

The Democratic Society Movement, TEV-DEM



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In a single day, 47 civilians killed, dozens injured in Turkish bombardments of Afrin

AFRIN – 47 civilians were killed and dozens more were injured in today’s bombardment on Afrin by the occupying Turkish army.

The Turkish army and its affiliated jihadist groups carried out a massacre in Afrin today. 47 civilians, including 16 children and 14 women were killed in the Turkish army’s attacks on neighbourhoods inhabited by civilians.

This figure includes Afrin Hospital, which has been the latest to be targeted in Turkish air attacks. Afrin Hospital is the biggest hospital in the Afrin Canton which has received civilians from all over the canton ever since attacks began.

Dozens of civilians were also injured in the bombardments carried out on the city with air attacks and heavy weapons.¹

Luxembourg’s Foreign Minister writes to NATO over Afrin

Luxembourg Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Jean Asselborn urged NATO to closely monitor the situation in Afrin.

In a letter addressed to NATO’s general secretary Jens Stoltenberg, Asselborn warned the alliance about the damaging effects of the Turkish operation “Olive Branch” in Syria.

Following the interrogations raised by many parliamentarians and the motion adopted during the debate on foreign policy that took place on 14 March 2018 in the Chamber of Deputies in Luxembourg, Asselborn wrote to the NATO to draw attention to the continued deterioration of the situation in Syria, including in and around Afrin.

In the letter minister Asselborn has expressed his fear that this operation will result in a real disaster.

Asselborn advised that NATO should closely monitor the situation in Afrin through regular briefings to the North Atlantic Council, and that contacts with the Turkish authorities should stress that their operation must respect international law, including the principles of proportionality and necessity.

Jean Asselborn showed particular concern for humanitarian access and the suffering of the civilian population.²

¹ <http://en.hawarnews.com/47-civilians-killed-dozens-injured-in-turkish-bombardments-on-afrin-today/>

² <https://anfenglish.com/news/luxembourg-s-foreign-minister-writes-to-nato-over-afrin-25534>

HDP leader accuses Germany of 'dirty deals' with Turkey over Afrin

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region (Kurdistan 24) – Pervin Buldan, the Co-leader of Turkey's opposition Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) on Saturday accused the German government of engaging in "dirty deals" and continuing to sell weapons to Turkey which is attacking the Afrin region in Syrian Kurdistan.

Addressing a crowd of some 11,000 diaspora Kurds during a Newroz celebration in the capital city of the German state of Lower Saxony Hanover, Buldan urged the Berlin government "not to ignore Kurdish people's quest for freedom."

"We know [you] are giving Turkey tanks and artillery. These dirty deals even cause us difficulty in celebrating Newroz here. There are raids on Kurdish civil organizations in Germany," she said, criticizing Berlin's relations with Ankara.

According to a Thursday report on Germany's public international broadcaster Deutsche Welle, arms exports to Turkey increased in 2018, despite several political and diplomatic differences between the two NATO allies.

The German Ministry of Economic Affairs said that in the first five-and-a-half weeks of the Turkish assault on Afrin, 20 export authorizations for German arms to Turkey were granted.

They had a value of 4.4 million Euros, significantly higher than the average of the previous year for such a period with 14 permits worth 3.6 million Euros...³

Operation Cizîre Storm halted because of Turkey's Afrin invasion

In an interview with ANHA, SDF spokeswoman Lilwa Ebdullah said that the Operation Cizire Storm against ISIS gangs is temporarily halted because of Turkey's invasion attacks on Afrin.

"The only reason that hindered the struggle against ISIS is the attacks of invader Turkish state on Afrin. The withdrawal of our forces from the region to join the Resistance of the Century is the main the factor that halted the operation. The ISIS gangs are still encircled in a small area on the east of Euphrates river. The gangs attack SDF positions sometimes and our forces respond immediately" she said.

Ebdullah accused Turkey of trying to prolong ISIS' life in Syria. Recalling the recent increase of ISIS' attacks, she said that ISIS is taking advantage of Turkish operation.

Ebdullah also denied that SDF forces withdraw from oil-rich regions and handed them over to Russia. "We will never leave the liberated areas and leave it to other forces," she said.⁴

³ <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/e28fc8f1-d784-46cf-8531-b095fdff67f0>

⁴ <http://en.hawarnews.com/lailwa-al-abdullah-campaign-has-stopped-temporarily-turkey-wants-prolong-life-of-is-gangs/>

Hundreds of thousands of civilians at risk in Afrin: UN

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region (Kurdistan 24) – A Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on Friday warned about the situation of civilians in the city of Afrin in Syrian Kurdistan, calling on all sides to take “feasible precautions” to avoid loss of civilian lives.

In an official statement, Spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani expressed concern for civilian deaths and injuries due to ongoing airstrikes and ground-based attacks on the Kurdish enclave of Afrin.

Shamdasani added that “hundreds of thousands of civilians [in Afrin] are at risk, including those recently displaced from other areas captured by” the Turkish army and Free Syrian Army militias.

Civilians fleeing the Kurdish-controlled areas embark on a treacherous path, risking shelling and explosive hazards, only to reach checkpoints manned by Syrian government-backed armed groups, the statement noted.

The UN report warned about the humanitarian situation in Afrin, stating that there is “tremendous pressure on Afrin hospital—the only medical facility equipped for major operations—which is struggling to cope with the influx of injured people.” ...⁵

Hundreds of civilians killed in Turkish airstrike

Hundreds of civilians were killed as a vehicle convoy carrying the civilians who were escaping from invasion attacks were targeted by Turkish warplanes on Saturday.

Locals say that the convoy was carrying more than 300 civilians and most of them were killed in the attack. Sources inside the Afrin city center also say that several civilians were massacred by the Turkish bombing.

In a rare interview, a person still inside Afrin said that Turkish soldiers beheaded two people on Sunday. With the recent attack the number of civilians killed since the launch of Turkish attacks on January 20, exceeded 500.⁶

AFP: Pro-Turkish forces pillage Afrin after taking the city

Syrian Turkish-backed forces went on the rampage in Afrin on Sunday, pillaging shops and homes after taking control of the northern city, AFP correspondents and a monitor said.

After chasing Kurdish fighters from Afrin, the pro-Ankara fighters broke into shops, restaurants and houses and left with foodstuff, electronic equipment, blankets and other goods, the correspondents said.

⁵ <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/9d420ced-440e-47f9-83da-c2572a9dd80b>

⁶ <https://anfenglish.com/rojawa/hundreds-of-civilians-killed-in-turkish-airstrike-25563>

They placed the loot in cars and small trucks and drove them out of the city, they added.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor confirmed the reports, saying Turkey's Syrian allies "have begun pillaging private property, political and military sites and shops".

A resident of Afrin told AFP earlier in the day that he had seen the pro-Ankara fighters breaking into shops to loot what was inside while others stole cars that had been parked on the streets.

Some fighters also set fire to shops that sold alcoholic beverages, an AFP correspondent said. According to AFP, a statue of Kurdish hero Kawa, a symbol of resistance against oppressors, was torn down as Turkish forces and their allies fanned across the city and fired into the air "to celebrate their victory".⁷

Saleh Moslem: Guerrilla warfare begins in Afrin

Saleh Moslem, former co-chair of the PYD (Democratic Union Party), told ANF about the current situation in Afrin and the state of the population.

Campaign to save the civilian population

Moslem said the fight has reached a new level: "Today, a step was taken in Afrin to defend the civilian population. The fight in Afrin and the war are not over. On the contrary, it goes on. The very nature of the war has changed."

"Fighters of YPG and YPJ continue their struggle in Afrin"

"As long as the population was in the city, the conditions for a fight, a war were not present. The Turkish state attacks the civilian population and carries out massacres. The propaganda of the enemy that no one is in Afrin is a lie. Nobody should pay attention to it. Both in the center and surrounding of Afrin there are YPG/YPJ fighters and they fight. A promise has been made to the people and this promise will be kept. Afrin will never be abandoned."

"The Turkish state aims at the annihilation of the Kurds"

Moslem pointed to the war in the Middle East and said: "With this war, a decision was made to annihilate the Kurds. They want to take Afrin and then attack the Kurds in Kobanê, Qamishlo, Kirkuk and Shengal. First, this was intended to be done via groups such as IS and al-Nusra. Since this was not successful, they do it themselves now. People in all four parts of Kurdistan should be vigilant and see the plans. Our liberation depends on unity. If we do not create unity, do not realize national unity, we will face similar attacks throughout Kurdistan. Therefore, we must not waste any time, Kurdish organizations must come together and fight with a national attitude against these attacks."

Saleh Moslem also pointed to the role of the international powers in the attacks on Afrin: "The international forces, the states of the world, have left us alone. This silence provided a basis for and supported the attacks of Turkey."

⁷ <https://www.afp.com/en/news/23/turkish-led-forces-oust-kurds-syrias-afrin-doc-12q7z86>

"YPG/YPJ will lead a guerilla war in Afrin"

Commenting on the resistance of Afrin, the Kurdish politician said: "For 58 days our people resisted with great self-sacrifice against soldiers of a NATO army and militias. These forces have carried out their attacks with excessive force, air strikes and massive use of technology. The resistance on the other hand is great and holy, everyone should know that.

The resistance has developed with great determination and it continues today. In Afrin, the YPG and the YPJ will continue their resistance in various ways. From now on, they will put the focus of their struggle on the guerrilla warfare. Hit-and-run methods will bring the resistance to the highest level. For a front war we have neither the technical possibilities nor the armament. We are committed to lead a guerrilla struggle. Our youth, our fighters and our forces are ready for it."

The evacuation of the civilian population from Afrin has made this fight easier, explained Moslem. "The presence of the civilian population has complicated the tasks of our fighters. Our enemy is merciless and cruel. It attacks civilians, bombards hospitals and homes. The aim of the Turkish state was the civilian population from the outset and they are progressing on this basis. The evacuation of the civilian population has facilitated the work of our fighters. That's why the war will continue in another way and the enemy will receive even bigger blows."

Saleh Moslem also appealed to the Kurds in Europe and around the world to ignore the propaganda of the Turkish state and to intensify the struggle for Afrin.⁸

Turkish-German ISIS member speaks to ANF

German citizen Ergün Orhan (code name: Ebubekir Almani) has something to say to the German government, who responded to a written inquiry submitted after the invasion attempt against Afrin with "There is no evidence or findings that show Turkey is colluding with terrorist organizations like ISIS and Al Nusra." Held prisoner by the YPG, Orhan has shared some information on the relationship between ISIS and Turkey.

28 years old Ergün Orhan is a Turkish man from Isparta who was born and raised in Germany. He holds both Turkish and German citizenships. In 2013, in the Ebu Bekir Mosque in Cologne, he met ISIS through the imam. He frequented the mosque for a year, after which he and his wife joined ISIS. The imam's code name is Ebu Beydeydi, and he is from Morocco.

Journey to ISIS over Turkey

Ergün Orhan travelled from Germany to Antalya, and then from Antalya to Antep, where he crossed into Syria from the Jarablus border in a shuttle bus that carried new arrivals like him, very comfortably. On how easy it was to move around on the border, Orhan said: "The border was completely open."

Turkey's friendship during Manbij

German citizen Turkish ISIS member Ergün Orhan took on various roles in various areas during his stay in the organization. After training in Jarablus, he went to Manbij to work in the military administration. That was during the time ISIS was attacking to invade Kobanê, about which Orhan said: "During the Kobanê process, Turkey had opened a path for ISIS to cross the

⁸ <https://anfenglish.com/rojava/saleh-moslem-guerrilla-warfare-begins-in-afrin-25573>

border and attack. They were sending them weapons. ISIS had many waiting points and houses around the border line within Turkey's territory. The borders were wide open for ISIS. Turkey aided ISIS quite a lot. When I was in the military administration in Manbij, the wounded and sick ISIS members came to my emir to take leave. Some of them went to Turkey to receive treatment in hospitals there. Most of them were allowed. Turkey never gave them any trouble. There was a hospital in Istanbul and another one on the Syrian border, to serve ISIS."

Member of ISIS and Turkish police force

Orhan said the head of the unit called the Horsemen of the Caliphate under Ciheman in the Antep Group of ISIS was Fudel. Ciheman headed the military administration in Manbij, while Fudel was his deputy. The attacks against the HDP in Adana and Mersin, and the hitmen used in the Ankara and Suruç Massacres were from this unit. The gang leader Fudel was a man who worked for both Turkish and ISIS intelligence. Ciheman is Turkish as well, he was on duty in Afghanistan as an Al Qaeda member and was later killed during the Manbij Operation process. Mustafa Şami (Orhan's most recent emir in Bab) said Fudel crossed into Turkey and continued his work in the Turkish police. He was working for both sides.

Also, a sniper

Ergün Orhan worked in the police organization and as a guard in Bab after Manbij. After a while, he left the police organization and joined the snipers unit, where he was wounded. He later became the head of the equipment warehouse in Cizîr. Orhan said: "I heard that people who left ISIS and went to Turkey were not arrested, on the contrary, they opened up businesses. Now many of them settled in Turkey and they just go about freely."

Orhan crossed into Deir ez-Zor after Shaddadi, and it was there he and his wife fled and surrendered to the YPG after the Operation Cizîre Storm started. On why he didn't flee to Turkey despite hearing about how those who did were not sentenced to prison, he said: "I myself fled ISIS along with my family. I didn't want to go to Turkey, because of my dual citizenship I could have been conscripted. Turkey had aided ISIS a lot, that is why I didn't want to go there. ISIS ruined our lives."⁹

US 'deeply concerned' with developments in Afrin

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region (Kurdistan 24) – The United States on Monday said it was "deeply concerned" with recent developments in Syrian Kurdistan's Afrin region which was taken over by Turkish forces and Syrian rebel allies the previous day.

"The United States is deeply concerned over reports from Afrin City over the last 48 hours," State Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert said in a statement.

"It appears the majority of the population of the city, which is predominantly Kurdish, evacuated under threat of attack from Turkish military forces and Turkish-backed opposition forces," she added...

The United States, who has supported and armed the Kurdish forces in the ongoing battle against the Islamic State (IS) in Syria as part of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), had not

⁹ <https://anfenglish.com/features/turkish-german-isis-member-speaks-to-anf-25576>

openly voiced its defense of the YPG but called on Turkey to limit its offensive during the eight-week campaign.

In her statement, Nauert warned that recent developments in Afrin “adds to the already concerning humanitarian situation in the area.”

The United Nations has reported “a displaced population in or from Afrin district in the hundreds of thousands, who now require immediate shelter and other assistance to meet basic needs.”

“We are also concerned over reports of looting inside the city of Afrin,” she added. “We have repeatedly expressed our serious concerns to Turkish officials regarding the situation in Afrin.”

International powers, including the US and Russia, have been idle in their efforts to end Turkey’s offensive, with Moscow notably giving Ankara the green-light to proceed with its operation in January...¹⁰

Turkish army bans entry to Afrin

With the invaders entering, looting and pillaging has taken hold in Afrin, while the same forces have banned entry to the city. Turkish soldiers and their collaborator gangs hold the entrances and exits of the city and are barring civilians from entering.

Reports say young people who couldn’t leave Afrin or who wish to come back are forced to choose between two inhumane options, prison and joining the FSA. Many young men are being held on these grounds.

In images the gang members post on social media, blindfolded civilians with their hands tied behind their backs can be seen. These young men detained by Turkish forces are threatened with prison in Azaz or Turkey because they refuse to join the gangs.

The bans, detentions and threats in the city are considered to be geared towards changing the demographic makeup of the city. The Turkish regime has repeatedly stated that they want to settle the refugees in Turkey in Kurdish lands. European Union funds are also being used to this end.

As looting continues in the city, hundreds of thousands of citizens have sought refuge in places around Afrin to avoid violence. The civilians in the Shehba desert live under harsh conditions.¹¹

US: We will remain in Manbij for as long as necessary

WASHINGTON DC, United States (Kurdistan 24) – A senior State Department official affirmed on Tuesday that the US would remain in Manbij as long as circumstances require.

¹⁰ <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/8008e364-bd92-4b3b-bc6e-666911c5c13c>

¹¹ <https://anfenglish.com/rojava/turkish-army-bans-entry-to-afrin-25605>

“We remain in Manbij, and we remain working with our partners there on the ground,” she said, responding to a request from Kurdistan 24 for clarification of this issue. “We have no intention of leaving,” she continued, “and we’ll keep staying there as long as we need to.”

The State Department has the lead in the “results-oriented mechanism,” a diplomatic framework established to resolve disputes between the US and Turkey, following Secretary of State Rex Tillerson’s visit to Ankara in mid-February and his long meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The senior State Department official, speaking on background, was much clearer about US intentions in Manbij than Defense Department Spokespersons, speaking on the record, had been on Monday.

The State Department official also revealed that Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan spoke with his Turkish counterpart over the weekend, a “follow-up conversation” that was part of the mechanism established by Tillerson and Erdogan.

Last Thursday, State Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert contravened the claim of Turkey’s Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu that Washington and Ankara had reached an agreement on Manbij.

Subsequently, Erdogan’s Spokesperson Ibrahim Kalin made a similar claim. On Tuesday, however, Nauert re-affirmed, “No agreement has been reached.” ...¹²

German footballer joins hunger strike against Afrin offensive

Kurdish-German footballer Deniz Naki joined a hunger strike in front of the United Nations headquarters in the Swiss city of Geneva on Wednesday to demonstrate against Turkey's military offensive in Kurdish regions of Syria.

"We demand that the Turkish military and its Islamist allies withdraw from Afrin and end this war of aggression," German daily newspaper Die Welt quoted Naki as saying.

The 28-year-old, who was born to a Kurdish-Turkish family in Germany, previously played for the under-21 German national team and St. Pauli in the northern city of Hamburg.

Around 200 Kurds, including some Kurdish mayors from Turkey, also joined the hunger strike alongside Naki.¹³

¹² <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/9f78664e-546d-459e-9086-832df8d4c1b2>

¹³ <http://www.dw.com/en/kurdish-german-footballer-joins-hunger-strike-against-turkish-afrin-offensive/a-43075622>

Destruction of a church and damaging of archaeological remains in Kemar village in Afrin

According to a report by Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) the invading Turkish army and the terrorist factions targeted the archaeological sites located in Kemar village and the vicinity of Mount Semaan with artillery and heavy shelling.

The shelling since the morning has resulted in a complete destruction of the church in addition to the damaging of the archaeological remains.¹⁴

Afrin people: “We want to return to Afrin under UN, international supervision”

Afrin residents who had to leave their homes following attacks by the invading Turkish state and their allied gangs say they want to return home under United Nations (UN) supervision. Afrin residents say their city was invaded and looted in front of the whole world, and argue that the UN, Russia and international powers created a basis for the invasion.

The people of Afrin stress that they will never accept the Turkish state invasion. They are trying to survive under harsh conditions in villages in Shehba and Afrin’s Sherawa district. The people of Afrin face invasion attacks by the Turkish state on one hand, and the threat of conscription by the Syrian regime on the other. They say they will return to the lands they have lived on for millenia, but the Turkish state and their gangs must be removed from the city. The people of Afrin living under harsh conditions in the Shehba region say they want to return to their lands with the UN and international powers forming security and observation committees.

“UN and international powers should intervene”

Ebû Mihemed left Afrin’s Bilbile district for Shehba due to the Turkish invasion and says they can’t return home as long as the Turkish state and their gangs are in the city, and that they want the UN to intervene. Ebû Mihemed said: “We want to return home. They looted all our homes, but we want to return if the UN and international powers take action. Because there are ISIS gangs there. We can’t return under these conditions. We never declared war against anyone, we were living on our own lands in peace. They declared war on us. The international community must not accept this.” ...¹⁵

HRW denounces mass deportations of Syrians in Turkey

Turkish security forces have routinely intercepted hundreds, and at times thousands, of asylum seekers at the Turkey-Syria border since at least December 2017 and summarily deported them to the war-ravaged Idlib governorate in Syria, Human Rights Watch said today.

¹⁴ <http://sdf-press.com/en/2018/03/destroy-a-church-and-damage-the-archaeological-remains-in-kemar-village-in-afrin/>

¹⁵ <https://anfenglish.com/rojawa/we-want-to-return-to-afrin-under-un-international-supervision-25632>

Turkish border guards have shot at asylum seekers trying to enter Turkey using smuggling routes, killing and wounding them, and have deported to Idlib newly arrived Syrians in the Turkish town of Antakya, 30 kilometers from the Syrian border.

The Russian-Syrian military alliance's December offensive against anti-government forces in Idlib has displaced almost 400,00 civilians, according to the UN. They have joined more than 1.3 million others trapped inside Idlib in insecure, overcrowded camps, and in makeshift camps in fields near the closed Turkish border where they are under constant threat of attack and lack food, clean water, shelter, health care, and aid.

At a March 26, 2018 summit meeting in Bulgaria, the European Union should press Turkey to allow Syrian civilians fleeing fighting to seek protection inside Turkey and pledge increased aid to Syrian refugees in Turkey and the region...¹⁶

¹⁶ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/03/22/turkey-mass-deportations-syrians>