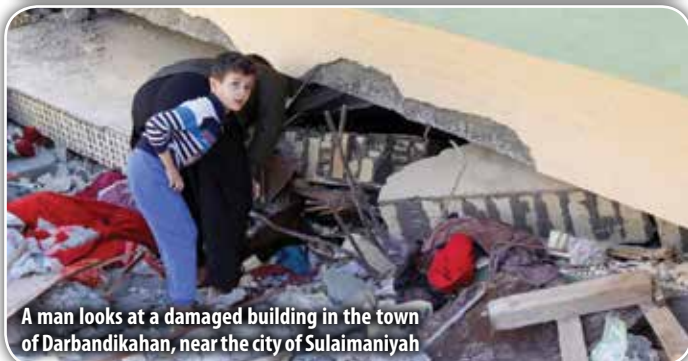




A wounded boy is treated following the quake in Kermanshah, Iran



A man looks at a damaged building in the town of Darbandikhan, near the city of Sulaimaniyah



A man sits outside a damaged building in Sarpol-e Zahab county in Kermanshah, Iran



A man reacts following the quake



A woman reacts next to a dead body in Sarpol-e Zahab county in Iran



A damaged building is seen in Kermanshah



A man walks past a damaged building in Sulaimaniya Governorate, Iraq

Ankara/Baghdad

Nizar Abdullah spent the night sifting through the ruins of the two-storey house next door in the mountainous town of Darbandikhan in Iraqi Kurdistan after a killer quake hit the region.

"There were eight people inside," Abdullah, an Iraqi Kurd, told AFP on Monday, outside the pile of concrete debris where the house once stood.

Some family members managed to escape, but "neighbours and rescue workers pulled out the mother and one of the children dead from the rubble", said the 34-year-old.

The 7.3-magnitude quake hit on the Iraq-Iran border area on Sunday night, killing hundreds of people and injuring thousands of others.

Iran took the brunt of it, with at least 400 people killed and 3,950 injured, while in Iraq the quake claimed eight

lives and injured 535 others, officials from both countries said.

The quake hit a border area 30 kilometres (20 miles) southwest of Halabja in Iraqi Kurdistan at around 9:20 pm (1820 GMT), the US Geological Survey said.

Most people were at home when the quake struck.

"All at once the electricity went out and I felt a strong tremor," said Loqman Hussein.

"I immediately ran out of the house with my family," he added.

Akram Wali, 50, said many families in Darbandikhan sought shelter with relatives outside of the town.

They fled as authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan called on the population in the southern area of the town to leave their homes, fearing that the Darbandikhan dam would burst.

All eyes on dam

The dam, which spans the Diyala River, is located in Sulaimaniyah province, where seven people were killed, including four in Darbandikhan. One person died in Diyala province.

Authorities in the Darbandikhan region, home to 40,000 people, say the dam has withstood the fury of the quake and did not suffer any major cracks.

Taha Mohammed, 65, has not heeded the call to leave Darbandikhan, even if the quake totally destroyed his house.

"We ran out and no one was injured," said the man dressed in the traditional baggy pants of Iraqi Kurds, counting his blessings despite the tragedy.

Iraqi health ministry spokesman Seif al-Nadr said that the quake injured 321 people in Iraqi Kurdistan, 170 others in Diyala province and 44 in the disputed northern province of Kirkuk.

Quake leaves trail of Death and Destructions

Major earthquakes to strike Iran in recent decades:

- » Aug. 11, 2012: Iran's East Azerbaijan province, magnitude 6.4; Over 300 killed.
- » Dec. 26, 2003: Southeastern Iran, Bam, magnitude 6.5; Over 26,000 killed.
- » Feb. 28, 1997: Northeast Iran, Ardabil, magnitude 6.1; Over 1,100 killed.
- » May 10, 1997: Eastern Iran, Birjand-Qaen, magnitude 7.3; Over 1,560 killed.
- » June 21, 1990: Northwest Iran, Roubar, magnitude 7.4; 50,000 killed.
- » July 28, 1981: Southeast Iran, Sirch district, magnitude 7.3; 1,500 killed.
- » Sept. 16, 1978: Northeast Iran, Tabas town, magnitude 7.7; 25,000 killed.
- » April 10, 1972: Southern Iran, Qir district, magnitude 6.9; Over 4,000 killed.
- » Aug. 31, 1968: Northeastern Iran, Dasht-e Bayaz district, magnitude 7.1; Over 10,000 killed.
- » Sept. 1, 1962: Northern Iran, Buin Zahra town, magnitude 7.1; Over 12,000 killed.
- » Dec. 13, 1957: East Iran Farsinaj district, magnitude 7.1; Over 1,100 killed.
- » June 2, 1957: Northern Iran, Bandpay district, magnitude 7; Over 1,500 killed.