of various intelligence services and terrorist organisations for their benefit, or are there any organisations or agencies hunting for and "chasing" it?

Ali Burak Darıcılı:

Of course, after significant natural disasters such as earthquakes, people who have been seriously injured respond in a reactive manner. It is impossible for a social reaction not to occur. This is the case all over the world. Of course, this reaction is aimed directly at the public authority. An adversary intelligence service that sees you as a target will, of course, prefer to utilise such a process to persuade the society in the country or region to reject state authority or to manipulate it in a variety of ways that undermine public authority. This is a method.

For example, Syria is currently in a civil war. Of course, the Assad regime has lost much of its hold on power in Syria's civil war. However, if Syria had not lost power, if Syria had not been like this, and if there had not been this civil war, it was almost certain that Syria, which still considered Hatay to be its own territory, would have attempted to create an atmosphere hostile to the state together with the entities in Hatay that supported it. Of course, Syria's power cannot be compared to that of the Republic of Türkiye. So it didn't matter if there was no civil war, either. However, since there are entities there that are seriously loyal to them, they use these entities to create confusion, undermine the state authority, and reduce the sense of belonging of the citizens in their own country—which I think is the most important thing—that is, to make people feel that they do not belong to this country, to create the perception of 'other' and that the public authority does not help people because of their sect, political thoughts, and to disrupt the sense of citizenship.

This is a situation that seriously weakens the public authority of a state. Of course, intelligence services strive to take advantage of such situations. This is a reality.

Of course, manipulation is not limited to earthquakes and other events; it is also occurs during

election processes. In Türkiye, election security means ballot box security. All right. However, in societies around the world that have solved the ballot box security and counting issue, there is no such problem. According to "international democracy indexes" of liberal democracy, the security of elections now concerns the manipulation of public perception... That is, the control of the will of the electorate for or against a president by an adversary intelligence service through various forms of disinformation. In the 2016 US presidential elections...

Tabii manipölasyon dediğimiz şey sadece deprem vesaire gibi de düşünmeyelim, mesela bir seçim süreci var. Şimdi Türkiye'de seçim güvenliği, sandık güvenliği olarak algılanıyor. Tamam. Ama dünyada bu sandık güvenliğini ve sayma meselesini çözen toplumlar, öyle bir sorun yok, liberal demokrasi "uluslararası demokrasi endeksleri"ne göre söylüyorum, seçimlerin güvenliği artık toplumsal algının manipüle edilmesi... Yani seçmen iradesinin çeşitli dezenformasyonlarla hasım bir istihbarat servisi tarafından bir başkan lehine veyahut aleyhine kontrol edilmesi. 2016 yılında ABD başkanlık seçimlerinde...

Nazif Menteş:

You are talking about Cambridge Analytica.

Ali Burak Darıcı:

Cambridge Analytica is different. In 2016, Russian intelligence intervened in the election, launching a systematic disinformation operation to assist Clinton lose and Trump win. In other words, intelligence services can use an earthquake in any target country; if it is a target, they can try to bring a government close to them in the elections in a way to shake the public authority, or they can work for the defeat of a candidate they do not want. They may succeed or fail. That is another story, but they will do it and seize this opportunity. Thank you very much.

Nafiz Menteş:

Well, having the final session is both enjoyable and challenging. I am sure you have also grown fatigued. I would like to thank both of my guests very much. It was a very instructive and enjoyable speech, event and panel for me. Thank you for watching. We will conclude for now. Thank you very much.





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