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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Sending Aid to Turkey, Syria After Devastating Earthquake

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People search through the wreckage of a collapsed building in Azmarin town, in Idlib province, northern Syria. A powerful earthquake has caused significant damage in southeast Turkey and Syria and many casualties are feared. **Ghaith Alsayed / AP / TASS**

Russia said Monday that 300 military personnel deployed in Syria were helping efforts to clear up debris following an earthquake that killed hundreds there and in neighboring Turkey.

The Defense Ministry said staff and 60 units of military hardware had begun "removing rubble, searching for victims and providing them with medical assistance in areas that have experience the most severe destruction."

Russian President Vladimir Putin held telephone calls with Syria's Bashar al-Assad and Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan and promised to send rescuers to both countries after the devastating earthquake.

"In the nearest hours, rescuers from the Russian emergency ministry will take off for Syria," the Kremlin said. In a separate message, Moscow said Putin also spoke to Erdogan who,

accepted "the help of Russian rescuers."

Putin had earlier expressed “the most sincere condolences” to his Turkish and Syrian counterparts after the 7.8-magnitude earthquake which killed over 4,300 people in the two countries.

Countries around the world have mobilized rapidly to send aid and rescue workers after to Turkey and Syria following the earthquake.

AFP contributed reporting.

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