

The geopolitical and geostrategic importance of Afrin and why the Turkish state wants to attack it

Turkey lies to the north and west of Afrin, to the east are Turkish-backed groups and to the south the *Nusra Front (Hayat Tahrir al-Sham)*.

Oil and food prices in Arin, whose economy relies on olives, olive oil and fruit, have rocketed in recent times because of the embargo from all sides.



Since 2014, Arabs have been taking their place in the legislative assembly, the Presidential Council of the assembly, and the Executive Council in the canton's administration.

A small population of Arabs live in the centre of *Afrin*, with Alevi Kurds in Mabata, and Yazidi Kurds in Kastel Cindo and Ezaze.

Due to its relative stability, since 2013 Afrin has been a refuge for people who have fled ISIS from places like *Raqqa, Manbij, al-Bab and Jarablus*. The population of Afrin, which consists of seven neighbourhoods and 365 villages, has doubled from the original figure of 400,000.

After the defeat of ISIS in *Kobani and Gire-Spi* in 2016 the Turkish state saw that its position had worsened; especially after it sold out its own gangs to the Syrian regime and Russian forces. To seek to remedy this the Turkish state redirected its attention towards the Democratic Autonomous Administration.

The occupying Turkish army has control of some parts of the region of *Shehba*. The primary objective of the military deployment in the *Azaz-Jarablus* pocket is to surround Afrin by taking what is seen as the Kurdish corridor between the *Menagh* air base and *Tell Rifaat*.

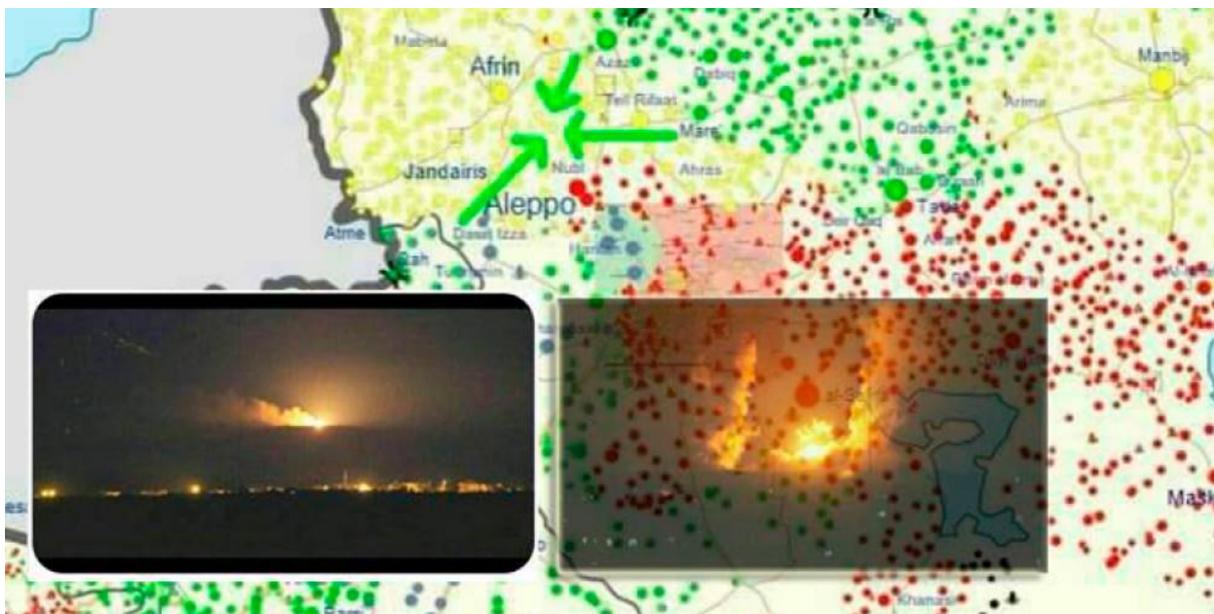
The ambitions of this occupation are two-fold: first the sabotaging of the *Raqqa* operation, and second, the protection of ISIS. There is also a desire to hinder the development of the North Syria

Federation, fight against the Democratic Autonomous Administration and to prevent the development of democratic projects in Syria.

Since *Afrin* liberated itself from the Baathist regime Turkey has wanted to destroy the city. In June, the Turkish army and the FSA groups it is backing fired mortars into the city and since the beginning of the Rojava Revolution the Turkish state has killed many civilians, injured thousands and burnt swathes of land belonging to the people.

The Turkish state confessed its plans

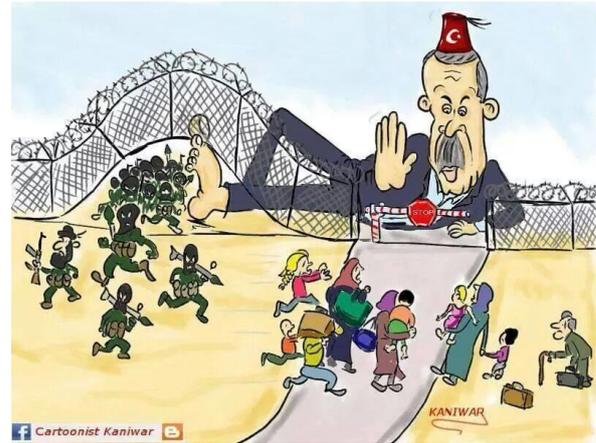
Significant victories are being won in the *Raqqqa* operation, ISIS and its biggest sponsor the Turkish state is losing in Rojava and northern Syria. Erdogan is unable to digest this loss and is therefore trying to take revenge on the Kurds. The Turkish state is attacking *Afrin* because it is afraid of any sort of status for the Kurds.



Turkish President Recep *Tayyip Erdogan*, Prime Minister *Binali Yildirim* and Defence Minister *Fehmi Isik* have been declaring their plan to attack Afrin. To get these plans approved *Erdogan* has had phone conversations with US President *Donald Trump*, Russian President *Vladimir Putin* and British Prime Minister *Theresa May*. At the same time, the Turkish state is deploying its forces on the Turkey-Syria border and also in the occupied areas between *Al-Bab* and *Azaz*. They are firing mortars into Kurdish populated regions from the occupied lands in Syria on a daily basis.

The Turkish state is trying to gain support by discussing its plans for attack and occupation in the media and in daily meetings. For example, a top aide for the Turkish Prime Minister said on 3 July:

“We are constructing a military base on the most strategic hill in al-Bab. It is about to be completed. Therefore, we will be ensuring the security of al-Bab and the wider region with our own police and military forces. We are working to stabilise the region. However, my personal opinion is that in order to stabilise the region we need to rid the Afrin region of terrorists”.



The aide also said that the foreign minister and the country's intelligence organisation was conducting its work to this end and added: "Turkey's plans for a secure area will be agreed upon in the Astana talks".

Turkey's reasons for its aggression

The civilised world is in a significant battle against ISIS and an international coalition has been formed for this. However, many documents and reports say that Turkey is supporting ISIS and providing them with arms. Turkey is threatening the region, the Kurds and the world through ISIS. This is why it is not in the interests of Turkey for ISIS to be defeated. The most successful battle of the International Coalition against ISIS has been conducted in collaboration with the Kurds and the Syrian Democratic Forces of which Kurds constitute a majority.

So then, why is Turkey wanting to attack Afrin, a city that does not threaten Turkey and where there is not a single ISIS fighter?

This aggression has no legal or ethical basis. There is only one reason behind Turkish state aggression towards Afrin and that is its Kurdish phobia. The Turkish state does not want the Kurds and their project to be successful. Turkey wants chaos, instability and war. Turkey does not want ISIS to be defeated. Turkey wants to occupy. Turkey is laying the groundwork for a regional and international war. Turkey wants to be a dominant force in the region by supporting Salafist forces and acting with a Turkish nationalist expansionist mentality.

With this policy, Turkey is diametrically opposed to the peoples of the region and the international community's objective of defeating ISIS. Turkey is sacrificing the will of the Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Keldanis, Armenians and Turkmen for its own expansionist objectives. Turkey's policies are leading it commit war crimes.

Peoples of Rojava stand against Turkey's occupation

Hundreds of Arabs walked against Turkish state occupation in the villages of *Keferneya*, *Umhos*, *Kefernase*, *Tell Rifaat*, *Ehres*, *Vahsiye*, *Fafen* and *Hisarcik*.



People from *Keferneya* village gathered in front of the village's mosque and walked to the local primary school. The marchers, who were joined by the *Shehba* People's Assembly and the Women's Assembly, shouted "***murderer Erdogan!***"



"We are all one and against occupation"

We see the Turkish army's presence on Syrian soil as an occupation. The presence of the Turkish army is also a threat to the democratic and peaceful future of Syria.

The Turkish state is playing a negative role in the region. They should leave and all national and democratic forces in Syria should call for the Turkish state to leave Syria and Rojava. The Turkish state presence in *Al-Bab, Jarablus and Shehba* is itself a reason for the prolonging of war in Syria.

In the press statement from the march *Arabs from Shehba* declared support for the SDF and opposition to the occupation of the Turkish state. ***“The SDF saved us from evil. We are against the occupation of the Turkish state. Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen are united”***.

In the same statement, a message was sent to the people in Shehba living under Turkish occupation: “The Turkish state’s aim is occupation it is not ensuring security. Everyone should stand against the Turkish state’s occupation. The Turkish state’s aim is to capture our villages and towns. They will not recognise the will of our people while doing this.”

The Turkish army’s attacks have begun

The Turkish army and gangs attacked the liberated villages of Shehba and Afrin. The Turkish army and gangs attacked the villages of Mirenar, Filat, Qetma, Qestecindo in the region of Sera and fired mortars at Cilber and Iska villages of Serava. At the same time, they attacked the liberated villages of Erfad, Minix, Sex Isa, Biluniye.



During the attack, a woman named Sebah Isa and three other civilians were injured. The wounded were taken to hospital in Afrin.

The Turkish army has intensified its attacks against the villages of Yazi Bax and Keferato in the region of Shehba. Tens of mortars landed in the village at about 03.00 local time. Three people were killed as a result of the mortar fire and four people from the same family were severely injured.

Those who lost their lives and were wounded:



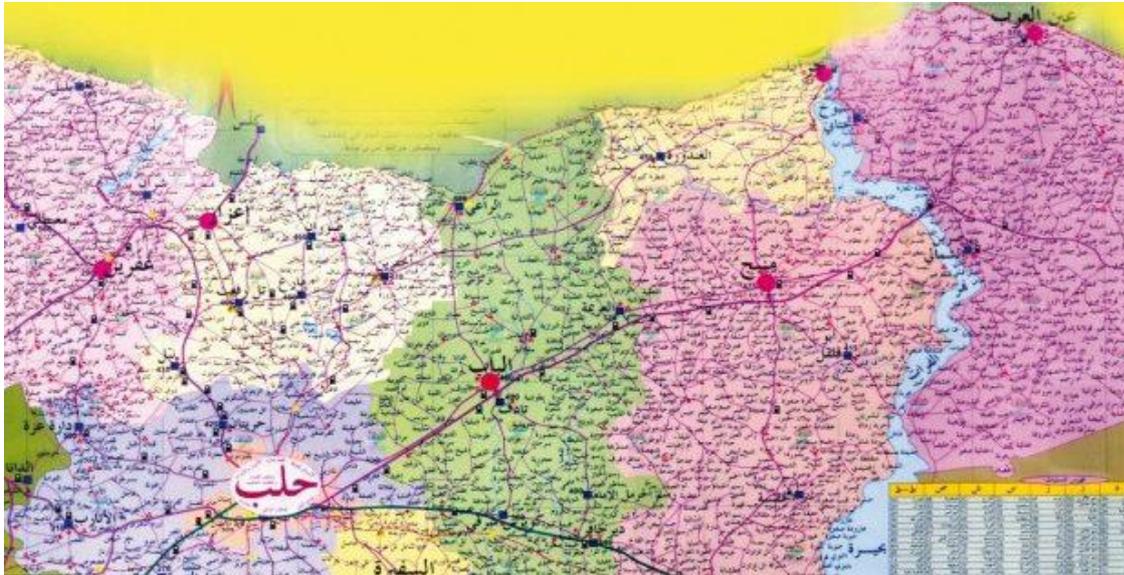
Life lost: Xezala Yusiv (40), Muawiya El-Yusif (13), Tebarik El-Yusif (13).

Wounded: Xensa El-Yusif (18), Rinda El-Yusif (23), Fidaa El-Yusif (19) ve Aya El Yusif (16).

According to information from doctors the injuries are critical.

The Turkish army is emptying villages in Shehba, forcefully displacing Kurds

The Turkish state ethnically cleansing the regions between Jarablus, al-Bab and Azaz. It is emptying Kurdish villages and forcefully displacing the Kurds. They are also pushing out the Arabs of the region and redistributing the lands to their partners. The Turkish state is playing a very negative role in this region. They are playing with the demography of the region. This is a crime against humanity.



SHEHBA

Turkey occupied Jarablus on 24 August 2016. After that it turned its attention towards Rai, Azaz, Exterin, Soran and finally al-Bab. When Turkey occupied these places, its primary target was the region of Shehba; the 217 Kurdish villages in the region. During the army's occupation 50 of these villages were burnt and destroyed by soldiers and gangs, with property being looted. These villages are in between the region of al-Rai and Marea, and Marea and al-Bab. Some of the looted villages are: Rai, Dudyan, Gidris, Tel Sehir, Karagoz, Twis, Sava, Siverin, Beluniye, Tel Cican, Tel Circir, Qibbesin, Seyh Nasir, Hawar Kilis, Yazıbag, Sosinbat, Karakopru, and Karamezra.

The occupying Turkish army and their gangs are emptying the towns of Marea and Shehba for military purposes.

Two days ago the Turkish army threatened citizens in Kurdish villages in the Shehba region to empty their houses.

According to local sources the villages of Hezwan, Sosyan, Neman, Birc, Keibe, Kefer Kelbin, Til Malid, Tiltane, Eble, Tewihine, Tiwes, Sidud, Baroza, Iwen, Dana and Izreq were emptied after threats from the Turkish army.

Again according to local sources gangs affiliated to the Turkish state emptied the villages of Sex Isa and Til Midyeq in preparations for an assault against the liberated areas of the Shehba region.

The Turkish army is deploying forces to the towns of Azaz and Marea and the villages of Til Malid and Kilcibrin in preparation for an assault against the canton of Afrin.

Turkish attacks and the role of International forces



The defence forces of the Afrin region and YPG Commander *Sipan Hemo* evaluates the situation as follows:

“The Turkish state has been unsuccessful in its policies concerning Syria, the Middle East and Rojava Kurdistan. If Turkey attacks Afrin this would mean that Russia, Iran and Syria approve of this. This is not possible in any other way. Our people must know that an attack by the Turkish state of this sort can only be conducted with the approval of these states. Russia especially will have a significant role in this. Turkey entered Jarablus and al-Bab with permission from Russia and even

the international coalition forces. This is an inter-state question. The Turkish state is making concessions, by making these it is trying to open itself a path. It is making a diplomatic effort towards this end and militarily it has brought together some groups.



The target of Turkey’s massacres is hampering the efforts against ISIS. However, our people’s path of self-defence will be implemented against anyone who intends to harm this strategy.

Unfortunately, some forces are continuing their support for Turkey. The silence of the international community against Turkey’s intentions is not in the interests of the Syrian nation. It is for this reason that the international community is responsible for the situation in Syria.

If our calls to the international community to take a stand against Turkey’s intentions do not materialise our people will have no choice but to resist.

Our people accept the joint borders within the framework of international law. However, Turkey’s attacks continue. Our people see resistance against these attacks as a national duty.”



‘They are fighting against Kurds not ISIS’

Uweyd Abu Seqir, a gang leader who was formerly operating under the command of the Turkish army, said that the Turkish army was forming military headquarters in al-Bab to form a new fighting force.

The commander who left the gangs under the command of the Turkish army five days ago said that Turkey’s intentions became clearer after the occupation of al-Bab: “The Turkish state wants to use us to occupy our own lands. We were receiving our orders from the

Turkish army from the beginning. All our logistical needs were provided by the Turkish army. After the capture of al-Bab it became clear that the Turkish army’s intention was not to fight against ISIS but rather to reinvigorate the Ottoman period. There were meetings between the Turkish army and ISIS and then tens of villages were handed over to the army by ISIS. The clearest example of this was the occupation of Jarablus.”

A Kurdish-Arab conflict is being provoked through the media

Uweyd Abu Seqir said that the Turkish state was trying to provoke a Kurdish-Arab conflict in the region and that many media outlets were being used to this end.

Our call and demands to the international community:

- *Afrin has been one of the most stable and secure regions in Syria over the past five years. With this in mind, the city has taken in as much as its original population in IDPs. The UN and the International Coalition must ensure the continuation of Afrin’s stability and security. Afrin must be protected against external attacks.*
- *Afrin is not a threat to Turkey and has not attacked anyone. The Turkish state is attacking Afrin because it is against the Kurds and Kurdish gains. This reality must not be neglected and the Turkish state’s attacks must be prevented.*
- *Russia, who is responsible for Afrin’s air space, must not be a spectator to Turkey’s attacks and must prevent any such show of aggression.*
- *The attacks of the Turkish state against Afrin, Rojava and north Syria as a whole is beneficial for ISIS. The International Coalition Against ISIS must take precautions against this and must prevent the Turkish army’s attacks.*
- *The Turkish state is an occupying force in Syria. The international community must not be a spectator to this situation and the Turkish army must be made to leave Syrian soil.*