

Information Center of Afrin Resistance



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AFRIN
RESISTANCE

Weekly News Bulletin from Afrin

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The Information Center of Afrin Resistance is providing direct information from the inside of 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 in Afrin.

This is the weekly summary of the developments in and around Afrin.

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The Developments in Afrin 23th-29th March, 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.

Last week's Developments inside Afrin

After 69 day of resistance against the second biggest army of the NATO, hundreds of people from Afrin Canton are still displaced and they face difficult conditions. The Turkish army and its jihadist allies are implementing ethnic cleansing, assimilation and colonisation policies, making preparations to add the region Afrin to Turkey's state territory. At the same time thousands of jihadists have been transferred from Goutha to Afrin to create demographic changes and install an Islamic-Turkish order. The resistance of YPG-YPJ forces in the all districts of Canton Afrin carries on, as well as the resistance of the displaced people from Afrin in Shehba region. Turkey has extended its threats now towards Til Rifat/Shehba region, Minbij and Shingal.

War and Humanitarian Situation

Due to the attacks on Afrin city center carried out by the Turkish army and its jihadists allies, about 300,000 people were displaced. The largest part is in Shehba region and the conditions are still difficult. According to UN 167,000 people have been displaced in Shehba region¹. Until now, in Til Rifat the Kurdish Red Crescent registered 100,000 people, but the total amount is expected to be about 160,000 people. The remaining refugees are staying in Sherawa, Noboul, Zehraa and Aleppo. About 1500 families managed to arrive in Minbij and less to Euphrates and N-E Syria. Although the local people and self-administration have provided useful help, urgent needs could still not be met in many sectors like shelter, healthcare, clean water and milk for infants and children. On March 24th, another Kurdish Red Crescent convoy arrived in Shehba region to help people displaced from Afrin.

In the past week, the resistance against occupation in Afrin Canton went on. Between March 22th and 29th, the People's Defence Forces YPG and Women's Defence Forces YPJ carried out many actions in Afrin city center and Kimara village (Sherawa district) resulting in 80 jihadist FSA members being killed and the destruction of military vehicles². On March 28th, YPG-YPJ carried out an action in Dikê village (Rajo district) in which 7 jihadists were killed. Among them, two jihadist group commanders: Issa Abdulhai (Al-Shamiya Front) and Abu Miqdad (Arhar Al-Sham)³. The same day, a special operation by YPG-YPJ on the Jindiresse-Afrin road resulted in 2 Turkish soldiers being killed and 6 wounded.

On March 25th, clashes erupted between two gangs of jihadists in Afrin out of plunder issues. The clashes extended also to Bab and Al Ray areas. As a result, in Afrin the gang Arhar Al-Sharqiya killed and arrested many members of Al Hamza Division.

1 <https://www.afp.com/en/news/205/nearly-170000-flee-violence-syrias-afrin-un-doc-1314vq1>

2 <http://anfnews.tv/files/632-efrin-merkezde-eylem-19-cete-oelduerueldue.mp4>

3 <https://twitter.com/ICafrinresist/status/979090574211997696>

An episode reported on February 24th by various Turkish state owned media agencies resulted to be false and a part of Turkey's propaganda war. Villagers in Miske village / Rajo district Afrin allegedly were tied and mined all around by YPG and used as human shields. An eye-witness of the same village reported that this was actually an act committed by Turkish army⁴.

During the last week, the Turkish army and related jihadist groups enforced their demographic change policies. Many people are scared to return to Afrin, since many cases show that those who returned to Afrin region have been deported to unknown locations. Others were refused to return to their homes and were placed in villages dictated and controlled by Turkish army and jihadist forces. The people inside Afrin report of incidents of beheading, rapes and pressure on civilians to identify houses of families that worked in structures or institutions of the democratic self-administration or defence forces⁵. Moreover, Turkey, Russia and Syrian regime agreed on handing over Til Rifat and Shehba region over to Turkish army and jihadist forces, while transferring jihadist fighters and their families from Gouta to Afrin. As a results, a 4th convoy with 13400 jihadists and their families left Ghouta to Afrin⁶.

Further Turkey opened a new border crossing point from Hatay to Afrin in Hamam village. Even if according to official propaganda it has supposedly been opened for aid deliveries, the actual reason behind it can be expected that looted property and confiscated goods of can be transported more easily from Afrin to Turkey. Turkey officials announced that they will directly appoint a governor for Afrin and declared that they are establishing a "council" to rule over "the new Turkish province". The council set up by Turkey includes mainly persons – all men - that lived for years in Turkey and Europe. According to Mezgin Ehmed: "Now they want to use those Kurdish traitors, who have lived for years in the bosom of Turkey [...] One of them is called Hasan Shendi. In 2013 he committed a bomb attack against a civil society institution with the support of MIT; 7 persons of the same family were killed in this incident".

Local sources confirmed intensifying ethnic cleansing practices of Turkey aiming at establishing a Islamist-Turkish regime in Afrin, as 20 families of fighters of jihadist Al-Rahman Corps from Ghouta were settled in Afrin, on March 27th⁷.

While Erdogan's threats focused also on Minbij, on March 24th, sleeping cells of Euphrates Shield attempted to assassinate, without success, the spokesperson of Minbij Military Council Shervan Darwish. Until now, USA has denied that any agreement was made with Turkey to hand over Minbij. Turkey's threats to attack also the Ezidi region Shingal in Iraq lead to condemnation by Iraqi government. Units of the Iraqi army have been sent to Shingal and discussions are in place to integrate the Units of Shingal Resistance YBS in the popular units of the Iraqi army. The People's Defence Forces HPG units that defended the city during the past 3 years withdrew from Shingal, as the YBS and the Ezidi society are now well organized to ensure their own protection.

Solidarity for Afrin

During the past 69 days the international solidarity with the Afrin resistance constantly increased. For the March 24th, a day of global action had been initiated by diverse social movements and civil society networks: the World Afrin Day. Many demonstrations took place in many countries and over 50 cities in Germany, Austria, Belgium, Italy, South Kurdistan/Iraq, Japan, USA, Chile, Afghanistan, France, Spain, Canada, Australia, Mexico, Sweden, Norway, India, UK, Argentina, The Netherlands, Denmark, Poland, Switzerland, Greece, Russia, Czech Republic, Portugal,

4 <https://twitter.com/ICafrinresist/status/977877886765096960>

5 <https://twitter.com/ICafrinresist/status/978555863228141568>

6 <http://www.syahr.com/en/?p=87890>

7 <https://twitter.com/ICafrinresist/status/978918906931892224>

Paraguay, Honduras and others. Many demonstrations and actions were carried out remembering Alina Sanchez from Argentina and Anna Campbell from UK who dedicated their lives to the defence of Afrin and the women's revolution. Especially in South America and UK people carried their pictures on the marches for Afrin identifying them as symbols for the globalising struggle for social liberation and women's freedom. In Peru, Mexico, Poland and USA, protests were held in front of Turkey's embassy, demanding an immediate end of the occupation. In Italy, protestors chained themselves at the main entrance of Turkey embassy blocking any access until the violent intervention of the police.

In Turkey, students of the Bogazici University protested also against Afrin occupation. Erdogan personally declared the protesters as a target and demanded to expel them from their right to education. Meanwhile, 15 students have been arrested.

Kurdish mayors, journalists and deputies are continuing their hunger strike to demand urgent actions from the United Nations to end the Turkish occupation and protect the lives and the rights of the people of Afrin. The hunger strike started in front of UN building in Geneva on March, 19th. In different European cities like in front of the Swedish parliament in Stockholm, Kurds launched solidarity hunger strikes protesting against the silence of European governments and the EU towards Turkey's aggression war and breaches of international law⁸.

Statements and analysis

The declaration of solidarity with Afrin resistance and the condemnation of Turkey's occupation by different institutions, political parties and civil society organisations are constantly increasing. On March 23th, Cyprus parliament condemned the Turkish invasion in Afrin⁹. The Egypt parliament stressed that Turkey's occupation of Afrin is an act of ethnic cleansing and stated: "These mass executions are reminiscent of the genocide the Armenian people suffered in the Ottoman empire during World War I."¹⁰ The South Africa Parliament condemned Turkey war crimes and recognized the right of the Kurdish people to freedom and justice¹¹.

Human Right Watch conducted an investigation about three cases in which Turkish army targeted civilians – on January 21, 27 and 28 – killing at least 26 people, including 17 children¹².

MPs of Die Linke party in Germany expressed their condemnation for Turkey's occupation of Afrin and its ethnic cleansing policy, urging the German government to condemn it as well and stop weapon export to Turkey¹³. Leanne Wood a Welsh politician and leader of Plaid Cymru declared: "The Kurds in Rojava have defended their homeland, their values and their culture against ISIS, but the government of Turkey, and their affiliated armed gangs, have conducted a despicable assault on Afrin"¹⁴. In Ireland, Sinn Féin Youth Congress passed a motion for Afrin: "This congress notes: That the current situation for the people of Afrin in Rojava – Northern Syria is a matter of grave concern.. and that the Turkish State has launched a war of aggression against Afrin (..)"¹⁵.

8 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dN7Z3IG_b1A

9 <http://www.cna.org.cy/webnews-en.aspx?a=3de1e934b5c2449295e889fb83309c5a>

10 <http://english.ajansfirat.com/anf-news-news/egypt-events-in-afrin-are-reminiscent-of-the-armenian-genocide/>

11 <https://twitter.com/ICafrinresist/status/979066684588937217>

12 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/23/syria-civilian-deaths-turkish-attacks-may-be-unlawful>

13 <https://twitter.com/ICafrinresist/status/978230388752609280>

14 <https://twitter.com/ICafrinresist/status/979077020071194629>

15 <https://twitter.com/ICafrinresist/status/979076749278539776>

On March 26th, an investigative article was published by a group of European journalists. They delivered findings on how Turkey used 80 Mio € of EU refugee funds to implement “security policies” on Turkey-Syria border that are conflicting with international law. These include also the invasion in Afrin. Further has been remarked that the construction of the 911-kilometer long border wall dividing the Kurdish regions on the territory of Turkey and Syria has been financed with EU fundings. On March 27th, during a meeting in Varna (Bulgaria) between EU member states and Turkey, the EU confirmed that it will give further 3 billion Euro to Turkey to deal with Syrian refugees situations. Still, the EU expressed concerns regarding Turkey’s actions in Syria, especially in Afrin¹⁶.

In France 40 unionists issued a call to “support the hope represented by the Rojava Democratic Confederalism project”. Moreover, an international call "Rojava: let's break the silence" has been issued by academics, activists, artists, journalists, politicians, trade unionists and civil organisations among them Christine Delphy, Janet Biehl, Roger Waters, Michel Warschawski, Union Syndicale Solidaires¹⁷.

Despite opposition and condemnations in many countries, Turkey’s project to realize a contiguous territory dominated by Turkey and controlled by jihadist gangs between Idlib, Afrin and Jarablus materialises further day by day. As international powers did not react on Afrin occupation and violation of international law, Turkey’s ambitions focus now on the Shehba region, Minbij and Shingal. Further invasions of the Turkish army and attacks on Kurdish settlements were reported from South Kurdistan / Iraq. Erdogan’s policy in exploiting the conflicting interests of international and regional powers – EU, USA, Russia and Iran – to establish its Islamic Neo-Otoman empire project seems to push through - until where and when?

16 <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2018/03/26/>

17 <https://twitter.com/ICafrinresist/status/978324789009027073>