Situation overview:
On 12 November 2017 at 21:18 local time (18:18 UTC) northwest Iraq experienced an earthquake in the magnitude of approximately 7.2 – 7.5, according to European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre (EMSC). The epicenter of this earthquake is located 32kms from the city of Halabja. According to the Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS), approximately 1,840,000 people live with within 100km of the epicenter of this earthquake in both Iraq and Iran.

Humanitarian impact:
There have been six reported fatalities and over 500 people injured in Iraq as a result of the earthquake. According to reports, four fatalities and approximately 80 injuries have occurred in Darbandikhan, including two critical injuries. Initial reports suggest the Darbandikhan area has been most severely impacted. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), as of 09:30 on 13 November the hospital in Sulaymaniyah city has received some 83 casualties from the earthquake, including 12 from Darbandikhan. The situation in Sulaymaniyah is now calm, and but urgent medical assistance, including first aid kits, surgical equipment, medicine and medical teams have been requested by the Kurdish Regional Government to ensure all local hospitals are able to treat injured civilians. WHO is responding to this request.

In Halabja town, near the epicenter of the earthquake, around 60 individuals were injured, however no critical injuries have been reported. The main hospital in Halabja is open and receiving patients. In the four small villages of Quarto/ Kifri, a child was killed and around eight people were injured. Almost all the houses in this set of villages were destroyed. In the village of Kalar, one person was also killed and several non-life-threatening injuries were reported.

Initial reports suggest that there is damage to some structures in Darbandikhan, with some buildings collapsed. Many houses in two villages in Maydan sub district were heavily damaged, but no critical injuries are reported.

The Mosul Dam is reportedly undamaged. However, the Darbandikhan Dam, a multi-purpose embankment on the Diyala river, is being assessed for damage today by the Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR), as local sources report that the dam was impacted by the landslides that pushed heavy rocks and rubble onto the dam’s spillway. Residents downstream of the dam were advised by authorities to be vigilant and ready for evacuation, should an emergency alert be issued.

Humanitarian response and coordination:
Immediately after the earthquake, the Departments of Health in Sulaymaniyah, Garmiyan and Halabja Governorates sent tens of ambulances to the affected areas, and critical injuries were transferred to Sulaymaniyah Emergency hospital, with less critical injuries receiving treatment at local hospitals. The Turkish Red Crescent has a team from Erbil on the ground assessing damage and providing assistance. An OCHA-led inter-agency assessment team is currently in Sulaymaniyah and plans to visit Darbandikhan later this afternoon.

WHO has sent an Immediate Response Team (IRT) and two ambulances to Sulaymaniyah. The Immediate Response Team is scheduled to arrive in Sulaymaniyah this afternoon. Trauma and Surgical Kits are also being sent to the Sulaymaniyah Department Health for use as required. A humanitarian partner, Aspen, has also sent a medical team to Sulaymaniyah to provide medical support.

It is unlikely that the Government of Iraq will request international medical or Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams to deploy. Supplies of food, health items, medicines, shelter kits and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) assistance are already located in country, and can be moved into storage sites and distribution points if necessary. A United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination team is on stand-by for immediate deployment to the affected areas, if required.

Disclaimer: This document is subject to availability of data at the time of circulation. The context is evolving and the above information is subject to constant change.