

# Information Center of Afrin Resistance



Information Center Of  
**AFRIN**  
RESISTANCE

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The Information Center of Afrin Resistance is providing direct information about Afrin. Since the 26th January 2018 we report up-to-date about the invasion and war crimes of the Turkish state and the resistance of the people of Afrin. This is the weekly summary of the developments in and around Afrin.

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# **The Developments in Afrin 20<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> April, 2018**

## **Introduction**

With the defeat of the IS in Syria and especially after the liberation of Raqqa in October 2017, the Turkish state intensified its threats and attacks on the Democratic Confederation of Northern Syria. On this background the Turkish occupation war on Afrin started the 20th January 2018 violating international law and the sovereignty of its neighbour country. The Turkish army has launched this war in cooperation with jihadist groups of the FSA ranks. Many of them are former Al-Qaida or IS members. Since the beginning of March, all districts and the city center of Afrin had been under heavy bombardments, shelling and drone surveillance by the Turkish army targeting especially civilians. On March 18th more than 200,000 people left the town centre which was evacuated in order to avoid a physical genocide. Since then the majority of refugees is staying in the Shehba region without security guarantee and international support.

In this new phase, the confrontation between the international powers and their interests is increasing all over Syria.

## **Last week's Developments inside Afrin**

After 97 days of resistance against the second biggest army of the NATO, hundreds of people from Afrin Canton are still displaced and are facing difficult conditions. The Turkish army and its FSA allies are implementing ethnic cleansing, assimilation and colonisation policies, preventing the population to return to their villages and continuing preparations to add the region Afrin to Turkey's state territory. The resistance of YPG-YPJ forces in the all districts of Afrin Canton carries on, as well as the resistance of the displaced people from Afrin in Shehba region. Tensions between regional and international powers became more concrete with the air strikes carried out by USA, UK and France on Syrian facilities.

### **Afrin**

The Turkish army and FSA forces are still continuing its policy and practice of abuse on the population of Afrin. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights was monitoring the area of Afrin for 5 weeks and accordingly reports that the "Olive Branch" forces continue to rob and loot as well as to abduct and torture civilians and afterwards releasing them pressing sums of money [1]. Inside Afrin city, local sources report that the Turkish army and FSA forces are forcing the women to wear the veil and clothing as the IS used to impose. The women are prohibited to wear trousers or to go out without a hijab. They also forbid women to leave the house alone. A man of her family must always go with them [2].

According to local sources from Jinderese district, Turkish army is still arresting civilians in the area [3]. Other sources reported that Turkish army recently opened a prison in Koran village. In this location, they are torturing civilians and forcing parents to teach the islamic prayers, especially in the Ezidi community. Another source from Rajo district reported that the FSA forces and the Turkish army are gathering the villagers and forcing them to work to retrieve the dead bodies of FSA forces in the areas where clashes took place. Moreover, they are forcing the villagers to clean the streets and remove the rubble. Others report that FSA forces were burning civilians' houses because they were interacting with the Democratic Autonomous Administration [4]. An older man who escaped from Afrin by foot, stated: "They took away my brother from his home, tortured him and brought him back like this after 3 hours, because he refused to leave his door open at night" [5].

The Turkish army and FSA forces emptied Barava village (Shera district) of its inhabitants to settle the families of FSA militiamen. At the same time, on April 21<sup>st</sup>, buses loaded with 1,700 people from al-Damir area (eastern al-Qalamoun, Damascus countryside) entered Jindirese District. Among them was the commander of Faylaq al-Rahman FSA forces, named Abdel Nasser Shamir, as well as dozens of Faylaq al-Rahman commanders and militiamen with their families. In addition, militiamen of al-Islam Army and the commander called Ahmad al-Abdu [6].

The FSA and the Turkish state are building a new council in Jindirese, to rule the district on the behalf of the occupying forces. The members' names were published [7].

On April 21<sup>st</sup>, the occupying forces in Afrin kidnapped 4 women in Shekhutka village (Mabeta District). Two of them were later released: one is responsible of Kongra Star and the other one judge of conciliation. The names of the other two women are still unknown. According to local sources, in Hasa village "Mirkan" (Mabeta district) the occupying forces gathered the men in the primary school yard, where they were insulted and beaten. Moreover, one was brought to an unknown destination and all his property was put at the disposal of FSA leaders [8].

YPG press office reported that in between April 17<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> many actions against Turkish army and FSA forces took place in Afrin Canton. As a result, 12 Turkish soldiers and FSA members were killed. Among them is the Turkish military officer Taner Cobanoglu, who was killed in Afrin city center on April 17<sup>th</sup> [9].

### **Shehba and Northern Syria**

In Shehba region, the displaced population from Afrin – especially the children – suffer from the difficult hygienic situation, the lack of clean water, sanitary products and medical supplies [10]. Cases of leishmaniasis have been reported. To help facing the difficult situation, many people from all over Northern Syria sent blankets and pillows to support the displaced people from Afrin, because the International aid organizations aren't acting yet [11].

Currently, 2,184 families (estimated to be 12,241 people) from Afrin are being hosted in Babens village, in Shehba region. In 2016 this village was destroyed due to the war in Shehba, but the people are now organizing themselves [12]. One month after the people were forced to leave Afrin and after a long period in which because of the attacks the children couldn't go to school, on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, the school in Berxwedan Camp was opened [13]. On April 19<sup>th</sup>, from Azaz the Turkish army shelled Til Rifat, where many of the displaced people had found refuge [14].

Shervan Derwish, Minbij Military Council's spokesperson, was released from hospital after a failed assassination attempt in March 2018 [15].

On April 20<sup>th</sup>, the official website of YPG was under cyber attack, which is clearly a Turkish-nationalist attack against Kurdish self-government and self-defense forces [16].

On April 21<sup>st</sup>, the Turkish army shelled with mortars the Saeediya Oil Station in Kerdim village, 15 km North of Tirbê Sipîyê (Jizire canton). As a result, the station was damaged.

The family of Alina Sanchez, Legerin Çiya, came to Rojava to participate in the funeral of the Argentinian martyr. The ceremony took place on April 20<sup>th</sup> in Derik. She was an internationalist fighter of YPJ, as well as a doctor who saved many lives and played a central role in the construction of a revolutionary healthcare system for Northern Syria [17]. On April 21<sup>st</sup>, a homage to the female internationalist martyrs Alina Sanchez and Anna Campbell was held [18].

## **Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran**

While Erdogan moved presidential and parliamentary elections to 24 June, 17 months ahead of schedule, and Turkish Parliament voted to extend the state of emergency for a further three months, the repressive policies of the Turkish state continue. Erdogan declared: "The state of emergency only affects terrorists. Now it's preventing labour strikes, such as the Bursa strike, which we stopped right away. It's a struggle against terrorism" [19]. The governor of Ankara's province banned the International Workers Day march on May 1<sup>st</sup>. The governorate said that the event could lead to disturbances of the peace [20]. According to the Turkish Ministry of Interior, 710 social media accounts have been investigated and legal persecution was taken against 208 social media users between April 16th and 23rd [21].

A Turkish court asked Twitter to delete all the footages showing an execution of a civilian carried out by the FSA forces Afrin on February 22<sup>nd</sup> [22].

Selahattin Demirtash is announced to be the HDP (People's Democracy Party) candidate to the presidential elections in Turkey. He is now held in jail for more than 17 months while his trial is still not over yet.

On April 21<sup>st</sup>, all Kurdish cities in Iran were on strike. The strike was due to the closure of the borders with Iraqi Kurdistan, unemployment and widespread poverty [23].

On April 25<sup>th</sup>, Head of the Qandil Municipality (Southern Kurdistan - Iraq), Mohammed Hassan, told that Turkish fighter jets attacked Gali Badran village [24].

The director of the Russian arms export company Alexander Mekhiev said that Russia has begun producing S-400 air defense systems for Turkey and that "the production process has started, there are cycles and stages, all the details have been agreed" [25].

## **Solidarity for Afrin**

On April 17<sup>th</sup>, a feminist action in Hamburg took place in solidarity with Afrin resistance and the campaign #WomenRiseUpForAfrin. The women demanded the end of Turkish occupation and femicide in Afrin committed by the Turkish army and the FSA forces [26].

On April 20<sup>th</sup>, the Platform Against the Destruction of Sur announced that on April 28th simultaneous actions will be held in 20 countries within the scope of the Global Action Day for Sur and Hasankef (Bakur – Northern Kurdistan) [27].

Activists and academics, such as Debbie Bookchin, Noam Chomsky, Judith Butler and David Harvey wrote an open letter in order to defend the young democracy of Rojava [28].

There were also solidarity actions in the Basque Country with the struggle of the Kurdish people, as banners appeared on city walls on April 21<sup>st</sup> [29].

In the same day, in Valencia thousands of people honored the 25th of April, remembering the freedom which Valencian people lost due to the Spanish occupation and showing solidarity with the Kurdish struggle against Fascism.

On April 22<sup>nd</sup>, in Duisburg (Germany) an action in remembrance and respect of all the civilians killed by the Turkish army and FSA forces in Afrin was held.

The hunger strike announced by NAV-DEM as a part of the "Freedom for Öcalan Campaign" took place in several cities as Strasbourg, Berlin, Cologne, Hannover and Bremen between April 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. Also in Toronto (Canada), 10 co-spokespersons of the Toronto Kurdish People's Assembly were on hunger strike until April 25<sup>th</sup> for Abdullah Öcalan freedom.

On April 25<sup>th</sup>, the global campaign "Siamo Afrin" started from Italy to collect funds for Afrin's displaced people in Shehba region. The collected money will be used to buy medicine, food, and other basic necessities to provide care and support to Afrin's people [30].

### **Statements and Analysis**

The Kurdistan National Conference (KNK) denounced the massacres committed by the Ottoman Empire in 1915 and demanded all the parties and concerned institutions to recognize these massacres [31].

The US Congress revived threats to sanction Turkey over the detention of North Carolina Pastor Andrew Brunson, as well as other US citizens and Turkish staff members of US diplomatic missions that it believes are being held as "political pawns" [32].

In an interview with Fox News ahead of his trip to the US where he will meet with President Donald Trump, Macron said "If we leave, we will leave the floor to the Iranian regime, Bashar al-Assad, and these guys, and they will prepare the new war. They will fuel the new terrorists." [33]

Turkish and FSA forces are implementing the policies to permanently control Afrin Canton and they are imposing FSA Islamic rules over the population and especially women. Erdogan's call for snap presidential and parliamentary elections to be held June 24 is increasing tensions with European countries and USA. As these tensions increase, Turkey has been discouraged from pursuing further action right now in northern Syria and is instead focusing on Iraq and Southern Kurdistan. As well, the pulling out of Sinjar by HPG units leaves no longer excuses to launch a military operation there. Therefore, Turkish army is conducting military operation and setting up outposts in Hakurk region next to Qandil Mountains.

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